



# Managing costs on placement

Nursing and midwifery students have more than just living and education expenses to think about, writes Róisín O'Connell

AS WE head into December, student nurses and midwives all over the country have started clinical placements and are experiencing the highs and lows of working within the health service. Nursing and midwifery can be extremely rewarding professions but are not without challenge. I still remember my first placement like it was yesterday. I was nervous that I wouldn't know what to do and that I would struggle to keep up with my preceptor. I was inspired by the knowledge and skill of the staff who took the time to instruct me. The expertise they had, paired with the care they showed their patients, seemed to be the glue holding the whole system together.

During placement, students learn to navigate the complexities of professional relationships and structures within the health service. While learning to understand the concepts of professional accountability and responsibility, they experience a personal growth wherein their coping mechanisms are challenged in a way that other students don't face, all while developing clinical skills and a comprehensive knowledge base and dealing with the pressures of exams and assignments.

Like all students, they must also manage their living and education expenses, but there are far higher expenses involved in attending clinical placements, especially in relation to accommodation and travel.

## Allowances

Nursing and midwifery students in first to third year may claim allowances while on clinical placement. These allowances are outlined in HSE HR Circulars 09/2022 and 09/2004, which state: "The vouched accommodation allowance cap has been increased to €100 weekly and this will apply for the duration of the supernumerary placement where it is necessary for the student to obtain accommodation away from their normal place of residence, on



the basis of receipts certified by the student and the student allocation officer (SALO) in the health service". This allowance is intended as a contribution towards the cost of clinical placement and it is not intended to meet the full cost of accommodation.

## Travel

Travel costs for clinical placement may also be refunded, as outlined in HSE HR Circular 9/2004. Allowances may be claimed by students when they provide receipts to the SALO in the health service. It is important to note that the travel allowances are calculated from your college to your placement location, not from your home address.

Student nurses and midwives are in a more precarious situation than other students because they attend clinical placements, so it is necessary to provide additional financial supports. At a time when there is a recruitment and retention crisis for nurses and midwives, we need to re-examine the supports available to students to assist them on their path to registration. All eligible student nurses and midwives should avail of these allowances.

If you have any questions regarding the accommodation and travel allowances available, email [roisin.oconnell@inmo.ie](mailto:roisin.oconnell@inmo.ie)

## Send in your class photos

Many of you will be graduating from college over the coming weeks. It would be great to get a collection of the graduating or last-day photos of newly qualified nurses or midwives. If you have a few photos, please send them (at their largest size) to [roisin.oconnell@inmo.ie](mailto:roisin.oconnell@inmo.ie) – along with the location the picture was taken – for publication in *WIN*.

## Get involved

It is essential that each class has a student rep linked in with me. If your group does not have an INMO student rep, please nominate one per year, discipline and placement area if you are spread across multiple sites. INMO student reps are distinct from student union reps as the INMO is the professional body representing nurses and midwives. Being a rep does not mean taking on a body of work and solving your class's problems by yourself. A rep is someone who lets me know the collective issues of their group so that I can either address these concerns or bring them to the attention of senior management so that your voice can be represented at national negotiations.

*Róisín O'Connell is the INMO's student and new graduate officer. If you have a question for her, please email [roisin.oconnell@inmo.ie](mailto:roisin.oconnell@inmo.ie)*