

A photograph of three young women sitting on wooden tiered seating in a lecture hall. The woman on the left is a Black woman with short dark hair, wearing a maroon bomber jacket over a white t-shirt, smiling and looking at a laptop. The woman in the middle is a South Asian woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a yellow sweater, gesturing with her hands while speaking. The woman on the right is a white woman with blonde hair and glasses, wearing a grey hoodie over an orange top, listening attentively. The background shows the wooden structure of the lecture hall and some blurred lights.

Your guide to the

# Social Work Bursary

2025/26

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This guide applies to students on approved undergraduate and postgraduate social work courses. However, some of the guidance is different for these students, so please look out for **undergraduate/postgraduate** explanations where the guidance differs.





# Welcome

**Welcome to the Social Work Bursary (SWB) guide for students. All the information you need to apply for your bursary is included in this guide.**

The SWB is administered by Student Services, part of the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA).

We assess, award and pay bursaries to eligible students on approved undergraduate and postgraduate social work courses on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

Postgraduate students can apply for a bursary from their first year of study and undergraduates from their second year of study.

However, the number of bursary recipients for all eligible social work courses is limited (or 'capped') so we are unable to guarantee that you will receive a social work bursary even if you take up an offer of a place on an eligible course.

Further information about the capping process is set out on page 8.



# Eligibility

## Eligible courses

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You must be studying, or intending to study, on a university based social work course approved by one of the following:

- [Social Work England \(SWE\)](#)
- [the Scottish Social Services Council \(SSSC\)](#)
- [Social Care Wales](#)
- [the Northern Ireland Social Care Council \(NISCC\)](#)

You must not already be a registered social worker and your course must lead to a first registration in that profession.

You will **not** be eligible if a social care employer is giving you:

- any paid time off to allow you to attend your studies
- payment of all or part of your tuition fees
- payment from a practice learning provider for undertaking placement duties for them.

In addition, students are not eligible if they are in receipt of funding for their social work course from any other public sector body.

This does not include your university or college's own hardship funds or bursaries paid to care leavers or similar.

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## Retainers

If you are receiving a retainer from an employer or potential employer, it must:

- be offered as an incentive to engage in employment with the retainer provider once the recipient qualifies as a social worker, and not as support towards the recipient's social work training
- not be funded by the DfE.

## Continuing SWB students

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If you have received SWB funding (including just the Placement Travel Allowance) in a previous academic year(s) you will have already demonstrated your eligibility for funding and supplied evidence of your identity and residency status. As a continuing bursary student you will not be required to provide this information again unless your immigration status changes. You must notify us if it does so that we can ensure you are receiving the correct funding.

See ['Changes you must tell us about'](#) on page 14.

## New SWB applicants

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If you will be:

- commencing a postgraduate level social work course which starts on or after 1 September 2025; or
- entering the second year of an undergraduate social work course in 2025/26 and this is the first time you are applying to us

please refer to the information below before making an application for the first time.

# Residency criteria

## **i** Information

The SWB is only available to students who normally live in **England** and who are ordinarily resident on the first day of the first academic year of their course. If you usually live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland when you are not attending your social work course, you should apply to your own national funding authority for support. Links to these organisations are available at the back of this booklet.

## Undergraduate students entering course year 2 in 2025/26

If you were eligible for full loan support from Student Finance England in the first year of your course, you will normally be eligible for a SWB (subject to capping). We will ask you to provide your student loan award letter to confirm this when you apply.

If for any reason you did not apply for or receive SFE support, you must satisfy the relevant residence conditions below.

## Postgraduate students entering course year 1 in 2025/26

You must satisfy the relevant residence criteria described below to be eligible for SWB.

If you are living in England because you have moved from another UK country for the purpose of undertaking your social work course (or a further or higher education course immediately before that), you will be considered as being ordinarily resident in the country from which you moved.

## Your nationality or residency status

Your nationality, residency status and where you have been living prior to the start of your academic year may affect your eligibility for SWB. If you meet the relevant criteria, you may be able to receive SWB funding to help as follows:

- **undergraduate** students can apply for help towards their living costs
- **postgraduate** students can apply for help towards their tuition fees and living costs
- depending on their residency status, some **postgraduate** students may only be entitled to help with their tuition fees
- tuition fee support is not available for **undergraduate** students

## Getting help towards living costs whilst you study

The following must apply to you:

- you are studying on a **postgraduate** or **undergraduate** social work course in the UK
- you have been living in the UK<sup>1</sup>, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man for at least three years before starting your course
- England is your home, for example, you live and work in England and have not moved there solely for the purposes of study

And you are one of the following:

- a UK national or Irish citizen
- settled under the EU Settlement Scheme
- granted settled status for other reasons in the UK

If you are a UK national who was living in the EEA, Gibraltar or Switzerland, you may be eligible for help towards your living costs from the SWB, but you would need to show that you have been:

- living in the EEA or Switzerland immediately before the end of the EU-exit transition period (31 December 2020) or
- resident in the UK having moved back from the EEA/Switzerland after 31 December 2017 or
- resident in the UK, Gibraltar, the EEA and Switzerland for three years immediately before the first day of the first academic year of the course; and you remained ordinarily resident in the UK, Gibraltar, the EEA or Switzerland between the end of the transition period (31 December 2020) and the first day of the first academic year of your course<sup>2</sup>.

You can also apply for help with your living costs from the SWB if you have been living in the UK, the EEA, Gibraltar or Switzerland for the past three years and you are:

- the child of a Swiss national and you have settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme
- an EEA or Swiss worker, or the family member of an EEA or Swiss Worker and you have settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme
- a family member of a UK National, both you and your family member must have lived in the UK, the EEA, Gibraltar or Switzerland for the past three years
- the child of a Turkish worker
- You must also have been living in the EEA or Switzerland on 31 December 2020, or in the UK having moved here from the EEA or Switzerland after 31 December 2017.

If you have one of the following UK residency statuses granted by the Home Office, you can apply for help towards your living costs:

- humanitarian protection or the family member of someone with this status
- Stateless Leave or the family member of someone with this status
- refugee status or the family member of someone with this status
- leave under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) or the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)
- Calais Leave or the dependent child of someone with Calais leave
- indefinite leave to remain as a bereaved partner
- indefinite leave to remain as a victim of domestic violence or abuse (DVILR)
- you or your parent have been granted leave to remain under section 67 of the Immigration Act or the dependent child of someone with this status
- if you have been granted Leave to Remain, such as Discretionary leave, and you are:
  - under 18 on the first day of your course and have lived in the UK for at least 7 years
  - 18 or over on the first day of your course and have lived in the UK for at least half your life or at least 20 years, whichever is applicable.

You must also have:

- been ordinarily resident in the UK, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man for 3 years in a row before the first day of the first academic year of your course; and
- held a form of leave to enter or remain issued by the Home Office throughout that 3-year period

<sup>1</sup> The UK means England, Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland only

<sup>2</sup> The first day of the first academic year means:

1 September for Autumn courses (courses starting from 1 September to 31 December) or  
1 January for Winter courses (courses starting from 1 January to 31 March).



- you or your family member have been granted leave to enter or remain in the UK under the Ukraine Family Scheme, the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme or the Ukraine Extension Scheme

## Students who may be eligible for tuition fee support only<sup>3</sup>

You can apply for tuition fee funding if you have been living in the UK, the EEA, Switzerland or the overseas territories for the past three years, you are studying on a **postgraduate** social work course and you:

- have pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme, or have temporary protection under the Withdrawal Agreements (this might be shown by a certificate of application), and are an EU national or a family member<sup>4</sup> of an EU national
- have Irish citizenship and were resident in the UK by 31 December 2020, or are a family member of an Irish citizen or Person of Northern Ireland and you have pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme
- have resident status in Gibraltar as an EU national or a family member of an EU national
- have a UK national or a family member of a UK national who has resident status in Gibraltar and has been living in the UK, Gibraltar, the EEA and Switzerland for the past three years
- are a person with settled status in the UK and you have been living in the UK, Islands and the British Overseas Territories for the past three years, with at least part of that time spent in the British Overseas Territories
- are a person of Chagossian descent and have British citizenship
- are a person with settled status in the UK and have been living in the UK, Islands, or Ireland for the past three years (with part of that time spent in Ireland)
- are a family member of a person with settled status in the UK and you have been living in the UK and Islands for the past three years
- are an Irish Citizen and you have been living in the EEA and Switzerland before 31 December 2020 and in the UK, Gibraltar, EEA and Switzerland for the past three years
- are an EEA or Swiss worker, a family member of an EEA or Swiss worker, a child of a Swiss national or the child of a Turkish worker and you do not qualify for full support as you have lived in the overseas territories (other than Gibraltar) at some stage in the three years prior to the start of your course

You will not be eligible for SWB funding to help with living costs.

## What you will be asked for when you apply for a Social Work Bursary

Depending on your residency status when you apply, you may be asked to upload:

- your passport and/or your current UK residence permit
- a valid and current EU Settlement Scheme share code
- details of where you have lived for the past three years, or certificate of registration if you are awaiting a decision

<sup>3</sup> Not applicable to students on undergraduate courses

<sup>4</sup> Family member

This generally means you are the

- child,
- step-child,
- spouse or
- civil partner

of the person who holds the relevant immigration status. Partners, siblings, cousins, etc are not regarded as relevant family members for student funding purposes.

# Capping process

Universities are allocated a certain number of SWB places by DHSC each academic year. From this they will nominate some of their social work students for a bursary funded place. The NHSBSA has no input into this decision process, so we cannot tell you if you will be nominated. There is no right of appeal to us if you are not selected by your university.

Your university will tell us which students have been allocated a capped place. This is normally done in the autumn, so you should not delay submitting an application as, even if you are not nominated, you may still be eligible for a Placement Travel Allowance if you satisfy the residency and other eligibility criteria.

If you are nominated for a capped place, you will normally retain this until you complete your course.

However, if you withdraw from your course for any reason, other than for maternity, and return to it at a later date, your capped place will not be retained.

If you transfer to a different university part way through your course your capped place will not automatically transfer with you. You would have to be nominated for a capped place by your new university, if one is available.

More information about capping allocations can be found in the [\*\*social work bursary information pack.\*\*](#)





# SWB allowances

## Undergraduate students

If you meet the eligibility criteria and you are allocated a capped place by your university, we will pay you the appropriate standard rate of basic non-income assessed bursary, as shown in the table below. This will include a Placement Travel Allowance (PTA) of £862.50 for full time courses.

### Undergraduate SWB rates 2025/26

University location	Amount*
London	£5,262.50
Outside London	£4,862.50

\*includes the Placement Travel Allowance

**This is the only bursary element available to undergraduate students, apart from the PTA detailed below. You cannot apply for any other support from the SWB.**

## Placement Travel Allowance (PTA)

Your course will normally include time spent at an agency that provides placements. The PTA is a fixed contribution towards these, payable at the rate of £862.50 per academic year. If you are allocated a capped place by your university and your application has been approved, the PTA will be included with your basic bursary and paid as a lump sum with your first termly instalment.

If you are not allocated a capped place, but meet the residency and course eligibility criteria the PTA of £862.50 will be paid to you in a lump sum at the beginning of your academic year once we receive enrollment information from your university.

If the organisation providing your placement will be contributing to your travel costs, this will not affect your entitlement to the PTA or bursary.

## Additional elements for students attending postgraduate courses

### Postgraduate students

If you are studying on a **postgraduate** course, are eligible for a bursary and nominated for a capped place, we will pay a contribution towards the cost of your tuition fees. This will be paid directly to

your university. Students should be aware that the **maximum** tuition fee contribution the NHSBSA is permitted to pay towards course fees each academic year is **£4,052**. If your university charges a higher amount than this, you will be responsible for meeting the balance. If you are required to extend your course NHSBSA will not cover the tuition fee costs for this period

## Non-income assessed SWB

### Non-income assessed bursary rates 2025/26

University location	Amount*
London	£3,762.50
Outside London	£3,362.50

## Income assessed SWB

This is intended to provide additional help towards the cost of attending your course. It is means tested, so the amount you may be awarded is directly linked to your available income. See the 'Calculating your entitlement' section below.

### Income assessed bursary rates 2025/26

University location	Amount*
London	up to £4,201
Outside London	up to £2,721

\*part-time students receive pro rata of the full time rate

## Calculating your entitlement

When assessing your application for the income assessed SWB, we will look at:

- your net unearned taxable income during the current academic year (if any)
- your partner's residual taxable income from the 2024/25 tax year (if applicable).

We may also take other dependents in your family into consideration in the assessment, where applicable.

Calculating your entitlement can be complex, so you should not base your likely entitlement on your own calculations.

If you do not wish to apply for the income assessed bursary element, the postgraduate SWB application form allows you to opt out of this.

## Adult Dependants Allowance (ADA)

This is payable if you have an adult who is wholly or mainly financially dependent on you. This may include your spouse, partner or civil partner but not your child or your spouse/civil partner/partner's child (as long as they are not a full time student in receipt of a bursary or student loan). This allowance is assessed using your adult dependant's income, if they have any, during the academic year.

The maximum ADA available in 2025/26 is £2,757.

## Parents' Learning Allowance (PLA) - postgraduate students only

This is payable if you have a dependent child or children (aged under 19). We will automatically assess your entitlement based on your dependant's income (if they have any). The maximum PLA in 2025/26 academic year is £1,573.

## Childcare Allowance - postgraduate students only

If you have dependent children aged under 15 (or aged under 17 for children with special educational needs) who are attending registered childcare, you can apply for Childcare Allowance. Your entitlement to this allowance is assessed using your dependants' income.

We can contribute a maximum of 85% of your costs per week.

You cannot claim for any hours or sessions that are covered by free early years childcare.

You will not be entitled to claim the SWB Childcare Allowance if:

- you are in receipt of the childcare elements of Working Tax or Universal Credit
- you receive Tax Free Childcare
- your provider is not registered by Ofsted or its equivalent, where applicable.

## Maximum Childcare Allowance rates 2025/26

Number of children	Amount per week
One	up to £155.25
Two or more	up to £266.15

## Reconciling your childcare costs

When you first apply for the Childcare Allowance you will be asked to provide an estimate of your expected costs for the academic year ahead. At the end of each term, we will contact your childcare provider(s) to confirm your costs are correct.

Once we have received confirmation of your costs we will reassess your entitlement to Childcare Allowance three times per academic year.

## Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs) - postgraduate students only

If you are eligible and you have been nominated for a capped place, you can apply for DSAs if you have a disability and need additional help to complete your course.

The amount of DSAs you could get is based on the recommendations in your Needs Assessment Report. The maximum possible rates for 2025/26 are:

Specialist Equipment	- Up to £5,414*
Non-Medical Helper's Allowance	- Up to £20,725
General Allowance	- Up to £1,741
Travel allowance - as recommended on your Needs assessment report for costs reasonably and necessarily incurred.	

\*All students who are recommended a specialist equipment allowance are required to contribute the first £200 towards the cost of a computer/laptop. DSAs will cover the rest up to the maximum amount

**Visit our website** for more information about DSAs for students on social work courses.

# Making a bursary application

To make your application you will need to create an account on the **MyFunding** system. Creating an account is simple and only takes a few minutes.

## What should I know before I apply?

Once you have created your MyFunding account, you will be able to access the appropriate social work bursary application form for the 2025/26 academic year.

Before you complete your application, please make sure you have read and understood the eligibility and residency criteria in this guidance.

If you are not sure whether your university will be allocating you a capped bursary place, you should still make an application as you may be entitled to the PTA.

If you are applying for the SWB for the first time, you must provide evidence to confirm your identity and residency. This is detailed on the application form.

## Application deadlines

If you start your course/academic year in:

September / October 2025 - you must apply by **31 October 2025**

January 2026 - you must apply by **23 February 2026**

March 2026 - you must apply by **22 March 2026**

You must ensure that you have submitted your application and all requested supporting evidence by the relevant deadline.

Applications received after these dates will not be accepted.



You must make an application **each** academic year.



## Timescales for assessment and payment

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### Bursary applications

We aim to assess your bursary application within 20 working days of receiving your application.

### Childcare Allowance

We will assess these applications at the same time as your bursary application. If you apply for the Childcare Allowance separately at a later date, we aim to assess your application within 20 working days.

### Further information

If we request further information or evidence from you, we will process the information you send to us within 20 working days of receiving it.

### Change in circumstances

You must notify us immediately of any change to your circumstances. If the change results in a reassessment that affects your bursary entitlement, any overpayments that have been made to you must be repaid.

We aim to process these within 20 working days providing we have all the relevant information we need from you and/or your university.

### DSAs

We aim to process applications within 20 working days of receiving them.



## How often will I receive my bursary?

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Bursaries are paid in three termly instalments each academic year once we have received confirmation from your university that you are attending your course and you have been allocated a capped place. You should log on to your MyFunding account for details of any bursary payments that are scheduled to be made to you.

If you are entitled to the PTA only, we will make a single payment of this once we have received confirmation that you are attending your course.

If you are a **postgraduate student** and you have applied for and been awarded a Childcare Allowance, the first instalment will be paid to you at the same time as your first terms bursary. However, further instalments will only be made once we have reconciled your previous terms childcare receipts.

## Reapplying for your bursary next year

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- All students must reapply for their bursary each academic year.
- It is your responsibility to ensure you submit an application for each year of your course, within the published timescales.
- If you do not reapply for your bursary each academic year, your bursary payments will not continue into the next one.

## Additional help and guidance

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Visit our website for further information:

[www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/social-work-students](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/social-work-students)

From here you can also access our online knowledge base 'Ask Us' which provides answers to general questions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



# Changes you must tell us about

It is important that you let us know straight away if your personal circumstances change. This will help us reassess your bursary, if applicable. We will then let you know if this results in any change to your entitlement.

If an overpayment occurs we will inform you how this can be repaid. If you are due additional funds as a result of your changing circumstances, these will be added to your next bursary payment.

## How do I notify you?

You can tell us about any changes via your MyFunding account. Depending on the nature of the change, you may need to complete a separate form.

## Change of address or other contact details

You can amend your personal details yourself at any time by logging in to your MyFunding account.

## A change of bank account

You can update your bank account details in your MyFunding account. It is important we have the most up to date details as this is where we will pay your bursary.

## Change of living arrangements (postgraduate students)

If you marry, divorce, separate or move in with a partner, you will need to inform us as your bursary may be made up of elements that are income assessed.

You may need to make a new application if the change affects your bursary entitlement. If you aren't sure, please [contact us](#).

## A change to your, or your family's income (postgraduate students only)

If this has reduced by 15% or more you may be entitled to more help. You can apply for this by selecting the Current Income Assessment form from your MyFunding account.

## A change to your residency status

If your residency or immigration status changes during an academic year, this may affect your social work bursary entitlement. Please [contact us](#) so we can advise you whether you need to take any further action.

## Additional dependants (postgraduate students only)

You may need to complete another application form, depending on the level of SWB you are currently receiving. Please [contact us](#) for advice first.

## Changes to your childcare arrangements (postgraduate students only)

If you have changed your childcare provider, or have started using an additional one, or your costs have changed, please complete a new childcare application form.

## If you stop attending your course (all students)

You must tell us as soon as possible if you are suspending training or leaving your course for any reason so we can hold any future bursary payments on your account to prevent an overpayment. You can do this directly via your MyFunding account.

If you have been allocated a capped place and you leave your course this will not automatically be reallocated to you if you return to training in a new academic year.



## Repeat Funding

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### Undergraduate students

Repeat funding is not available under any circumstances for undergraduate students. This is because the undergraduate bursary is paid as a one-off incentive to train and the students have recourse to other forms of income, such as a student loan.

### Postgraduate students

Repeat funding is only available in exceptional circumstances if you are required to repeat part of your course.

You must demonstrate that you failed to pass a required module or academic year due to compelling personal reasons. For example, if you had a serious illness or injury which required time away from your course, or you experienced bereavement due to the death of a close family member.

If we are satisfied you are repeating due to one of these reasons, you may be eligible for continued funding for the required period. Academic failure on its own where there were no serious mitigating circumstances won't be considered as a reason for repeat funding.

If you are only eligible to receive the Placement Travel Allowance (PTA), repeat funding is not available regardless of your circumstances.

To be considered as eligible for repeat funding, you must also satisfy all of the following:

- you are required by your university or college to repeat all or part of an academic year
- you have been in receipt of a postgraduate bursary (not just the PTA) in the academic year prior to the year in which you're repeating
- you are attending an approved postgraduate social work course.

Please note, repeat funding won't be available if you are only required to resubmit course work or resit exams without attending classes.

## Fraud

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We are serious about tackling fraud and employ Fraud Specialists to reduce the risk of fraudulent activity and to investigate any potentially fraudulent claims.

Fraud can come to light before, during and after completion of training and may result in a person being unable to register or having their registration removed. All reported allegations of fraud are investigated fully with a range of sanctions available (criminal, civil and disciplinary).

The NHSBSA is responsible for protecting the public funds it administers. To do this, we may share the information we hold about you with other bodies that inspect and manage public funds. The NHSBSA participates in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) which is an exercise that matches electronic data within and between public and private sector bodies to prevent and detect fraud. This includes police authorities, local probation boards, fire and rescue authorities as well as local councils and a number of private sector bodies.

# Contacting us

If you have general questions about the SWB, click on the  logo on our website at [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/social-work-students](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/social-work-students)

'Ask Us' enables you to get answers to your queries 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you need specific information about your application, our contact details are:



[swbteam@nhsbsa.nhs.uk](mailto:swbteam@nhsbsa.nhs.uk)



[www.facebook.com/socialworkbursaries](https://www.facebook.com/socialworkbursaries)



[www.x.com/SWB\\_NHSBSA](https://www.x.com/SWB_NHSBSA)



**Text relay service: 0800 7311 888**



**0300 330 1342**

Our call centre opening hours are: **8am - 6pm** Monday to Friday. **9am - 3pm** Saturday. **Closed** on Sunday.

## Useful contacts

### Department of Health and Social Care

Social work bursary information packs are published by the Department of Health and Social Care and can be viewed at:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/reforming-social-work-bursary-information-packs](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reforming-social-work-bursary-information-packs)

### Student Loans Company

[www.slco.uk](http://www.slco.uk)

### Student Finance England

[www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

### National Union of Students

[www.nus.org.uk](http://www.nus.org.uk)

### NASMA

(National Association of Student Money Advisors)

[www.nasma.org.uk](http://www.nasma.org.uk)

### Social Work England

[www.socialworkengland.org.uk](http://www.socialworkengland.org.uk)

### Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)

[www.sssc.uk.com](http://www.sssc.uk.com)

### Social Care Wales

[socialcare.wales/careers/student-funding](http://socialcare.wales/careers/student-funding)

### Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC)

[www.niscc.info](http://www.niscc.info)

### NHS Help with Health Costs

[www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-help-health-costs](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-help-health-costs)



[www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/student-services](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/student-services)



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We have taken great care to ensure that the information in this booklet is correct at the time of publication. However, it is subject to change in accordance with Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) policy. The guide is not intended to override or replace any of the social work bursary arrangements as set out by DHSC. You can read the information

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/reforming-social-work-bursary-information-packs](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reforming-social-work-bursary-information-packs)