

# NMC

# Corporate Plan

2022–2025

# | Foreword

**This year, 2022–2023, marks the halfway point of our current strategy. We launched the strategy in 2020, but the world looks very different now. During the pandemic, our focus changed to supporting the professionals on our register to deliver the safe and effective care the nation needed as we responded to the coronavirus pandemic.**

Our strategy helped us navigate this unfolding situation. The three core pillars of our work – regulate, support and influence – guided us to adapt our approach and be confident in our decision making in response to this pandemic.

For most of 2021–2022, Covid-19 dominated our thoughts. It continued to place extraordinary pressure on the professionals we regulate and the partners with whom we collaborate. Even now, as we move into the new year with most protections and restrictions lifted, the pressures remain, though the nature of them may have changed.

We all owe the greatest tribute to nurses, midwives, nursing associates and nursing and midwifery students for the way they have adapted and innovated in the face of change and an increasingly complex environment over the last two years.

And while the pandemic brought unprecedented and ongoing challenges to the health and care sector, it was more important than ever for us to act in line with our strategic commitments: to innovate and improve, to provide proactive support to the incredible professionals on our register, to be visible and well-informed, to empower

and engage, and to use our insight to influence positive change.

For us at the NMC, the pandemic means we're not where we'd expected to be in this pivotal third year. I'm incredibly proud of the role we played to support the workforce and help nurses, midwives and nursing associates deliver the best possible care, even under the most difficult of circumstances. But that's meant we've not been able to progress some of the ambitions outlined in our strategy.

We feel the biggest impact of the pandemic in the number of fitness to practise cases we currently have open. Bringing the caseload down is still our top priority, and we hope this coming year will see the changes we've introduced begin to take greater effect as they embed.

Many of the improvements we've made in fitness to practise help to lay the groundwork for the direction of travel in regulatory reform, and we'll work with partners across the UK to make sure that we're prepared for reform when it comes.

In 2021–2022, we began a number of important pieces of work that will continue in to the next few years.

We consulted on our new post registration standards between April and August 2021, and plan to launch the final versions this summer. We've also started work on a more modern and agile set of programme standards for pre-registration education and expect to consult and agree on proposals for change this year.

In 2021 we refreshed our approach to international registration. We increased the capacity of the test of competence (the way professionals trained overseas can join our register) test centres by bringing new centres on board. In 2022 we'll build on this work to review the way we ask overseas-trained professionals to demonstrate their competence in English language.

As we publish this corporate plan, it's apparent that a great many maternity services are facing significant challenges, with devastating impacts for women and their families impacted by poor care as recent reports into the safety of maternity services show. We know concerns and risks are widespread, particularly given the known pressures on midwifery staffing, and this needs to be addressed with urgency.

It needs all of us – regulators, employers and professionals – to join forces to deliver sustainable improvements in maternity services. No one person or organisation can fix those issues, but at the NMC, we will do all we can to make improvements happen.

Maternity care is also an area where outcomes are much worse for women from Black backgrounds, but health inequality and discrimination is of course not restricted to maternity care. As the NHS Race and Health

Observatory recently highlighted, Black African nurses and those trained overseas face racist abuse from both members of the public and their peers. Our own research shows that Black nurses and midwives are disproportionately referred into our fitness to practise procedures.

We're clear about our responsibility to promote equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do as a regulator and as an employer. We're ambitious about what we can achieve to promote best practice in equality, working with our partners and the wider sector. We will embed this commitment in all our work as we've highlighted in our recently published equality, diversity and inclusion plan.

We'll continue to listen to and engage with the public we're here to serve, the professionals we regulate and the partners with whom we collaborate so we can be responsive and agile to changes in health and social care. We are extremely grateful to everyone who's worked with us over this second year of the pandemic; we couldn't have done it without you, nor can we in future.

As ever, I pay tribute to my talented and dedicated colleagues across the organisation, the senior team and Council for their flexibility in the face of unprecedented change and everything they have contributed in 2021–2022. I am confident that by working collaboratively together, being fair and kind we will realise the ambitions set out in this plan.

**Andrea Sutcliffe**  
Chief Executive and Registrar

# | Who we are

We are the independent regulator for nurses and midwives in the UK, and nursing associates in England.

# | What we do

Our vision is safe, effective and kind nursing and midwifery that improves everyone's health and wellbeing. As the professional regulator of almost 745,000 nursing and midwifery professionals, we have an important role to play in making this a reality.

Our core role is **to regulate**. First, we promote high education and professional standards for nurses and midwives across the UK, and nursing associates in England. Second, we maintain the register of professionals eligible to practise. Third, we investigate concerns about nurses, midwives and nursing associates – something that affects a small minority of professionals each year. We believe in giving professionals the chance to address concerns, but we'll always take action when needed.

To regulate well, **we support** our professions and the public. We create resources and guidance that are useful throughout people's careers, helping them to deliver our standards in practice and address new challenges. We also support people involved in our investigations, and we're increasing our visibility so people feel engaged and empowered to shape our work.

Regulating and supporting our professions allows us to influence health and social care. We share intelligence from our regulatory activities and work with our partners to support workforce planning and sector-wide decision making. We use our voice to speak up for a healthy and inclusive working environment for our professions.



# | Our values

**We are fair**

We treat everyone fairly. Fairness is at the heart of our role as a trusted, transparent regulator and employer.

**We are kind**

We act with kindness and in a way that values people, their insights, situations and experiences.

**We are collaborative**

We value our relationships (both within and outside of the NMC) and recognise that we're at our best when we work well with others.

**We are ambitious**

We take pride in our work. We're open to new ways of working and always aim to do our best for the professionals on our register, the public we serve and each other.



Photograph taken pre-pandemic

# | Our strategy

2022–2023 marks the third year of our five-year strategy to 2025. You can read our full strategy on our website.

## Our role 2020–2025

### Regulate

- An accurate and transparent **register**
- Robust professional and educational **standards**
- Assuring education **programmes**
- Responding fairly to **fitness to practise (FtP)** concerns

### Support

- Promote **understanding** - our professions and our role
- Provide **practical tools** - help embed standards
- **Emotional/practical support** - people involved in our processes

### Influence

- Promote positive and inclusive **professional working environments**
- Share **data and insight** to identify risks of harm and address workforce challenges
- Encourage **regulatory innovation**

## Our strategic themes 2020–2025

- 1 Innovation and improvement
- 2 Proactive support
- 3 Visible and better informed
- 4 Engaging and empowering
- 5 Insight and influence

We will also ensure that NMC is a **fit for the future organisation.**



# | Strategic context

## Responding to the external environment

### Recovering from the coronavirus pandemic

While the crisis phase of the pandemic may be over, professionals are still working in a challenging and complex environment to tackle the primary and secondary impacts of Covid.

We are here to support the sector. In collaboration with partners and sector leaders, we want to understand the key pressures our professionals are working within and to influence change where appropriate.

As we learn to live with Covid we will remain respectful of people's time, and will make sure that we communicate and co-produce in a way that makes the best of everyone's time.

### Workforce

The health and care sector continues to face acute workforce shortages. Although the number of people on our register continues to rise, demand is increasing more quickly.

### Safety of maternity services

We continue to contribute to national and regional quality assurance mechanisms which have been strengthened in light of concerns about the safety of maternity services in England. With the recent publication of the Ockenden report and a number of other inquiry reports in the pipeline,

we continue to identify and share learning and good practice across the UK, and to promote our new standards as a strong basis for all midwives to enhance their practice and to help prevent things from going wrong.

### Managing economic, political and climate challenges

The social and economic environment we work in is becoming increasingly challenging, with the highest rate of inflation seen for many years, an increasingly competitive labour market, challenges across the global supply chain and a volatile stock market. We must also recognise the impact of the war in Ukraine, which is causing further global and economic instability and heightens the risk of cyber-attacks. The climate emergency requires us to take an active approach to sustainability.

To mitigate these issues, we've taken a range of steps.

- We've factored in extra costs to our plans, while ensuring we'll be operating within our free reserves constraints.
- We've introduced regular reviews of our cyber security.
- We're advancing our sustainability planning during the year.
- Our People Plan will help us recruit and retain the right people.

## Approaches to health across the four nations

Across the UK, all four countries have committed to better integration between health and social care as a solution to challenges to the health and care system. But differences in funding and operations means that the approach to integration varies.

The health and care system faces different challenges and requires different approaches to tackle issues (for example, workforce planning, service delivery) due to devolution. We must apply regulatory consistency while being aware of differences and sensitivities.

## Our internal focus areas

As we move into the midpoint of our five year strategy, we remain committed to delivering our ambitious plans that we set out in 2020 despite some delays over the past two years. As the pandemic moves into recovery, this third year will be pivotal for us to shift our focus back onto delivering our strategy.



## Reducing the fitness to practise caseload

Reducing our fitness to practise caseload to manageable levels will remain a priority within our 2022–2025 corporate plan.

We have designed our fitness to practise improvement work to make sure we deal with concerns at the earliest appropriate opportunity. We will aspire to prevent the caseload from rising any further, reduce the number of cases that we're holding at any one time back to manageable levels, and process cases in a fair, timely and cost effective way.

To do this we are redesigning our regulatory processes and investing in additional resources to increase capacity in key areas for a time limited period. This is designed to reduce the caseload during 2022–2023 and prevent its rise in future. We'll also embed our successes such as the promotion of

early engagement to drive further improvements and make sure that there aren't barriers when people need to raise concerns with us. To help us make the right decisions, at the right time, we're also working with employers to resolve cases quickly and locally, wherever appropriate.

## Continuing to make our processes fair for everyone

Integrating equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) into everything we do will make us a better employer and an inclusive place to work for our colleagues. It'll also increase public confidence in us, help us to be a more effective regulator and give us the platform to influence change within other regulators and partners across the health and care sector. We are taking action, but we have much more to do. We recognise our individual and collective responsibilities to address these issues.

## A once in a generation chance for change through regulatory reform

Our legislation is out of date and inflexible. We support the government's proposals to reform the legislation of regulators of health and care professions. Modern legislation will enable us to deliver safer regulation for the public and better support our registrants. We are planning on the basis that reforms to our legislation may start to come into effect at the earliest in 2024.

Reform will enable us to make sure that we regulate at the leading edge of practice into the future, collaborating with our partners and other regulators to make sure that regulation reflects the multidisciplinary environments in which care is delivered, and the advanced skills and specialisation which complex, person-centred care requires.



# Our commitments for 2022–2025

The following 22 commitments articulate what we expect to achieve over the next three years. To ensure that our plans remain aligned to the needs of the sector and the aims of our strategy, we will continue to review our corporate plan and budget at regular intervals.



## Proactive support for professionals

We work to enable our professions to uphold our standards today and tomorrow, anticipating and shaping future nursing and midwifery practice.

### 01 Deliver a new set of ambitious post-registration standards focusing on community nursing practice.

We will finish our work to develop and implement a new set of post-registration standards for professionals for community and public health nursing in the UK, enabling professionals to deliver high standards of care for the public.

### 02 Provide greater flexibility in nursing and midwifery pre-registration education and training by launching new standards for pre-registration education in the UK.

Following our exit from the EU, we will review the programme standards for pre-registration education in the UK and implement any changes to support nursing, midwifery and nursing associate education programmes.

### 03 Review regulation of advanced nursing practice.

We will explore whether the regulation of advanced nursing practice is needed, and if so, develop and approve new standards for professionals.

### 04 Review revalidation requirements for nursing and midwifery professionals.

We will engage with professionals on our register on how revalidation should link to our standards of proficiency. We will subsequently formally review our revalidation requirements with the aim of strengthening the process and its focus on our standards of proficiency and continuing professional development.

### 05 Implement a new data-driven and proportionate approach to education quality assurance which enables us to have a more holistic oversight of institutions and their programmes to make appropriate interventions.

We will enhance the ways we capture, record and analyse data on our approved education institutions and their programmes. This will enable us to make targeted interventions where we identify potential concerns and strengthen our focus on equality, diversity and inclusion.

## 06 Evaluate whether protected learning time is in line with current nursing associate standards.

To support their education, we will evaluate the use of protected learning time in the nursing associate standards and make any appropriate adjustments.

## Improvement and innovation

To improve and innovate across all our regulatory functions, providing better customer service, and maximising the public benefit from what we do.

## 07 Reduce our fitness to practise caseload and make improvements to how we regulate to ensure that we process cases in a timely, proportionate, and efficient way.

We will reduce our fitness to practise caseload by improving our productivity, making sure that processing is timely, proportionate, and affordable.

## 08 Work with the Department of Health and Social Care to deliver a substantial programme of regulatory reform to remove legal barriers that limit improvements in the way we regulate.

We will engage and consult with stakeholders to shape reform proposals on changes to our order and rules. This will include how we design and implement new processes and systems to deliver the identified reforms.

## 09 Tackle discrimination and inequality and promote diversity and inclusion to make sure that our processes are fair for everyone.

We will implement our equality, diversity and inclusion action plan which aims to improve outcomes for professionals within our regulatory role, and in how we support NMC colleagues as an employer.

## 10 Design and launch pilot work to increase OSCE testing capacity and improve access including options for alternate delivery models.

We will pilot further improvements to increase access to the practical examination part of the test of competence (the objective structured clinical examination (OSCE)) to provide greater capacity and flexibility for testing professionals.

## 11 Deliver policy and legislative change to enable new approaches to international registrations, including a review of English language guidance, to ensure that it is fair.

We will implement changes to our international registration routes to ensure that our processes are fair and proportionate to support international professionals to safely joining our register. This will also include a review of our English language policy.

## 12 Close the Covid-19 emergency register and remove recovery education standards.

Now the government has declared that the emergency period has ended, we will remove our recovery measures, close the temporary register and support eligible professionals to move from the temporary register to the permanent register if they wish.

## More visible and better informed

We work in close contact with our professions, their employers, and their educators so we can regulate with a deeper understanding of the learning and care environment in each country of the UK.

## 13 Build trust in professional regulation through targeted campaigns to build an awareness of who we are, what we do, and what we stand for.

We will deliver targeted campaigns to build engagement and trust with the public, nursing and midwifery students, and professionals so that they will have a broader understanding of our role and how we regulate, support and influence.

## 14 Expand our national and local outreach to embed regulation, support and influence at local level (evolving our employer link service into a broader outreach and in-reach service).

Using partnerships and registrant ambassadors, we will increase our capacity to advise national and local programmes on how to respond to concerns and challenges within social care, general practice and the private and voluntary sectors.



## Empowering and engaging

Actively engage with and empower the public, our professions, and partners. An NMC that is trusted and responsive, actively building an understanding of what we and our professionals do for people.

**15** Create a modern and accessible website that effectively portrays our values, delivers our core services, and enhances our communications and engagement.

We will implement a new website which effectively reflects our identity and role to regulate, support and influence, and enhances our improvements to core functions and processes.

## Greater insight and influence

Learning from data and research, we improve what we do and work collaboratively to share insights responsibly to help improve the wider health and care system.

**16** Improve our insight and use it to enhance our regulatory impact and influence in the sector.

Using our own data, and that shared by our partners, we will improve our understanding and response to issues within the health and care sector. We will also publish a new annual insight report to influence positive changes within the sector for the benefit of our professions and the public.



## Fit for the future organisation

We will align our culture, capabilities, and infrastructure to our new strategic aims.

**17** Deliver our People Plan that supports our colleagues to be engaged, retained and supported to deliver our strategy.

Based on NMC colleagues' feedback, we will implement key initiatives to address the issues that matter to them such as hybrid working, our rewards package, developing leaders and internal progression.

**18** Improve the way we are structured so that we can deliver our strategy.

We will review the organisation's structure to ensure we have the right people in the right place to support our business needs, and to take advantage of the opportunities offered by regulatory reform.

**19** Update digital systems that support how we regulate to improve the experience for customers and colleagues.

We will continue our internal improvement work to design and implement new digital systems to support us to regulate well, including our registration platform and modernising our fitness to practise case management tools.

**20** Deliver contemporary IT through our technology improvement programme and core business to improve our efficiency.

We will design and deliver our three year plan to evolve our information technology capabilities which will support us to deliver our strategy. This will include introducing new digital tools and systems to make it easier for NMC colleagues to do their jobs well and increase their productivity.

**21** Create modern workspaces that support wellbeing and collaboration (five year programme).

We will ensure our workspaces and facilities are inclusive, accessible and fit for purpose to enable effective collaboration.

**22** Implement an NMC sustainability and environmental plan.

We will implement our sustainability and environment action plan to ensure that we work in a sustainable and environmentally conscious way both now and in the future.

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The nursing and midwifery regulator for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland  
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