

Professional Standards Authority response to NMC practice learning consultation

1. About us

- 1.1. The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA) is the UK's oversight body for the regulation of people working in health and social care. Our statutory remit, independence and expertise underpin our commitment to the safety of patients and service-users, and to the protection of the public.
- 1.2. There are 10 organisations that regulate health professionals in the UK and social workers in England by law. We audit their performance and review their decisions on practitioners' fitness to practise. We also accredit and set standards for organisations holding registers of health and care practitioners not regulated by law.
- 1.3. We collaborate with all of these organisations to improve standards. We share good practice, knowledge and our right-touch regulation expertise. We also conduct and promote research on regulation. We monitor policy developments in the UK and internationally, providing guidance to governments and stakeholders. Through our UK and international consultancy, we share our expertise and broaden our regulatory insights.
- 1.4. Our core values of integrity, transparency, respect, fairness, and teamwork, guide our work. We are accountable to the UK Parliament. More information about our activities and approach is available at www.professionalstandards.org.uk

2. Answers to questions

Is there anything else you would like to share on the proposals to improve nursing and/or midwifery practice learning standards that was not covered in the previous questions?

- 2.1. We welcome the NMC's proposals which are intended to strengthen the quality of practice learning and to enhance nursing and midwifery education.
- 2.2. We would encourage the NMC to consider whether the proposed standards place sufficient emphasis on multidisciplinary learning and collaborative practice, particularly in relation to the working relationship between midwives and obstetricians.
- 2.3. Recent maternity reviews and investigations have consistently highlighted the importance of effective teamwork, communication and shared decision-making across professional boundaries. The independent review of maternity services at

Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust¹ and the recent Independent National Maternity and Neonatal Investigation² led by Baroness Amos both identified shortcomings in multidisciplinary working and called for stronger teamworking, professional understanding and opportunities for joint learning between maternity professionals. The Amos investigation specifically noted that current education and training pathways can create barriers to mutual trust and understanding between professions and recommended greater opportunities for joint curriculum development and multidisciplinary training including joint experience of the practical aspects of maternity and neonatal training.

- 2.4. We therefore suggest that the NMC consider whether its practice learning standards should include more explicit expectations around multidisciplinary learning experiences for student midwives, including structured opportunities to learn alongside obstetricians and other members of the maternity team, and exposure to collaborative decision-making in complex and high-risk maternity care.
- 2.5. We note that wider education and training standards do seek to embed requirements for inter-professional learning and working. However given the persistence of concerns in this area and the potential impact on patient safety, it may be helpful to consider whether more could be done in relation to practice learning.
- 2.6. This could help ensure that future registrants are equipped not only with the clinical competencies required for safe practice, but also with the skills and behaviours needed to contribute effectively to multidisciplinary maternity services and improve outcomes for women and babies. The consultation document itself identifies strong collaboration as a key feature underpinning high-quality practice learning, and there may be merit in reflecting this more explicitly in relation to the problems identified in the sector.

¹ **Ockenden review into maternity services at Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust: final report - GOV.UK**

² **Final Reports - National Maternity and Neonatal Investigation**