

Midwifery Panel

held on 21 June 2023 via MS Teams

Minutes

Present

Name	Title
Agnes Agyepong (AA)	Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Global Black Maternal Health Institute
Anna van der Gaag (AvdG) (Midwifery Panel Chair)	Visiting Professor in Ethics and Regulation, University of Surrey
Connie McLuckie (CMcL)	Deputising for Nicky Clark, Chair, Lead Midwives Education Strategic Reference Group
Dale Spence (DS)	Midwifery Officer, Department of Health Northern Ireland
Gill Walton (GW)	Chief Executive, Royal College of Nursing
Gloria Rowland (GR)	Chief Executive Officer, African Medical Centre of Excellence, Abuja, Nigeria
Gwendolen Bradshaw (GB)	Emeritus Professor, University of Bradford
Janice Sigsworth (JS)	Director of Nursing, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
Justine Craig (JC)	Chief Midwifery Officer, Scottish government
Karen Jewell (KJ)	Chief Midwifery Officer, Welsh government
Kerri Eilertsen-Feeney (KE-F)	Lead Midwife, NHS England
Mary Renfrew (MR)	Professor Emerita, University of Dundee
Natalie Whyte (NW)	Service User Representative, National Maternity Voices, Leicester, and Rutland
Sascha Wells-Munro (SW-M)	Deputy Chief Midwifery Officer, NHS England
Tracey McCormack (TMcC)	Director of Midwifery and Gynaecology, Kings College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Verena Wallace (VW)	Senior Midwifery Adviser, Nursing and Midwifery Council
Wendy Olayiwola (WO)	National Maternity Lead for Equality, NHS England

Observers	Title
Ellie Winstanley (EW)	Midwifery student, London South Bank University
Margaret McQuire (MMcQ)	Council Member, Nursing and Midwifery Council
Stacey Keane (SK)	Assistant National Officer, Royal College of Midwives Wales
Rachel Blackpool (RB)	Midwifery student, London South Bank University
NMC Attendees	Title
Andrea Sutcliffe (AS) Edward Welsh (EW)	Chief Executive and Registrar Executive Director, Communications and Engagement
Sam Foster (SF) Noita Sadler (NS)	Executive Director, Professional Practice Assistant Director, Stakeholder Engagement
Emma Westcott (EW) Jenny Collard (JC)	Assistant Director, Strategy and Insight Head of Regulatory Policy
Kirsten Van Balen (KVB) Gabrielle Jones (GJ)	Head of Strategic Communications Stakeholder Engagement Manager
Melissa McLean (MMcL) Johnnet Hamilton (JH)	Senior Public Engagement Officer Senior Stakeholder Engagement Officer
Barbara Forshaw (BF) Gurinder Whall (GW)	Stakeholder Engagement Officer Senior Events Officer
Rebecca Calver (RC)	Communications and Engagement Programme Manager
Evelyn Ugen (EU) Rachael Truswell (RT)	Events Officer Strategy Manager
Matthew Clayton (MC) Ellie Cope (EC)	Strategy Manager Strategy Manager

APOLOGIES	
Name	Title
Angela Graves	Council of Deans of Health Representative, Head of School of Healthcare, University of Leeds.
Cath Broderick	Independent Consultant in Patient and Public Engagement.

Jacqueline Williams	Senior Midwifery Adviser, Nursing and Midwifery Council.
Kate Brintworth	Chief Midwifery Officer, NHS England.
Nicky Clark	Chair, Lead Midwives for Education Strategic Reference Group and Senior Lecturer, University of Hull.
Ruth May	Chief Nursing Officer, NHS England.

1 Welcome and introduction

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including observers.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Angela Graves, Cath Broderick, Jacqueline Williams, Kate Brintworth, Nicky Clark, and Ruth May.

2 Minutes and actions of the previous meeting

- 2.1 The Chair noted the following amendments:
 - 2.1.1 The Chair noted apologies for absence had been given by GB for February's meeting. MR had attended part of the session.
 - 2.1.2 MR raised a point about the implementation of the standards in practice. She said they are well implemented in education and contain a good response to the current concerns around safety as raised in the Shrewsbury and Telford, and East Kent reports. She asked the NMC to consider a publication that makes it clear which standards are critical on safety and what they could achieve in relation to safe, effective, and kind care.
 - 2.1.3 AS responded in agreement and highlighted the NMC has at every opportunity stressed the implementation of the standards which will help what maternity services are facing, but it needs its partners on Midwifery panel across all four nations of the UK to do that. AS encouraged panel members to reflect on where the standards' role could be strengthened in their plans, citing the example of NHS England's three-year delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services which referenced the NMC's Standards only once.
 - 2.1.4 The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

3 NMC Update

- 3.1 AS gave an overview of the NMC's recent work to respond to pressures within health and care and how the NMC has been supporting midwifery

and nursing professionals. Links to news stories and updates are being shared regularly with Panel members via the stakeholder newsletter.

4 Introduction to Midwifery panel and reflections on midwifery and maternity care

- 4.1 SF, Executive Director for Professional Practice, introduced herself to the Panel. She shared reflections from a meeting she had with a small group of Panel members and said a summary would be circulated to the Panel. Key priorities:
- 4.1.1 Deliver on NMC's corporate objectives and to review if the NMC should regulate advanced practice. The Panel were asked to nominate someone to join a new advanced practice steering group. There is already a national nomination for a midwife to be seconded to the working group.
 - 4.1.2 Re-tender the NMC's quality assurance contract so it is more data-driven, agile, and responsive to the context in which the NMC is operating.
 - 4.1.3 [Employer Link Service](#) looking for opportunities to engage across health and social care.
 - 4.1.4 Review the state of practice in relation to the NMC's standards and in the future, its [Code](#) and revalidation.
- 4.2 SF highlighted the Panel's Terms of Reference, and emphasised the NMC would like it to continue to be a 'straight-talking' group who influence and support the work of the NMC.
- 4.3 The NMC were asked how it might use its supporting role to help reduce the fear that some midwives have of the fitness to practice (FtP) process. Andrea said the NMC are aware of the concerns but reassured the Panel it always takes account of context in referrals.
- 4.4 There was a query about the political interest in exploring reducing the number of practice hours required to join the register. When reviewing our pre-registration programme standards last year, the NMC had considered this issue.
- 4.5 SF said we had explored the issue of reducing practice learning hours with key stakeholders, but the feedback was clear that although there was interest in this issue, we did not yet have the evidence base to reduce practice learning hours. The NMC has made a commitment to continue to explore the issue and are planning how to progress this work. The Panel will be kept informed and SF will seek their input at the appropriate time.

5 Spotlight on the four UK Countries: best practice and improvement

5.1 KJ, Chief Midwifery Officer, Wales updated:

- 5.1.1 A major win over the last 12 months has been to commission two intakes of midwifery students a year. The two-year output should happen in the next two to three years.
- 5.1.2 They are seeing an annual recurrence of a severe staffing crisis during summer, while waiting for students to qualify.
- 5.1.3 Birthrate Plus is mandated in Wales but staffing levels fade over the year, until the next cohort of students graduate. Birthrate Plus are reviewing its future workforce including apprenticeship programmes.
- 5.1.4 Pre-qualifying placements have worked well in transitioning students to their first midwifery posts.
- 5.1.5 The All-Wales preceptorship programme is underway.
- 5.1.6 Concerns have been raised that since Covid, some birth centres have not reopened which is impacting women who prefer standalone midwifery-led centre care, and student experiences in those settings.
- 5.1.7 Other updates included: Commissioners at Health Education and Improvement Wales are leading on the development of the Strategic Perinatal Workforce Plan.
- 5.1.8 Health Inspectorate Wales have published a report highlighting concerns about the experiences of Black and Asian women.
- 5.1.9 A MatNeo diagnostic safety support programme goes live on 7 July. Digital Maternity Cumbria are going out over the summer to procure a maternity and neonatal system. All health boards have a digital midwife.

5.2 DS, Midwifery Officer, Department of Health Northern Ireland (NI) updated:

- 5.2.1 The continuity of midwifery carer programme was launched on 24 May and has moved to phase II to implement small scale programmes in all Health and Social Care Trusts.
- 5.2.2 NI's Department of Health have set up a Maternity and Neonatal Safety Services Oversight Group. The Department responded to the coroner's findings following the inquest into the death of a baby by appointing MR to conduct an independent review into Midwifery Services across Northern Ireland. She will complete the report by autumn 2023.

- 5.2.3 NI is implementing 'Encompass,' a health and social care programme to introduce a single digital care record for every citizen in NI to create better experiences for people who use services. The first Trust goes live in November 2023.
 - 5.2.4 NI has a well-established collaborative maternity 'multi-professional' structure which aims to improve safety.
- 5.3 JC, Chief Midwifery Officer, Scottish government updated:
- 5.3.1 Scotland has a Ministerial-led maternity taskforce and that SF would represent the NMC. Details of the taskforce's four subgroups were shared which cover: 1. Attraction and wellbeing 2. Workforce 3. Education 4. Leadership and culture.
 - 5.3.2 The Midwifery workforce and education review group have now taken forward recommendations from a report published in March 2021. The oversight group will link closely with the NMC to avoid duplication.
 - 5.3.3 There is a clear focus on working on maternity equality and safety and a meeting was held in June which looked at standards frameworks and how maternity care will look in Scotland.
 - 5.3.4 Scotland's Best Start national strategic programme for maternity and neonatal care ends in 2024, while the continuity of carer programme has been extended for a further two years.
 - 5.3.5 Other updates included: work around racialised inequalities in maternity care, and the Directorate for Children and Families is looking at pre-birth to three years old and the importance of getting families off to the best start. A national preceptorship framework goes live in August and there is monitoring of the Health and Care Staffing Act which will be enacted by the government in April 2024.
- 5.4 JR, Deputy Chief Midwifery Officer, NHS England updated:
- 5.4.1 On the three-year delivery plan published March 2023, NHS England committed to ensuring that when it presents on the plan around the country, reference will be made to the Future Midwife Standards. Details of the plan were shared including that it moves forward from the Better Births programme. The plan brings together actions from the Ockenden reports, Kirkup report into East Kent, NHS Long Term Workforce Plan and NHSE Maternity Transformation programme. Highlights were shared around the three themes and 12 objectives. A new data group has been set up with support from Dr Bill Kirkup.

5.4.2 JR updated that workforce updates including that midwifery, maternity support and neonatal posts are rising. She said there is a significant gap of around 2,800 posts, so there is a recruitment drive. The gap in staffing is being made up from bank/agency staff. While there are encouraging signs, the pandemic has exacerbated issues in the workforce. Midwives are continuing to report more stress and work-related pressure than any other NHS staff.

5.4.3 JR gave other updates including the expansion of undergraduate training places, 504 international joiners with a further five hundred due by year end. NHSE have 306 nurses on the shortened maternity programme and its regions are planning for 5,000 starters during 2023/2024. Midwifery degree apprenticeships are increasing.

6 NMC Strategy development 2025-2030

6.1 EW updated the Panel the NMC are in the initial stages of insight and exploration to develop the next five-year strategy 2025-2030. EW gave an overview of the NMC's approach to the strategy's development timetable and key questions were explored with the Panel.

6.2 EW's strategy team led discussions in online breakout rooms centred on insights around the regulatory space and opportunities and risks across the future of health and care. Short summaries of the discussions were shared afterwards. Feedback included that the NMC needed to adopt an equity lens to all its work, ensure EDI is represented in simulation for all types of women, and ensure the standards are absorbed and adopted into practice.

7 Update on NMC Activities

Canterbury Christ Church University midwifery programme

7.1 SF updated the Panel on the NMC's decision to withdraw approval of the midwifery programme at Canterbury Christ Church University, which was done after careful consideration in the best interest of women, babies, and families. A discussion ensued and questions were answered.

Update on maternity campaigns

7.2 KVB gave an update on the NMC's upcoming maternity campaigns and Panel members were able to share feedback and ask questions.

7.3 KVB shared details of the maternity campaign [The best midwifery care happens in partnership](#) and that it had been developed in line with [The Code](#) and [Standards of proficiency for midwives](#) to support midwives in the care they provide for people.

- 7.4 KVB shared the NMC's second targeted information campaign for the public [For Every Pregnancy](#) aims to highlight that each pregnancy is unique, and whatever stage someone is at the midwifery team is there alongside them.

Senior Midwifery Adviser activity

- 7.5 VW presented an overview of her recent midwifery engagement activities. This included an update on work to address Entonox concerns reported in the media.
- 7.6 VW shared highlights from the 33rd Triennial International Congress of Midwives (ICM) held in Bali. She said the updates included the move from set competencies for improving the education of midwives and the standards for practice, to bringing in global research and considering regulation. She said some countries do not have regulation and the ICM is at the stage of thinking about how progress can be made, recognising that different countries have quite different needs, cultures, and budgets.
- 7.7 Panel members who attended the ICM Congress said UK representatives were challenged on the recruitment from 'red list' countries and how this was adversely impacting retention in some countries of their own midwifery workforce.

Update on internationally educated midwives

- 7.8 A pre-briefing was shared on this item. VW briefly highlighted the requirements for joining the NMC's register and that applicants must hold an 'approved qualification. She said the NMC does not ask about experience and does not do comparability assessments. All applicants must take two parts of the [NMC Test of Competence](#), a [Computer Based Test](#) and an [Objective Structured Clinical Examination](#).
- 7.9 Due to time constraints, this topic was deferred to October's Midwifery panel to allow more time for discussion. The Chair asked the Panel to contact the NMC's Senior Midwifery Advisers in the meantime, with any points they wished to explore at that meeting.

8 AOB

- 8.1 There were no other business items. The Chair thanked members and observers for attending.

Next meeting date: Wednesday 4 October, 14.00 – 17.00, in-person, NMC's Offices, 23 Portland Place, London W1B 1PZ.