

Ref:PHEM1220

04/12/20

To all Student Members, Branches and Officer Board

Dear Colleagues,

As you are aware the PNA have been engaging with the Department of Health with regard to Student Nurses pay and allowances. An emergency motion, as below, was passed at our Annual Delegate Conference on 26/11/20;

*"The PNA seek an urgent engagement with Department of Health regarding an upward review of allowances and assurance that no Student Nurse is disadvantaged due to COVID-19. PNA are also seeking an increased rate of pay for interns commencing January 2021 commensurate with the increased rate paid to 2020 interns"*

Since our conference we have been communicating with the Department of Health and have received correspondence from the Minister outlining the following;

*"All student nurses and midwives who can show previous income during the relevant period, and who are now not earning, will be entitled to the **Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP)** for the duration of their placements. This is a specific exemption for nurses and midwives which I have secured government approval for. There are student nurses and midwives on placement who cannot work part time as they would have previously. Student nurses might have been working at weekends in nursing homes or as agency healthcare assistants, but cannot do so now while on placement because of Covid infection prevention and control considerations. Because the jobs they were doing still exist they may not avail of PUP. They will now be able to avail of PUP, once they can show previous income for the period used to consider PUP eligibility. These payments will be backdated to the start of their placements from September 2020.*

*Healthcare care costs incurred by student nurses and midwives in relation to Covid during their placements will be covered. All student nurses / midwives on placement have occupational health and healthcare supports available to them (PPE, medical support including payment of GP costs if required for healthcare acquired COVID 19; COVID-19 testing regime, staff wellbeing supports). These are **all in addition to the normal supports** for all students on placement.*

*An initial **assessment of student placements** for student nurses and midwives has being conducted. I have now instructed that a short, time-limited examination is done, to be completed before the end of December, as follows:*

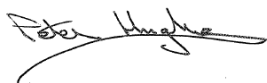
- a. A review of the **current allowances to 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students;***
- b. A review of the situation for **4<sup>th</sup> year students;***
- c. The review will be **independently verified;***
- d. The review will include **engagement with representative organisations.***

*General Secretary, Mr Peter Hughes  
Deputy General Secretary, Mr Michael Hayes*

*Issues were also raised with the Department in regard to the conditions for student nurses and midwives during their placements. This included being rostered for night shifts and to cover sick leave, when the level of required supervision may not have been available. The Chief Nurse and I have engaged closely with the HSE on these issues, and will work closely with them, and with the PNA, to address them."*

We will keep you updated in relation to developments on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Hughes', with a long, sweeping underline.

Mr Peter Hughes  
General Secretary