

Steve Brine MP
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee

By email: hsccom@parliament.uk

5 September 2023

Dear Mr Brine,

I am aware that the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) wrote to you and the committee last week to highlight today's publication of their annual performance review of the Nursing and Midwifery Council against their Standards of Good Regulation. I would therefore like to take the opportunity to update you on our response to the performance review and the action we are taking.

Professional Standards Authority (PSA) Performance Review 2022/23

I am pleased that for a fourth year we have met 17 of the 18 standards and that the report highlights several areas of work where we've performed well, including:

- the quality of our engagement with stakeholders, with feedback describing us as collaborative, and being 'open and receptive to ideas and suggestions'
- our updated pre-registration education standards, giving educators greater flexibility to deliver courses at the cutting edge of education.
- our ongoing work to address inequalities and disparities within our regulatory processes for people with different characteristics, including the second phase of our Ambitious for Change research.
- making changes to our English language requirements to ensure our processes are as fair and proportionate as possible.
- our proactive engagement with inquiries into failings in patient care.

Standard 15 and our Fitness to Practise (FtP) caseload

It is disappointing that we have not met standard 15 which focuses on how quickly we conclude FtP cases, and the PSA's letter to you has emphasised their concerns.

We share those concerns and recognise the impact that our fitness to practice caseload has on both members of the public raising concerns, and for the professionals those

23 Portland Place, London W1B 1PZ
020 7333 9333
www.nmc.org.uk

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concerns are about. We have recently launched our FtP referrals helpline which supports members of the public who are considering raising a concern.

Reducing the caseload remains our top priority and we are making progress. The caseload has been reduced by 14 percent since April 2022, and the screening caseload is now at its lowest level since September 2020. We'll continue to monitor and build on this progress in the coming months, and we're continuing to make improvements and focus resources in this area so we can reach decisions on cases as quickly and safely as possible.

As we work towards tackling our caseload and resolving cases more quickly, we're also developing an ambitious programme to transform our professional regulation functions which begins this autumn with a small pilot team. The programme will draw on improvements to technology and will anticipate changes made possible by new legislation. It aims to provide the best possible service to those we work with - including those involved in FtP cases.

As the PSA recognises, we have been open about this issue. We have given regular reports at open meetings of our Council and in updates to Ministers and officials at the Department of Health and Social Care, devolved administrations and parliamentarians. We will continue to engage with our partners, including the PSA, as we take the action necessary to reduce our caseload swiftly and safely.

If you have any questions about our response to the PSA's report or our ongoing work, I would be happy to discuss in more detail.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrea Sutcliffe', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andrea Sutcliffe CBE
Chief Executive and Registrar