

NMC Independent Oversight Group

Summary of Meeting held on 12 March 2025

1. Welcome

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the group and noted apologies.

2. Action: Fitness to Practise dashboard

- 2.1 The NMC presented its fitness to practise (FTP) dashboard, which was listed as an action at the last meeting.
- 2.2 The NMC highlighted that it had achieved the first overall caseload reduction in eight months in December 2024, and screening decisions were showing a significant increase in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24. There was also progress in the number of cases awaiting a legal review, which fell from 542 at the beginning of September 2024 to 72 at the end of February 2025.
- 2.3 The NMC is working with PwC until the end of March 2025 to reinforce its FTP plan. PwC is undertaking casework, in order to relieve pressure on the FTP function. The NMC is also working with PwC to develop a turnaround plan, which will be presented to the Executive Board in Q1 2025/26.
- 2.4 Group members enquired about the process for outsourcing casework to PwC, and received assurances that the NMC remains responsible for decision-making.
- 2.5 The Chair acknowledged that the overall timeliness KPI is moving in the right direction, but noted that the data does not show the whole picture. The group agreed to reconsider the FTP data as a whole to identify any trends at the next meeting covering FTP as a substantive item.

ACTION: PSA secretariat to include an item on the FTP dashboard data at the next meeting covering FTP as a substantive item.

3. NMC Executive Board and senior recruitment update

- 3.1 The group heard that the seven members of the NMC Executive team have left the organisation in the last nine months. The NMC acknowledged that the Executive has very few substantive postholders, and noted that the Acting Executive Director for Professional Practice is leaving at the end of April.
- 3.2 The NMC is running a campaign to fill the Executive posts with substantive appointments, with the assistance of a recruitment agency.
- 3.3 The NMC confirmed that once its new Chair is appointed, it will move to fill the substantive role of Chief Executive and Registrar.
- 3.4 The NMC also noted that registrants will play a vital role within the NMC as a multidisciplinary team.

- 3.5 One group member commented that a number of union meetings with the NMC had been cancelled at short notice in recent weeks, owing to limited availability from Executive Directors. The NMC said it will rectify this, and noted that its culture plan contains a commitment to meet with its in-house union every two months.
- 3.6 Group members noted that there is currently no nursing or registrant voice on the Executive Board, and asked how the NMC will mitigate for this in the intervening period. The NMC affirmed that registrants will play a key role moving forwards, and noted the appointment on secondment of Professor Donna O'Boyle, who is working to define the role of registrants in the NMC within the clinical strategy.
- 3.7 The group sought assurances that the departure of the Acting Executive Director for Professional Practice would not impact the NMC's focus on safeguarding, which was highlighted as a significant concern in the Independent Culture Review (ICR). The NMC stated that safeguarding is a key part of screening, and the safeguarding hub is now working with full a complement of staff, with registrant expertise feeding into this. The NMC indicated that a paper covering the NMC's position on safeguarding will be presented to Council at the end of March, and this will be shared with the group.

ACTION: NMC to share its paper on safeguarding with the group at the April meeting.

4. NMC Culture Plan

- 4.1 The NMC presented its draft culture plan to the group. The plan has been informed by a number of townhall meetings with the Interim Chief Executive and Registrar and NMC staff. The NMC said that the feedback received had proved valuable in shaping the plan.
- 4.2 Similar to the ICR, some NMC staff recounted that they had experienced bullying and racial discrimination, whereas others said they loved working at the organisation. Some staff spoke of bureaucracy and a hierarchical structure, and there was a clear message that those in junior and middle roles did not feel agency within the NMC. It was also noted that registrant staff in particular felt less respected than others.
- 4.3 The NMC acknowledged that it has in the past had limited registrant involvement throughout its teams, but said that it is now clear that registrants are a key part of the team, and it cannot perform its work properly without their input. The NMC's culture plan makes clear that it will embrace registrants as part of the transformation, and it has appointed a registrant to the cultural transformation steering group.
- 4.4 The NMC noted the concerns that issues identified in the past had not been fully addressed.
- 4.5 The draft culture plan was shared with NMC staff last week, and the final version will be presented to Council at the end of March. The six pillars of the culture plan are: psychological safety; effective leadership; values-based

- decision-making; embedding EDI best practice; enjoying work; and regulatory fairness.
- 4.6 The NMC said that the plan is a comprehensive three-year programme involving root and branch change in the organisational culture. It sets out a vision for a positive, empowering and inclusive culture for everyone regardless of background and characteristics. The NMC said that this will be underpinned by a strong anti-racist ethos and a commitment to improve the experience for the public and nursing and midwifery professionals.
 - 4.7 The plan is iterative, and the NMC noted that it will be required to test and learn whilst responding to feedback. It is looking to introduce regular feedback loops in the delivery of the project, and the plan will be refined frequently.
 - 4.8 The NMC stated that the plan is the morally right thing to do, and will ultimately lead to higher morale and better performance, including in FTP.
 - 4.9 The NMC will introduce a culture transformation coaching team, comprised of five coaches, beginning in April 2025. The coaches will be part of the cultural transformation steering group, which will be co-chaired by the Interim Chief Executive and Registrar and the Executive Director of People and Culture. The group will be comprised of staff from varying grades and characteristics from across the organisation, with the aim of being less hierarchical and more inclusive.
 - 4.10 The NMC set out the key actions and goals throughout each year of the plan. A cultural transformation network will be established, and work is ongoing to develop and select members.
 - 4.11 Psychological safety will be a central theme of the NMC's culture plan, and an organisation-wide consultation will be launched into hybrid working, in accordance with one of the ICR recommendations. Group members discussed staff satisfaction more widely, and suggested that the NMC capture the voices of those who leave the organisation.
 - 4.12 A further consultation will be launched to clearly reidentify the NMC's values. This will be supported by values-based decision-making coaching, aimed at providing managers with the tools to embed values and behaviours into policy and process. A pilot will also be introduced on values-based interviewing.
 - 4.13 The culture plan will embed engagement events with NMC staff. This will entail regular meetings with the employee forum, union meetings and the staff network on a quarterly basis, to increase the opportunities for staff to feedback to senior leaders.
 - 4.14 The plan will involve six rounds of EDI training, the first two modules of which will commence in Q1 of 2025/26. This will introduce strategies for race and gender equity for staff and registrants, as part of the EDI plan. The EDI plan is currently being updated, and this will be complete by Q4 2024/25.
 - 4.15 Q2 2025/26 will see a review of the Empowered to Speak Up service, and an assessment will be undertaken to identify pain points in the NMC's day-to-day work with a view to removing these and creating more capacity and enjoyment in employees' work.

- 4.16 The NMC is developing a project on regulatory fairness. Some of the actions arising from this will be incorporated into the turnaround recommendations from PwC.
- 4.17 Group members commended the continuous improvement approach adopted by the NMC, and emphasised the importance of genuine collaborative working with stakeholders.
- 4.18 The NMC acknowledged that communications is an area for improvement, and indicated that it is currently considering its communications and engagement strategy in respect of the plan. The NMC noted that it has shared the plan with the GMC and CQC, who also have an interest in organisational culture, and will continue to engage with other organisations to share best practice.
- 4.19 Group members noted the need for performance measures and indicators to monitor progress. The group also emphasised the need for a data-driven and triangulated approach to this.
- 4.20 Group members enquired as to the extent of midwifery input into the plan. The NMC confirmed that it has considered this, and has a midwife sitting on the steering group.

5. Update on the publication of the Ijeoma Omambala KC reports

- 5.1 The NMC acknowledged that the two reports are taking longer than originally expected, and noted the discomfort for stakeholders. It said that NMC staff are also concerned about the delay.
- 5.2 The NMC emphasised the importance of the reports' independence, and that independence means the NMC should avoid requesting that Ijeoma Omambala KC complete her work more quickly. It is the NMC Council's view that the reports must remain independent, and the NMC should avoid making any attempt to expedite the reports.
- 5.3 The latest delay revolves around a whistleblowing report that concerns the NMC's whistleblowing policies and processes. Ijeoma Omambala KC needed to see the outcome of these processes before finalising her outcome, and the NMC confirmed that the report in question has not yet been finalised.
- 5.4 The NMC reiterated that it continues to prepare for receipt of the reports, and said that it is critical that they are reviewed in a positive and constructive manner internally. The reports are viewed as an opportunity for learning, and the NMC affirmed that the reports cannot derail its progress in respect of its cultural transformation and FTP plans.
- 5.5 The NMC is unable to give a date for the reports' publication, but has agreed with Ijeoma Omambala KC that she will give the NMC two-weeks' notice before it will receive the drafts for fact-checking. The Chair noted this.

ACTION: NMC to notify the group when it receives the Omambala reports.

- 5.6 Group members enquired as to what measures are being taken to ensure the recommendations from the reports are incorporated into the change programme. The NMC said that it has ensured the culture plan is iterative to

allow it to take account of the reports, and the cultural transformation steering group is meeting every month to amend and enhance the plan where necessary. The NMC has also restructured to create a department with responsibility for tracking measures from every review the NMC receives.

6. Update on the publication of the PSA performance review

- 6.1 The PSA provided an update on the new timeline for publication of the NMC performance review covering 2023/24. The original plan was to publish in September 2024, covering the review period of July 2023 to June 2024. However, this was delayed to take account of the three independent reviews, and the review period was extended to December 2024.
- 6.2 The PSA has now taken the decision to complete its performance review before receipt of the further delayed Ijeoma Omambala KC reviews, and will publish this in June 2025. The PSA noted that it is in the public interest for it to publish the periodic review report, and it has decided not to wait for the Omambala reviews given the uncertainty on timings.
- 6.3 The PSA noted that clear communication around the report is important, and emphasised that it will take account of the Omambala reports when received. The PSA confirmed that it has published a statement on its website outlining its approach.

7. Data cleansing update

- 7.1 The NMC gave an update on its ongoing data cleansing work. It said that its legacy systems do not enforce data capture and standardise data. As a result, data is not always complete, consistent or accurate. The NMC is therefore undertaking manual work to ensure data is usable.
- 7.2 This work forms part of the Modernisation of Technology Services project, and the NMC's new case management system (CMS) is due to be enrolled in full by 2026. The data cleansing work will allow the NMC to provide clear and accurate data to stakeholders, and will enable it to perform its regulatory functions better.
- 7.3 The NMC took the decision to cleanse its data following publication of the ICR. Five employees have been reviewing every live case in the NMC's CMS to ensure employer data is correct. This was prioritised because it assists the NMC in breaking down data to make it discernible for external stakeholders. It will also provide a breakdown of cases based on the relevant NHS trust and by nation.
- 7.4 The data cleansing work is due to be complete by the end of March 2025, and the first published set of data will be disclosed to Chief Nursing Officers (CNOs) in mid-April 2025. Additional data will be published on a quarterly basis throughout the rest of the financial year.
- 7.5 The NMC plans to show case data according to how many cases are at each stage of the FTP process and by: region of employment; where the referral came from; and to show how old they are. These categories have been identified following engagement with CNOs and other stakeholders.

- 7.6 The ultimate goal is to have an interactive dashboard by the end of 2025, which will be available to stakeholders.
- 7.7 Group members enquired as to whether this includes social care data or solely NHS data. The NMC confirmed that it will include data from both settings, and will allow for a breakdown based on 'hierarchy', which is difficult for social care data. It said that social care data will be categorised by country.
- 7.8 The group commended this ongoing work and welcomed the update.

8. Frequency of meetings

- 8.1 The Chair noted that the terms of reference stipulate that the group review the frequency of meetings after six months, and accordingly the group was due to discuss this.
- 8.2 The group's next two meetings are scheduled for 29 April and 25 June, at which point the group will receive an update on the NMC's progress against the ICR recommendations.
- 8.3 The Chair noted that the NMC has indicated that material provided for the group will be the same material prepared for Council, so there is a possibility to align with Council meetings.
- 8.4 The NMC considered that a review of frequency of meetings is premature at this stage, and proposed that the group defer this item to the June meeting.
- 8.5 The Chair noted this, and the group agreed to revisit the frequency of meetings at the June meeting.

ACTION: PSA secretariat to include an item on frequency of meetings at the June meeting.

9. AOB

- 9.1 One group member asked the NMC about its decision to deprioritise its work on advanced practice, as discussed at the most recent NMC Council meeting. The NMC stated that its priority is on FTP, which requires considerable resource, as well as culture transformation and leadership. The NMC will consult on its code and modernising revalidation in Autumn 2026, and the modularised versions will be finalised in the latter of 2027. The NMC acknowledged that this has led to advanced practice being deprioritised, but confirmed that a paper setting out advanced practice principles will be presented to Council at the end of March 2025. The NMC indicated that it wishes for there to be a clear position on advanced practice by 2027/28.
- 9.2 One group member enquired as to what remit the group may have to consider the cost implications of the NMC's cultural transformation work. The NMC confirmed that falls within its Council's purview, and the Chair confirmed that the financial implications of the plan do not fall within the group's terms of reference.

Annex 1: Attendee list

| Organisation/Role | Name |
|---|---|
| Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care, DHSC | Deborah Sturdy |
| CNO England | Mark Radford (deputising for Duncan Burton) |
| CNO Scotland | Anne Armstrong |
| CNO Wales | Sue Tranka |
| CMidO England | Kate Brintworth |
| CMidO Wales | Karen Jewell |
| CMidO Scotland | Justine Craig |
| CMidO NI | Caroline Keown |
| DHSC | Aisling Fox (deputising for Phil Harper) |
| Welsh Government | Ian Owen |
| DoH NI | Peter Barbour |
| NMC Interim Chief Executive and Registrar | Paul Rees |
| NMC Chair, Council | Sir David Warren |
| NMC Chief of Staff | Matt Hayday |
| NMC Executive Director of Professional Regulation | Lesley Mansen |
| NMC Deputy Director, Professional Regulation | Paul Johnson |
| NMC Chief Information Officer | Tom Moore |
| NMC Acting Executive Director of Strategy and Insight | Emma Westcott |
| NMC Assistant Director, Culture Transformation | Charlotte Eimer |
| NMC Employee Forum Co-Chair | Devika Baude (deputising for Colette Howarth) |
| NMC | Noita Sadler |
| PSA Chief Executive | Alan Clamp |
| PSA Director of Regulation and Accreditation | Graham Mockler |
| RCN General Secretary and Chief Executive | Professor Nicola Ranger |
| RCN | Lucy Muchina |
| RCM Chief Executive | Gill Walton |
| Unite | Dave Munday |
| Unison NMC staff representation | Anne Carvalho |
| Unison registrants representation | Stuart Tuckwood (deputising for Gail Adams) |
| Expert- NHS England, National Maternity Lead for Equality | Wendy Olayiwola |
| Expert- Chief Executive, Queen's Nursing Institute | Dr Cate Wood (deputising for Dr Crystal Oldman) |
| Expert- Chief Executive, Patient Safety Learning | Helen Hughes |
| Expert- Social Care | Derek Barron |

Annex 2: Action Log

On track (including not started) Delayed (or medium risk of delay for projects) Overdue (or high risk of delay for projects) Complete

| Mtg. Date | Item No. | Action point | Owner | Date required | Action progress | Status |
|------------------|----------|--|-----------------|--------------------------------|--|--------|
| 9 September 2024 | 2.9 | Circulate new version of Terms of Reference to the Group for agreement | PSA Secretariat | 13 September 2024 | Complete (13 September 2024). | |
| 9 September 2024 | 3.2 | Members to send suggestions for experts to the PSA | All members | 16 September 2024 | Complete (16 September 2024). | |
| 9 September 2024 | 3.2 | Experts: compile list of suggestions and seek expressions of interest | PSA Secretariat | 19 September 2024 | Complete (20 September 2024). | |
| 9 September 2024 | 4.1 | NMC to share a version of the action plan with the Group | NMC | As soon as possible (date TBC) | Complete (20 September 2024). The NMC made the action plan materials going to Council available in parallel with the publication of Council papers, making clear that Council would be approving the plan in principle but that the document would be liable to further adjustment and refinement in | |

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| | | | | | the light of the Group's comments and wider discussion | |
| 2 October 2024 | 2.2 | NMC to share the detailed version of the fitness to practise improvement plan with the group in advance of the meeting on 18 October 2024 | NMC | TBC | Complete (16 October 2024) | |
| 2 October 2024 | 2.14 | PSA secretariat to include an agenda item on the NMC's governance structure and assurance framework at the IOG meeting in November | PSA secretariat | 1 week in advance of the IOG meeting in November (date TBC) | Complete (20 November 2024) | |
| 2 October 2024 | 3.1 | PSA secretariat to share a list of experts who have expressed an interest in joining the group | PSA secretariat | 3 October 2024 | Complete (3 October 2024) | |
| 2 October 2024 | 3.1 | PSA secretariat to review expressions of interest from experts and make a recommendation to the group | PSA secretariat | 11 October 2024 | Complete (9 October 2024) | |
| 18 October 2024 | 3.1 | PSA secretariat to arrange the next meeting as soon as possible. | PSA secretariat | TBC (November) | Complete (25 October 2024) | |
| 28 November 2024 | 2.23 | PSA secretariat to include an agenda item on the NMC's fitness to practise performance at the next meeting | PSA secretariat | 31 January 2025 | Complete (31 January 2025) | |
| 28 November 2024 | 2.23 | NMC to provide EDI data on the FTP caseload at the next meeting | NMC | 31 January 2025 | Complete (31 January 2025) | |
| 28 November 2024 | 3.1 | PSA secretariat to arrange the group's next meeting in the week ending 24 January or 31 January | PSA secretariat | 31 January 2025 | Complete – meeting scheduled | |

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| | | | | | for 31 January 2025 | |
| 31 January 2025 | 3.8 | PSA secretariat to include an agenda item for an update on the Ijeoma Omambala KC reports at the next meeting | PSA secretariat | 12 March 2025 | Complete (12 March 2025) | |
| 31 January 2025 | 4.10 | NMC to provide the group with insights from its data cleansing work at a future meeting | NMC | 12 March 2025 | Complete (12 March 2025) | |
| 31 January 2025 | 4.10 | NMC to provide the group with FTP scorecard data at future meetings | NMC | 12 March 2025 | Complete (12 March 2025) | |
| 12 March 2025 | 2.5 | PSA secretariat to include an item on the FTP dashboard data at the next meeting covering FTP as a substantive item | PSA secretariat | TBC | | |
| 12 March 2025 | 3.7 | NMC to share its paper on safeguarding with the group | NMC | 29 April 2025 | | |
| 12 March 2025 | 5.5 | NMC to notify the group when it receives the Omambala reports | NMC | TBC | | |
| 12 March 2025 | 8.5 | PSA secretariat to include an item on frequency of meetings at the June meeting | PSA secretariat | 25 June 2025 | | |