



**LEICESTERSHIRE, LEICESTER AND RUTLAND HEALTH
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – FRIDAY 3 JULY
2020**

**QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER STANDING ORDER 7(3) and
(5)**

The following questions are to be put to the Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

1. Question by Mrs Amanda Hack CC:

Please could we receive an update on the support for 2017 Student Nurses, who put their studies and lives to one side to assist the NHS with the Covid response. There had been reports of student nurses having their 6 month contracts reduced by 2 months, whilst it looks like the 6 month contracts will now be honoured, is this the correct position?

How many 2017 cohort student nurses do we have across our sites and how are our hospitals going to support these student nurses through the next 2 months.

Reply by the Chairman:

I have sought an answer to the question from University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust and received the following response:

“Across UHL, we have approximately 100 finalist student nurses and midwives from the 2017 cohort who volunteered to become an aspirant nurse at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in England. Some of the Aspirants are from other universities across England who have chosen to complete their training in Leicester to be nearer to their families during the pandemic. All Aspirant nurses are being paid a Band 4 salary.

We also have 80 x 3rd year finalist students who chose not to be an aspirant nurse or midwife but wanted to have an extended paid placement in UHL. They are being paid a Band 3 salary. At the beginning of the COVID outbreak, Health Education England (HEE), believed that the extended paid placement initiative would be for six months and this was communicated to universities and students. However in UHL we gave all of our students (and all the NHS Bring Back Scheme volunteers) a three month fixed term employment contract in UHL that would end on July 31st 2020. This was a pragmatic decision

because of the unpredictable nature of COVID. It is always easier to have a shorter contract that can be extended rather than bringing a longer contract to an end with little notice to an individual (which may be the case elsewhere in the UK). However, HEE announced on Friday 26th June that these paid placements could now continue for six months as per their original decision. Locally, we will now extend contracts until the 31st August so as of the 1st September the students will revert back to full supernumerary status in order to complete their training. Our finalist students at DMU should complete their training on the 20th September and many have secured jobs in UHL so we will make sure they are supported to complete their programme in the best way possible.

HEE and NHSI/E agreed that students who chose to continue their placements during the pandemic should have an NHS contract and be reimbursed for their time working on wards. This is because as an NHS employee, students would benefit from the COVID legislation around statutory sick pay which would give them the same protection as existing NHS employees should they contract COVID whilst working in the NHS and as a result, become very ill (or in the worst case scenario, die as a result of COVID so, family becoming eligible to receive death in service payment). The salaries for students are being paid for by NHSI/E. Many students across the UK may have given up part-time employment thinking they would be receiving a band 4 salary for six months and this has caused distress to the students. This is not the case we believe, in LLR. However, when the contract ends on August 31st the students will no longer be an NHS employee or be remunerated for the remainder of their training (they should still receive their bursary) but they could still contract COVID but will be no longer eligible for benefits. So, we now await a decision from the Council of Deans who are working with NHSE/I, regulatory bodies, HEE and DoH to agree what needs to be in place that will support students appropriately. The final decision lies with the Department of Health and Social Care under the direction of the Secretary of State.

In relation to the point about “we have 500 vacancies in UHL” and using our students to support this position, we actually have circa 400 RN vacancies in UHL but we cannot use our students as qualified nurses and the most important thing is that we support them to complete their training.”

Mrs Hack CC will be aware that I am open to suggestions for agenda items for future Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings and I am happy to discuss with her the best way to scrutinise this issue. I expect we will have several future agenda items regarding the impact of Covid-19 on the NHS in LLR, and we also have an item on the work programme regarding Recruitment and Retention at UHL and the NHS People Plan.