From the Chief Executive and Registrar

27 May 2026

Dear Colleague

I am writing to update health and care providers and employers about an historical problem recently identified with the NMC's process for considering health and character declarations by nurses, midwives and nursing associates through our registration and revalidation processes.

The process

For a nursing or midwifery professional to join or remain on the NMC register, they must declare any health or character issues that may affect their ability to practise safely and effectively.

Declarations are first considered by a specialist NMC team, and all cases of concern should be referred to an Assistant Registrar – an internal post-holder – for a decision.

Not all health conditions or character concerns are necessarily incompatible with being on the NMC register and practising safely as a nurse, midwife or nursing associate, such as driving offences.

We assess declarations on a case-by-case basis, in line with our Guidance on Health and Character. In each case, we look closely at the underlying circumstances of the health concern or offending – to determine whether there's a risk to the public that we need to act on.

We consider factors such as the applicant's age when the offence took place, how long ago it took place, whether it was an isolated incident, and whether the incident was linked to nursing or midwifery practice.

What we have uncovered

The NMC, which has been subject to a number of critical reports, including the Independent Culture Review in July 2024, is under new leadership – and has rolled out a three-year transformation plan.

I was made the substantive Chief Executive and Registrar in July, having previously held the role on an interim basis. A new Chair, Ron Barclay-Smith, took up his role last April.

Virtually the whole of the Executive team has changed over the last year, with a string of new appointments having been made.

As a new top team, we are determined to turn around the NMC once and for all and ensure that it becomes the strong and independent regulator that everyone wants to see.
Under our new leadership:

- A new set of values – Integrity, Fairness, Respect, Equity and Effectiveness – as well as a new set of behaviours, was rolled out in September
- A speak up culture is being promoted, and
- Staff are being encouraged to highlight areas for improvement.

As a result of the new value of Integrity and the emphasis on the speak up culture, a member of staff came forward to raise concerns about the historical failure of the NMC to follow the full process – described above – for investigating health and character concerns.

Over a 12-year period, registration and revalidation applications which included health and character declarations were reviewed by our specialist team but not consistently referred to an Assistant Registrar in line with the established process.

The comprehensive action we've taken

As soon as the nature of the issue was shared with the Executive team, in February, a rapid review of the cases was commissioned.

To do this, we brought in a team of paralegals, who worked alongside our staff team to review all 18,060 registration and revalidation applications over the 12-year period, to determine whether the correct process was followed in each case.

The rapid review has determined that no further action is required in 17,639 cases (98%).

During the rapid review the NMC has undertaken risk assessments to establish whether it should seek to restrict a professional's practice through an Interim Order. At this stage, it has not been deemed necessary to seek any Interim Orders, however as always, risk assessments are kept under close review.

This morning we're contacting (27 May) 421 nursing and midwifery professionals who need to provide further information prior to a decision being made by an Assistant Registrar.

We're explaining to each individual what has happened and what it means for them – with tailored communication and support to help each person to engage in the process fully and swiftly. We have asked each individual to inform their employer when notified.

It is anticipated that the vast majority of the 421 cases will also require no further action, however ongoing risk assessments will take place on all cases.

An Assistant Registrar may decide to make an onward referral of some of the 421 cases to an independent panel, with a recommendation to consider the removal of a registrant from the register.

It is estimated that Assistant Registrars could make recommendations that up to 15 nursing or midwifery professionals should be removed from the nursing and midwifery register of 867,935 (0.002%). The final decision will rest with the independent panel.

Supporting those affected

All 421 cases have been reviewed from a safeguarding and wellbeing perspective to ensure that any potential risks, vulnerabilities, or support needs have been appropriately identified and considered. Where required, tailored safeguarding and wellbeing plans will be implemented to provide appropriate support and risk management for registrants throughout the process.

Our aim is to reach fair and proportionate decisions, while protecting the public and maintaining public confidence in the professions.

In the meantime, as an employer, you do not need to do anything.

We would ask you not to take any action – even if you know that one of your employees is within the 421 cohort and receives a letter from us.

All our initial letter does is to ask the nursing or midwifery professional concerned for more information. Where we also need information from an employer, we will ask the registrant for their employment details and make direct contact.

An internally-appointed decision maker, an Assistant Registrar, will use all the information received in each case, to determine whether the individual is capable of safe and effective practice.

In the vast majority of cases, the Assistant Registrar is likely to conclude that no further action is needed.

It could take 4-6 months for the Assistant Registrar to review all of the cases, however we hope that in some cases we can resolve them more quickly.

We know this will feel like a long wait for an outcome, however it's important that the Assistant Registrar looks at each case carefully.

We'll keep each registrant – and their employers where relevant – updated as this work progresses.

We would also strongly encourage you to provide your usual wellbeing support to any affected employees, at what may be a worrying time for them.

Wider assurance and next steps

As part of our three-year transformation plan in January, we set up a new directorate – Transformation and Technology Services – to drive the transformation of our operational activities.

In order to make sure that all our regulatory functions are operating as they should, the organisation will now be carrying out 'health checks'.

These will ensure all areas are following the correct processes and policies as well as quality assuring their work.

This will be followed by the setting up of a function within the Transformation and Technology Services directorate to manage a central Quality Management System, which will work in partnership with all NMC regulatory functions to ensure they consistently work in line with policy and procedures.

Our commitment

On behalf of the NMC, I apologise unreservedly for this historical failure to ensure that all health and character declarations were assessed in line with our published process. It should not have happened. This was a failure of systems which we've moved rapidly to fix.

We are building a new NMC, through a three-year transformation plan, to create the strong and independent regulator we all want to see, once and for all.

We are lifting up stones and dealing with the issues where they emerge.

Our focus now is on putting things right: protecting the public, maintaining confidence in the nursing and midwifery professions, and upholding the standards.

If you have any queries or concerns, please see our Q&A for employers on our website.

If you still have unanswered queries, then please contact the Regulation Adviser for your region from our Employer Link Service (ELS), using the contact details below. They will be happy to help.

Yours faithfully



Paul Rees MBE
Chief Executive and Registrar

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