Investigating concerns about language competence

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When we investigate concerns about a nurse, midwife or nursing associate's knowledge of English, we can direct them to take a language assessment.

In such cases we use the outcome of the assessment as our key evidence about the nurse, midwife or nursing associate's fitness to practise.

How do we direct nurses, midwives and nursing associates to take language assessments?

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We give a direction for them to take a language assessment in writing.

We'll pay for the cost of the test which we have directed they need to take. We will request that the test be taken by a specific date and that the nurse, midwife or nursing associate give us the results within a timeframe of around 60 days, depending on the circumstances of the case. For example, we could extend the time if a nurse, midwife or nursing associate needed a reasonable adjustment to allow them to take the assessment.

Usually we specify that the test should be an assessment provided by IELTS. However, if the nurse, midwife or nursing associate chose to obtain their own assessment provided by OET we would also accept the result.

What happens if the nurse, midwife or nursing associate doesn't comply?

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If we direct a nurse, midwife or nursing associate to take a language test, but they don't do it, or don't give us the results, we can use this as evidence that they are not fit to practise because they don't have the necessary knowledge of English.

This is because the Fitness to Practise Committee can draw conclusions from the nurse, midwife or nursing associate's failure to follow our direction to them to do the test and give us evidence of the result.[1]

1. Rule 31(6A) of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2004