

The Nursing and Midwifery Council's response to the consultation on the Care Quality Commission's new strategy

About us

- 1 Our vision is safe, effective and kind nursing and midwifery that improves everyone's health and wellbeing. As the professional regulator of more than 700,000 nursing and midwifery professionals, we have an important role to play in making this a reality.
- 2 Our core role is to **regulate**. First, we promote high professional standards for nurses and midwives across the UK, and nursing associates in England. Second, we maintain the register of professionals eligible to practise. Third, we investigate concerns about nurses, midwives and nursing associates – something that affects less than one percent of professionals each year.
- 3 To regulate well, we **support** our professions and the public. We create resources and guidance that are useful throughout people's careers, helping them to deliver our standards in practice and address new challenges. We also support people involved in our investigations, and we're increasing our visibility so people feel engaged and empowered to shape our work.
- 4 Regulating and supporting our professions allows us to **influence** health and social care. We share intelligence from our regulatory activities and work with our partners to support workforce planning and sector-wide decision making. We use our voice to speak up for a healthy and inclusive working environment for our professions.

Our response

- 5 We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) new strategy for 2021 and beyond. The direction it sets out reaffirms the value of our existing close co-operation, and we look forward to continuing to develop this partnership in line with the values of our [own strategy](#).
- 6 While our respective remits are different, the CQC and NMC have a shared interest in supporting staff and services to provide the safest possible care, to identify risks quickly through the sharing of data, and promoting public understanding of the role of regulation.
- 7 Our response is organised around the four core themes of the strategy document.

People and communities

- 8 The NMC supports the ambition set out in the CQC's draft strategy to consider people receiving care as equal partners, to support people to share their experiences of care, to better understand and take account of those experiences, and to produce regulatory information that is tailored to specific audiences. Setting out how this feedback is used and its impact will support trust and confidence in regulation.
- 9 In our own [2020-25 strategy](#), the NMC committed to actively engage and empower the public by embedding a person-centred approach in how we regulate, using co-production as our habitual means of developing standards and policy, supporting public understanding of what we and our professionals do, and building a programme of public engagement to make sure the voices of people who use health and care services shape our actions.
- 10 We would encourage the CQC to include frontline health and care staff as a key group for engagement on what services should look like and how they can most effectively be delivered. This is important for building on the strategy's commitment to collaboration and also provides an additional route for gathering feedback from the public.

Smarter regulation

- 11 We welcome this theme in that it affirms the CQC's commitment to continuous improvement, learning for staff and services, and meaningful public engagement.
- 12 The proposed shift away from single assessments of services could help make regulation more targeted and proportionate, while a greater focus on using and sharing data will support a risk-based approach as well as making regulation more transparent. However, it will be important to monitor these changes to ensure that they are delivering the outcomes which the CQC intends given how quickly services can deteriorate when circumstances change. It is also worth noting that the data and information to inform such an approach is likely to be weaker in social care than health care so particular attention may be required in these areas.
- 13 We fully support the proposals on improved data sharing, and are working closely with the CQC and others on triangulating our data. This will enable us to develop a more robust understanding of regulatory risk.

Safety through learning

- 14 We welcome the opportunity for enhanced collaboration with the CQC in order to strengthen a 'safety through learning culture'. We

think that safety through learning is the correct approach and this is reflected in our [own strategy](#) and our new approach to Fitness to Practice. Learning will also help to strengthen quality by improving people's experience and effective outcomes.

- 15 We would welcome a discussion and closer working with the CQC and other regulators so that we can address the lack of consistency in the system at present. We envisage that this should lead to the development of a shared, common narrative on safety culture, with regulators acting as role models in terms of speaking up, creating a just culture and providing consistent messaging.
- 16 The NMC's new Fitness to Practice process, introduced in 2019, shows the benefits of such an approach. It includes a commitment to move away from a culture of blame when things go wrong, to developing ways of working that better support safety.

Accelerating improvement

- 17 We fully support the aims set out in this section of the strategy, but note that the infrastructure to drive improvement in the social care sector is more limited than in the health sector. It will therefore be important to understand and meet the needs of both sectors.
- 18 We particularly applaud the CQC's ambition to invest in research and to build its evidence-base, and we are eager to partner more closely with the CQC on this area going forward.

Equality diversity and inclusion

- 19 We were pleased to see that reducing inequalities is at the heart of this strategy. This echoes our own strategic commitment to eliminate discrimination and root out systemic and avoidable differences in health outcomes between different groups of people. We know our professions play a vital part in addressing these inequalities, and we know that regulatory bodies need to support and mirror this action.
- 20 It is right that the CQC's ongoing work to reduce inequality should inform and underpin the four strategic themes. We agree that a focus on equality should be fundamental in order to support a regulatory model which is informed by people's experiences. We are pleased to see the plans to drive change stem from empowering people, and that the CQC has considered the need to hear from diverse voices in its engagement.