

Midwifery Panel

Date: 2 December 2022

Time: 10:00 – 13:00

Location: Nursing and Midwifery Council

23 Portland Place

London W1B 1PZ

Meeting notes

Present

| Attending | | |
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| Name | Role | Organisation |
| Agnes Agyepong | Lay member | Founder and CEO of Global Black Maternal Health Institute |
| Angela Graves | Head of School of Healthcare, University of Leeds | Council of Deans of Health |
| Anna van der Gaag | Midwifery Panel Chair | Visiting Professor, University of Surrey |
| Caitlin Wilson | Chair | Consultant Midwife Network, Royal College of Midwives |
| Dale Spence | Midwifery Advisor | Department of Health, Northern Ireland |
| Gill Walton | Chief Executive | Royal College of Midwives |
| Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent | Chief Midwifery Officer | NHS England |
| Janice Sigsworth | Director of Nursing | Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust |
| Justine Craig | Chief Midwifery Officer | Scottish Government |
| Karen Jewell | Chief Midwifery Officer | Welsh Government |
| Leigh Kendall | Lay member | Maternity campaigner and communications expert |
| Mary Renfrew | Professor Emeritus | University of Dundee |

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| Natalie Whyte | Lay member | Services User Representative National Maternity Voices, Midlands |
| Nicky Clark | Chair, Lead Midwife for Education Strategic Reference Group | University of Hull |
| Sascha Wells-Munro | Deputy Chief Midwifery Officer | NHS England |
| Wendy Olayiwola | National Maternity Lead for Equality | NHS England and NHS Improvement |
| Observers | | |
| Margaret McGuire | Registrant Council Member, NMC | Observer |
| Caroline Zwierzchowska-Dod | Lead trainer for Cambridge National Maternity Voices Partnership | Observer |
| Gloria Rowland | Associate Council Member, NMC | Observer |
| Tracey MacCormack | Associate Council Member, NMC | Observer |
| NMC attendees | | |
| Andrea Sutcliffe | Chief Executive and Registrar | NMC |
| Geraldine Walters | Executive Director Professional Practice | NMC |
| Verena Wallace | Senior Midwifery Adviser (Policy) | NMC |
| Jacqui Williams | Senior Midwifery Adviser (Education) | NMC |
| Johnnet Hamilton | Senior Stakeholder Engagement Officer | NMC |
| Melissa McLean | Senior Public Engagement Officer | NMC |
| Orfhlaith Kearney | Senior Press Officer | NMC |
| Beth Faircliffe | Events Manager | NMC |

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| Gabi Jones | Stakeholder Engagement Manager | NMC |
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| Apologies | |
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| Gwendolen Bradshaw | Emeritus Professor, University of Bradford |
| Kerri Eilertsen-Feeney | Lead Midwife for Education, Health Education England |
| Leigh Kendall | Programme Lead (Social Influence), NHS Horizons |
| Cath Broderick | Independent Consultant in Patient and Public Engagement, We Consult |

Papers

- Agenda
- Notes of meeting held 21 September 2022
- The Times article 'Trust intuition not monitors, student midwives are taught'
- NMC response to The Times article titled 'Midwifery training'
- NMC letter to Approved Education Institutions on Midwifery curriculum reading list

Agenda items covered

1 Welcome from Chair

- Anna van der Gaag welcomed everyone to the meeting. This included two new members: Natalie Whyte, Service User Representative for National Maternity Voices, Midlands; and Dr Angela Graves, Head of School of Healthcare, University of Leeds, and who represents Council of Deans of Health on the Midwifery Panel, succeeding Professor Janet Hirst.
- Welcome was also extended to four observers:
 1. Margaret McQuire, Registrant Council Member
 2. Caroline Zwierzchowska-Dod, Lead trainer for Cambridge National Maternity Voices Partnership
 3. Gloria Rowland, Associate Council Member, Nursing and Midwifery Council
 4. Tracey MacCormack, Associate Council Member, Nursing and Midwifery Council
- The Chair noted that this would be Professor Geraldine Walters' final meeting as Executive Director of Professional Practice, and commended her contribution to the NMC, Midwifery Panel and the professions.

2 Matters arising from notes of September's meeting

- The Chair confirmed with members that they are satisfied the notes from September's meeting are an accurate representation of the discussions held.

3 NMC Update

- Andrea Sutcliffe gave an overview of key updates.

Points raised in discussion

- The NMC shared its [statement](#) on industrial action. It outlines that professionals on our register have the right to take part in lawful industrial action, and the [Code](#) continues to apply at all times.
- Health professionals, including midwives, are facing huge pressures at the moment. The NMC, alongside the four Chief Nursing Officers of the UK and the Care Quality Commission, co-signed a [letter](#) to professionals outlining how mindful we are of the challenging circumstances they are working under and reiterating our commitment to taking context into account when concerns are raised. We received positive feedback from panel members on this letter, and its role in supporting conversations between senior registrants and their teams.
- The NMC has been focused on EDI issues. Since the last meeting we have co-published an anti-racist [resource](#) for professionals which references the NMC's animation [Let's talk about challenging discrimination](#). We also published a [blog](#) by our Executive Director of Professional Practice, Professor Geraldine Walters on challenging health inequalities in maternity services setting out the role we all play.
- On 30 November 2022, we published the mid-year registration data [report](#), it showed our register has grown to over 771,000. Midwife numbers have also continued to grow reaching over 41,000. There are more international professionals joining the register, and with UK joiners becoming more ethnically diverse, the profile of the NMC register is changing.
- Donna Ockenden has stepped down as Senior Midwifery Adviser to the NMC. Having led the Independent Review into Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust and currently Chairing the Review into Maternity Services at the Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust, she is prioritising those responsibilities. We are confident the NMC's Senior Midwifery Advisers Dr Jacqui Williams and Verena Wallace MBE, will continue to play a vital role in being advocates for midwifery voices within the NMC. In addition, the Midwifery Panel continues to make a significant contribution to ensuring the NMC hears from midwifery voices and those of people who use maternity services.
- Following the analysis of our responses to our Consultation on education programme standards for pre-registration midwifery and nursing programmes,

we will take proposed changes to the Standards to our January 2023 Council meeting. Changes within the new Standards are not as significant for midwives as they are for nurses, reflecting the feedback received during the consultation. A question was asked about the timing for implementation of pre-registration standards for universities. We shared that our quality assurance team will notify approved education institutions (AEIs) on next steps. We will ensure AEIs have enough time to implement the standards.

4 NMC reflections on East Kent report findings

- Our Senior Midwifery Advisers presented an overview on the findings and recommendations of the report [Reading the signals: maternity and neonatal services in East Kent](#), and shared the NMC's reflections.
- The Chief Nursing Officer for England, Professor Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent also shared her reflections. She said strong midwifery leadership within the NMC was needed now more than ever, and she felt reassured by the work of the Senior Midwifery Advisers. She shared the work she has been carrying out to take forward recommendations and the extensive programme of engagement she is leading with midwives, people who use maternity services, and Boards of trusts with maternity services.
- The Midwifery Panel Chair summarised the themes coming through from the presentations, including the importance of a commitment to multi-professional training and working, and an open culture that supports staff to speak up. A discussion followed.

Points raised in discussion

- There is learning from this and previous enquiries that shows the importance of reading the signals that point to problems within services. Looking at culture and behaviours is key – initial appearances can be deceiving.
- The NMC should consider how its regulatory levers can be used to support identifying issues early. Revalidation was raised as one example, with the suggestion that feedback could be sought from a range of professions as part of this process. The importance of the NMC working with other regulators and partners across professions that deliver maternity and neonatal care was raised.
- There was a keenness to improve the profile of the standards across maternity improvement work, and to better embed them across the workforce, as a solution to some of the challenges around behaviour and culture. This included discussion on whether the name 'Future Midwife' suggests the standards are only for students and early career professionals, when we want them to be implemented in all midwives' practice.
- Panel members agreed that supporting midwives to work in a system and workplaces where they feel valued and supported is vital.

- There was discussion of the need for leaders to consider the best approaches to support members of their workforce to understand the findings and recommendations from this and other reports, and what this means for their practice, as not everyone will feel confident reading a long report of this kind independently.
- The theme of taking a personalised approach to individual women's care, listening to them and acting on feedback comes through strongly in the report. Listening may not always look and feel the same for all individuals, so professionals need to be responsive to individuals' needs and preferences.
- A challenge was made to how Duty of Candour requirements can be seen by board and trust leaders as a positive tool to promote improvement, rather than a risk or challenge. Encouraging a speaking up culture is an important way to identify and address issues within services.
- There was discussion on the challenges faced by students, and that student experience is often an indicator for wider performance. Challenges include working alongside demotivated professionals, a feeling that change isn't always implemented if students do speak up, and that this often depends on the professionals on duty during their placement shift. There has also been high turnover of University staff, leading to less experienced lecturers dealing with complex issues when supporting students.

5 Update on new Professors network

- Professor Mary Renfrew updated the Panel on a new UK-wide network of senior academics in midwifery and maternal and infant health, aligned with the Council of Deans of Health.
- The network is focussed on advocating for and enabling the growth of UK research capacity and capability on midwifery and maternity. In the future, the network is keen to increase public and professional understanding of quality midwifery, extend their work with other key stakeholders, and extending membership to other senior academics.

6 Update on new maternity oversight group

- Gill Walton updated Panel members about the work of the new independent maternity working group (IMWG), set up as part of the [Immediate and Essential Actions](#) from the Ockenden review into maternity safety at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust.
- The working group was created to be independent of the [Maternity Transformation Programme](#) (MTP). It is chaired jointly by the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. The group develops plans to guide the MTP around implementation of the essential actions of the Ockenden report and recommendations of other

reports. It also acts as a critical friend to those who have responsibility for funding and implementing recommendations.

Points raised in discussion

- There was discussion around the diversity of the group, whose members are predominantly Presidents of its member organisations. While there is some racial diversity amongst members, this is very limited. Panel members felt it would be beneficial to consider how more diversity of experience and voice within the membership could be achieved, to support its role in providing a critical lens to the MTP.
- Panel members reflected the importance of taking action now. Recent inquiries have identified a range of areas that require improvement and the important thing is to now take changes forward.
- Members discussed how the NMC's standards for midwifery would be fed into the work of the group, as the NMC is not a member. This was agreed as important and something midwife members of the IMWG would be able to do.

7 Updates from the NMC

Update from Senior Midwifery Advisers

- The Senior Midwifery Advisers updated Panel members on their recent work and engagement. This includes:
 - Continued engagement at stakeholder meetings, events and conferences promoting the implementation of the Future Midwife Standards.
 - Post consultation work on the pre-registration programme standards which will be presented to Council for approval in January 2023.
 - Continued joint work with the NMC's Employer Link Service, joining Regulation Advisers on visits to services to promote the Future Midwife Standards.
 - A refreshed NMC maternity regulation oversight group to coordinate all midwifery and maternity related activity across the organisation.

8 Use of language

- Geraldine Walters led a discussion on the use of language, referring to a recent example of how language had prompted discussion and media reporting on an issue related to midwifery reading lists.

Points raised in discussion

- Reference was made to the findings in the RCM's Re:birth [report](#) around the language women want professionals to use when caring for them. There was agreement that more promotion of the report's findings and recommendations would be helpful.
- There was agreement that the language of the standards is clear and reflective of modern terminology. Further embedding of the standards will be helpful in addressing this issue, and educators can use them as a tool to support how they present their work.
- There was agreement that having this conversation in a way that is supportive of educators and professionals and their roles is important.
- There was specific discussion on the issue of what is implied by 'intuition', which has caused some concern. Panel members agreed that the key thing is to articulate that for registered midwives, intuition is a combination of knowledge, skills and experience, not a gut feeling based on no evidence.
- There was agreement that a future item on the role of Quality Assurance as a regulatory lever would be helpful.

9 Closing remarks

- Geraldine Walters shared final reflections with the group to mark her final meeting. She reflected on how the NMC's relationship with the midwifery profession has been strengthened and the importance of midwifery being seen as the distinct profession it is.
- The Chair closed the meeting with a short summary of the discussions that had taken place. The Panel were reminded that the next meeting will be online via Microsoft Teams, on Wednesday 8 February, 14:00-17:00.

Future meetings:

- Wednesday 8 February 2023, 14:00-17:00
- Wednesday 21 June 2023, 10:00-13:00
- Wednesday 4 October 2023, 14:00-17:00
- Thursday 14 December 2023, 10:00-13:00