

**Stakeholder information pack  
from the Nursing and Midwifery  
Council on our response to Covid-19**

**23 November 2020**

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## Introduction

This pack provides the latest information about the work of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) during the coronavirus pandemic, including our actions as we transition from the emergency towards ongoing management of Covid-19 in health and social care.

As the independent regulator of nurses and midwives across the UK, and nursing associates in England, we have played an active role in expanding and supporting the nursing and midwifery workforce during this challenging time. We made a series of [operational changes](#) in response to the pandemic, in order to prioritise our core regulatory functions and ensure we continue to regulate nurses, midwives and nursing associates effectively.

As we have moved from the initial response to the pandemic towards ongoing management of its impact, the NMC is gradually introducing changes to support the nursing and midwifery workforce to provide the best and safest care to people. We have resumed areas of our work that we had been required to pause during the initial emergency, in accordance with government guidelines. We will continue to work collaboratively to ensure that the people on our register have the knowledge and skills to deliver safe, kind and high quality care to people.

If you have any questions about the detail contained in this pack then please get in touch using the information provided under [contact us](#).

## How the NMC is responding to tighter Covid-19 restrictions across the UK

With tighter restrictions implemented across the UK in response to increasing Covid-19 cases, the NMC has reviewed our operations in light of the latest guidance. We will continue to deliver our core regulatory services, as follows:

### **Fitness to practise**

- We will continue to hold in-person fitness to practise hearings where virtual hearings are not possible.
- Members of the public are usually allowed to observe certain hearings, but in light of current Government measures public access to in-person hearings is limited. Further information about this can be found on our [Covid-19 webhub](#), which will be updated if the situation changes.
- For our virtual hearings, we will continue to provide audio access to members of the public.

### **Registration and revalidation**

- The [existing arrangements for revalidation](#) will remain in place, enabling some flexibility for extension.
- Our objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) test centres will continue to operate in a Covid-19 secure way, enabling professionals trained overseas to continue their registration process.

## Education

- We will keep our [recovery standards](#) in place for nursing and midwifery students, enabling flexibility and supporting students to complete their studies with the appropriate supervision. We have published a [joint statement](#) with the Chief Nursing Officers of the UK setting out our shared position.
- Our quality assurance activity will continue to happen remotely until at least March 2021.

You can find out more about how we are responding to the restrictions by reading the [detailed information on our website](#).

## Consultation on future use of emergency powers

On 4 November we launched a [consultation](#) on our future use of powers, which we were granted in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The consultation follows [powers](#) given to us by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) earlier this year. These changes increased the flexibility of our fitness to practise and registration and revalidation processes. Recognising the uncertainty surrounding Covid-19, DHSC [introduced a change](#) which allows us to use the powers indefinitely.

The lasting impact of Covid-19 means that we will need these powers into the future. Some of the changes have also made us more effective. But we know it would not be appropriate to use new powers indefinitely without consulting with our partners, the professionals on our register and the public. We now want to hear from others on how we should use these powers going forward, to make sure that we introduce any permanent changes in the best way.

The consultation will run until 15 January 2021 and is seeking views on the following key areas:

- The NMC's use of virtual meetings and hearings
- Public access to hearings
- The number of people on a hearing panel
- The NMC's use of email to communicate notices of a hearing

- The NMC's use of extensions for revalidation and fee payment.

The [consultation](#) is available in English, Welsh and easy read versions. Find out how you can learn more and get involved on our [website](#).

## The temporary register

As you will be aware, the Government introduced emergency legislation that enabled the NMC to create the Covid-19 temporary register. This means we have temporarily registered fit, proper and suitably experienced people, so that they can practise if they want to and feel able to do so during the Covid-19 emergency.

When we opened the temporary register on 27 March, 7,510 nursing and midwifery professionals appeared on it. Over 14,000 professionals joined the temporary register in total.

We are pleased that some of these temporary registrants are now joining our permanent register. Over 2,000 professionals with qualifications gained overseas have now passed the objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) and have joined our permanent register. This accounts for the majority of the decrease in overall temporary register numbers in the table below.

The published breakdown of the temporary register (data as of 28 October 2020) can be found below. We will in future provide an update on our temporary register data on a monthly basis.

	<i>Country of address</i>					
	<b>England</b>	<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>Not given</b>	<b>UK</b>
<b>Midwife</b>	637	12	72	27		748
<b>Nurse</b>	9,129	254	1,362	524	39	11,308
<b>Midwife; Nurse</b>	108	4	12	3	1	128
<b>Total</b>	9,874	270	1,446	554	40	12,184

The temporary register will remain open as long as the Secretary of State for Health declares Covid-19 to be an emergency. We continue to work collaboratively with the Department of Health and Social Care and the Devolved Administrations to make any decisions in relation to the temporary register, including the future transition out of the emergency situation. Further information on the temporary register can be found on [our website](#).

## Concern remains around the long term impact of Covid-19 on the workforce

On 12 November we published our latest [mid-year registration data](#), revealing that the overall number of nurses, midwives and nursing associates on our permanent register has grown by 7,909 to 724,516 between 1 April and 30 September, an increase of 1.1 percent.

While the growth in the register is positive, we cannot be complacent about the impact Covid-19 will have on future recruitment and retention of nursing and midwifery professionals. On publishing the report, we commented that together with our partners we must do all we can to nurture, protect and support nurses, midwives and nursing associates so they choose to stay once the Covid-19 crisis has passed.

## Supporting our professions

### Supporting professionals during the second wave

On 20 November, Andrea Sutcliffe and the four Chief Nursing Officers of the UK published an [open letter](#) to nursing and midwifery professionals outlining their support for them during the second wave of the pandemic.

The letter recognised the challenging, tireless and remarkable work that professionals have done and will continue to do to support people to receive Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 care. It also recognised the need for professionals to be flexible at this time, which may include working outside of normal roles or places of work, and highlighted that the Code can support professionals to make decisions in challenging circumstances.

### A thank you to professionals

On 23 September, six months after the Prime Minister announced the UK would go into a national lockdown to control the spread of Covid-19, Andrea Sutcliffe [wrote to all the professionals on our register](#) to thank them for everything they have done during the pandemic.

The message acknowledged the extraordinary work of nurses, midwives and nursing associates this year and affirmed the NMC's commitment to doing all we can to support them to continue providing safe, effective and kind care to people. Andrea also paid tribute to those professionals who have sadly lost their lives during this period.

### Caring with Confidence

We know that nurses, midwives and nursing associates have been facing difficult decision in unprecedented circumstances as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

To support professionals to feel confidence about their decision and actions in these challenging times and beyond we have launched [Caring with Confidence](#), a series of

bite-sized animations about key aspects of the roles of nursing and midwifery professionals, and how the Code can support them.

The topics already covered, or coming up in November and December are: accountability, professional judgment, delegation, speaking up, inclusivity and challenging discrimination, social media, end-of-life care, and person-centred care.

## **Mental health and wellbeing**

On 1 October, we published a [blog from Andrea Sutcliffe](#) talking about the importance of caring for those who care for us, and the pressure professionals are facing as we ask them to respond to the challenges of Covid-19.

## **Equality, diversity and inclusion**

### **How our response to Covid-19 has affected diverse groups**

In July we published our [equality impact assessment](#) (EqIA) for the action we've taken in response to Covid-19. This covers temporary registration, our emergency education standards, changes to fitness to practise, and all other changes we made in relation to Covid-19 up until the end of June.

We would be grateful for your feedback on this EqIA, particularly in answer two questions:

- Have we missed anything that is in our role to do or influence?
- Looking to the future, are there any particular topics of concern or opportunities that we should focus on?

If you have any feedback on the EqIA please send it to [equality@nmc-uk.org](mailto:equality@nmc-uk.org).

We have recently [updated our EqIA](#), and will continue to revise this document regularly, for as long as we're carrying out activity to respond to the pandemic and support the professions.

## **NMC responses to external developments and reports on Covid-19**

- We [welcomed](#) NHS England's funding announcement, which will provide mental health support for nursing and midwifery professionals and their colleagues in England. We said that with Covid-19 cases rising and a hard winter looming, it's vital we care for those who care for us in health and social care settings.
- We [responded to](#) the Care Quality Commission's [State of Care](#) report. We said that the findings reinforce our continued concerns about the unacceptable inequalities magnified by Covid-19 and demonstrate the need for adequate support for the workforce to help them meet the demands of a new Covid era.

- We [celebrated](#) the nursing and midwifery professionals recognised in this year's Birthday Honours and the difference they have made to so many people, including during the pandemic.
- We [responded to](#) the Public Accounts Committee's [NHS nursing workforce](#) report, expressing our view on the importance of recruitment, retention and support for nursing professionals and the need for a long-term, sustainable workforce plan that addresses the needs of nursing professionals employed across all NHS, social care and community settings, particularly in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- We [responded](#) to the UK Government's Covid-19 social care winter plan for England, welcoming the introduction of a new Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care and expressing our view that while this plan is a positive step, the pressures that existed in social care before the pandemic remain and have been exacerbated, requiring a long term commitment to social care reform.



## Further information

We will make updates to this pack on a regular basis and alert you to when these changes are made. Previous packs with additional information can be found on our website here:

- [18 September](#)
- [4 September](#)
- [21 August](#)
- [7 August](#)
- [24 July](#)
- [10 July](#)
- [25 June](#)
- [15 June](#)
- [22 May](#)
- [13 May](#)
- [27 April](#)
- [20 April](#)

## Frequently asked questions

We are monitoring the queries we are regularly being asked by registrants and stakeholders and collating a list of responses to frequently asked questions. A full list of our FAQs in relation to Covid-19 can be found on [our website](#).

## Contact us

If people in your networks have any general queries about the NMC, they can contact us at 020 7333 9333. If they have questions about our temporary register they should email [tempreg@nmc-uk.org](mailto:tempreg@nmc-uk.org) or call 020 7637 7181.

As a key stakeholder of the NMC, our stakeholder relations team is also here to support with your queries and any feedback you have on our work. You can contact the team at [stakeholders@nmc-uk.org](mailto:stakeholders@nmc-uk.org).

If you are a parliamentarian, civil servant or elected official, our public affairs team will be able to answer any queries. You can contact the team at [public.affairs@nmc-uk.org](mailto:public.affairs@nmc-uk.org).

Our [Employer Link Service](#) run an advice line for employers and relevant stakeholders in health and social care. They are available to support employers with questions or concerns about fitness to practise and the NMC's work more broadly. Call 020 7462 8850 to speak to one of our regulation advisers, or email the team at [employerlinkservice@nmcuk.org](mailto:employerlinkservice@nmcuk.org).