

NMC Independent Oversight Group

Summary of Meeting held on 25 June 2025

1. Welcome

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the group and noted apologies.

2. Progress on addressing the recommendations from the ICR (NMC)

- 2.1. The Chair noted that a key provision of the group's terms of reference is that it needs to be assured of the NMC's progress against the ICR recommendations. This meeting fell almost a year since the ICR was published. The Chair intimated that if the group is going to be assured of progress, it must be clear what has been done and what the difference is.
- 2.2. The Chair reiterated the need for clarity, to allow the group to track individual recommendations. The Chair requested that recommendations are presented clearly and transparently to allow the group to assess what actions have been taken, and what the underlying data shows.
- 2.3. The NMC presented its update on how it is progressing in addressing the recommendations from the ICR. The NMC noted that it was publishing its headline EDI targets on 25 June, which had been developed through collaboration with the GMC, who published similar targets in 2021. The GMC told the NMC that these targets felt like a significant stretch but because of this, they were compelled to take action that they otherwise would not have done. The NMC intimated that it intended to apply the same approach with its EDI targets.
- 2.4. The NMC also referred to the latest publication of the Ambitious for Change research. This research, based on evidence from 2024, found evidence of bias early in the NMC's processes, based on ethnicity and gender.
- 2.5. The NMC said that it has completed 24 of the 37¹ recommendations, with nine recommendations either a minor concern or on track, and four recommendations a moderate concern. It said that none of the recommendations fell into the 'significant concern' category. The actions taken to address these recommendations have been integrated into the NMC's key change plans: its culture transformation plan, the Fitness to Practise (FTP) plan and the safeguarding plan. All recommendations have a senior responsible officer from the Executive team.

¹ The NMC separated Recommendation 1 into two parts, 1a and 1b, for ease of tracking.

-
- 2.6. One group member requested that the NMC refrain from using acronyms without first explaining their meaning. The NMC acknowledged this, and said it would adhere to this at future meetings.

ACTION: NMC to refrain from using acronyms without first explaining their meaning at future meetings.

- 2.7. The NMC's culture transformation plan was published in March 2025, and the NMC provided a progress update for Q1 (April to June). Coaching delivery is on track, with two sessions having been held with the Executive on the subject of strong and sustainable leadership. Psychological safety has been rolled out to 350 members of staff, with staff rating this coaching 3.6 out of 5. The NMC confirmed that anyone with line management responsibility will receive coaching, and that it aims to achieve consistency of leadership to ensure managers have the same understanding of what good looks like. Coaching sessions are being delivered in-person.
- 2.8. The NMC signed the UNISON Anti-Racism Charter at the first meeting of its culture transformation steering group. This sets out a detailed 19-point action plan, progress against which will be tracked and reported through the culture transformation plan. The NMC is aiming to deliver on 17 of the 19 commitments in the first year.
- 2.9. The Chair noted that there is a lot of activity and positive progress, but that the group needs to see the recommendations explicitly when reviewing the plans. The Chair stated that in order to conclude that the recommendations are complete, the group needs to see the evidence for each recommendation.
- 2.10. Group members commented that the papers were narrative-based and had no assurance that the outcomes had been delivered. The group felt that the NMC had focused on process rather than outcome measures, and stressed the need for outcome measures. The group also asked how staff were feeling. The NMC confirmed that it is measuring staff feeling through its Your Voice survey in the autumn, six months after the launch of the culture transformation plan.
- 2.11. The NMC also affirmed that beneath what was presented to the group lies detailed tracking of activity in connection with each recommendation, from which it was assured that 24 recommendations are complete. The NMC indicated that it will reconsider how it presents this to the group, but emphasised that there is a significant amount of detail which it felt could not be presented to the group in the time available. The Chair noted that the group could review such detail on the papers, which would be beneficial for it to see for assurance, without the need for presenting it. The NMC added that there is a distinction between outputs and outcomes, noting that the ICR recommendations are mostly targeted at outputs. The NMC is reviewing the delivery of the outputs, whilst measuring the outcomes. It also noted that some measures will impact others, for example it considered that its new hybrid working policy would lead to a downturn in staff sentiment in the short-term.

-
- 2.12. Group members noted that further detail was needed in relation to the recommendations falling in the ‘moderate concern’ category, and enquired as to where the NMC is at in respect of Recommendation 21². The NMC confirmed that as of May 2025, staff in grade 6 roles and above were 60.5% White and 27.8% Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic, which compares to 63.5% White and 25.5% Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic in March 2024. Group members commented that they would welcome a timeline for delivery on this and other recommendations.
- 2.13. Group members suggested that staff sentiment could be measured by asking staff a monthly question that would act as a stocktake. The NMC staff representative supported this, and noted that staff felt there was a lot of positive activity, but that this had not necessarily translated into changes on the ground. There was concern around coaching being focused on senior levels, with some junior colleagues feeling excluded. Staff recognised that culture changes and psychological safety will take time to embed. The hybrid working policy had been a key issue for many staff, with over 1100 staff responding to the consultation, and the culture transformation network had been well-received.
- 2.14. The NMC confirmed that it carries out pulse surveys at panels and leadership meetings. The NMC Chief Executive meets regularly with the employee forum, and Co-Chairs the staff networks to gather feedback data from staff. A quarterly review of the culture transformation plan is scheduled in the week commencing 7 July, which will assess the ongoing activity and outcome measures.
- 2.15. The NMC stressed that it is determined to address the failings identified in the ICR, but noted that almost half of staff did not believe that these issues existed. The Chief Executive of the NMC emphasised that he believed the ICR identified issues that were genuine, but that he often hears from staff at townhalls that they did not recognise these issues, with some questioning whether the NMC should have an anti-racist focus. The NMC emphasised its commitment to eliminate disparities in FTP based on ethnicity, and to increase Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff at senior levels, but that some staff do not support that. The NMC stated that it was important for the group to have this background, as it illustrates the complexities involved in the culture transformation programme.
- 2.16. The NMC presented the findings from the latest volume of the Ambitious for Change research. The research found that black professionals in the FTP process are faced with more challenges, and evidence pertaining to them is scrutinised more closely, when compared to white professionals. The NMC noted that while its policies and guidance are aligned to equal outcomes, they are open to different interpretations. Group members expressed concern that these issues were highlighted in previous volumes of the Ambitious for Change research, but had not been addressed.

² That the NMC ‘should appoint 30% of Black and ethnic minority managers so they can better regulate the communities they serve within the next three years.’

-
- 2.17. The NMC said that the research covers the same period as the ICR, which it called a dark period for the organisation, and that it takes these issues seriously. The NMC accepted that it was asked to publish EDI targets in 2021, but it has taken until now to do so. The NMC recognised the group's frustration at this, and asserted that it would be taking decisive action. The NMC said that it can only eliminate disparities in treatment based on ethnicity or gender if it takes concrete action, which is set out in the EDI targets published on 25 June.
- 2.18. The NMC noted that 42% of its staff are Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic, but they are concentrated in the lower two pay quartiles. The NMC reiterated that it wants diverse senior leaders, evidenced by its new mentoring scheme, which will be 80% Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic.
- 2.19. Group members enquired as to the percentage of Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic panel members, when compared to a year ago. The NMC confirmed that in the most recent round of panel appointments, 24% of appointees were Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic, and the percentage of registrant members from these ethnic groups has increased from 15% to 23%. The NMC acknowledged that its previous EDI training was too general, and its new EDI training will be specifically targeted at decision-makers and lawyers. Group members emphasised the importance of a clear dataset to identify and address these systemic issues.
- 2.20. The NMC presented its people objectives, which are aligned to the pillars of the culture transformation plan. These objectives are: we will support diversity throughout our organisation; we will support the culture transformation plan and actively work to change our NMC culture; we will invest in our colleagues; and we will support everyone to have the same positive experience across the organisation.
- 2.21. The NMC intends to use positive action where it considers this appropriate. For example, its Rising Higher programme, which encourages progression throughout the organisation, will have a minimum of 80% Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic applicants, and these candidates will get a guaranteed interview if they apply.
- 2.22. The NMC has consulted with its staff to develop a new set of values. The proposed values are: integrity, fairness, respect, equity and effectiveness. It has also launched its culture network, derived from volunteers throughout the organisation. The network is representative, and serves to improve communication by supporting staff to drive culture change. Each meeting of the network will take a deep dive on a particular element of the culture transformation plan.
- 2.23. The NMC is changing its approach to recruitment, with all interviews to be values-based to ensure candidates align with the organisational values. The NMC is conducting exit interviews for all staff who leave a team for a different role within the organisation, pursuant to Recommendation 23³. It also aims to have 40 people on its apprenticeship programme by the end of 2025.

³ 'The NMC should conduct exit survey and/or interviews whenever an employee leaves a team for a different role within the NMC to identify strengths and issues within teams.'

-
- 2.24. The NMC confirmed that it has launched its safeguarding education and training, with refreshed mandatory level one training and a trauma-informed practice module. A business case has been approved to substantiate the safeguarding team to provide assurance on continual support for the priorities of the safeguarding function.
 - 2.25. The NMC presented a brief summary of its latest FTP figures. This area will be considered in detail at the next meeting, in August. The Chair asked whether the NMC has a target for reducing its caseload, how many and by when. The NMC said that it has been reviewing this closely, and that it is more interested in timeliness, for which the KPI is set at 15 months.
 - 2.26. One group member contended that the figures are misleading, because screening decisions are included, and noted that there remain significant issues with investigations and adjudications. This group member also welcomed the progress made in respect of screening, and in particular the increase in clinical oversight, which they considered had reduced the number of cases being needlessly progressed. They also reported that the NMC had been receptive when safeguarding concerns were raised, and felt there had been some notable improvements in this area.

3. NMC performance review 2023/24 (PSA)

- 3.1. The Chair noted that the 2023/24 performance review of the NMC was published on 19 June. The NMC met 11 out of 18 Standards, and asked any group members with questions to contact the PSA.

4. Frequency of future meetings (All)

- 4.1. The NMC acknowledged that the group has discussed a number of failings at the NMC, which it takes seriously. The NMC contended that the evidence and reports relate to 2023/24, and that the teams at the NMC are working hard to turn things around. The NMC noted that it is under new management, with a new Chair and Interim Chief Executive and Registrar.
- 4.2. The NMC accepted that it must be transparent and held to account, although it felt that the frequency of meetings is currently too high. The NMC argued that the IOG meetings are diverting its resources away from the work that it needs to do to improve. The NMC proposed that the frequency of meetings be reduced, but accepted that they must continue in the interests of transparency and accountability.
- 4.3. The Chair stated that the group will need assurance on the NMC's progress before determining that meetings should be less frequent. The Chair added that the NMC's work in preparation for these meetings should not be a diversion, because this is the same material that it prepares for its Council. The Chair invited the NMC to discuss this outside of the meeting, and intimated that meeting frequency will be agreed by the group at the next meeting.

5. AOB

- 5.1. None.