

NMC Independent Oversight Group

Summary of Meeting held on 2 October 2024

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all members to the NMC Independent Oversight Group.

2. NMC action plan

- 2.1 The Chair of the NMC confirmed that the action plan was presented to Council on 24 September 2024. Council endorsed the direction of travel, whilst remaining mindful that the group would want to scrutinise and comment on the plan.
- 2.2 The aim of this meeting was to consider the high-level action plan as presented to Council last week. The group will consider the fitness to practise improvement plan in more detail at its next meeting (on 18 October), and the cultural elements of the action plan in further detail at the meeting in November.
- ACTION: NMC to share the detailed version of the fitness to practise improvement plan with the group in advance of the meeting on 18 October 2024.**
- 2.3 The NMC's Interim Director of Strategy and Insight gave a presentation to the group. This outlined the immediate actions taken by the NMC following to the publication of the Culture Review.
- 2.4 The NMC has appointed an independent empowered to speak up guardian, and has recruited 12 colleagues as freedom to speak up ambassadors to facilitate the raising of concerns in a psychologically safe space. The NMC acknowledged that the diversity of the initial pool of ambassadors needs improving. The group advised that the NMC consider what proactive steps it can take to rectify this, rather than reviewing it after six months as planned.
- 2.5 An EDI advisor has been appointed to the Executive Board to support its decision-making. The EDI advisor is also undertaking a review of mandatory EDI learning to identify any gaps and improve this. Greater support has been made available to NMC colleagues, for example decompression sessions and increased spending on learning and development.
- 2.6 The NMC's Assistant Director of Rapid Resolution gave a presentation to the group outlining the steps taken since the fitness to practise improvement plan was initiated in April 2024. Progress was noted in respect of unallocated cases at screening and the number of decisions made per month.
- 2.7 The NMC noted that this progress was not reflected in the overarching figures, largely owing to a sustained increase in the number of referrals received. The NMC noted other factors impacting the timeliness of case processing and decision-making. The Assistant Director of Rapid Resolution set out a number of further interventions aimed at resolving these issues and accelerating impact.

These measures will be presented to Council at its meeting on 27 November 2024. The group welcomed the notion of additional resource being allocated to the screening team.

- 2.8 In response to questioning from the group about targets for improvement in fitness to practise, the NMC advised that an operational decision had been made to allocate greater resource to higher-risk cases, which has impacted progress on closing lower-risk cases. One group member raised a concern regarding the slower approach to lower-risk cases, in light of the difficulties identified in differentiating between higher and lower-risk cases.
- 2.9 The group discussed referrals from members of the public. The NMC indicated that a large proportion of referrals do not amount to regulatory concerns. The NMC is making changes to its website to provide better information when directing members of the public to the referral form.
- 2.10 The group discussed the safeguarding hub and asked whether there will be a lookback exercise to assess cases. The NMC confirmed that specialist clinical advisors in safeguarding have been undertaking lookback reviews of cases.
- 2.11 The group discussed staff turnover in fitness to practise, and asked whether any trends had been identified amongst teams. The NMC is working with its HR team to identify these trends, and noted that it has introduced a decompression and debriefing service for staff to utilise.
- 2.12 One group member suggested a number of ways in which the NMC could achieve greater engagement with staff to inform its action plan. The member will meet with the NMC outside of the group to discuss this further.
- 2.13 The group noted the upcoming NMC staff conference, and identified this as an opportunity to listen to and engage with staff on the action plan. It was suggested that the draft conference agenda could be shared with the IOG. The group agreed that time needs to be allocated to ensure staff can properly consider and contribute to the cultural transformation programme.
- 2.14 The group sought assurances from the Chair of the NMC as to Council monitoring the planned improvements and the action plan more widely. The Chair of the NMC confirmed that Council has adopted a tighter and more constant level of oversight following the publication of the Culture Review. The Chair of the NMC expressed his confidence in the structures Council has in place, and invited constructive dialogue to consider this further. The group agreed that it would be helpful to consider the NMC's governance structure and assurance framework at one of its next meetings.

ACTION: PSA secretariat to include an agenda item on the NMC's governance structure and assurance framework at the IOG meeting in November.

- 2.15 The Chair of the group noted that the action plan will require outcome measures for the group to assess progress against.
- 2.16 The NMC thanked the group for its constructive challenge of the action plan.

3. PSA update on recruitment of experts

- 3.1 The PSA confirmed that it has received expressions of interest from eight experts. The PSA will consider these applications with a view to recommending experts to the group in the week commencing 14 October 2024.

ACTION: PSA secretariat to share a list of experts who have expressed an interest in joining the group.

ACTION: PSA secretariat to review expressions of interest from experts and make a recommendation to the group.

- 3.2 One group member noted that a number of senior representatives of NHS England were already appointed to the group. The group agreed that diversity of experience is essential to the group's function.
- 3.3 The group agreed that ensuring sufficient patient group representation on the group would be essential.

4. Next meeting – agenda items

- 4.1 The group agreed that the next meeting, on 18 October 2024, would focus on the detailed version of the fitness to practise improvement plan. It would also look to consider input from experts on the Terms of Reference, with a view to agreeing these at the next meeting.
- 4.2 The group agreed that the subsequent meeting, in November, would focus on the detailed version of the cultural change action plan. It would also include an item on the NMC's governance structure and assurance framework.

5. AOB

- 5.1 None.

Annex 1: Attendee list

Organisation/Role	Name
Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care, DHSC	Deborah Sturdy
CMO England	Kate Brintworth
CMO Scotland	Justine Craig
CMO Wales	Karen Jewell
CNO England	Duncan Burton
CNO NI	Maria McIlgorm
CNO Scotland	Anne Armstrong
CNO Wales	Gillian Knight (deputising for Sue Tranka)
DHSC	Aisling Fox
DoH NI	Peter Barbour
Welsh Government	Ian Owen
NMC Acting Chief Executive and Registrar	Helen Herniman
NMC Chair	Sir David Warren
NMC Employee Forum Co-Chair	Colette Howarth
NMC Interim Director of Strategy and Insight	Kuljit Dhillon
NMC Assistant Director of Rapid Resolution (Fitness to Practise Team)	Jen Taylor
PSA Chief Executive	Alan Clamp
PSA Director of Regulation and Accreditation	Graham Mockler
Scottish Government	Donna O'Boyle
RCN	Lynn Woolsey
Unison	Gail Adams

Annex 2: Action Log

On track (including not started) Delayed (or medium risk of delay for projects) Overdue (or high risk of delay for projects) Complete

Mtg. Date	Item No.	Action point	Owner	Date required	Action progress	Status
9 September 2024	2.9	Circulate new version of Terms of Reference to the Group for agreement	PSA Secretariat	13 September 2024	Complete (13 September 2024).	
9 September 2024	3.2	Members to send suggestions for experts to the PSA	All members	16 September 2024	Complete (16 September 2024).	
9 September 2024	3.2	Experts: compile list of suggestions and seek expressions of interest	PSA Secretariat	19 September 2024	Complete (20 September 2024).	
9 September 2024	4.1	NMC to share a version of the action plan with the Group	NMC	As soon as possible (date TBC)	Complete (20 September 2024). The NMC made the action plan materials going to Council available in parallel with the publication of Council papers, making clear that Council would be approving the plan in principle but that the document would be liable to further adjustment and refinement in the light of the Group's comments	

					and wider discussion	
2 October 2024	2.2	NMC to share the detailed version of the fitness to practise improvement plan with the group in advance of the meeting on 18 October 2024	NMC	TBC		
2 October 2024	2.14	PSA secretariat to include an agenda item on the NMC's governance structure and assurance framework at the IOG meeting in November	PSA secretariat	1 week in advance of the IOG meeting in November (date TBC)		
2 October 2024	3.1	PSA secretariat to share a list of experts who have expressed an interest in joining the group	PSA secretariat	3 October 2024	Complete (3 October 2024)	
2 October 2024	3.1	PSA secretariat to review expressions of interest from experts and make a recommendation to the group	PSA secretariat	11 October 2024	Complete (9 October 2024)	