

Summary: membership of NMC engagement groups policy

Scope and purpose

In our 2020-25 corporate strategy, we made a commitment to work in co-production with our partners as a habitual approach. This policy aims to embed the NMC's co-production principles in how we recruit and involve external partners in our engagement groups.

This policy is aimed at anyone who is currently involved or is seeking to be involved in one of the NMC's engagement groups. It does not apply to NMC employees, any of the NMC's governing bodies, Council, committees or panels as defined in our rules or to contractors who support the delivery of NMC operations.

The NMC is committed to ensuring that the membership of our engagement groups reflects the nursing, nursing associate and midwifery professions and the communities they support across the UK's four nations. We recognise our responsibility to reach out to a diverse range of external partners and the value that comes from hearing from a broad range of people. We are also committed to upholding our public sector equality duty as part of the Equality Act 2010 (and our applicable equality duties in Northern Ireland) by integrating consideration of equality into how we establish and operate engagement groups.

The NMC's values are to be fair, kind, ambitious and collaborative. These values are at the core of the experience we want people to consistently receive when they join our groups and this policy has been written in line with them. We will be:

- *Fair* by being open and transparent about our recruitment processes and membership. We will be clear about what group members can expect from us, as well as what we need from them. We will value the time of all members consistently. We act to ensure all members can participate equally and meaningfully.
- *Kind* by treating members respectfully, sharing information in a timely way and ensuring we listen openly to their views. We will clearly set out the role of group members. We will ensure that ways of working across our groups build and maintain the trust and confidence of the public in the professions we regulate.
- *Ambitious* by striving to embed genuinely co-productive ways of working across the NMC, always seeking to further advance our co-production journey and improve our groups. We will monitor and evaluate our work, sharing the findings with members and continually seeking to improve.
- *Collaborative* by ensuring our engagement groups provide meaningful opportunities to develop work in co-production with members. We will proactively inform members about our shared work, and commit to working together from the start of new projects and initiatives. We will actively seek participation in our groups from a diverse range

of people to enable us to hear the perspectives of different groups from across the UK.

Defining 'engagement groups'

For the purposes of this policy, an engagement group is a group of external partners convened by the NMC where the same named people are invited to meet, either virtually or physically, more than once.

There are three types of engagement group at the NMC and the policies within this document apply differently depending on the type of group. The types of group are:

1. **Overarching strategic groups** - provide input on a range of issues over an extended period of time without a defined end date.
2. **Strategic advisory groups** - provide advice on one particular subject or programme, usually with a specific end point.
3. **Working groups** - focus on operational matters and ways of working, may be either long term or short term.

Each engagement group at the NMC has a defined purpose that is shared with its members before they are invited to join.

Membership types

Membership on an NMC engagement group is one of the following four types. All members have equal status within the engagement groups. The combination of membership types on each group are decided on a case by case basis, reflecting the group's specified purpose. The different types of members are:

1. **People invited due to their professional position** whilst in a particular role. Should a member leave this position, their successor will be entitled to take up the place on our engagement groups. They are expected to speak on behalf of their organisation or employer when in the group. They are expected to send a deputy if unable to attend a meeting.
2. **People invited due to their professional expertise**, experience, background and/or training (including students). These people are expected to speak based on their individual experience and expertise. They are permitted to send a deputy if unable to attend a meeting.
3. **People invited due to their connection to a particular community** to reflect their views and experiences. This connection may be through employment or membership of a particular network or group. They are permitted to send a deputy if unable to attend a meeting.
4. **People invited due to their background or lived experience** to provide input based on their personal experience only. There is no obligation or opportunity to send a deputy if unable to attend a meeting.

Diversity

Ensuring that our engagement groups reflect the nursing and midwifery professions and the communities they support is a key priority for our membership policy. We consider and review a group's membership in full, seeking members with diverse experiences,

backgrounds and opinions. We do not expect members to be responsible for reflecting the entire community (or communities) they identify with. We expect all members to consider equality, diversity and inclusion during discussion, regardless of their background or experience.

Length of term

Members of overarching strategic groups are asked to commit to at least one term, but may be asked to extend to a second term. Terms have a minimum commitment of one year, but most members are offered a three year term. Some members invited due to professional position do not have a defined length of term.

A strategic advisory group is set up for a limited amount of time and members generally join for the entire length of the advisory group.

Working groups are established to fulfil an operational need and therefore timescales may not be known initially. NMC colleagues communicate the expected length of term to group members as early as possible.

Recruitment processes

Our aspiration is to be as transparent as possible in recruiting new members. This encourages a diverse membership and increases representation from a broad range of groups across the UK's four nations. New members of NMC engagement groups are either selected by the NMC; nominated by existing members; or recruited via an open and transparent recruitment process. The NMC recognises that each of these methods of recruitment have benefits and limitations and seeks to use whichever methods best support our overall aims of a diverse membership with different perspectives and opinions.

Membership on multiple groups

To ensure we continue to hear from a diverse range of people, individuals may usually only join one overarching strategic group at a time. However, there are specific circumstances relating to an individual's profession, expertise or experience where exemptions may be appropriate. Members are not restricted from being invited to present or speak at meetings of other overarching strategic groups where mutually beneficial.

Being a member of an overarching strategic group does not limit the amount of strategic advisory or working groups that a person is permitted to join.

Being a member of a strategic advisory or working group does not limit the amount of groups that an individual is permitted to join.

Funding and expenses

The NMC takes responsibility for funding all our engagement groups. No members are expected to pay to become a member or maintain their membership. Our separate policy on payments and expenses applies in full to people who are invited due to their background or lived experience. People who are invited due to their professional expertise or due to their connection to a community can also request to be considered

under this policy. Requests are decided by the NMC on a case by case basis. Employers of members invited due to their professional position are expected cover professionals' travel and expenses.

Independent chairs

Overarching strategic and strategic advisory groups may be chaired independently, with meetings facilitated by the NMC. Chairs are recruited based on their expertise and experience. For overarching strategic groups, independent chairs are asked to commit to a term of between two and four years, and they may be invited to extend their commitment to a second term. For strategic advisory groups, independent chairs are asked to commit to the role until the specified end point of a project. Independent chairs are remunerated for their role.

Expectations

As part of our commitment to co-production, group members can expect that the NMC will agree to:

- Talk to members about relevant matters at the earliest opportunity and include them through the process where appropriate.
- Keep members informed as the topics they provide input on are progressed further.
- Provide advance notice of meeting dates and materials.
- Accommodate both virtual and in-person meetings as appropriate.
- Provide members with details on the group's purpose, meeting structure and likely timescales for its work.

When joining a group, it will also be made clear to members that the NMC expects members to:

- Attend the majority of meetings.
- Provide the NMC with advanced notice if they are unable to attend meetings. □
Act in accordance with the NMC's values and behaviours.

Leaving a group

The NMC reserves the right to ask members to leave groups, and we understand that members may choose to leave at any time. We will only ask members to leave before the end of their term for a select number of reasons, including:

- If members are no longer employed in a relevant professional position; no longer have relevant professional expertise; or no longer engage with or are able to reflect the community they did when they were asked to join.
- Failure to attend three consecutive meetings without providing prior notice or without, if applicable, sending a representative in their place. (*Overarching strategic and strategic advisory groups only.*)
- Behaviour in meetings or on digital channels related to the group is considered by the NMC to be either discriminatory, aggressive or otherwise wholly inappropriate towards either an individual or to groups of people.

- Behaviour outside of meetings in either a personal or professional capacity is considered to be wholly inappropriate and/or to undermine the confidence of the public in the nursing and/or midwifery professions and/or the NMC.

Engagement groups are hugely valued by the NMC. They allow us to conduct detailed conversations and in-depth work with specialists on subjects of mutual importance. We deliver comprehensive engagement plans for all strategic projects, and engagement groups are a key element of these. We are committed to embedding co-productive values through our engagement groups and beyond.