

NMC Independent Oversight Group

Summary of Meeting held on 6 August 2025

1. Welcome

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

2. Frequency of meetings

- 2.1. The Chair stated the PSA's view that the group has not received sufficient assurance that progress is being made and in a timely way. Accordingly, the PSA does not support any change in the frequency of meetings, and the Chair emphasised the need to keep the momentum up.
- 2.2. The Chair noted that there was insufficient detail in the papers at the last meeting, and consequently the PSA now requires the NMC to provide the papers two weeks in advance of meetings to allow time to review them and request further detail if necessary. The papers for this meeting were received two weeks previously, and further detail was requested and provided.
- 2.3. The Chair noted that he had received several emails from group members after the last meeting expressing concern at the NMC proposal to reduce the frequency of meetings.
- 2.4. Group members unanimously agreed that the frequency of meetings should remain at six weeks, and that the group needs to demonstrate fulfilment of the terms of reference before reducing meeting frequency.

3. Update on the independent investigations into FTP and whistleblowing, formerly the 'Omambala reviews'

- 3.1. The NMC provided the group with an update on the newly commissioned independent investigations into FTP and whistleblowing. Last month, the NMC announced that Ijeoma Omambala KC would no longer be writing these reports due to personal reasons. The NMC took the decision to recommission the reports to avoid any further delays.
- 3.2. The report into the NMC's handling of a number of FTP cases will now be completed by Victoria Butler-Cole KC and David Hopkins, of 39 Essex Chambers. The report into the NMC's handling of the initial whistleblowing disclosures will now be completed by Lucy McLynn, who is Chair of the whistleblowing charity Protect.
- 3.3. The NMC confirmed that Ijeoma Omambala KC will be handing all documents she acquired during the course of her review to the newly appointed investigating lawyers directly and without any NMC involvement.

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- 3.4. The NMC acknowledged the ongoing frustration the delays have caused to stakeholders, and confirmed that the reports are expected to be published in mid-Autumn.
 - 3.5. The NMC said that it has not received any of Ijeoma Omambala KC's findings, nor did it receive any draft reports, summaries of findings or bullet points.
 - 3.6. The NMC confirmed that the original terms of reference still apply to the newly commissioned reviews, and that the objective and scope is unchanged. The NMC said that the instructions to the newly appointed lawyers have been updated to make them relevant, noting that some provisions were no longer relevant given the passage of time since the reports were first instructed (November 2023).
 - 3.7. The NMC noted that the original terms of reference provided that the whistleblowing report would be confidential, whereas the new instructions stipulate that the report will be published. The NMC said that the focus of this report remains on whether the whistleblower was treated appropriately, and whether the NMC followed its processes. The new instructions also expand the scope to include whether the policies, if followed, represent good practice.
 - 3.8. One group member expressed his support for the change in commission, and said that it would have caused further problems if the delays continued. Another group member asked if the NMC could be more specific as to when the reports are expected to be published. The NMC emphasised that it hopes to receive the reports as soon as possible. The NMC General Counsel is in regular contact with the newly commissioned lawyers to establish progress and to avoid any unexpected further delays. The NMC noted that the factors behind the delays are not a factor now, and that it does not anticipate significant delays to the reports' publication.
 - 3.9. Group members asked if all support arrangements are in place to support the whistleblower, noting that it would be wrong if the whistleblower felt that the continued delays compromised their ability to support the recommissioned investigation. The NMC said that it aims to support people who speak up and not to cause them detriment, and that it is treating the whistleblower with courtesy and compassion, as well as providing them with all the information necessary to enable them to put their case forward.
 - 3.10. Group members asked that the NMC update the group when it has been informed that all information has been shared from Ijeoma Omambala KC to the newly commissioned lawyers. Group members emphasised the need for assurance that the lawyers are working to the timescales described by the NMC.

ACTION: 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.

- 3.11. The Chair noted that there is some nervousness among the group around the recommissioning of the reports, but that the update provided by the NMC was clearer than the update published on its website.

4. NMC FTP performance and improvement plan

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- 4.1. The Chair noted that the PSA will be conducting an audit of the NMC's FTP function as part of the 2024/25 performance review.
 - 4.2. The PSA requested additional FTP data from the NMC as part of the papers, and this level of detail will be expected at all future meetings covering FTP as a substantive agenda item. This will enable the group to track progress over time. The group reviewed detailed datasets covering all stages of the NMC's FTP function in the papers.
 - 4.3. The NMC presented the actions it has taken in respect of the ICR recommendations as part of the FTP improvement plan. The NMC affirmed that Recommendations 7¹, 9² and 30³ are complete, and the group saw evidence to support this.
 - 4.4. Group members conveyed positive feedback regarding Recommendation 9. In respect of Recommendation 30, group members asserted that continuity of case management will be key for the NMC moving forwards.
 - 4.5. Group members commented that there is a risk that actions are tick boxed and emphasised the need to ensure that progress is sustained. The NMC acknowledged this, and noted that changes are being built into FTP processes.
 - 4.6. The NMC presented an overview of the FTP data. The caseload is on a downward trajectory, falling from 6,511 in January 2025 to 6,186 in June 2025, which the NMC submitted is a positive sign given the repeatedly high number of referrals.
 - 4.7. Other highlights include:
 - 4.7.1 the sustained increase in the number of FTP decisions per month, which between July 2024 and June 2025 was at 928 decisions compared to 777 decisions in the previous 12-month period
 - 4.7.2 a fall in the number of open cases at Screening, from 2,769 in January 2025 to 2,060 in June 2025. This is owing to improved performance in timeliness, with the median time from receipt of referral to Screening decision falling from 15 weeks in January 2025 to 6 weeks in June 2025
 - 4.7.3 less than 40 cases are awaiting a legal review at the end of the FTP process, a significant fall from 500 12 months previously.
 - 4.8. The group noted that the increased timeliness and number of decisions at Screening has resulted in an increase in the number of open cases at Investigations, which rose from 1,774 in April 2024 to 2,283 in January 2025 and then to 2,553 in June 2025. That represents a 44% increase in the size of the open caseload from April 2024 to June 2025.

¹ Recommendation 7: The NMC must engage more effectively with stakeholders to ensure they are efficiently and effectively using resources to complete more adjudications decisions each month.

² Recommendation 9: Complex and serious cases should be managed by a specialist team who understand all of the risks involved in not processing these cases appropriately in a timely fashion.

³ Recommendation 30: Consider different structure of Professional Regulation so as to more effectively manage it.

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- 4.9. At the Adjudications stage, the median age of cases has been trending downwards, from a peak of 148 weeks in December 2024 to 140 weeks in June 2025. The caseload has also been gradually decreasing, from 1,179 in January 2025 to 1,115 in June 2025. However, this is still higher than when the FTP plan was launched (1,089 in April 2024), and the overall number remains high. It was also acknowledged that screening decisions were having a significant impact on the overall 15 month average case closure period and this could give a misleading impression in relation to other stages of the process where registrants are still waiting too long for their cases to conclude.
- 4.10. The NMC acknowledged that investigations are taking too long, and said that it is actively considering its options to address this. It also noted that it needs to do more to identify themes of cases closed at Screening.
- 4.11. The Chair noted the positive indicators, and emphasised the need to ensure these are sustained. The Chair also noted that whilst the percentage of cases closed within 15 months is at 70%, the overall caseload is worsening as a percentage of cases closed within 15 months. Group members welcomed the increased volume and breadth of data, and agreed that the data painted a picture of both good and bad news.
- 4.12. One group member commented that the Employer Link Service had been helpful in assisting employers when making referrals and avoiding referrals where not appropriate. The group discussed what more can be done to prevent inappropriate referrals, and group members agreed to discuss this with the NMC in more detail outside of the meeting.
- 4.13. Group members noted the number of older cases, and asked how the NMC is assured that these are being progressed. The NMC stated that it regularly reviews its 50 oldest cases, and closed its oldest case in the week prior to this meeting. There is proactive monitoring of these cases, and the NMC is actively considering how it can ensure continued allocation of an older case, to ensure continuity of governance. The NMC now publishes more granular data on its oldest cases as part of its Council papers, and has created an Assistant Director of Legal role within FTP, whose responsibilities include providing greater oversight over the oldest cases.
- 4.14. Group members noted that Black, Asian and minority ethnic registrants are more likely to be referred, and go further in the process, than white registrants, and asked what the NMC is doing to address this. The NMC said that it has published EDI targets, and that its action planning will involve working with key stakeholders to understand what is driving disproportionality in its referral base. Group members welcomed the opportunity to collaborate on this issue. The NMC is also setting up a working group, which will be led by the Head of Regulatory EDI, to establish a set of actions to address disparities in treatment.
- 4.15. One group member noted that the independent investigation into FTP might identify concerns regarding a case that has been closed, and asked whether the NMC will have to reopen older cases that it has previously closed. The Chair noted that there is a wider question as to how the reports are received, and how the NMC acts to ensure that they do not derail progress.

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- 4.16. The NMC stated that it has implemented a myriad of actions following the ICR that have led to change. The NMC affirmed that while there are further improvements to make, it does not anticipate a whole myriad of further actions arising from the independent investigations, although this is subject to what the reports find.
- 4.17. The group considered what assurances it needs before deciding to lower the scrutiny of the group, and whether the group should be prescriptive as to what actions it would like to see, in a similar way to a trust in special measures. The Chair emphasised the need to consider what good looks like, and noted that monitoring of the NMC will have to continue to ensure sustainability of progress. The group agreed that it should revisit the terms of reference when considering what it expects to see before reducing its scrutiny of the NMC. The group also agreed that it should wait for the findings of the independent investigations of FTP and whistleblowing before considering this further.
- 4.18. The group discussed the role of the NMC's Council, and whether greater visibility of the Council's assurance processes is needed. Group members noted that it should not be duplicating the role of the Council. The Chair agreed with the proposal to consider how the NMC Council is operating at a future meeting. The NMC welcomed this proposal, and emphasised that the Chair of the NMC and Council are holding the Executive to account more effectively than under the previous leadership. The NMC said that this is a key marker of the Chair of the NMC's leadership, and that the Chair of the NMC would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with the group.

ACTION: 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.

- 4.19. One group member asked whether the NMC Council effectiveness review conducted internally amounting to 'marking their own homework'. The NMC stated that this report, carried out in 2022, concluded that Council was effective; however, the NMC said that its new Chair would have disagreed with these findings, and that he expects Council to perform to a high level. The NMC also said that some of the management decisions made prior to the new Chief Executive and Registrar joining were questionable, and that its focus now is on turning the ship around under new management.
- 4.20. The Chair thanked group members for their contributions, and welcomed their support for the clarity and level of detail in the papers. The next meeting will focus on safeguarding, and the subsequent meeting will consider the role and effectiveness of the NMC Council. In between these meetings, the PSA will be surveying group members for their individual and organisational views on the NMC's progress to date. An analysis of this will be undertaken by the PSA and presented as an item for the following meeting.

5. AOB

- 5.1. None.

Annex 1: Attendee list

Organisation/Role	Name
Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) England	Duncan Burton
Chief Midwifery Officer (CMidO) Scotland	Justine Craig
CMidO Wales	Karen Jewell (also deputising for CNO Wales, Sue Tranka)
CNO NI	Maria McIlgorm
DHSC Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care	Deborah Sturdy
NI Government	Chris Wilkinson
NMC Chief Executive and Registrar	Paul Rees
NMC Chief of Staff	Ben Wesson
NMC Executive Director of Professional Regulation	Lesley Maslen
NMC Assistant Director, Fitness to Practise	Paul Johnson
NMC General Counsel	Alice Hilken
NMC Executive Director of Communications and Engagement	Julia Corkey
NMC Co-Chair of the BeMe Network and representative of the staff network	Suma Das
NMC	Roberta Beaton
PSA Chief Executive	Alan Clamp
PSA Interim Director of Regulation and Accreditation	Amanda Partington-Todd
RCN, Chief Nursing Officer	Lynn Woolsey
RCM Chief Executive	Gill Walton
Unite	Dave Munday
UNISON NMC staff representation	Anne Carvalho
UNISON registrants representation	Gail Adams
Expert- Social Care	Derek Barron
Expert- NHS England, National Maternity Lead for Equality	Wendy Olayiwola
Expert- Chief Executive, Patient Safety Learning	Helen Hughes
Expert- Queen's Nursing Institute	Cate Wood (deputising for Steph Lawrence)
Expert – National Guardian's Office	Jenni Fellows

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		
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		
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	TBC		

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
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