



Royal College
of Nursing
Students

Fund Our Future



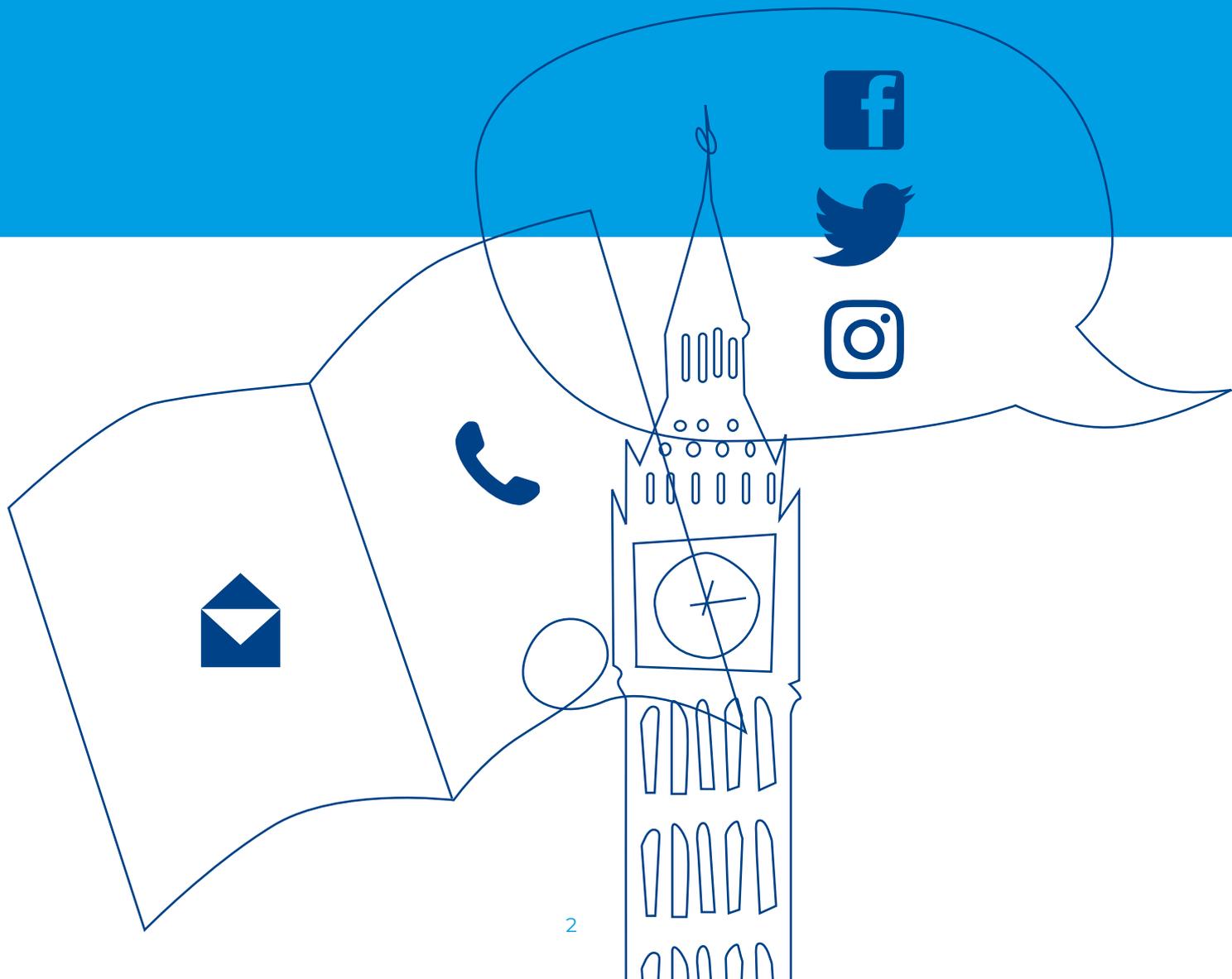
**Briefing Pack for
'Spotlight on Nursing
Students' week**



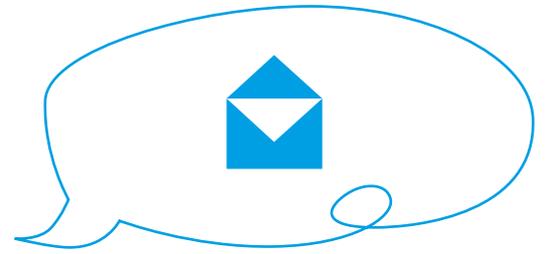
This is all the information you'll need to take part in our 'Spotlight on Nursing Students' virtual lobby week, including:

- how to arrange and confirm a meeting with your MP
- how to respond if your MP is unsure about a meeting
- the importance of sharing on social media
- how to prepare for the meeting.

The same level of support and information will be shared with all student members who contact us about this activity.



How to secure a meeting



1. **Email your MP:** You've already emailed your MP via our platform to seek a virtual meeting. This initial email gives your MP all the information they will need to confirm that you're a constituent and to find out about the RCN's Fund Our Future 'Spotlight on Nursing Students' week. Of course, all meetings will have to take place virtually – you could use Zoom, Skype, Teams (if you have access via your university) or even over the phone.

2. **Follow up on your meeting invitation:** Email your MP and remind them that you've asked for a virtual meeting. MPs receive hundreds of emails per day and it may take a while for their office to read yours. Politely remind them by emailing to check on your request or by calling their constituency office. A copy of the email you've already sent was automatically sent to the email address you put in on the action page so you can re-send the invitation if the MP asks to see it.

3. **Confirm a date and time during 'Spotlight on Nursing Students' week:** Many MPs will be involved in debates and committees during 7-11 December as Parliament doesn't break up for Christmas recess until later in the month. They often reserve Fridays for their constituency meetings so please try to be as flexible as you can in fitting your meetings into your studying schedule. A 30-minute meeting is the standard time and this is usually long enough for a good discussion.

4. **Join up with other students:** Share your involvement in our 'Spotlight on Nursing Students' week by joining the conversation on Twitter and including @RCNStudents and #FundOurFuture in your tweets.

5. **Seek support from the RCN Campaigns team:** Email campaigns@rcn.org.uk from the RCN campaigns and influencing teams if you're successful in securing a meeting. They are here to help make sure you have everything you need to meet your MP and to help you get ready to persuade them to support the Fund Our Future campaign. Contact the team on campaigns@rcn.org.uk.

6. **Prepare for your meeting:** You can wear your uniform for your meeting if you would like to. If your virtual meeting is happening while you're on placement, please check with your supervisor that you're able to take the time out to do this activity and ensure you have a quiet space with good internet connection to conduct your meeting. Included in this pack are the key messages for the Fund Our Future campaign and a template agenda and talking points to help you prepare for your meeting.

7. **Promote your meeting:** Ask your MP if you're able to take a screenshot of your meeting to share on social media. You can then share this on Twitter and tag @RCNStudents. We will showcase some of the virtual meetings you've held with your MPs during the week to celebrate everyone's lobbying efforts.



Our handles are: @theRCN @RCNStudents



Your meeting is confirmed!

This is great. Make sure you reply to their email and find a time to meet during our 'Spotlight on Nursing Students' week 7-11 December. It is helpful to know that your MP is initially supportive. Go ahead and get your virtual meeting booked in! Share your success with other students and start preparing for the meeting itself.

As other students in your constituency will also be emailing their MP, the MPs office may ask to meet with you all as a group. This is an excellent way to help your MP understand the unique experiences of you all as students and will make the meeting more impactful. Try to be as flexible as possible so that others can participate.

Please do not worry if your schedule doesn't allow you to have a meeting with your MP during our exact dates of 7-11 December. You should still meet with your MP to discuss your experiences as a nursing student and the Fund Our Future campaign as it is really important that as many MPs as possible are informed about student funding. This means that MPs from all parties will be able to speak out on nursing student issues and raise our campaign in Parliament and with the government.



Suggested text: Thank you *[add name of your MP]* for responding to my email – I am very pleased that you have agreed to meet with me. *[Add content here about your availability or whether you can accept the time they've offered you]*. I look forward to meeting with you. Best wishes *[add your name]*

What if your MP doesn't reply?

MPs receive lots of emails each day and their staff will be managing their diaries to make sure that your MP is spending equal amounts of time in Parliament and on constituency case work.

As their schedules are so busy, your MP may reply to say that they don't have time for a meeting. You can help by being as flexible as possible and offering to meet at an alternative time outside of the virtual lobby week, if you would like to. Your meeting will still be meaningful and it is still beneficial to engage with your MP despite it being outside of this specific week of activity.

You could send a message like this back to your MP if they say they're too busy: Thank you [name of your MP] for responding to my email. I am disappointed that you are unable to meet with me due to competing priorities. Are there any alternative dates and times – outside of our specific week of action from 7-11 December 2020 – that you might be available for a meeting instead? I would really like your help and support to raise the importance of student issues, including funding the education of nursing students, adequately. As your constituent, I hope that you will reconsider my request. Please do share your availability with me as I can try to be flexible with my studying commitments. Best wishes [Add your name].

If your MP declines your meeting, try politely tweeting their office to ask about setting up a time to meet again. You could send a tweet like this: *'I'd like to meet @[your MP's handle] to discuss our student nurses campaign #FundOurFuture. I hope that you can meet me to hear my story about being a student nurse throughout #COVID-19'.*

Key messages to tell your MP

Here are some rebuttals if your MP says that they don't agree that nursing students need adequate financial support. It is important we present our evidence and give MPs the opportunity to change their mind:

- There continues to be a severe shortage of nursing staff across the UK. We need to attract more people to study nursing as this is the only effective way to tackle the shortage sustainably, at the pace and scale required.
- Full financial support – via the bursary and no tuition fees – was removed in 2016 for health care students in England. The numbers of new people choosing to become a nurse has not increased as the government planned by making this change. Nursing student numbers declined, and substantially so. The numbers of new recruits studying nursing now are only just coming back to 2016 levels. We have lost four years of being able to increase the nursing workforce.
- The government now has less than one year left to increase the numbers of student nurses joining courses in September 2021 in order to meet their 50,000 more nurses target by the end of this Parliament. This is because it takes three years to graduate as a registered nurse.

- In September 2020, an additional 4,000 nursing students started their nursing course at university based on the number of nursing students who started their studies in 2019. This highlights the positive impact of recognising health care professionals as key workers and further proves that the reintroduction of the £5,000 training grant (or up to £8,000 in limited circumstances) – is necessary and effective in increasing new recruits.
- Imagine the difference that more support could make to ambitious people wanting to join health care but who face the barrier of debt.
- The impact of COVID-19 on nursing education – particularly on clinical placements – is also a risk. If the government don't act to protect our education, then there may be even fewer graduates in three years, further pushing the workforce into crisis.
- We need the government to fund our future nurses so that we have the staff we need to provide safe and effective care for everyone who needs it.

Make a noise on social media

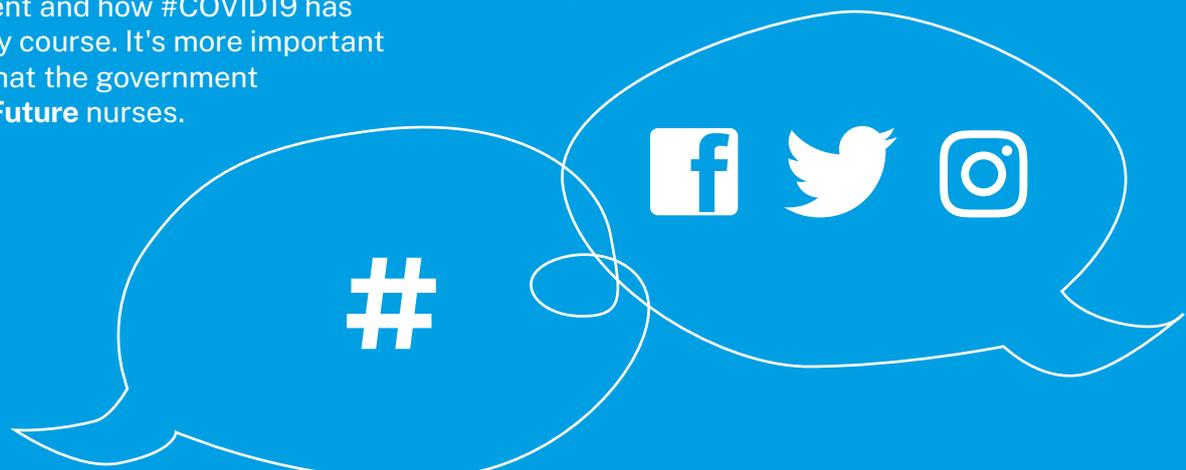
Before your meeting:

- Pleased that @[add MP's handle] is meeting me during @RCNStudents Spotlight on Nursing Students week to hear about life as a student nurse, and the importance of funding for nurse education #FundOurFuture

After your meeting:

- I've just met with @[add MP's handle]. We discussed my role providing care on placement and how #COVID19 has changed my course. It's more important than ever that the government #FundOurFuture nurses.

- Had a great meeting with @[add MP's handle], who wanted to hear about my life as a student nurse during the pandemic and how the lack of financial support has affected me. #FundOurFuture
- Share your experience on Facebook to tell your friends and colleagues how the meeting with your MP went.
- Create an Instagram story about your meeting.



How to prepare for your meeting

What to talk about with your MP

Describe what it is like being a nursing student – at university and on placements.

Think about:

- How much time do you spend in lectures compared to time spent on placements?
- How do you care for patients on placement?
- How do you learn while on placement?
- What do the pressures of the course mean to you?
- How did/does COVID-19 impact your experience?

Persuade them that nursing students need more financial help and tell them about our campaigning asks.

Think about:

- Are you worried about student debt?
- Do you receive the training grants? How has this small amount of money helped you?
- If the government abolished tuition fees, do you think this would encourage more people to become a nurse?
- What would the removal of tuition fees mean for you?
- Do you have to work to supplement your income? If yes, does this impact on your studies?

Tell your MP that you expect the government to help nursing students by:

- Reimbursing tuition fees or forgiving current debt for all current nursing, midwifery, and allied health care students.
- Abolishing student-funded tuition fees for all nursing, midwifery, and allied health care students starting in 2020/21 and beyond.
- Introducing universal, living maintenance grants that reflect actual student need.

Researching your MP

It is important to research your MP before your meeting so that you can understand the issues that are important to them and to know if they have raised nursing issues or supported the RCN in the past.

You can find out about your MP on the Parliament website here: <https://members.parliament.uk/members/commons>

Most MPs have a Twitter account. See what your MP has been saying on social media by searching their account: www.twitter.com

You can also see how your MP has voted in health-related parliamentary business: www.theyworkforyou.com

Contact the RCN for support

Email Rachael and Vicky:
campaigns@rcn.org.uk



Fund Our Future

The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes excellence in practice and shapes health policies

RCN Direct
rcn.org.uk/get-help
0345 772 6100

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