

## Lack of competence

Reference: FTP-2b Last Updated: 14/04/2021

Lack of competence would usually involve an unacceptably low standard of professional performance, judged on a fair sample of their work, which could put patients at risk. For instance when a nurse, midwife or nursing associate also demonstrates a lack of knowledge, skill or judgement showing they are incapable of safe and effective practice.

Unless it was exceptionally serious, a single clinical incident would not indicate a general lack of competence on the part of a nurse, midwife or nursing associate.

We recognise that nurses, midwives and nursing associates sometimes make mistakes or errors of judgement. Our starting position is that the nurse, midwife or nursing associate is usually a safe and competent professional but something may have happened that got in the way of them delivering safe care.

If concerns are raised about the general competence of a nurse, midwife or nursing associate we'll seek to understand the circumstances at the time. We'll also look at their practising history and not just at the period of time when the concerns arose. This will help us understand if there is a particular area of practice where there may be concerns or whether they are more general in nature.

Where we identify a gap in the nurse, midwife or nursing associate's knowledge or training we'll try to help them understand what they can do to address this gap and demonstrate they're safe to practise.

It's important that we find out how this gap occurred and in particular if it raises a concern about the quality or availability of support and supervision at a particular setting or whether there's evidence of discrimination or victimisation. If there is such evidence we may need to take some additional action, such as sharing information with other regulators or employers.