

Midwifery Panel

Date: 1 March 2022

Time: 14:00-17:00

via GoToMeeting

Meeting notes

Present

Dr Anna van der Gaag	Midwifery Panel Chair
Wendy Olayiwola	National Maternity Lead for Equality, National Health Service/Improvement
Dr Mary Ross Davie	Director of Professional Midwifery, Royal College of Midwives
Professor Janet Hirst	Head of School of Healthcare, University of Leeds
Karen Jewell	Nursing Officer for Maternity and Early Years, CNO Office, Welsh Government
Professor Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent	Chief Midwifery Officer for England, National Maternity Safety Champion, NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I)
Justine Craig	Chief Midwifery Officer for Scotland
Professor Janice Sigsworth	Director of Nursing, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
Professor Gwendolen Bradshaw	Head of the Division of Midwifery and Reproductive Health, University of Bradford
Dr Dale Spence	Midwifery Officer, Department of Health, Northern Ireland
Nicky Clark	Senior Lecturer, Lead Midwife for Education, University of Hull
Caitlin Wilson	UK Consultant Midwife Forum, Worcester Acute Hospitals NHS Trust

NMC	
Andrea Sutcliffe	Chief Executive and Registrar, NMC
Professor Geraldine Walters	Executive Director Professional Practice, NMC
Tracey MacCormack	Associate Council Member, NMC and Director of Midwifery, King's College Hospital
Verena Wallace	Senior Midwifery Adviser (Policy), NMC
Dr Jacqui Williams	Senior Midwifery Adviser (Education), NMC
Jenny Ross	Stakeholder Relations Manager, NMC
Johnnet Hamilton	Senior Stakeholder Engagement Officer, NMC
Michele Harrison	Regulation Adviser, Employer Link Service, NMC
Nicola Smith	Assistant Director, Stakeholder Engagement, NMC
Maddie Elder	Policy Manager, NMC
Natasha Dare	Head of Regulatory Policy, NMC
Faye Kamara	Events Coordinator, NMC
Frances McConnell	Corporate Communications Manager, NMC
Sara Kovach-Clark	Assistant Director Policy, NMC
Luis Perpetuo	Public Engagement Manager, NMC

Apologies	
Cath Broderick	Independent Consultant in Patient and Public engagement
Professor Mary Renfrew	Professor of Mother and Infant Health, University of Dundee
Sally Ashton-May	Lead Midwife, Health Education England (HEE)
Nina Khazaezadeh	Deputy Chief Midwife for London, NHSI
Gill Walton	Chief Executive, Royal College of Midwives
Linda Kelly	Acting Chief Nursing Officer Northern Ireland
Sascha Wells-Munro	Deputy Chief Midwifery Officer for England, NHSI
Sue Tranka	Chief Nursing Officer for Wales, Welsh Government
Leigh Kendall	Programme Lead, Social Influence, NHS Horizons
Professor Alex McMahon	Chief Nursing Officer for Scotland, Scottish Government
Jaki Lambert	Professional Advisor for Midwifery and Perinatal Care, Scottish Government

Papers

- NMC Corporate update
- Notes of meeting held 11 October 2021
- Midwifery Matters leaflet
- Briefing paper on EU minimum requirements for education of midwives

Agenda items covered

1 Welcome from Chair

- Anna van der Gaag welcomed attendees to the meeting to a full agenda on workforce pressures, education issues and proposed regulatory reforms. Anna reflected on the significance of the BBC Panorama programme aired on 23 February 2022, entitled '[Maternity Scandal: Fighting for the Truth](#)' which reported on Donna Ockenden's investigation into the failures of maternity care

at the [Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust](#). The programme reflected ongoing public and professional concern about some of the negative experiences of women and families accessing maternity care. One of the most startling figures was from the Care Quality Commission, that only one per cent of maternity services are currently rated outstanding in England.

2 Update from Chief Executive

- Andrea Sutcliffe gave an overview of key updates from the NMC.

Points raised in discussion

- The Government published on 21 February 2022, its [Living with Covid](#) Plan signalling the end of the temporary register.
- Justine Craig, former NMC Council Member, was appointed Chief Midwifery Officer for Scotland. This leaves a vacancy on the Council. Recruitment is now at the shortlisting stage.
- The review of the NMC's professional qualifications follows the UK's departure from the European Union (relates to the proposed [Professional Qualifications Bill](#)). There are changes that need to be introduced relating to recognition of qualifications which are not just about nursing and midwifery professionals but span all of the professions.

3 Covid-19 impact and workforce pressures

- Andrea Sutcliffe, NMC Chief Executive and Registrar, opened the item by acknowledging, along with the Midwifery Panel Chair, the current situation facing maternity services and the pressures faced across the UK. Every example of poor care and distress is deeply regrettable, and lessons must be learned across all services. The NMC recognises the extremely challenging circumstances facing the workforce across the health and social care sectors, and is continuing to support midwives, nurses and nursing associates.
- Recently, the NMC issued a [Statement](#) on mandatory vaccines following the government's announcement on vaccines as a condition of deployment, and the NMC have communicated its plans to end Covid-19 temporary registration.
- The NMC are following a number of reviews, including the [East Kent Maternity Services Review](#), [Nottingham Maternity Services review](#).

Four country updates

- The updates revealed similar themes across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales: that morale among midwives and obstetricians is at its lowest. This is largely due to staffing pressures and experiencing 'burnout' from constant hard work throughout the pandemic. There are some issues around sickness and absence but these may or may not be Covid related.
- The recent press BBC Panorama programme on maternity care and other coverage in the media about poor maternity coverage has had a massive impact on staff morale.
- General consensus across the four countries of the UK is that staffing, retention and recruitment are the biggest challenges. Also, some home births had been suspended, and some Memorandums of Understanding had been cancelled but some had started again.

- In some of the devolved nations, student numbers are at a tipping point and capacity for all placements had been reached. This is because of the year on year increase, which makes retention even more important.

Positive news

- Office for National Statistics [report](#) showed the stillbirth rate in England reached its lowest level on record and the neonatal mortality rate in England fell from 2.8 to 2.7 per 1000 livebirths between 2018 & 2019.
- England received a £95m injection of funds which had led to an increase in midwifery staffing and obstetric training. Also, £45m had been invested in digital maternity and pastoral support.
- Wales received £1.5m to initiate a maternity and neonatal safety support programme on a local and national level.
- Northern Ireland are planning collaborative events between maternity and mental health services with a focus on multidisciplinary working. Work continues around the commissioning of abortion services in Northern Ireland.
- Maria McIlgorm was appointed in March 2022 as Chief Nursing Officer for Northern Ireland.
- Scotland has introduced a new shortened course at Edinburgh Napier University, the only one in that country. It has 20 places for registered nurses to apply from the Health Board.
- Scotland is focussed on delivering the [Special Patient Safety Program](#). The programme seeks to steadily improve the safety of hospital care.
- The Scottish government are running an international nursing recruitment strategy.
- Scotland reported valuable conversations, initiated by Professor Chris Witty about learning from the pandemic, and RCM Scotland are capturing lessons learned from its response to the pandemic.

Other updates

- The Minister for Patient Safety and Primary Care, Maria Caulfield established a new [Maternity Disparities Taskforce](#) co-chaired by Professor Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent. The Taskforce will be focussed on understanding the reasons for poor outcomes in maternity care.
- The RCM created a new safety hub [Standing up for high standards](#), and relaunched its [Caring for You](#) initiative.
- There's an emerging debate again about 'normal birth' on social media. Dr Mary Ross Davie, Director of Professional Midwifery said she would be happy to present at a future Midwifery Panel about the RCM's [Rebirth Project](#).

4 Issues affecting Midwifery education

To provide an update on approved education institutions, such as shortage of midwifery lecturers, reduced applications and issues in practice affecting students.

- Nicky Clark, Senior Lecturer, Lead Midwife for Education updated education is struggling in three main areas:
 1. Issues in practice affecting students
 2. Shortage of lecturers
 3. Reduced applications

1. *Issues in practice*

- Reports of a bullying culture, lack of civility and respect.
- Anecdotally parents of minority ethnic students are advising their children not to study health care.
- There's not enough experienced midwives coming into education, so new midwifery lecturers need a lot of support and training.
- There's a lack of support in practice for midwives to undertake time to study.
- New practice documentation is a challenge for midwives.
- Students need a lot of academic support, having struggled in the pandemic.

2. *Shortage of Midwifery lecturers*

- Increased student numbers and reduced number of midwifery lecturers - no mandated Student Staff Ratio.
- Inexperienced recruits need support and training and there's no clear pathway.
- Salary much reduced from practice – some are appointed to higher bands but are not ready for the role.
- Lack of support for practice midwives to undertake Masters Degrees due to workload pressures.
- Maintaining a work-life balance is difficult.

3. *Reduced applications*

- Due to the pandemic, A Levels were regraded and more students are struggling.
- The issues of moving from online/home schooling to face-to-face learning had been a shock for some students.
- There is a need to balance the quality of students and the drive to increase numbers.
- Midwifery has a 'poor reputation' due to recent events and media reports.
- The [National Student Survey 2021](#) findings revealed a significant decline in student satisfaction around the availability of learning resources after months of disruption due to the pandemic. There were also funding criticisms.

Positives

- Positives included partnership working between approved education institutions and practice partners, leading to mutual decision making and management of student issues.
- Programme approvals co-produced, and MSc programmes available at pre-registration level.
- Collegiate working with HEE/health boards/NMC/CoDH/RCM leading to consistency of approach.
- The NMC encourages universities to work in partnership where there is a shortage of midwifery expertise.

5 Regulatory reform

To give a brief overview highlighting the benefits and update on the structure of the register at a principles level.

- In 2021, NMC [published](#) its response to the [DHSC Regulating professional healthcare protecting the public](#) consultation.

- The proposed changes are underpinned by a desire to achieve a simple, clear, straightforward register that gives everyone confidence. The NMC also wants meaningful regulation for additional qualifications, over and above initial registration as a nurse, midwife or nursing associate.

Latest timetable of activities:

- The NMC is currently seeking feedback from stakeholders, including the Midwifery Panel members, on what should be in our revised Order/Rules. The NMC works with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) to share feedback and help shape draft legislation.
- Spring 2022, DHSC publishes more details on its proposals.
- Summer 2022, DHSC consults on the General Medical Council's (GMC's) legislation. We expect the GMC's legislation to provide a steer for expected change in the NMC's legislation.
- Mid 2023, DHSC consults on the NMC's Order and the NMC consults on the Rules that sit under the Order.
- 2024, new legislation comes into force.

Feedback

- The revalidation process for a prescribing midwife was raised, querying whether they would need to provide evidence as both a midwife and as a prescriber. Or, if someone is revalidating as a midwife Health Visitor, or seeking to return to practice, could they return to health visiting?
- Geraldine Walters, NMC Director of Professional Practice said that to meaningfully regulate post-registration qualifications such as prescribing, we propose that the professional would need to revalidate against their primary registration and prescribing too.
- Anna summarised that the principle is the information on the register must be up-to-date.
- The question was asked how do you know who is a qualified teacher when you're looking at different institutions? Geraldine explained that we understand regulatory reform will give the NMC the flexibility to introduce more post registration qualifications as needed for public protection. The NMC does not currently regulate a post registration teaching qualification but in the future if it was in the interests of protecting the public, the NMC could do so.
- There was general agreement from the Midwifery panel members the NMC is moving in the right direction. The group understood the new proposals are to have a simpler register and clearer titles with appropriate restrictions on the use of those titles.

6 Midwifery Matters at the NMC

To update on [Midwifery Matters at the NMC](#) and Programme Standards Consultation.

- Verena Wallace NMC Senior Midwifery Advisor (Policy) and Jacqui Williams NMC Senior Midwifery Advisor (Education) gave an overview of the current programme of work as outlined in *Midwifery Matters at the NMC*. The plan is to create a pack that goes to every new midwife or new joiner to the NMC register.

- Promotion continues to implement the [Future Midwife Standards](#) particularly around the language of the new Standards and areas such as person-centeredness, listening to women and getting the message across about universal and additional care needs.
- The Senior Midwifery Advisors emphasised the Future Midwife Standards are not just for the curriculum and student midwife, but for all midwives. Useful for appraisal, supervision and continuing professional development for revalidation.

Also:

- There will be a presentation to NMC Council in May 2022 seeking permission to consult on new (or amended) Standards for Pre-Registration Programmes of Education following the UK's departure from the EU. This includes midwifery Pre-Registration Programmes.
- A public consultation will be launched in summer 2022.

English Language Review

To update on NMC's plans to consult on English Language guidance.

- An overview was given on how practitioners joining the NMC's register from overseas must demonstrate they have the English language skills to practise safely and effectively. The NMC accepts:
 1. A pre-registration qualification taught and examined in English
 2. Passing a language test (the NMC accepts IELTS or OET)
 3. Recent practice of at least one year in a majority English speaking country.
- The English Language guidance was last reviewed in 2018. In 2022, the NMC will carry out:
 - Literature review
 - Research
 - Engagement
 - Public consultation.

Proposed timetable for activity:

- Refresh and update evidence base by end of spring 2022
- Consultation in summer 2022 consisting of:
 - Webinars
 - Focus groups
 - Written responses
- Final proposals to NMC Council in September 2022
- Implementation from October 2022.

Feedback

- Concern raised whether summer is the ideal time to hold a public consultation considering school and summer holidays.
- The NMC should consider opportunities to widen the range of people who can apply for registration.

- Reassurance needed that the balance is kept right for new types of evidence or different types of language tests.
- The tests should not be limited to 'language tests', be 'too expensive', or 'only offered in one particular format' that people might find difficult.
- Anna said the NMC should consider what other professional regulators are doing and what lessons could be learned from how their tests are applied. The NMC should also consider some applicants may have difficulties with writing skills due to neuro-diverse needs.

7 Close

- The Chair closed the meeting, thanking everyone for their participation and contributions.
- The next virtual meeting will be held Thursday 19 May 2022, 09:00–12:00.