

# Our corporate plan 2024-2026

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April 2024

**nmc**  
Nursing &  
Midwifery  
Council

# Foreword



## Strategic context

The last 12 months at the NMC has been a mixed picture of important regulatory action and significant organisational challenges. We comprehensively engaged with stakeholders to explore whether to further regulate advanced practice, leading to the decision to develop approaches to additional regulation, published our updated pre-registration education programme standards and our first ever Spotlight report to share insight to help improve safety in health and social care. We also responded swiftly and robustly to concerns about fraud at a computer-based test centre; and took the unprecedented decision to withdraw approval of a midwifery training programme to keep women, babies and families safe.

We did not meet our target for improving the time it takes to manage concerns about nursing and midwifery professionals which are referred to us and go through our fitness to practise processes. This was hugely disappointing – fitness to practise is a main regulatory function for us, and we are very conscious of the impact this has for all those involved in these processes; referrers, professionals or NMC colleagues. As a result, we are making the biggest investment in a decade to improve our safe, swift handling of the referrals we receive.

Concerns have also been raised about our culture and our effectiveness as a regulator. We take these concerns very seriously and have instituted independent investigations to examine them thoroughly. We will report the findings transparently and act on the recommendations made during 2024 and beyond.

The contemporary health and social care landscape across the four UK nations in which we operate presents an increasingly complex and challenging environment. Workforce pressures, widespread industrial action, an ageing population and rising demand for health and social care are all factors which are impacting the professionals on our register, the public accessing and receiving care and the work of the NMC.

All of this means we need a realistic corporate plan that supports the public, the professionals on our register who provide their care, and our colleagues to do the best job possible.

## Reflecting and rebalancing our work

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When the context changes, so must the plan. We've carefully considered how best to respond to these challenges by refocusing our efforts to build the right capacity to deliver the best for people across the next two years. We're making significant investments in fitness to practise to improve the timeliness and quality of our decision-making. We're focusing on shifting our culture to become a learning organisation that is person-centred and fit for the future. This will make us a better regulator; improving how we protect the public by supporting safe, effective, and kind nursing and midwifery care that improves everyone's health and wellbeing in a changing world.

We have reset our corporate plans to focus on five priority outcomes over the next two years that will support us to realise this vision.

### We will:

- 1 progress fitness to practise decisions in a timely and sustainable way that keeps people safe
- 2 build an open, inclusive and high-performance learning culture with fairness and equality at its heart
- 3 continue to modernise our systems and processes to be fit for the future
- 4 inform and support the implementation of workforce strategies across the four UK nations helping nursing and midwifery professionals deliver safe, kind and effective care
- 5 strengthen processes and procedures to protect the integrity of our register so the public can continue to have confidence in the quality of care they receive.

To achieve these outcomes, we've deferred or reduced the scope of some planned projects to release capacity and resources. These include pausing plans to refresh our website and refurbish our offices in Portland Place and delaying the development of a new strategy for 2025.

## **Working in partnership and improving our interactions with people**

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Central to the success of this plan is our ongoing relationship with our partners and the professionals on our register across the four UK nations. It's vital that they continue to shape our work, tell us where we're not getting things right, and work with us on shared challenges and opportunities.

Equally important is the voice of the public. We've embedded public engagement and involvement opportunities including consultations and focus groups, so we can continue to hear the voices of people from different backgrounds and communities. We're especially grateful to our Public Voice Forum, which helps shape our strategic projects. Members of the forum are from all four UK countries and some live with long-term conditions, meaning they interact with professionals on our register regularly. They all have an interest in health and care and make an invaluable contribution to helping us embed our standards and improve people's experience of services.

We also know that we have more to do to improve our interactions with people, whether that's professionals or the public involved in fitness to practise, those raising complaints with us or calling for advice or support on other aspects of our regulatory work. In doing so, we will continue to build on the good work of our public support service, to make every interaction count.

## **Thank you**

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Against a challenging backdrop, we remain grateful for the dedication of our colleagues and the professionals on our register; the invaluable engagement, collaboration and insights of our partners and the public, and the work of our Council and Associate members.

We've made a steadfast commitment to continue to listen, learn and challenge ourselves to improve. We will be laser-focused on the priorities in this plan for the benefit of people and communities across the four countries now, and in the future.



**Andrea Sutcliffe**  
Chief Executive  
and Registrar



**Sir David Warren**  
Council Chair

# Who we are

Our vision is safe, effective and kind nursing and midwifery practice that improves everyone's health and wellbeing.

As the independent regulator of more than 808,000 nurses and midwives in the UK and nursing associates in England, we have an important role to play in making this vision a reality.

We're here to protect the public by upholding high professional nursing and midwifery standards, which the public has a right to expect. That's why we're improving the way we regulate, enhancing our support for colleagues, professionals and the public, and working with our partners to influence the future of health and social care.

# Our role

Our core role is to **regulate**. We set and promote high education and professional standards for nurses and midwives across the UK, and nursing associates in England and quality assure their education programmes. We maintain the integrity of the register of those eligible to practise. And we investigate concerns about professionals – something that affects very few people on our register every year.

To regulate well, we **support** nursing and midwifery professionals and the public. We create resources and guidance that are useful throughout professionals' careers, helping them to deliver our standards in practice and address challenges they face. We work collaboratively so everyone feels engaged and empowered to shape our work.

We work with our partners to address common concerns, share our data, insight and learning, to **influence** and inform decision-making and help drive improvement in health and social care for people and communities.

# Our priority outcomes



**Regulate**



**Support**



**Influence**

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We've identified five priority outcomes between now and 2026 to shape our work that will help us realise our vision for nursing and midwifery and become a better NMC. Ultimately, people who use health and social care services will have safer, better experiences if we make critical changes and improvements to key areas of our work, our culture and how we interact with people.

# 1

## Progress fitness to practise referrals in a safe and timely way



### Regulate

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We want our fitness to practise process to be timely, considerate, and straightforward for everyone involved. Referrers and professionals need to have their cases dealt with effectively and as quickly and safely as possible; employers should understand when to refer their employees, and our people should feel proud to work for the NMC and be able to make a positive difference.

We will significantly change capabilities and systems by instituting a new 18-month plan with the biggest investment in fitness to practise in a decade. This will improve how we work so that we can make quality decisions to keep people safe in a way that's sustainable for the future.

## **We will:**

- work with employers and the public to ensure the referrals we receive are appropriate, while strengthening clinical and safeguarding advice for our decision-makers to ensure the right decisions are made to keep the public safe
- improve the timeliness and quality of our decisions to ensure those on our register are fit to practise safely and professionally. We will do this by:
  - increasing the number of decisions we make at the screening stage of our process
  - bringing more of our hearings to hearing centres to increase efficiencies and improve our wellbeing and safeguarding support for all involved
  - maximising the impact of our new Legal Services contracts, outsourcing appropriate work and enabling our teams to deliver more investigations and prepare for and present cases
  - developing a quality assurance approach that empowers colleagues to ensure decisions on case progression are safe, timely and of the right quality, taking account of learning to improve decision-making in the future.
- develop a new case management system to be in place by 2026. This will enable us to progress cases more quickly and safely; interact more effectively with the public, professionals and employers and, in the long term, reduce costs
- ensure we have the right amount of skilled people working in an organised way to support our work across fitness to practise. This will improve performance, accountability and retention leading to a more consistent customer experience for those involved in our fitness to practise process.



# 2

## Build an inclusive, high-performance learning culture



**Regulate**



**Support**

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We want an open, inclusive culture that is free from discrimination, advances equality, celebrates diversity, promotes inclusion, and aligns with our values of kindness, fairness, ambition and collaboration. This is key to enabling everyone to perform at their best and learn and grow in their roles, so that we uphold professional standards for nursing and midwifery care and improve outcomes for people who use health and social care services.

## **We will:**

- act on learning from independent investigations into concerns raised about our regulatory decision-making and people and culture, including colleagues' safety to speak up. These changes will support the development of an open, learning culture within the NMC and build the trust and confidence of our colleagues, the public and professionals in our ability to regulate well
- identify areas for learning and improvement in how we regulate through our involvement in external inquiries and act on any recommendations arising. This will ensure we are fulfilling our regulatory responsibilities effectively and are protecting the public
- improve how we collectively and systematically capture learning as an organisation, including our approach to incident reporting, to drive sustainable improvements in how we work. This will enhance our regulatory processes; improve how we protect the public, support our professionals, and interact with everyone who comes into contact with us
- deliver our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan to ensure more equitable experiences and outcomes for the people who work for us, the professionals we regulate and people using health and social care services. We'll do this by improving consistency and fairness in our regulatory decision-making; using our diversity data for professionals to work with partners to influence ways of working across the sector and improving our internal processes so that our colleagues and all those we interact with can thrive without barriers
- assess a sample of fitness to practise cases through our next Ambitious for Change review to understand to what extent, if at all, bias or discrimination in our decision-making explains differences in progress and outcomes of cases for particular groups. The review will identify opportunities to improve our policies, guidance, and processes to maximise fairness and consistency as a result.

# 3

## Modernise our systems, tools, policies and processes



**Regulate**



**Support**

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We will ensure better, safer regulation for the benefit of the public with an improved register that's easier to use and understand. Our regulatory digital systems will be updated, making it easier for people to connect with us and for NMC colleagues to do their jobs, supporting nursing and midwifery professionals to deliver safe, person-centred care. Everyone will have confidence and trust that we're keeping their information safe and secure.

## **We will:**

- improve the efficiency and security of our internal systems, tools and processes by moving to an integrated digital technology platform to deliver and maintain the register. This will make it easier for NMC colleagues to deliver their roles leading to improved support for nursing and midwifery professionals to deliver safe, person-centred care
- deliver our new Safeguarding Work Plan to ensure colleagues are able to perform their roles safely when engaging with others or when handling sensitive data, in line with our Charity Commission obligations
- work with the Department of Health and Social Care to deliver flexible, modern legislation that enables better, safer regulation for the public. It will mean we have a register that's clearer and easier to understand; enable us to act more quickly to protect the public if someone can't meet our Code and standards; strengthen our ability to intervene when we have concerns about the quality of nursing or midwifery education, and ensure we can stop people from calling themselves nurses when they are not registered with us
- review our Financial Strategy to ensure it supports improvements in our regulatory processes, the wider delivery of our corporate plan and is sustainable for the future.

# 4

## Contribute to the workforce strategies and support professionals in the four nations



**Regulate**



**Support**



**Influence**

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Partners and the wider sector will benefit from our insight and be able to use it to inform and implement plans to address workforce challenges and improve care for people. The way we regulate will help nursing and midwifery professionals adapt to future challenges, including the changing needs of people who use services.

## **We will:**

- implement the options agreed by Council in March 2024 to develop a combination of approaches to further regulate advanced practice, to protect the public and improve consistency and standards for people receiving care
- successfully complete our review of practice learning, to ensure students continue to be supported to achieve our standards in an inclusive learning environment, gaining the knowledge and skills needed to deliver the best possible care for people and communities
- work with the Welsh Government and the Department of Health and Social Care to extend the regulation of nursing associates in Wales. This will support the widening of access into nursing and improve the quality, safety and consistency of care provided to people using health and social care services in Wales
- publish our annual Spotlight report, registration, revalidation, fitness to practise, and EDI data reports. Our insights will inform and influence future workforce planning across the UK, our fitness to practise improvement plan and other key priorities
- lay the groundwork for refreshing the NMC's Code and revalidation process which are central to supporting professionals to develop and improve their practice and deliver safe, kind and effective care in a changing health and care landscape.

# 5

## Strengthen the integrity of the register



**Regulate**



**Support**

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The public and the professionals on our register will have trust and confidence in the quality of education, skills and competency of registered nurses, midwives and nursing associates to protect the public and deliver safe, effective and kind care to people and their communities.

## **We will:**

- improve our international registration processes and controls and build on lessons learnt from past incidents of fraud and bribery to ensure all internationally educated professionals on our register have the right skills and experience
- work with an independent advisor to review and strengthen our education quality assurance, ensuring all education programmes meet our standards and students develop the right skills and knowledge to deliver care throughout their careers. The review will cover lessons learnt from our response to concerns raised leading to the withdrawal of the Canterbury Christ Church University midwifery programme.



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