

Abigail Harris

Chief Executive, Swansea Bay University Health Board

Alex Howells

Chief Executive, HEIW

23 October 2025

Dear Ms Harris, Ms Howells

We have been contacted by the March 2023 cohort of Adult Nursing students at Swansea University, who tell us that no Band 5 adult nursing positions have been made available to newly qualified nurses within Swansea Bay University Health Board through the recent NHS Wales Streamlining process. As a result, they tell us that up to seventy students are facing unemployment following completion of their nursing training, which has been funded by NHS Wales under the Welsh Government's bursary scheme. They also say there are limited vacancies in the surrounding health board areas, making those positions highly competitive.

The students who have contacted us are, understandably, extremely concerned about their future and their ability to work within the Welsh NHS workforce. Many of them live locally to Swansea and have trained within the health board area but now find that they are unable to access employment locally. They are also worried about the implications for their bursary conditions which, they tell us, require employment within three months of qualification and for that employment to be within Wales for a minimum of two years post-qualification.

If the above position is correct, it would be extremely concerning not just for the 2023 cohort who are currently facing an uncertain future, but for nursing students more broadly as well as the wider workforce. It would also highlight significant deficiencies in the workforce planning and staff recruitment and retention processes.

As a Committee, we are well aware of the staffing shortages and working pressures facing the NHS workforce in Wales, and we have heard, as part of previous inquiries, of the efforts by HEIW and health boards to both recruit new staff and to retain existing staff. A decision not to offer entry-level nursing posts to newly qualified students would seem to fly in the face of this.

In light of this, and as a matter of urgency, can you:

1. confirm the position as regards Band 5 nursing vacancies for the 2023 training cohort – are any such vacancies available in Swansea Bay University Health Board; do you intend to make any vacancies available in the near future and, if so, how many;
2. outline what advice has or will be made available to the current cohort on next steps and the options that are available to them;
3. confirm whether this position is similar across other health boards in Wales, not just in relation to nursing but as regards wider healthcare roles; and
4. outline what advice has or will be given to the current cohort about the position regarding their bursary funding if they are unable to meet the terms of their bursary agreement due to a lack of suitable posts being made available by the health board.

A copy of this letter goes to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee, and the Executive Director of RCN Wales.

I look forward to your swift response.

Yours sincerely



Peter Fox MS
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.