

Boost for thousands of aspiring health professionals from deprived areas

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New measures to tackle inequality of opportunity and breakdown barriers to healthcare careers.

- 2,000 new nursing created apprenticeships concentrated in areas that need it most
- A further 2,000 young people from deprived areas to be supported when applying to medical courses backed by £2.3 million
- Pledge to increase the number of students receiving free school meals into medical school by 50% in the next decade.

Thousands of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds will benefit from a comprehensive package to break down long-standing barriers into healthcare careers, as part of the government's 10 Year Health Plan.

Careers in the medical profession, particularly doctors and health care specialists are often out of reach for many because schools and families – particularly in disadvantaged communities – often lack the knowledge needed to guide students towards medicine, or to encourage biology, chemistry, physics early enough, which are essential stepping stones into medicine.

Data shows that one third of schools have never had a pupil apply to medical schools, and around half have never had a student accepted.

That is why the government is introducing a series of measure to help people from the poorest areas of the country start a career that could see them become a top surgeon or nurse.

To tackle break down barriers into medicine, 2,000 young people from England's most deprived areas will be supported to apply to university through government-funded medicine access courses over the next three years. Support includes giving young people access to summer schools or placements within the NHS, where they can increase their knowledge and skills, boosting their university applications.

Backed by a £65.4 million, the government has unlocked 2,000 additional nursing apprenticeships, concentrated in areas facing the greatest training shortages and highest levels of deprivation. These earn-while-you-learn opportunities will help people build skilled, well-paid careers without needing to leave their communities or take on upfront costs.

Opportunities will be targeted to areas where nursing shortages have the biggest impact on local healthcare services.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Wes Streeting, said:

Talent is everywhere in our country, but opportunity isn't. I don't want the NHS denied the talents and potential of the doctors, nurses and staff of the future, simply because they are never given a chance.

Having grown up in poverty on a council estate, getting into Cambridge University

changed my life. With the most working class cabinet in history, this government is determined to change the odds for young people today.

We're determined to break the class ceiling in the NHS so that our professions are elite, not elitist. My message to the best and brightest young kids who want to a future caring for their country in the National Health Service is – go for it.

By backing people from every background to train and work in the NHS, this will benefit patients, the NHS, and students.

Talented students from under-represented backgrounds will be able to apply to courses from spring next year, working with NHS England and partners like the Sutton Trust, Social Mobility Foundation and Medical Schools Council.

It will expand on the success of existing partnerships funded by NHS England that have resulted in around 75% of students applying going on to study medicine or related degrees

The government will also expand or reallocate medical school places so that areas with poorer health outcomes or ageing populations train more doctors locally, alongside a pledge to increase by 50% the proportion of students who received free school meals being accepted into medical school in England by 2035.

To support doctors from disadvantaged backgrounds who face higher relocation costs, we will also trial a three-year pilot programme that will see Resident Doctors stay in one place for longer, easing the financial burden and disruption to family life.

Duncan Burton, Chief Nursing Officer for England, said:

Apprenticeships open up nursing careers to people with the skills, commitment, and compassion to care for patients, who may not have otherwise come forward for a career in the NHS.

Investing in apprenticeships in this way will help us build the skilled nursing workforce the NHS needs, while supporting social mobility.

Minister for Skills Jacqui Smith said:

There are still too many talented young people who don't pursue careers in healthcare because they feel those paths aren't open to them.

Aspiration and hard work should decide a young person's future, and access to training for careers in medicine cannot remain just for the privileged few.

We are reintroducing maintenance grants to support those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and to build towards our ambition for two-thirds of young people to be on a gold-standard apprenticeship or at university by age 25.

The nursing apprenticeships will be delivered through partnerships between NHS trusts, higher education institutions and local training providers with deprived communities prioritised..

Alongside these measures, £15 million in government funding will expand a programme to support around 3,000 young people from deprived communities into NHS entry-level roles or training, for vital back office roles.

In the first year of the programme nearly 3,500 people were offered care paths into the health service.

These measures will deliver more opportunities for thousands of aspiring health professionals across the country, break down barriers and tackle inequalities. As part of its 10 Year Health Plan, the government is ensuring the health service has a strong, diverse workforce that is critical to building an NHS fit for the future.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/boost-for-thousands-of-aspiring-health-professionals-from-deprived-areas>