

Paulette Hamilton MP
Vice-Chair of The Health and Social Care Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

12 June 2025

Dear Ms Hamilton,

Regulatory performance of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)

On 19 June, we will publish our review of the performance of the NMC in the year 2023/24, covering the period from 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2024. The NMC's performance during the review period has caused us considerable concern, and I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of the Professional Standards Authority to inform you of the action we are taking, in line with our escalation policy¹. I attach a copy of our report, which is under embargo until publication on 19 June.

About the Professional Standards Authority

The Professional Standards Authority (PSA) reports to Parliament and the devolved administrations each year on the performance of the 10 statutory health and social care professional regulators². We judge a regulators' performance against our 18 Standards of Good Regulation (the Standards), which cover five cross-cutting standards as well as the four key regulatory functions: guidance and standards; education and training; registration; and fitness to practise. Each Standard is assessed as being 'met' or 'not met'. Every three years, we conduct an intensive 'periodic review' and in the other two years, we monitor performance and produce shorter 'monitoring reports'. For the NMC, 2023/24 was a periodic review year.

Our 2023/24 performance review

The Independent Culture Review (ICR) of the NMC was published in July 2024. The ICR made a number of critical findings about the NMC's culture and governance, and made 36 recommendations, which the NMC accepted in full. Two further reviews into

¹ Professional Standards Authority process for escalating performance review concerns

² These are the General Chiropractic Council, the General Dental Council, the General Medical Council, the General Optical Council, the General Osteopathic Council, the General Pharmaceutical Council, the Health and Care Professions Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland, and Social Work England.

the NMC's handling of a number of fitness to practise cases and its handling of whistleblowing disclosures are being undertaken by Ijeoma Omambala KC. We had intended to wait for the findings from these reviews before reporting, however these have been repeatedly delayed.

We believe it is in the public interest for us to report on the NMC's performance in a timely way. We are publishing our report now without waiting any longer for the evidence from the two outstanding independent reviews.

We have identified weaknesses in multiple regulatory functions during 2023/24 which have led us to conclude that the NMC has not met 7 of our 18 Standards this year. Our report sets out our findings in detail, which are summarised below:

- **Standard 2:** we identified performance issues across a number of the NMC's regulatory functions, and this was reflected in the NMC's own strategic risk register. Moreover, the ICR concluded that '... the NMC had strayed from its central mission' and recommended that 'The NMC needs to retain a focus on its core regulatory purposes, and how best to deliver its mandate to protect the public within a changing environment.'
- **Standard 3:** the NMC did not meet Outcome 1 under this Standard because of limited evidence about the impact of the work that has been undertaken to embed EDI throughout the organisation. It met the other three Outcomes and we identified examples of good practice. The ICR made numerous critical findings about the extent to which EDI is embedded in the NMC's work and whether policies are followed in practice. The Omambala reviews are likely to make findings relevant to this Standard, and we will consider these when available as part of the next review period.
- **Standard 4:** we saw considerable evidence of routine public reporting, however we identified inconsistencies in the NMC's fitness to practise reporting. Also, there are significant gaps in respect of the NMC's ability to report on its education quality assurance function. The ICR found that the NMC has failed to implement and embed some of the findings and recommendations of previous reviews, and the NMC accepted that it has not addressed all the recommendations from previous reports. The PSA established the Independent Oversight Group in 2024 to monitor the work of the NMC in addressing all the recommendations of the ICR.
- **Standard 9:** we identified significant concerns about the NMC's ability to effectively monitor and quality assure Approved Education Institutions (AEIs). The NMC is in the process of developing an education quality assurance improvement plan, however this was not finalised by the end of the review period.
- **Standard 10:** maintaining an accurate register is a key function of a regulator, in the interests of public safety and public, and we were not sufficiently assured about the NMC's ability to ensure the integrity of the register during the period under review.
- **Standard 15:** the NMC is investing significant money and resources in trying to improve the timeliness of its fitness to practise function, and there are some

areas of improving performance. However, cases are still taking too long to process, and it continues to have a significant backlog. The NMC has not met this Standard since 2018/19.

- **Standard 17:** the ICR highlighted significant concerns around safeguarding, and the NMC reported that an internal audit showed that there has been a failure to identify and act on safeguarding concerns. The NMC has taken steps to strengthen its safeguarding capabilities, however safeguarding remains the NMC's highest-rated strategic risk.

Our assessment of the NMC's performance in 2023/24 is notable in that it is only the second time, after the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland in 2023/24, that a regulator has not met this many Standards in a single year.

Next steps

Our legislation does not provide us with any power to require action to be taken by the regulators in response to our reports. We will continue to monitor the NMC's performance closely, both through our performance review and the Independent Oversight Group chaired by the PSA, and will provide you with annual updates until the issues we have identified are resolved. We will also consider the Ijeoma Omambala KC reviews in detail when they are available, including deciding how we can most appropriately report on what they tell us and whether there is further action we need to take. In the meantime, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the NMC's performance and how it can be supported to improve.

I have copied this letter to Ron Barclay-Smith, Chair of the NMC, and I am writing in similar terms to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Wes Streeting MP.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Corby
Chair