

NMC Independent Oversight Group

Summary of Meeting held on 31 January 2025

1. Welcome

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed the new NMC Interim Chief Executive and Registrar, Paul Rees MBE, to the group.

2. Introduction of new NMC Interim Chief Executive and Registrar

- 2.1 Paul Rees introduced himself to the group. Paul outlined his experience and track record in transforming culture and performance in previous roles.
- 2.2 Paul's priority as Interim Chief Executive and Registrar of the NMC is to: implement a new, positive culture; improve operational performance; develop standards work to support nursing and midwifery professionals; strengthen leadership to drive through cultural change.
- 2.3 This improved culture will be centred around five pillars: strong leadership; a values-based approach; embedding EDI; psychological safety; and embedding an approach of enjoying work so staff have job satisfaction.
- 2.4 Paul confirmed that the cultural transformation plan will be published by the end of March 2025.
- 2.5 Paul thanked Helen Herniman for leading the NMC through a difficult period, and also thanked Kuljt Dhillon for her hard work in building a strong sense of EDI in the organisation.
- 2.6 Group members enquired as to the relationship between the Interim Chief Executive and Registrar, Council and the incoming Chair. Paul confirmed that he has met with all Council members both outside and during Council; Council members are determined to be part of this process of improvement, and will continue to feed into the cultural transformation plan before publication in March 2025.

3. Delay to the publication of the Ijeoma Omambala KC reports

- 3.1 The Chair asked the NMC for an update on when the group can expect to receive the Ijeoma Omambala KC reports on fitness to practise and the handling of whistleblowing disclosures. The Chair noted that the terms of reference were approved 15 months ago, with an initial reporting date of Spring 2024. This publication date has been pushed back, first to November 2024 and then January 2025.
- 3.2 The NMC stated that it asked Ijeoma Omambala KC to pause her investigation to take account of the findings of the Independent Culture Review (ICR) in July 2024. It had hoped that Ijeoma Omambala KC would complete her engagement with relevant parties by July 2024, but she required the outcomes of a number

of confidential matters which would inform the investigation and are relevant to the terms of reference.

- 3.3 Ijeoma Omambala KC is awaiting the outcome of grievances raised with the NMC when the Independent Culture Review was published, as well as ongoing confidential matters which are currently under investigation.
- 3.4 The NMC said that two investigations are relevant to the Omambala reviews, one of which remains ongoing owing to the need to shift the timing of the investigation.
- 3.5 The NMC confirmed that it hopes to receive the Omambala reports by the end of Q4 2024/25, and will update the group when it has greater clarity on the timetable.
- 3.6 Group members asked how that will fit alongside the timetable for publishing the cultural transformation plan in March 2025. The NMC acknowledged this, and said that its plan will be sufficiently high level to ensure it can be flexible and take account of Ijeoma Omambala KC's findings. The NMC noted that these findings will potentially be highly relevant to the cultural transformation plan.
- 3.7 The NMC noted that its staff are keen to see the reports, and a major programme of work is underway to support colleagues with their engagement and as part of the response to the reports' findings.
- 3.8 Group members emphasised the need to ensure the group is kept informed. The NMC indicated that it will provide a more detailed update at the next meeting in March 2025.

ACTION: PSA secretariat to include an agenda item for an update on the Ijeoma Omambala KC reports at the next meeting.

4. Fitness to Practise Improvement Plan update

- 4.1 The NMC provided an update on the fitness to practise (FTP) improvement plan. Since instigating the plan in April 2024, the NMC acknowledged that the context and operating environment has evolved.
- 4.2 The plan has been adjusted due to higher than predicted referral numbers, which have been sustained over the course of the last ten months. It has also been adapted to incorporate the recommendations of the ICR.
- 4.3 Anthony Omo, seconded from the GMC for a three month period, undertook a review of guidance and risk thresholds. In line with this, the NMC is making significant revisions to its guidance in March.
- 4.4 The NMC has recruited Donna O'Boyle on a secondment from the Scottish Government, to provide additional clinical and regulatory experience in the FTP function. The NMC accepted that this additional specialist support needs to be embedded and sustained.
- 4.5 The FTP plan will run in three phases. Phase 1 (April 2024-March 2025): *Stabilisation* involves modernising systems, clearing delayed cases, onboarding additional specialist expertise and strengthening the approach to safeguarding. Phase 2: *Improvement* will commence in April 2025, and will see the

implementation of revised screening thresholds, improving processes and frameworks, embedding a more person-centred service and investing further in NMC staff and its culture. Phase 3: *Steady State* will be reached in April 2026, and will see the NMC delivering safe, swift and proportionate decisions that are achieved by way of its fair, fast and effective processes.

- 4.6 The group considered the FTP data in detail. The NMC noted that screening is almost matching the number of incoming referrals against the number closed, and the case age at screening has reduced. However, investigations are struggling to keep up with the high numbers of incoming referrals. It expects the recruitment of additional specialist support to address this.
- 4.7 The group noted the reduction in the legal review backlog, from 542 in September 2024 to 190 in December 2024. The number of hearing outcomes is less than expected; the NMC said this will be a focus of the next phase.
- 4.8 The NMC's current focus is on the review of thresholds and screening guidance, a targeted review of lower risk cases at the investigation stage, and the next release of technology in April 2025.
- 4.9 The NMC noted the group's previous request for more granular data, and has responded by capturing more data by employer and categorised according to all four nations. The NMC has also undertaken an exercise to cleanse its data, and has committed to providing a dataset by March 2025 that shows caseload by country, employer type and age profiling. The NMC accepted that its legacy case management system presents a challenge as regards the collection and provision of data, and said that its move to a new platform will improve the accessibility and quality of data in future.
- 4.10 The Chair emphasised the need to ensure the group receives one correct version of the truth. The NMC indicated that it will provide the group with insights from its data cleansing work to discuss any identified trends. The NMC also said that it will share the FTP scorecards contained in the Council papers at future IOG meetings.

ACTION: NMC to provide the group with insights from its data cleansing work at a future meeting.

ACTION: NMC to provide the group with FTP scorecard data at future meetings.

- 4.11 Group members welcomed the positive signs of progress, but noted that the overall caseload remains at 6,633 cases, 2,969 of which are at screening. The group asked whether more clinical expertise could be utilised at the screening stage. The NMC said that it has a team of clinical advisors, which senior decision-makers are able to consult at the screening stage.
- 4.12 The group asked what more could be done to increase the number of hearings. The Royal College of Nursing has recruited 17 more lawyers to help prevent delays to hearings, and the NMC recognised that there are too many inefficiencies in the hearings process. It is planning to set up a working group to assess these, and invited group members to submit their feedback on this.
- 4.13 Group members asked whether the NMC has heard from the patient voice when considering its FTP plan. The NMC confirmed that it has engaged with

stakeholder groups and has been reviewing people's experience of the process. Group members advised that working in partnership needs to be reflected from the patient perspective to ensure person-centred care is genuine.

- 4.14 Group members commented that the NMC's data appeared to be NHS-focused, and noted that a significant proportion of registered nurses work in the social care sector. The group noted that social care is disproportionately represented in FTP, and asked whether Equality Impact Assessments take this into account. The NMC said it will consider this, and noted that Donna O'Boyle's expertise in this area will inform its approach moving forwards.
- 4.15 Group members welcomed the increased focus on safeguarding, including the roll out of the Safeguarding Hub, and asked what further support the NMC is providing to registrants. The NMC noted that it has a dedicated team for supporting registrants, which includes a mental health practitioner. The team works alongside FTP staff to understand what measures are required to support registrants throughout the FTP process. It also noted that it is considering its approach to engaging with employers, and acknowledged that this is more straightforward with NHS employers.
- 4.16 The group debated whether it would be helpful to assess the NMC's FTP data against other international regulators, and acknowledged this is a complex issue.
- 4.17 The group considered the EDI data insights arising from the FTP data. The NMC indicated that the next phase (*Improvement*) will assess the root causes of this, with a view to progressing improvement in the new financial year.
- 4.18 Group members noted the increase in referrals of international nurses, and expressed concern at the continued lack of improvement in the data, especially for Black nurses. The NMC said that it will take time to see the impact of the changes on outcomes.

5. Next meeting – date and agenda items

- 5.1 The Chair confirmed the next meeting will be on 12 March 2025 and will focus on the cultural transformation plan.

6. AOB

- 6.1 One group member asked what assurances the IOG can receive regarding the absence of the Executive Director of Professional Practice, and asked whether this is in any way a consequence of previous confidential disclosures made. The NMC said that it is unable to comment on individual cases. The Chair noted this.

Annex 1: Attendee list

Organisation/Role	Name
Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care, DHSC	Deborah Sturdy
CNO England	Acosia Nyanin (deputising for Duncan Burton)
CNO NI	Mary Frances McManus (deputising for Maria McIlgorm)
CNO Scotland	Anne Armstrong
CMidO England	Kate Brintworth
CMidO Wales	Karen Jewell
Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care, DHSC	Deborah Sturdy
DHSC	Phil Harper
Welsh Government	Ian Owen
DoH NI	Peter Barbour
Scottish Government	Iona Duckett
NMC Interim Chief Executive and Registrar	Paul Rees
NMC Chair, Council	Sir David Warren
NMC Employee Forum Co-Chair	Colette Howarth
NMC Interim Executive Director of Strategy and Insight	Kuljit Dhillon
NMC Executive Director of Professional Regulation	Lesley Mansen
NMC Assistant Director, Fitness to Practise	Jen Taylor
NMC Executive Director of Resources and Technology Services and former Acting Chief Executive and Registrar	Helen Herniman
NMC	Fausto Felice
NMC	Noita Sadler
NMC	Roberta Beaton
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
Unite	Dave Munday
Unison	Anne Carvalho
National Guardian's Office (EDI/culture expert)	Charlie Cassell (deputising for Dr Jayne Chidgey-Clark)
Expert- NHS England, National Maternity Lead for Equality	Wendy Olayiwola
Expert- Chief Executive, Queen's Nursing Institute	Dr Crystal Oldman
Expert- Chief Executive, Patient Safety Learning	Helen Hughes
Expert- Social Care	Derek Barron
Expert- Chief Executive, Patients Association	Rachel Power

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 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 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		
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		
31 January 2025	4.10	NMC to provide the group with FTP scorecard data at future meetings	NMC	12 March 2025		