



Working together
for safe, kind,
effective care

What our audiences feel
about us and the health
and care landscape

Working together for better care

What our audiences feel about us and the health and care landscape.

To achieve our vision of safe, effective and kind nursing and midwifery practice, improving everyone's health and wellbeing, our ambition is to **regulate** well, **support** the public, our professions and our partners and positively **influence** the context for learning and care.

Balancing these three pillars can be difficult to achieve, but is vital. Regulation is the cornerstone of what we do, but to regulate well we must support our professionals, the public and our partners. If we regulate well, and work with those we serve, we can use our regulatory insights and influence to improve the quality of care for the public.

Whether you are a member of the public, a professional on our register, an employer, a student, or one of our partner organisations, you are at the centre of everything we do. We really value your input and hearing from you will shape and improve our work. Your opinions highlight issues affecting the health and care sector and help us to support positive change.

Our key audiences

To assess whether we're striking an effective balance in our work, and to understand what people think and feel about the NMC, and wider health and care services, we sought the views of five key audience groups.

- those on our register: the **nurses, midwives** and **nursing associates** we regulate
- the **general public** who come into contact with those on our register, often at times of greatest need
- **employers**, from individual care homes through to the largest NHS organisations
- **students**, who we support while they're learning, and as the professionals of the future
- our **partners** across the health and social care sectors, with whom we collaborate on a range of topics.



Professionals



General Public



Employers



Students



Partners

An effective and independent regulator of valued professionals

We commissioned extensive research from insight specialists, BritainThinks. Over five months, they collected the detailed views of more than 6,000 people via online surveys, focus groups, and in-depth interviews with individuals from each audience. The people involved in the research were from a range of age groups, genders, ethnicities, and regional locations.





The results provide us with a better understanding of the priorities of those we work with and for, and will help us to meet their needs and expectations more effectively.

The research reiterates the need for us to continue to deliver on the priority work set out in our 2020-2025 strategy. The findings have important implications for how we carry out that work, and will impact on strategic decisions moving forward. They also raise crucial questions.

Are we effectively supporting our professionals to enable them to provide high quality care? How can we further evolve our relationship with our partners? What should we be influencing and where can that influence be most effective?

It's worth remembering the context within which this research was conducted. Over the past two years, the pandemic has brought unprecedented pressure to bear on our professionals, at times challenging their ability to maintain their own high standards, and ours. These pressures have affected practice placements and supervision for students. We also know that there are systemic health inequalities that exist between different groups of people. These wider contextual issues were echoed in the feedback we received. As their regulator we need to help our professions to help address these inequalities, and support them with the wider pressures they face.

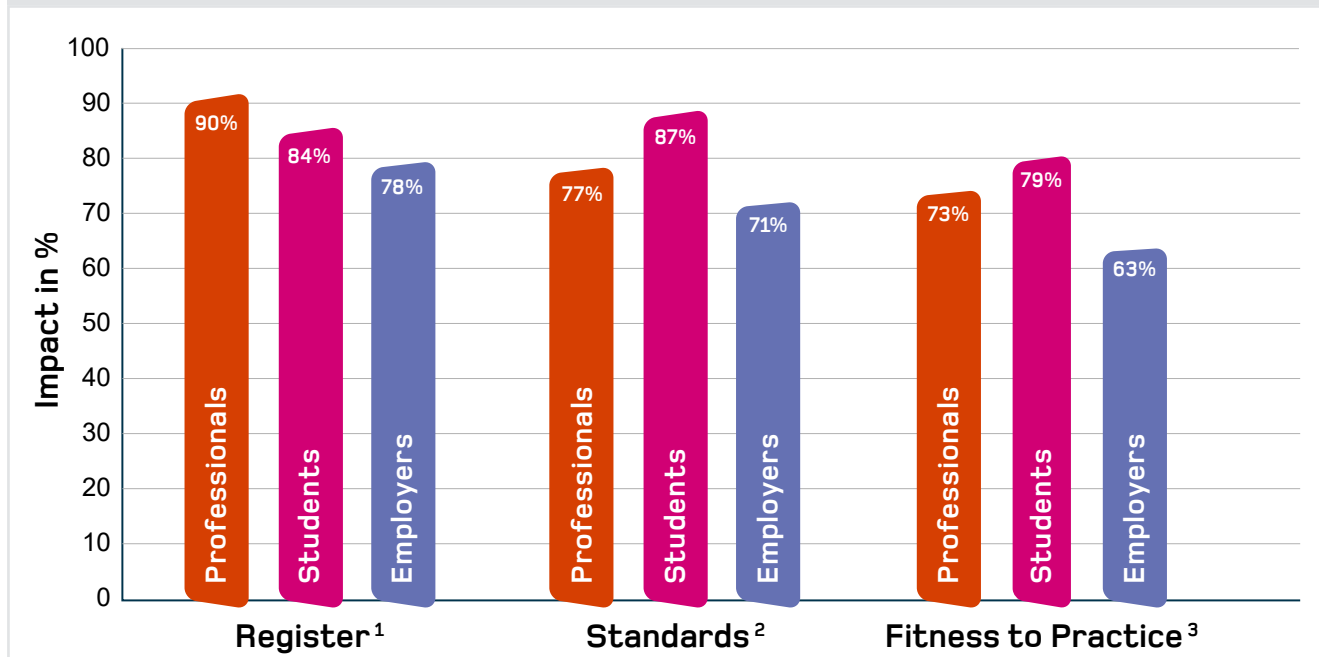
What we found

An initial and reassuring finding is that professionals, students, employers and partners show strong awareness and appreciation of our role in regulating the professions. We're broadly seen to be performing a crucial role and regulating effectively.

A closer look at respondents' attitudes towards our specific regulatory activities is also positive. People value our work in maintaining the register, revalidating professionals and setting standards. When asked about registration and revalidation, 90 percent of professionals viewed us as effective. Earning the trust of our professionals is hugely important to us.

“[The NMC is]... to keep patients safe, prioritise patients and make sure that the staff are safe to practise.”
[Nurse]

Perceived effectiveness and impact of the NMC in key areas of work



- 1 Professionals were asked about the perceived effectiveness of the NMC at maintaining and making publicly available the register which shows who can practise as a nurse or midwife in the UK, or a nursing associate in England. Students and employers were asked what they think the impact of our work is on the register.
- 2 Professionals were asked how effective the NMC is in ensuring that nurses, midwives and nursing associates are educated to a high standard and have the necessary skills and knowledge to practise. Students and employers were asked what they think the impact of the NMCs work is in setting standards.
- 3 Professionals were asked how effective the NMC is at investigating concerns about nurses, midwives and nursing associates and supporting professionals to address these concerns. Students and employers were asked what they think the impact of the NMC is in Fitness to Practise.

There are caveats however. While our audiences have a generally high opinion of our regulatory role, many highlighted our fitness to practise caseload and the slow pace of that process as a potential factor in undermining trust and confidence in our ability to ensure safe and effective care. We regulate to provide people with confidence in our professions and reducing this caseload remains our top corporate priority.

It was also encouraging to see the public's admiration and empathy towards nurses, midwives and nursing associates. A large majority (81 percent) of the public believe that the standard of care delivered by nurses is excellent or good. The people on our register, particularly nurses, are perceived to provide kind, safe and compassionate care despite a sense that they're being overworked and undervalued. The public also generally feel that where care falls below expected standards, this is as a result of a lack of funding or understaffing, rather than a lack of competence.

These findings also come with a qualification. Some public respondents feel that professionals could do more to understand their needs, listen and show compassion. It's a priority for us to see care that improves everyone's health and wellbeing and to support professionals via the implementation of our standards in this area.

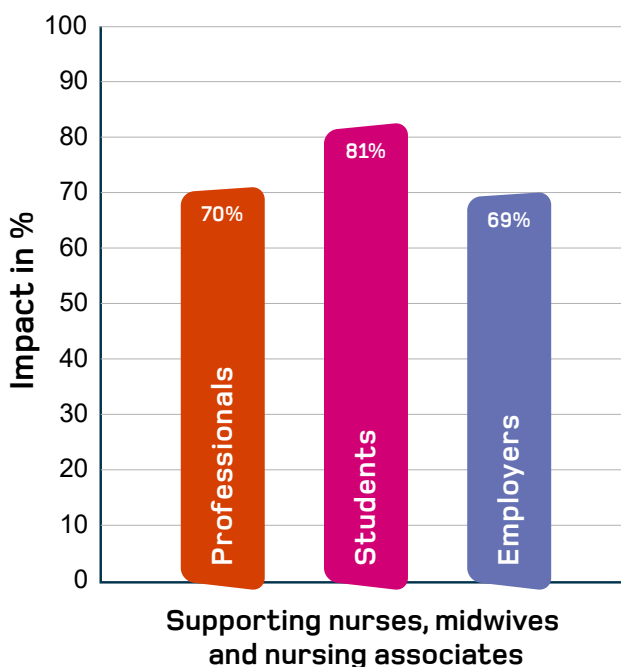


The need for greater support

While the findings outline clear understanding of our regulatory role and activities, they highlight a sense that for some of our professionals, our wider role is unclear and they don't automatically see us as supportive. When asked about the NMC's support, only 28 percent of professionals viewed us as very effective. For some of the people on our register, given the pressures they face, there is a feeling that we don't fully understand the challenges involved.

There are other similar findings of particular interest. For professionals and students, one of the key frustrations is a feeling that their relationship with the NMC is largely transactional - hearing from us mainly in relation to registration, revalidation and fees - with uncertainty about the 'added value' they receive in exchange for their fees. As one nurse commented, "with the NMC I only get stuff about revalidation and payment of registration fees, that's when they email me."

Perceived effectiveness and impact of the NMC as a supporting organisation



Professionals were asked how effective they think the NMC is in supporting nurses and midwives with effective resources and guidance to deliver high standards of care. Students and employers were asked what they think the impact is of the NMC's supporting work.

We really value the opinions of those we work with and for, and we want to empower them to shape our work. Their views will inform discussions about our actions moving forward. The pandemic and workforce pressures have impacted our professions significantly. We want to be a regulator that is approachable and supportive and our professionals need our support now more than ever.

The research identifies clear support for many of our key initiatives and approaches. Professionals, students and employers emphasised their appreciation for our standards of education and practice that provide them with clear and helpful frameworks within which to work.

Many employers, partners and professionals also praised a move away from a 'culture of blame' in our fitness to practise casework



to one of openness, as indicative of a greater understanding of the realities and pressures facing people on our register. Similarly, the findings reveal strong support for our insight programme which is largely viewed as a positive step in understanding more about the people on our register and the issues they face. Additionally, our audiences, particularly our partners, are keen to hear more about the proposed reforms to our legislation that will increase our flexibility and enable us to be a more proportionate and effective regulator.

Our regulatory role is enhanced when we support the public, our professions and our partners, and our values are intrinsic to us doing that. The findings show us to be living our values of being fair, kind, collaborative and ambitious. Among professionals, 68 percent view us as fair, 63 percent as kind, 64 percent as collaborative and 64 percent as ambitious. Employers had almost identical views. We will continue to work to ensure that our values are reflected more prominently in our actions.

“I think they’re positive things... removing that culture of blame, improving how people get registered, it’s going to make it a more positive experience and a smoother experience. And better education... is going to feed into better practice.”

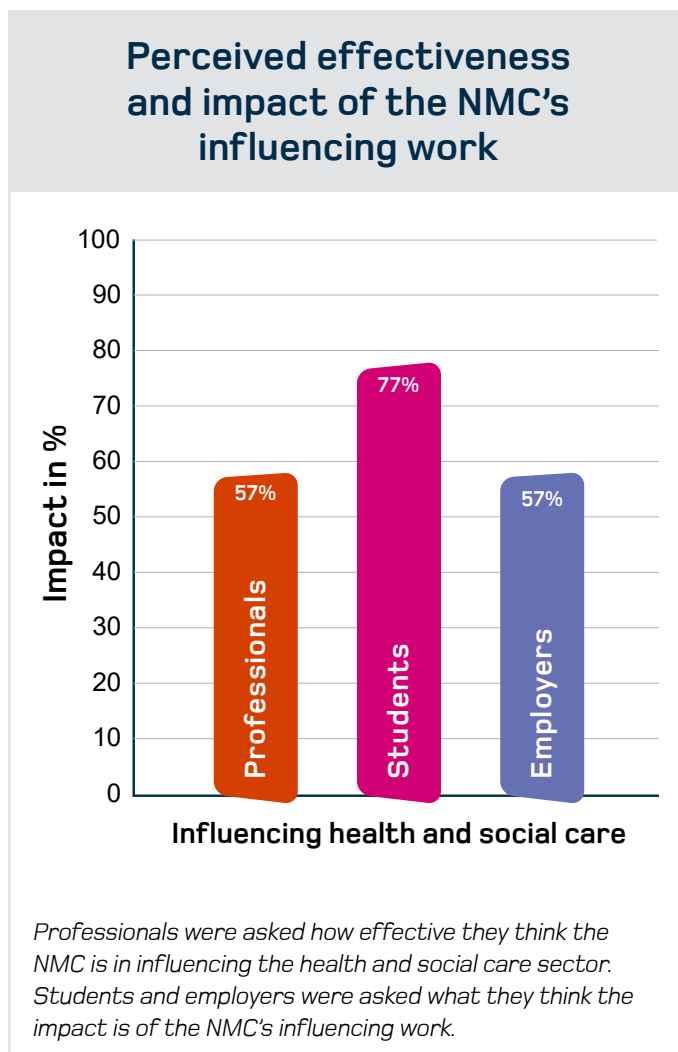
[Student]

The impact of engagement

It's important to consider these viewpoints alongside other findings from the research. Respondents commented on a feeling of increased engagement and openness from the NMC, with many professionals and employers noting an improvement in terms of us reaching out to seek views. Partners also praised us for our short-term response to the pandemic and many view our communication as increasingly open and collaborative. It's encouraging that perceptions of us have improved significantly in recent years, and we've worked hard to implement a more systematic and targeted approach to engagement across the four countries of the UK.

However, two running themes arose with regards to our engagement with partners:

- a wish to understand better how their engagement impacts our decision-making
- desire to hear more about what the NMC is doing to influence the wider sector



The ability to influence NMC decision making was cited as a key frustration. We're seen to collaborate more openly with a wider range of partners, but it's clear that we must further evolve our relationship with them by reflecting back the impact of that engagement on our work – something which we're already looking to do as part of our ambitions to embed a co-production approach across all of our work.

All of our key audiences expressed a desire for greater engagement from us, particularly demonstrating what we're doing to influence positive change in the wider health and care sector. When asked about the effectiveness and positive impact of the NMC's influencing work, 57 percent of our professionals and employers viewed us as effective.



The findings outline that our key audiences are unsure of the impact of our influencing activities and want us to be more vocal about issues facing the sector and do more to influence policy change. But in doing this we must be mindful of our role in the sector and our remit. We need to do more to be clear about where it is our role to speak up on issues and where others may be more appropriately placed.

“I would say influencing isn’t the thing that I know them for – there is room for improvement... The more they can be open to listening... and understanding our context the better.”

[Nurse]

A broader role in shaping the landscape?

We believe our role as a regulator is enhanced when we support the public, our professions and our partners and work collaboratively to highlight the challenges facing the nursing and midwifery professions. It's important that we find a balance between our regulating, supporting and influencing activities to help deliver safe, kind and effective care.

We know what an impact nurses, midwives and nursing associates make for people needing care; and hearing from all of our audiences really helps us to ensure that everyone gets the support they need.

Encouragingly, there's a symmetry between how we view our current and future role and the findings of the research, which reveal a clear desire from our key audiences for us to play a more prominent role in supporting our professionals and influencing positive change in the sector.



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