

General Osteopathic Council Response to the Consultation on considering future options for the NHS Wales Bursary Scheme

Section One: about you

1. Are you responding as an individual, or on behalf of one or more organisations or professional bodies?

Student not at university	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student at university	<input type="checkbox"/>
As an individual	<input type="checkbox"/>
On behalf of one or more organisations or professional bodies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation or professional Body, please complete the information below and then move to **Question 7c**

Your name: Fiona Browne

Organisation (if applicable): General Osteopathic Council

Email address: fbrowne@osteopathy.org.uk

If you are responding on an individual basis, then please complete Section Two below.

Section Two: about you, if you are responding on an individual basis
Questions 2 to 5 are optional, but your answers will help us to understand experiences across different demographic groups.

2) What is your age? (optional)

24 or under	<input type="checkbox"/>
25 to 34	<input type="checkbox"/>
35 to 44	<input type="checkbox"/>
45 to 54	<input type="checkbox"/>
55 to 65	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over 65	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

3) Which gender description most closely matches how you identify? (optional)

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-binary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer to self-describe (please utilise space below)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please utilise space below)	<input type="checkbox"/>

4) Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth? (optional)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

5) What is your ethnic group? (optional)

White - includes British, Northern Irish, Irish, Gypsy, Irish Traveller, Roma or any other white background	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - includes white and black Caribbean, white and black African, white and Asian or any other mixed or multiple background	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asian or British Asian - includes Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese or any other Asian background	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black, black British, Caribbean, African or any other black background	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other - includes Arabic or any other ethnic group	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

6) In what capacity are you responding to this survey?

Note: A Welsh-domiciled student is someone who ordinarily lives in Wales and meets certain conditions that make them eligible for student finance and “home fee” status in Wales.

An NHS healthcare student is someone studying to become a healthcare professional within the NHS. This includes a wide range of roles like Nurses, Midwives, Physiotherapists, Radiographers, Paramedics and others. A full list of NHS Wales courses eligible for NHS Bursary funding can be found at Annexe 1.

6a) Are you currently a student studying at university? If no, please move to question 6e

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	X

If yes, please respond to the following questions (6b; 6c; and 6d).

6b) Are you Welsh-domiciled as defined above (i.e. ordinarily resident in Wales)? Please tick one box below

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

6c) Are you studying in Wales? Please tick one box below

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

6d) What are you studying? Please tick one box below

Medicine	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dentistry	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional Healthcare Course	<input type="checkbox"/>
If studying a Professional Healthcare Course, what are you studying:	

Current university students should now move to Section Three.

6e) If you aren't currently a student studying in university, please tick one of the boxes below that best describes your interest in the consultation.

An individual sharing my personal views such as a patient, carer or member of the public [Move to Section Three]	<input type="checkbox"/>
On behalf another individual [Move to 7a]	<input type="checkbox"/>
A healthcare/medical/dental professional who has graduated within the last five years [Move to 7b]	<input type="checkbox"/>
A healthcare/medical/dental professional who has graduated more than five years ago [Move to 7b]	<input type="checkbox"/>

7a) If you answered 'on behalf of another individual' in Question 6e, please write in below on whose behalf you are responding.

For example, on behalf of your child studying A 'levels.

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Move to Section Three

7b) If you answered 'a healthcare/medical/dental profession' in Question 6e, what is your profession?

Medical Professional	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dental Professional	<input type="checkbox"/>
Healthcare Professional (please provide details below)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please write in below)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Move to Section Three

7c) If you answered 'on behalf of an organisation' in Section One, on whose behalf are you answering the survey?

Professional Body or Regulator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Trade Union	<input type="checkbox"/>
NHS Health Board or Trust	<input type="checkbox"/>
Higher Education Institution	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Care	<input type="checkbox"/>
School or Further Education College	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please write in below)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Move to Section Three

Section Three: your views

Question 8

Healthcare professional students who receive the NHS Wales Bursary are currently asked to work in Wales for up to two years after they graduate.

This helps ensure we have enough healthcare professionals in Wales. If they don't stay, they may need to repay some or all the bursary.

Do you agree with this requirement to work in Wales after graduation?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't Know/ Not Applicable

Please explain why you chose this answer [500-words maximum]:

As a statutory regulator, the General Osteopathic Council like other statutory regulators, has a duty of: protection of the public. This includes:

- (a) to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of the public;
- (b) to promote and maintain public confidence in the profession of osteopathy; and
- (c) to promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for members of that profession. (Source [Section 1A Osteopaths Act 1993](#))

We are not permitted to lobby for funding for the osteopathic profession and this is why we have stated neither agree nor disagree.

However, in our response to this question to assist the Welsh Government, we have set out factual information about osteopathic education and the osteopathic profession in Wales which may assist the Welsh Government to consider how osteopaths may contribute to the health workforce more effectively.

The General Osteopathic Council set standards and quality assure undergraduate education, set standards for practice, holds a register of practising osteopaths (including being able to be searched for those who speak Welsh), requires continuing professional development including peer review and has a fitness to practise process which enables us to restrict or remove the registration of osteopaths where this is necessary in the public interest. (Source: [Osteopaths Act](#))

1993). Like all other statutory regulators, including the Health and Care Professions Council and the General Medical Council, we are overseen by the Professional Standards Authority. We are the only regulator which has met all the PSA standards every year for the last 15 years. (Source: Professional Standards Authority - <https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/organisations-we-oversee/regulators/general-osteopathic-council-gosc>)

It is illegal to practise as an osteopath unless registered with the General Osteopathic Council.

Our website and services are accessible in Welsh. Our register can be used to search for Welsh speaking osteopaths. Under the Welsh Language Standards (No.8) Regulations 2022, the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) is required to publish an annual report to the Welsh Language Commissioner on the ways in which it has complied with the Welsh Language Standards. This can be accessed on our website (Source: [GOsC Welsh Language Report 2025, GOsC website](#))

There is a well established osteopathy course in Swansea University which produces an average of c22 osteopaths per year. There are 169 osteopaths currently working in Wales with around 50 practices spread across south Wales and northern Wales with a few in mid Wales. Our register can be searched for those osteopaths who can speak Welsh. Currently our records record 2 Welsh speaking osteopathic practices. ([Source: GOsC Register](#))

We note that although osteopaths are regulated health professionals as set out in the Osteopaths Act 1993 and the Health Act 1999, they are not currently able to access the NHS Wales bursary.

Osteopaths are allied health professionals in England but not in Wales. See <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ahp/role/>

We note from our registration data that between 2021 and 2025 the number of osteopaths practising in Wales increased from approximately 150 to 164, while 122 osteopaths graduated from Swansea University over a similar period. Whilst there are limitations to the data, the data suggest that not all those training in Wales remain in Wales to treat Welsh patients and therefore this suggests a retention issue in Wales. ([Source GOsC Annual Reports, April 2021 to April 2025](#))

Question 9

Medical and dental students who receive the NHS Wales Bursary don't currently have to commit to working in Wales after they graduate.

This is partly due to the additional Foundation Training required by UK regulators. While implementing this would be complex and falls outside the scope of this question, we're still keen to hear your views.

Do you agree or disagree medical and dental students should continue to be exempt from this work-in-Wales requirement?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't Know / Not Applicable

Please explain why you chose this answer [500-words maximum]:

Question 10

In Wales, healthcare courses are planned and funded through a national commissioning process. This process is further explained in Annexe 2.

As the education commissioner for the NHS Wales non-medical workforce, Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) advises the Welsh Government each year of the number of healthcare training places required to meet current and future NHS Wales workforce need through the submission of the Training and Education Commissioning Plan. This includes both undergraduate and post graduate

professional education. Health Boards and Trusts share their future staffing and training needs with HEIW. This helps HEIW plan and provide the right education and training to support NHS services in Wales. Once the Education and Training Commissioning Plan has been reviewed, agreed and has Ministerial approval, HEIW contracts with the education sector to deliver the training based on the numbers and budget agreed.

Some healthcare courses, and those not related to healthcare, are supported differently and may not receive the same level of funding. Instead, universities offer these courses directly through the open market, based on demand and availability.

Do you agree or disagree the current commissioning process is an effective way to plan and fund healthcare training in Wales?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't Know/ Not Applicable

Please explain why you chose this answer [500-words maximum]:

As a statutory regulator, we are unable to comment on the commissioning processes to plan and fund healthcare training in Wales.

However, our data shows that there are 169 osteopaths currently working in Wales with around 50 practices spread across south Wales and northern Wales with a few in mid Wales. (Source: GOsC Register as at 21 January 2026). These osteopaths are open to provide care to Welsh patients. Our data shows 2 Welsh speaking osteopathic practices in Wales. This healthcare provision is not accounted for within current workforce planning arrangements.

We note that although osteopaths are regulated health professionals as set out in the Osteopaths Act 1993 and the Health Act 1999, they are not currently able to access the NHS Wales bursary.

Osteopaths are allied health professionals in England but not in Wales. See <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ahp/role/>

We note from our registration data that between 2021 and 2025 the number of osteopaths practising in Wales increased from approximately 150 to 164, while 122 osteopaths graduated from Swansea University over a similar period. Whilst there are limitations to the data, the data suggest that not all those training in Wales remain in Wales to treat Welsh patients and therefore this suggests a

retention issue in Wales for osteopaths. ([Source GOsC Annual Reports, April 2021 to April 2025](#))

Question 11

Students on most healthcare courses in Wales can currently access the NHS Wales Bursary (see Annexe 1 for eligible courses). We want Wales to be the destination of choice for our professional healthcare students along with those studying Medicine and Dentistry. The NHS Wales bursary provides financial support with tuition fees and living costs during training.

Do you agree or disagree that offering something instead of the NHS Wales Bursary could be a better option for attracting and retaining healthcare professional students to Wales?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't Know / Not Applicable

Please explain why you chose this answer [500-words maximum]:

As a statutory regulator, we are unable to comment on the policy options to attract and retain health care students in Wales.

However, our data shows that there are 169 osteopaths currently working in Wales with around 50 practices spread across south Wales and northern Wales with a few in mid Wales. (Source: [GOsC Register as at 21 January 2026](#)). Our data shows 2 welsh speaking practices in Wales. These osteopaths are open to provide care to Welsh patients. This healthcare provision is not accounted for within current workforce planning arrangements.

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Question 12

Most healthcare courses in Wales currently offer access to the NHS Wales Bursary (see Annex 1 for the full list). This bursary helps students with tuition fees and living costs while they train.

Do you agree or disagree that all the healthcare courses listed in Annexe 1 should continue to offer the NHS Wales Bursary?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't Know / Not Applicable

Please explain why you chose this answer [500-words maximum]:

As a statutory regulator, we are unable to comment on the funding arrangements for health professionals in Wales.

However, we note that there is a mixture of health professions funded, including those who are not regulated.

As a statutory regulator, like other statutory regulators, we have a duty of: protection of the public. This includes:

- (a) to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of the public;
- (b) to promote and maintain public confidence in the profession of osteopathy; and

(c) to promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for members of that profession. (Source [Section 1A Osteopaths Act 1993](#))

We are not permitted to lobby for funding for the osteopathic profession and this is why we have stated neither agree nor disagree.

However, in our response to this question to assist the Welsh Government, we have set out factual information about osteopathic education and the osteopathic profession in Wales which may assist the Welsh Government to consider how osteopaths may contribute to the health workforce more effectively.

The General Osteopathic Council set standards and quality assure undergraduate education, set standards for practice, requires continuing professional development including peer review and have a fitness to practise process which enables us to restrict or remove the registration of osteopaths where this is necessary in the public interest. (Source: Osteopaths Act 1993). Like all other statutory regulators, including the Health and Care Professions Council and the General Medical Council, we are overseen by the Professional Standards Authority. We are the only regulator which has met all the PSA standards every year for the last 15 years. (Source: Professional Standards Authority - <https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/organisations-we-oversee/regulators/general-osteopathic-council-gosc>)

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Question 13

Students have different needs — depending on whether they are school leavers, career changers, or training for different NHS professions. We want to explore whether the bursary could offer more flexible options to suit different situations.

Do you agree or disagree that the NHS Wales Bursary should offer more flexible financial support for students to reflect these different circumstances? For example, giving students a choice between non-repayable funding while they study, or a one-off payment (like a starting-your-career incentive payment) if they commit to working in NHS Wales after graduating?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Don't Know / Not Applicable

Please explain why you chose this answer [500-words maximum]:

Inclusive health education is important and in line with our own [strategy](#). Flexibility can support greater inclusion.

Question 14

We want to make sure students can easily find the information they need about the NHS Wales Bursary.

Do you agree or disagree it's easy to access information and advice about the bursary right now?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't Know / Not Applicable

Please explain why you chose this answer [500-words maximum]:

A list of useful links can be found in Annexe 3.

Question 15

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about the NHS Wales Bursary, including your experiences where appropriate?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please tell us more, [2500 words maximum]:

Further information about osteopathy and the General Osteopathic Council as a regulator can be found here - <https://www.osteopathy.org.uk/news-and-resources/document-library/about-the-gosc/briefing-about-gosc-for-devolved-administrations/>

Osteopathic education involves four years normally at master's degree level and involves 1000 hours of clinical training in patient clinics and a variety of case presentations.

Our [Graduate Outcomes and Standards for Education and Training \(2022\)](#) and [Osteopathic Practice Standards \(2019\)](#) map to those expected of other allied health professions, for example, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) Standards of Proficiency for physiotherapists.

Like other regulated health professionals, osteopaths work within an ethical framework including working within the limits of their competence, confidentiality, ethics, professionalism and a competence framework, including keeping knowledge and skills up to date.

Osteopaths are trained to take a history, perform an examination, make a working diagnosis, discuss treatment options and prognosis, and formulate a treatment or management plan in partnership with the patient including treatment or referral as necessary and appropriate. Further information about osteopathy can be obtained from the professional body, the Institute of Osteopathy.

A statutory quality assurance framework is in place involving independent inspection, annual reports supplemented with external data and information, sharing of good practice and ongoing dialogue to ensure standards and patient safety.

Qualifications are recognised by the General Osteopathic Council and approved by the Privy Council in accordance with the Osteopaths Act 1993.

The General Osteopathic Council have recently been partnering with the Health and Care Professions Council to explain how our regulatory standards apply to advanced levels of practice. You can find more information about these here: <https://advanced-practice.hee.nhs.uk/hcpc-webinars/>. Further project work is being undertaken on joint HCPC / GOsC resources to support GOsC and HCPC registrants in this area.

We would be pleased to meet with the Welsh Government to explore how our data and how our regulatory work can better support the Welsh Government to meet the needs of Welsh patients.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. All responses will be anonymised.