

2017 — protecting our education, training and professional development



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I am sure that you are aware of the Government's plans to integrate health and social care and promote the NHS as being world leading. The spending review (HM Treasury, 2015) stated there would be £120 billion annual investment by 2020/21 to protect the NHS, providing the NHS in England with a £10 billion per annum more in real terms by 2020–2021 than in 2014–2015. There would be £6 billion a year available by the first year, to allow the Five Year Forward View (2014) to be fully funded to deliver services 7 days a week. In order to increase social care funding, local councils will have the power to increase Council Tax to support social care locally. As a part of these changes, there will also be changes to funding of pre-registration nursing and healthcare courses.

CUTS FOR PRACTITIONERS/STUDENTS

Since last year, there has been a significant reduction in funding available for registered practitioners in England to access post-registration modules and courses. This year also sees the introduction of student loans rather than NHS bursaries for nursing students and the opportunity for universities to offer up to 10,000 extra training places on pre-registration healthcare programmes in England. The promise of extra training places is welcomed, as this will help to increase the amount of registered practitioners in clinical areas following completion of education and training courses. The Council of Deans (2016) raised specific concerns regarding cuts to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) funding in relation to the provision of mentorship modules. They warned that: *'Unless universities start to run mentorship courses at their own cost (which some may do) or individuals are willing to fund themselves (which is unlikely) ... they will limit the numbers of mentors in the system and the ability of universities to offer clinical placements to undergraduates and have implications for the Government's strategy (HM Treasury, 2015) of expanding student places across the current parliament.'*

As tissue viability specialists, we need to consider how we will adequately support pre-registration students in clinical practice, especially if training places increase. If the amount of students increases, there will need to be an increase in numbers of mentors to support these students to develop their skills and knowledge and to meet learning outcomes. We know that tissue viability services integrate across all specialties and age ranges with staff providing advice and interventions from prevention of skin damage to managing complex wound types. Staff within these services can maintain their skills and knowledge via attendance at study days and conferences, reading journals, reflection and discussion with peers. However, it is essential that courses and modules are available that provide the opportunity for staff to develop critical analytical skills, understand research, are able to locate and integrate research and evidence into clinical practice and share ideas and innovations with other students. The expertise prevalent within tissue viability provides an essential service to all areas of healthcare across the age continuum. As the population continues to age, there will be an ever increasing need for tissue viability services to provide support and education to staff, family and patients in maintaining skin integrity, ensuring wounds heal in a timely and cost-effective manner while meeting quality targets. The Five Year Forward Plan (NHS, 2014) stated that Health Education England would work with employers, employees and commissioners to identify education and training needs of the current workforce, equipping them with the skills and flexibilities to deliver the new models of care, including the development of transitional roles. In line with this, and the cuts to education funding, it is essential that tissue viability nurses emphasise the skills and expertise this specialty possesses and the importance of maintaining access to post-registration courses to support staff development. This month's *Wounds UK* debate explores these cuts and asks what we can do to address these issues.

WUK

REFERENCES

- Council of Deans (2016) *A False Economy*. Available at: <http://www.councilofdeans.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/19092016-A-False-Economy-CPD-cuts-in-England-2016-17-.pdf> (accessed 25.01.2016)
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