

8 January 2021

Supporting nursing and midwifery professionals during the Covid-19 pandemic

As we begin 2021 it is important to reflect on the experience of 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has and continues to place demands on all frontline clinicians in a way that was previously unimaginable and the way you have risen to the challenge is a credit to our professions.

We are incredibly proud of the nursing and midwifery response to the pandemic which has demonstrated the critical role our professions play at the centre of health and care.

We would like to remember all those who have been impacted by the virus, either directly or indirectly. Colleagues have lost their lives over the last year and our thoughts are with their families and friends. For those who are sick, we extend our heartfelt wishes for a full recovery.

Unfortunately, as we all know, COVID-19 cases are continuing to rise and there are already sustained additional pressures on parts of the NHS and other elements of health and care provision. Staffing shortages due to sickness or caring responsibilities will exacerbate the pressures and despite actions to date to address this, the impact on staff both personally and professionally will be profound and potentially prolonged throughout the coming months.

Supporting you to deliver care

As demonstrated since the start of the pandemic, our professions will need to continue to respond flexibly, including potentially working outside our normal roles or places of work.

We recognise how stressful this can be and that our professional communities may have concerns about both the professional practicalities and implications of working in such circumstances. We are committed to ensuring you feel supported and able to discuss and raise concerns.

In March last year we outlined how nursing and midwifery professionals must continue to adhere to the core principles of nursing and midwifery practice. As registered professionals we should always practise in line with the NMC code and use our professional judgement, taking account of the realities of an abnormal emergency situation. The [NMC Code](#) is here to support us and, even in the most difficult of circumstances, is a valuable tool to help guide practice, supported by the NMC's latest [Caring with Confidence animations](#).

We want professionals, in partnership with patients and people they provide care for, to use their professional judgement to assess risk and make sure people receive skilled care, informed by the values and principles set out in our professional standards. It is the responsibility of the organisations in which we work to ensure we are supported to do this. They must bear in mind that clinicians may need to depart, possibly significantly, from established procedures to care for people in the highly challenging but time-bound circumstances of the peak of a pandemic.

It's also worth remembering that while services continue to be under extreme pressure, we need you to speak up if you see things that are unsafe. This will help to make sure that appropriate steps can be taken and help to ensure that people can be cared for as well as possible.

We know that professionals may feel anxious about how context is taken into account when concerns are raised about their decisions and actions in very challenging circumstances. The NMC will always consider the specific facts of the case, taking into account the factors relevant to the environment in which a professional is working.

We also continue to expect employers, educational supervisors, professional bodies, national NHS and health and social care organisations to be flexible in their approach and the expectations of routine requirements.

Helping to strengthen the workforce capacity

We recognise the significant pressures on staffing in health and care services at the moment. In March 2020 the NMC created the COVID-19 temporary register, made up of professionals who had recently left the NMC's register and professionals from overseas awaiting their final assessment in the UK. The temporary register is still open to all those previously invited, and earlier this week [the NMC announced actions they are taking](#) to further support the nursing workforce by extending the temporary register to new groups of nurses that trained overseas.

Supporting the roll-out of vaccines

As well as caring for those affected by COVID-19 and the many thousands of other people who need your care during this time, many of you will be involved in the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines.

We know that there have been some recent changes to guidance from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and the UK's Chief Medical Officers on how these vaccines should be administered. This includes extending the period between which the first and second dose of the vaccine can be received with the aim of achieving greater population protection. It's important that when administering the vaccine, professionals continue to follow the appropriate national protocols and local guidance that is in place where you work.

We also want to reassure you, that as nursing and midwifery professionals you are among the high priority groups identified by the JCVI for receiving a vaccine and the health and care services across the UK are working hard to get this to you as soon as possible.

Support for your health and wellbeing

Nursing and midwifery professionals have been at the heart of the UK's response to COVID-19, doing extraordinary things to provide care and support their fellow citizens and their families. The skills, specialism and resilience of our professionals have never been more publicly recognised and valued.

Many of you will be working in extremely difficult circumstances and we know that this can have a real impact on your own health and wellbeing. While you're caring for others it can be challenging to find the time to take care of yourself, but it is so important that you do. The NMC signpost a range of helpful [resources available on their website](#) to support you, should you need them.

We would like to thank all the nurses, midwives, nursing associates and the nursing and midwifery students who continue to work in these extraordinary circumstances and make such an amazing contribution to the UK's COVID-19 response.



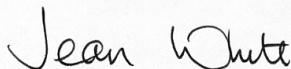
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