

Distribution of tariff funding: Overview of engagement events

Background

Reforms announced in the 2015 Autumn Statement (November 2015) changed the funding model for a range of pre-registration non-medical courses previously funded by Health Education England (HEE) through its commissioned programme of courses and the provision of NHS Bursaries.

As part of the reform, HEE continued to retain direct responsibility for funding clinical placements, but only at a level commensurate with the minimum numbers of registered professionals needed by the NHS to deliver the Secretary of State duty for ensuring supply of staff for the NHS.

One of the intentions of the reforms, in addition to reducing NHS costs, was liberalisation of the market by removing the de facto cap on numbers in student numbers. At the time, it was intended that this would lead to a significant increase in the available supply of trained nurses, midwives and allied health professionals to the NHS and social care sectors by allowing the universities to create up to 10,000 more training places by the end of Parliament and would be achieved without cost to the NHS frontline and within HEE's flat cash settlement.

Engagement Events

Following DH consultation, on how the reforms were to be implemented, that closed on 30 June 2016 HEE listened to the views of widely diverse stakeholders across the country. HEE held a roundtable event, series of bilateral meetings and engagement events throughout late August to October 2016. Geographic events (in London, Bristol, York and Leicester) and local meetings were held across England. These listening exercise and events were held to inform proposals for the development of a new system for planning and governing NHS funding of non-medical clinical placements to be implemented for 2018/19 academic year.

Stakeholders included professional and statutory regulatory bodies, placement providers, student representatives and higher education institutions (HEIs). Just over half the attendees at the engagement events were from NHS placement providers and just over a third from higher education institutions. The rest of the attendees were from arm's length bodies, private provider organisations, GP practices, clinical commissioning groups and third sector providers

Stakeholder views were sought on the future options for placement funding which could ensure:

- sufficient students were studying in the right places to meet HEE's workforce plan for the NHS while facilitating the recruitment of extra student numbers in line with government objectives; and
- service users and patients continue to receive safe, high quality care and
- that students have a high quality learning experience

Placement funding options

A number of placement funding options were considered. These were:

- directly allocating funding to placement providers via HEE
- HEE or Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) allocating funding via Universities to placement providers
- allocating funding via a lead organisation to support learning collaboratives
- HEE or HEFCE directly allocating funding via students to placement providers

An audience interaction tool and an online ‘virtual’ tool, were used to undertake a poll on the preferred option for placement funding and to capture the outcomes of a SWOT analysis undertaken on each model.

Findings

The findings suggested that:

- one size will not fit all, small and vulnerable professions may need national commissioning of placements or a separate, focussed model of placement funding to meet their specific needs.
- directly allocating placement funding through HEE is the most commonly preferred option but with added assurance, transparency and governance as a stepping stone to future change
- a phased move to an intermediate step of pooling provider placement budgets locally was strongly supported as a means of further developing local partnership working across placement providers; and that
- over time consideration should be given to placement funding flowing through learning environments or larger learning collaboratives to fit with health economies and sustainability and transformation plans (STPs)

Participants commented on the need for assurance, governance and clear systems and processes for ensuring the tariff would meet the needs for high quality and safe practice learning placements. Comments also focused on the need to align the tariff to the HEE Quality Framework and for a clear and transparent policy for distributing and monitoring the use of tariff. The table below provides a summary of the participants preferred option for placement funding.

Overall summary of findings from the engagement events

Options for distributing future funding tested	Level of support for option
1. Placement funding directly to placement providers via HEE	Most preferred
2. Placement funding to support learning environments or via a lead organisation - to support learning collaboratives	Potential recognised but with caveats
3. Placement funding by HEE or HEFCE via HEIs to placement providers	Some support
4. Hybrid model ¹	Some support
5. Placement funding via Students to placement providers	Least preferred /rejected

¹ Hybrid model was put forward at the local events and mentioned at the geographic events. It referred to option 2 being combined with elements of option 1 or 3.