



# Senedd elections 2021: Manifesto

April 2021

University healthcare faculties have been key to the nation's response to the pandemic. They have continued their efforts to ensure that Wales has enough nurses, midwives, and allied health professionals equipped with the right skills and knowledge to meet our population's health challenges and lead innovation in clinical practice. They have worked with the NHS to deploy thousands of healthcare students and academic staff to expand the workforce, provided training to upskill current NHS staff and offered facilities and equipment to NHS services. Healthcare research in universities has been fundamental to informing our ongoing response to Covid-19.

The next Welsh Government must continue to work closely with the healthcare higher education sector to help it to deliver on its civic mission to support local and regional communities as we come out of the pandemic and to grow and shape the future health and social care workforce in Wales.

## Key messages

**We call on the next Welsh Government to:**

- **Provide stable and sustainable funding for our disciplines**
- **Ensure healthcare students receive adequate financial and wellbeing support, including via the continuation of the NHS Wales Bursary**
- **Deliver strategic funding for continuing professional development (CPD)**
- **Invest in healthcare teaching, research and international partnerships**

### Provide stable and sustainable funding for our disciplines

Nursing, midwifery, and allied health professional courses are more expensive to deliver than typical university degree programmes. Universities need stability and certainty to invest for the future. The full costs of educating healthcare professionals must be met to ensure the sustainability and quality of healthcare education. The Welsh Government should increase the rate at which healthcare programmes are funded to meet the needs of education.

The pandemic has reshaped the delivery of healthcare with more patients accessing services remotely. The Welsh Government needs to consider the increasing use of technology in healthcare and invest in the infrastructure and equipment needed by higher education to provide digitally enhanced and simulated placements to produce a future healthcare workforce better equipped to deliver services. England has recently announced £10m of dedicated investment in simulation for healthcare faculties and Scotland has committed to £3.8m for innovative technology.



## Ensure financial and wellbeing support for students



In Wales, universities and prospective students need certainty about student support arrangements over the long term so universities and applicants can make plans. Healthcare students should be able to access both the standard maintenance support package through Student Finance Wales and an NHS Bursary to cover full tuition fees and additional funding for costs related to clinical placement expenses (subject to a post-qualification employment period). This would recognise the unique nature of these courses and their importance to the future health and social care workforce. Having access to both sources of funding would give students more support for day-to-day living costs.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, healthcare students have played a key role in the Covid-19 response. In Spring 2020 more than 2,000 healthcare students were deployed to support healthcare services in Wales. The Welsh Government should ensure healthcare students have ongoing access to adequate mental health services tailored to their needs. This will support students to complete their programmes and embark on a rewarding career within health and social care.

## Deliver strategic funding for continuing professional development (CPD)



The Welsh Government must deliver continued, sustained, and strategic CPD funding for the existing workforce to support service improvement and staff retention.

This is more important due to the pandemic and recent changes to regulatory standards of proficiency, which have raised the bar on what is expected of nurses and midwives.

The expansion of Masters level education and investment in postgraduate education and flexible learning pathways would create a healthcare workforce which is more highly skilled and better able to respond to future population health demands and the changing healthcare landscape.

## Invest in teaching, research and global partnerships



Universities drive research outputs and innovation in healthcare delivery. We need to strengthen the academic workforce to educate future professionals. This requires adequate investment in teaching qualifications and research opportunities for the wider workforce, which would lead to an increase in the sustainability of both academic staffing and clinical academic careers.

The Welsh Government needs to increase nursing, midwifery and allied health professional research capacity and invest in funding for clinical research to increase the quality and efficiency of care delivery. It should also implement recommendations from the Reid Review, to increase the visibility and influence of Welsh research and enable Welsh researchers to win more funding from outside Wales.

We welcome plans for an International Learning Exchange Programme to replace Erasmus+ for Wales. Healthcare students, academic staff, and Welsh-led international health research should be prioritised to benefit from these proposals.

## About us

The Council of Deans of Health Wales represents 9 universities in Wales engaged in education and research for nursing, midwifery, and the allied health professions. Our member institutions work together with policy makers to help shape the education and research of the future healthcare workforce in Wales.



## For more information contact:

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