

NMC Independent Oversight Group

Summary of Meeting held on 12 January 2025

1. Welcome

1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted apologies.

2. Fitness to practise improvement plan update (NMC)

2.1. The NMC reported on its activities completed over the past 18 months, which included:

- Establishment of the safeguarding hub
- Improvements to the member of public webform
- Implementation of the new Screening guidance
- Significant reduction in the caseload at Screening
- Increased volume of physical hearings
- Development of the operational safeguarding process and training.

2.2. The NMC said that these and other measures had resulted in an 85% reduction in the number of aged cases at Screening, and a 48% reduction in the number of cases in the reviews queue at Screening.

2.3. The NMC noted that it had achieved 72% of cases closed within 15 months (based on a rolling average) for the first time since 2021. The Chair also noted that the percentage of open cases within the 15 month timeliness target had fallen, from 63% in November 2024 to 57% in November 2025. The NMC said that it has been tackling timeliness at the front end of the process (Screening) and affirmed that capacity improvements would see gains over the course of the next year.

2.4. It was noted that the NMC's overall caseload had increased slightly since publication of the ICR (from 6,221 in July 2024 to 6,357 in November 2025, which the NMC attributed to consistently high numbers of referrals. The group also noted that there had been a 25% increase in the caseload at the Investigations stage. One group member enquired as to a backlog of 800 unallocated cases at the Investigations stage. The NMC also stressed that its focus now is on Investigations and the need to invest in a new operating model. The NMC confirmed that it is currently in the process of procuring a partner, who from April 2026 will work alongside the NMC to resolve 300 of the unallocated cases. The NMC said that it will use this partner as a vehicle to identify and embed improvements in operational performance and ways of working across its FTP teams.

- 2.5. The group enquired as to how the NMC is assured that its progress at Screening will be sustained, as its focus shifts to Investigations. The NMC said that it has garnered knowledge from the operating model adopted at Screening, and will apply this learning to other areas of the FTP process. The NMC also noted that culture is another important focus for the organisation, and that it requires strong and effective leadership to ensure the progress in its casework is sustained.
- 2.6. The NMC stated that its FTP improvement work to date had been focused on building the foundations necessary for a more efficient and proportionate service. It said that it will continue to build on these foundations over the next 12-18 months, with a focus on being fit for the future. The NMC said that a key driver will be improvements in technology, tools and automation, with this being led by a new directorate for transformation and technology services. The NMC is also focusing on better ways of working, by obtaining earlier clinical, safeguarding and EDI advice on cases.
- 2.7. The Chair asked the NMC how the findings from the PwC diagnostic report - which the NMC provided a summary of in the papers for this meeting - had informed its latest FTP improvement plan. The NMC confirmed that the findings and recommendations from this work had been incorporated into the plan for the next two years.
- 2.8. The NMC is launching a new governance structure, which will see an operational performance meeting held fortnightly. It is also developing metrics to measure whether delivery and impact are on track going forwards. The NMC emphasised that FTP is an ongoing programme of improvement, on which it is reflecting and learning regularly, including through its Log and Learn process.
- 2.9. The NMC noted that it is developing a new end-to-end quality assurance framework, with quality gateways at key decision points to ensure compliance with the framework. The NMC acknowledged that it currently has multiple frameworks that are inconsistent. The group welcomed this, including the NMC's focus on KPIs at a team level.
- 2.10. One group member noted that the annual cost of FTP had increased by around 30% in the past year. The NMC stated that its interventions are targeted at quality and timeliness, as well as the cost and efficiency of the process. The NMC said the roll out of more advanced technological tools, led by its new transformation and technology services directorate, will result in a more efficient service. The NMC also said that by the end of 2026, all new casework will be handled on its new Case Management System which will increase efficiency.
- 2.11. One group member commented that effective communications will be critical for the NMC to maintain momentum. The NMC agreed, and noted that as part of the restructure it has created a new communications and engagement directorate. The NMC is currently in the process of developing a new communications strategy.

2.12. One group member expressed concern about the increased caseload at Investigations, and intimated that this could lead to a bottleneck of cases at the Case Examiner stage. The group member contended that the NMC should increase the number of Case Examiners now, to mitigate this risk. They also noted that there remain a significant number of (over 1000) cases awaiting a hearing. The NMC confirmed that it is boosting the capacity of Case Examiners, and reiterated that its workstreams are now aimed at balancing improvement across wider areas outside of Screening.

3. Meetings frequency (IOG members)

3.1. The Chair introduced this item. The group's terms of reference, drafted in August 2024, state that the group would meet every six weeks, and that there was an expectation the group would meet for at least two years keeping meeting frequency under review.

3.2. The Chair noted that the survey of group members¹ discussed at the November 2025 IOG meeting found that there remain concerns in all three areas surveyed (FTP, culture, and safeguarding), but there was a significant amount of work being done that was showing early signs of improvement. Group members called for more evidence of impact and outcomes for a greater level of assurance.

3.3. The group discussed three options for meeting frequency: continue with meeting every six weeks; reduce the frequency to eight weeks, to broadly align with the NMC's Council meetings; or reduce the frequency to quarterly.

3.4. The NMC said that it welcomes being held to account, and that it values input and feedback from group members. The NMC stated that it treats IOG meetings with the same seriousness as Council meetings. The NMC said that the current frequency is hard to balance with its Council meetings. The NMC said IOG meetings generate additional work for staff including senior leaders. The NMC said that the work involved in preparing for meetings is considerable, and that it wants to focus its resources on delivering the work stakeholders and the public expect.

3.5. The group discussed the options presented. All group members agreed that continued scrutiny is necessary and after discussion, the majority of group members agreed eight-weekly meetings would be proportionate to the group's current level of assurance.

3.6. It was agreed that the group would meet eight-weekly for six months and meeting frequency would be revisited in June 2026.

4. AOB

4.1. None.

¹ As reported in the summary note of the meeting on 3 November 2025.

Annex 1: Attendee list

Organisation/Role	Name
Deputy Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) England	Acosia Nyanin (deputising for Duncan Burton)
CNO Scotland	Aisha Holloway
CMiDOWales	Karen Jewell
CMiDONI	Caroline Keown
DHSC	Phil Harper
Welsh Government	Ian Owen
NMC Chief Executive and Registrar	Paul Rees
NMC Chief of Staff	Ben Wesson
NMC Executive Director of Transformation and Technology Services	Richard Cartland
NMC Executive Director of Professional Regulation	Lesley Maslen
NMC Assistant Director, FTP	Jen Taylor
NMC	Caitlin Law
NMC	Roberta Beaton
NMC Co-Chair of the staff network	Niamh Fleming
NMC	Silvia Dominici
PSA Chief Executive	Alan Clamp
PSA Interim Director of Regulation and Accreditation	Amanda Partington-Todd
RCN	Lynn Woolsey
RCM Chief Executive	Gill Walton
Unite	Dave Munday
UNISON registrants representation	Gail Adams
Expert – National Guardian’s Office	Beth Carter
Expert – social care	Heather Smith
Expert - NHS England, National Maternity Lead for Equality	Wendy Olayiwola
Expert - Chief Executive, Patient Safety Learning	Helen Hughes

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	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	6 August 2025	Complete (6 August 2025)	
12 March 2025	3.7	NMC to share its paper on safeguarding with the group	NMC	29 April 2025	Complete (29 April 2025)	
12 March 2025	5.5	NMC to notify the group when it receives the Omambala reports	NMC	TBC	Complete (15 September 2025)	
12 March 2025	8.5	PSA secretariat to include an item on frequency of meetings at the June meeting	PSA secretariat	25 June 2025	Complete (25 June 2025)	
29 April 2025	2.6	NMC to notify the group as soon as possible when it has an indication of Ijeoma Omambala KC's estimated timetable for the reports' publication	NMC	TBC	Complete (6 August 2025)	
29 April 2025	4.1	NMC to present an update, including detailed data, on its oldest FTP cases at a future meeting	NMC	6 August 2025	Complete (6 August 2025)	
29 April 2025	4.6	NMC to present its revised FTP improvement plan to the group when approved by Council	NMC	TBC		
25 June 2025	2.6	NMC to refrain from using acronyms without first explaining their meaning at future meetings	NMC	TBC		
6 August 2025	3.10	NMC to update the group when it has been informed that all information has been shared from Ijeoma Omambala KC to the newly commissioned lawyers	NMC	15 September 2025	Complete (15 September 2025)	

6 August 2025	4.18	PSA Secretariat to include an agenda item to consider the effectiveness of the NMC Council, with the Chair of the NMC in attendance, at a future meeting	PSA Secretariat	TBC	Complete (3 November 2025)	
15 September 2025	1.4	NMC to notify the group when the independent investigations into FTP and whistleblowing will be published	NMC	TBC	Complete	
15 September 2025	3.9	NMC to include graphs showing the age profile of caseload over time and by stage in the dataset for all meetings covering FTP	NMC	TBC		
3 November 2025	2.5	NMC to present its plan in response to the reports' recommendations to the group at a future meeting	NMC	TBC		
3 November 2025	7.1	PSA secretariat to share the latest FTP dataset with the group	PSA secretariat	3 November 2025	Complete (3 November 2025)	