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Convener  
Health, Social Care and Sport Committee  
Scottish Parliament

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12 June 2025

Dear Clare

## **Professional Standards Authority (PSA) Performance Review of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)**

We are writing to you ahead of the publication of the PSA's Performance Review to provide an overview of the circumstances surrounding the report's finding, which relate to a snapshot in time and the radical turnaround programme we have embarked on.

### **The PSA's findings**

The PSA's annual review of the NMC's performance is for the period July 2023 – December 2024 and reflects a dark period in the history of the NMC, having already been summed up in the Independent Culture Review.

As a result of the poor performance during this historical phase, we have, as expected, not met seven of the PSA's Standards of Good Regulation, including again failing Standard 15 in relation to Fitness to Practise. We take this very seriously and we are progressing at pace with improvements – ensuring that we focus on, and deliver against, our core purpose of protecting the public, promoting confidence in the professions and maintaining standards.

### **Transforming the NMC**

We are now well underway with our turnaround plan, which has already been acknowledged by key stakeholders as having made a real difference. Our turnaround plans include a comprehensive Fitness to Practise plan underpinned by major investment, and a three-year Culture Transformation Plan. Alongside this, there have

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been significant changes in NMC leadership, which will help us drive forward our improvements. Paul took up post on 20 January and Ron started on 1 April.

Among the other new talent recruited, we have appointed Ravi Chand CBE as our new People and Culture Director. Ravi is currently Director for the Civil Service (People and Places directorate) in the Cabinet Office and has previously worked as Chief People Officer at the Foreign Office and HR Director at HMRC.

## **Fitness to Practise**

Since the period covered by the PSA report, we have steadily been turning around the Fitness to Practise process, with the figures showing consistent improvement.

This includes rolling out additional roles in the Professional Regulation directorate and investing £3.4m on bringing in PwC to help us spot improvements that can be made to the process. This will be followed by more partnership working with third-party providers during the current financial year, with the aim of driving further improvement.

In July 2023, at the start of the period covered by the PSA report, the monthly rolling timeliness average figure for completing cases end-to-end within 15 months was 60.8%, against a target of completing 80% of cases end-to-end within 15 months. This figure has now climbed to 69.8%, demonstrating real progress towards our target.

In the last few months, we have seen record numbers of decisions at screening, with 809 screening decisions made in May alone.

Since the period covered by the report, we have delivered an average of 624 screening decisions (closures or progressions) over the twelve months to May 2025 – compared to an average of 457 for the same period to May 2024.

We have also introduced updated screening guidance to help us focus on the right cases by taking a risk-based approach, empowering our teams to make prompt decisions to close cases which do not require regulatory action.

In addition, we have also established a safeguarding hub, so that all new referrals are triaged to provide appropriate support at the outset. Our failure to deal with safeguarding concerns was a key concern highlighted by many during the period covered by the PSA review.

Alongside resolving cases more quickly, we are committed to improving the way members of the public interact with us. We will be working with Professor Louise Wallace, from the Open University, who is a registered clinical and health psychologist to help us review and improve our public-facing information, following a review she did of the materials of all the health professional regulators.

## **Professional Practice**

We are also driving change in other areas of our regulatory remit, including strengthening our approach to education quality assurance.

Since the period under review in the PSA report, we have published a plan to:

- Update the Code and revalidation process by Autumn 2027;
- Review practice learning by Autumn 2026; and,
- Produce standards for advanced practice by March 2028.

## **Culture Transformation**

We are currently rolling out a range of activities under our Culture Transformation Plan, which was published on 19 March, eight and a half weeks after Paul took up post, following the listening events Paul held with 770 staff in his first five weeks, across all of our sites.

Under the plan:

- We have signed up to the UNISON Anti-Racism Charter;
- We are taking radical steps to reduce our ethnicity pay gap, such as ensuring ethnically diverse shortlists where there are Black, Asian and ethnic minority candidates who meet the minimum requirement;
- We are regearing our flagship mentoring programme to ensure that 80% of participants are Black, Asian and ethnic minority;
- We are delivering coaching to all managers on embedding EDI, values-based decision making, ensuring psychological safety and enjoying work;
- We are delivering coaching to senior managers on strong and effective leadership;
- We have consulted with staff on bringing people back to the office two days a week from late September; and,
- We have consulted with staff on a new set of values.

Finally, next week we will publish ambitious new EDI targets as part of a broader set of headline EDI strategic objectives.

The targets we will publish next week are to:

- Eliminate disparities of treatment based on ethnicity and gender in the NMC's fitness to practise processes by 2030;
- Eliminate the disproportionate pattern of FtP complaints received from employers in relation to ethnicity by 2030;
- Eliminate disproportionate outcomes in nursing and midwifery education and training by 2035;

- Eliminate disparities in the representation of Black, Asian and ethnic minority NMC colleagues in the upper two pay quartiles, starting now; and,
- Eliminate ethnicity, gender and other pay gaps by 2030.

This will ensure we achieve equity for nursing and midwifery professionals and for our colleagues, these objectives have been informed by research we have commissioned from the University of Greenwich looking into disparities in our Fitness to Practise process. The research will be published on 25 June, and as mentioned yesterday, will highlight bias, based on ethnicity and gender, in some parts of our Fitness to Practise process.

### **Omambala investigations**

Finally, in early August we expect to publish the findings of Ijeoma Omambala KC's independent investigations looking at our handling of a small number of FtP cases and our handling of whistleblowing concerns. We will use these findings to build on the improvement plans we have in place.

We hope the above reassures you that radical change is already well underway, and we are already taking robust action to address the issues raised in the PSA report, which as we have said, represents a period of time long passed. We look forward to continuing to work closely with you on these matters.

Yours sincerely



Ron Barclay-Smith  
Chair of Council



Paul Rees MBE  
Interim Chief Executive and Registrar