Many of you will be familiar with The Queen’s Nursing Institute (QNI) and its work — funding innovative projects; developing a network of Queen’s nurses; supporting nurses who work with homeless people; influencing policy; and publishing reports.

The QNI is an organisation with a long history and our financial assistance programme dates back to the early years of the Institute when funding was allocated to provide pension support to nurses who were retiring after years of service.

Because of this historical link there may be a perception that we continue to provide financial support only to older retired nurses living in reduced circumstances, eking out a living on a small pension, and some of our clients do indeed fit this picture. However, more and more financial support is being offered to nurses across the age range, from different community specialties, in a variety of personal circumstances.

In some circumstances we are also now able to help healthcare assistants, as well as qualified nurses who have worked in the community. It only takes a relationship breakdown and severe illness can be stressful experiences — adding financial problems to the mix just compounds the situation.

As an example, I recently had to pay £330 to have my central heating boiler repaired. Fortunately, I was able to pay the bill, but for someone who just gets by on their salary month-to-month, an unexpected bill for this amount can cause real problems and can start the stressful slide into juggling money to pay off the most pressing bill. Often food and heating are where the compromise has to be made.

I’d like to share a few real-life examples to illustrate how the QNI has helped nurses recently (names and circumstances have been altered to protect clients):

- A practice nurse in the process of being made bankrupt was sent £150 of food vouchers to ensure she and her children had enough food for a good Christmas and we will continue to support her until her situation improves.
- A community nurse in full-time employment with a severely disabled daughter contacted us because her marriage was deteriorating and we were emotionally and physically exhausted trying to remain employed and care for her daughter. She desperately needed a respite break and the QNI provided a £1,000 one-off grant.
- A practice nurse with cancer who was put down to half-pay was given a one-off grant of £500 to help with her living expenses.

As you can see, the circumstances are very different. Of course, there are criteria to meet and any beneficiary does have to disclose information to the QNI about their personal finances, but this is handled in a discreet and confidential manner.

If you, or one of your colleagues, needs financial help please visit our website: [http://www.qni.org.uk/for_nurses/financial_and_personal_assistance](http://www.qni.org.uk/for_nurses/financial_and_personal_assistance)

The website lists the QNI’s eligibility criteria and explains how to apply. Or If you would like to discuss matters first, speak to Jo Moorby, Welfare and Grants Officer on 0207 549 1405, or email joanne.moorby@qni.org.uk

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The QNI — helping nurses in the real world

Did you know....

Some facts you may or may not know about the QNI:

- The QNI is a registered charity dedicated to improving the nursing care of people in their own homes.
- The organisation trained district nurses until the 1960s, in a model that was copied across the world.
- The QNI’s beneficiaries include children with physical and mental disabilities, people with long-term conditions, older people and vulnerable groups. We also provide assistance to community nurses in financial or personal difficulty.