

## FAQs - Advanced Practice Review: Phase 2 (June 2024)

The following frequently asked questions (FAQs) are for stakeholders - professionals, employers, educators and the public. This is a live document, which means it will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis as we receive more questions about the work.

### Advanced Practice Review Phase 2

#### Q. What is the Advanced Practice Review Phase 2?

The Advanced Practice Review Phase 2 is the next stage of our work to regulate nursing and midwifery advanced level practice - the complex, autonomous and expert roles that many experienced nurses and midwives carry out. This follows on from our Council's decision to provide additional regulation of advanced practice in March 2024.

Phase 2 will consist of several workstreams, including work to:

1. Develop and finalise a unified UK-wide Advanced Practice Framework.
2. Draft nursing and midwifery advanced level standards of proficiency, undertake a public consultation and finalise these standards.
3. Draft associated nursing and midwifery advanced level programme standards, undertake a public consultation and finalise these standards. This will include quality assurance and implementation activity.
4. Develop a proportionate approach to recognising existing advanced practice nursing and midwifery professionals and those studying.
5. Include advanced practice considerations in the planned review of revalidation and review of the Code.

#### Q. What did the Advanced Practice Review Phase 1 conclude?

We undertook extensive research and engagement with the public, professionals and stakeholders as part of Phase 1. This work can be found [here](#).

We've heard clearly from both the public and professionals about the important role advanced practitioners play in delivering care for people. They've also said a lack of consistency in education and training, qualifications, responsibilities, and governance processes create a risk to the public, and that additional regulation will help reduce the risk.

Additionally, there is no single definition of advanced practice and it's unclear whether the public understands the role and what it means for their care.

Our research concluded that there is a need for the additional regulation of advanced nursing and midwifery practice. Our Council agreed in March 2024 to proceed with

additional regulation of advanced nursing and midwifery practice and to proceed to Phase 2 of the review.

### **Q. How will the public and professionals be involved in the Review?**

We are committed to giving people a meaningful voice in our decision making to help shape how we regulate. We work collaboratively to co-produce our regulation with the public, professionals and stakeholders. We have set out our [engagement approach](#), which will inform how we will work with the public, professionals and other stakeholders in Phase 2.

We have a growing Community of Interest of current advanced practitioners, other professionals, stakeholders and interested individuals. We encourage you to [sign up](#) to get updates.

### **Q. I'm a nurse/midwife working in advanced level practice. What should I do now?**

As part of the Advanced Practice Review Phase 2, we will undertake work to develop a unified UK-wide advanced practice framework, standards of proficiency, education programme standards and transitional arrangements for existing advanced practice nursing and midwifery professionals.

During Phase 2 we will continue to build on the engagement and evidence work from Phase 1 to understand more about the existing nursing and midwifery advanced practice workforce, including what professionals would like out of this current review stage.

There is nothing that nursing and midwifery professionals need to actively do at this moment in time. However, we would encourage professionals to [sign up](#) to our Community of Interest to stay informed about this work.

### **Q. How can I get involved with this work?**

If you'd like to be kept up to date with our progress and be notified of any opportunities to get involved, including when we consult on any proposals, please [sign up](#) to our Community of Interest.

## **Governance**

### **Q. What are the governance arrangements for the Review?**

The Review's governance structure includes multiple layers of reporting. We have well established, robust internal governance arrangements with representation from relevant parts of the NMC's strategic and operational teams to enable suitable challenge, scrutiny and refinement of our proposals.

We have established an independent advanced practice steering group with an independent chair – Kay Fawcett OBE. It reviews all draft proposals related to advanced practice and provides advice to the NMC Executive Board. It is constituted of key strategic stakeholders and partners from health and social care across the four UK

nations as well representation from the Advanced Practice Public Advisory Group (PAG).

The PAG has been set up specifically for this project to ensure that the voice of the public and people with lived experience is central to our policy development and thinking.

Our work to develop a unified UK-wide advanced practice framework is also informed by collaboration with a joint regulatory group. This group includes other health and social care professional regulators and systems regulators from across the UK.

Our policy decisions will continue to be informed by our project design principles, including ensuring any decisions align with the [Professional Standards Authority's \(PSA\) right touch regulation](#) approach.

Our Council will review and decide on final proposals from the Advanced Practice Review Phase 2.

**Q. How will the NMC utilise existing local governance frameworks?**

We will be reviewing existing local governance frameworks from across the four UK countries as part of Phase 2. Additional regulation of nurses and midwives working at advanced practice level will help to ensure good governance and kind, safe and effective care.

## **UK-wide approach**

**Q. How will the NMC ensure that the Review takes into account the four UK nations?**

The NMC is a UK-wide regulator. We regulate nurses and midwives in the UK and nursing associates in England.

We are committed to being open and accountable and to building on our strong and effective relationships across all four UK countries, including with the UK Government and devolved governments. For example, working with governments to address health and social care workforce challenges.

Advanced practice has developed in different ways across the four UK nations and the professions we regulate within those countries. Our approach to the regulation of advanced practice will take into account developments in advanced level practice across the four nations.

Chief nursing and midwifery officers from across the four UK nations have [given support](#) to the advanced practice Review and we continue to engage with them throughout our work. They have each nominated nursing and midwifery advisers to work with us throughout the review. The advisers reflect their respective nation's population health needs and workforce requirements and bring their unique expertise to this programme of work.

**Q. Each UK country already has its own advanced practice framework. How does this work impact on these frameworks?**

Advanced practice has developed in different ways across the four UK nations and the professions we regulate within those countries. For example, each nation has its own advanced practice framework. Our approach to the regulation of advanced practice will need to take into account these developments in advanced level practice across the four UK nations as well as international evidence.

A specific workstream of the Advanced Practice Review Phase 2 is the development of a unified UK-wide advanced practice framework. We note the benefits a UK-wide approach could have, including standardisation of advanced practice, education and roles; a more portable workforce; and a more visible and better understood level of practice for the public.

## **Midwifery**

**Q. I'm a midwife working in an advanced practice role? How will this Review affect me?**

Advanced practice has existed in the UK for many years. The role of advanced practitioners working in midwifery and nursing has developed in different ways and evolved at different paces and we are cognisant that advanced practice nursing has a comparatively longer history than advanced practice in midwifery.

The Review will consider advanced practice across both professions, informed by current practitioners, and whether profession-specific approaches are needed.

Our view is that any future regulatory approach to advanced practice should be open and accessible to both midwifery and nursing. For that reason, we need to hear from both professions across the UK to shape future practice.

We would therefore encourage professionals to [sign up](#) to our Community of Interest to stay informed of this work and participate in our engagement activities.

**Q. Aren't all midwives advanced practitioners at the point of qualification as they are autonomous?**

We note that midwives are autonomous professionals at the point of registration. However autonomous and advanced level practice are different, and autonomy is not a proxy for advanced practice. Newly qualified midwives (and nurses) do not practise at an advanced level. Midwives can develop their practice to become advanced practitioners, autonomy continues to be a part of this.

## Standards of proficiency

### **Q. Will new standards of proficiency take into consideration the different practice settings that advanced practitioners work in?**

Nurses and midwives working at advanced practice level work across a wide range of health and social care settings. We will continue to engage with professionals across the full spectrum of settings and areas of practice as part of Phase 2.

The standards we develop are **regulatory** standards that need to be based on right touch regulation principles of proportionality and be applicable across the UK for all nurses and midwives in advanced practice roles. The emphasis therefore is on the advanced **level** of practice and will not be specific to any role, specialism or work setting.

From a regulatory perspective we do not determine the scope of practice of the professionals on our register, because individual professionals will develop this in line with their qualifications, experience, career development and employment role.

We will engage widely with stakeholders across the UK to develop draft standards and undertake a public consultation to finalise these new standards to ensure that these are applicable to all practice settings across the health and care system.

## Education standards

### **Q. How will new advanced practice education standards align with existing NMC education regulation?**

The NMC will develop nursing and midwifery advanced practice education programme standards. As part of the Advanced Practice Review Phase 2, there will be a linked workstream on delivering the quality assurance of advanced practice education for these education standards.

We will engage widely with stakeholders across the UK to develop draft standards and undertake a public consultation to finalise these new standards.

In the future, individual education providers will need to be approved to deliver nursing and midwifery advanced practice programmes. Most universities who deliver advanced practice education are already NMC approved education institutions (AEIs).

This means that they are already approved to deliver other nursing and midwifery programmes and are approved through our [four-stage gate way process](#), including approval against our [Standards Framework for Nursing and Midwifery Education](#) and our [Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment](#). This should reduce future regulatory burden for current AEIs, although we do deploy a [different approach](#) for education providers who have not been approved to deliver any NMC programmes.

As with other programmes, AEIs will be required to provide ongoing assurance of compliance with our standards through annual monitoring. More information on our education quality assurance processes can be found in our [QA Framework](#).

**Q. Will the regulation of advanced practice education necessitate NMC approval of existing advanced practice programmes?**

Yes. Education providers that want to deliver advanced practice education programmes for nurses and midwives in the UK will need to get their programmes approved by the NMC. The programmes will be approved against the NMC standards for nursing and midwifery advanced practice education programmes that we will develop. The quality assurance of advanced practice education is a further workstream in the Advanced Practice Review Phase 2.

**Q. Many current advanced practice programmes are multiprofessional. Is it envisaged that programmes will continue to be multi-professional?**

As the regulator for nurses and midwives in the UK we have a clear remit. Whilst we cannot regulate other professionals who work in advanced practice roles, NMC approved education providers will be supported to continue to develop multi-professional advanced practice programmes but they must meet NMC education standards.

We are committed to ensuring we continue to work collaboratively across professions. We will continue to work closely with other health and social care professional regulators, including the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), to understand the implications of our new regulatory approach on advanced practitioners from other professions.

**Q. How will advanced practice education providers be involved in this Review?**

Education providers are a key stakeholder of the Advanced Practice Review and have been closely engaged in the Review to date. Co-production is a central tenet of our methodology and engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders from across the UK will continue in Phase 2 building on the evidence and engagement work from Phase 1 where we sought feedback from educators and learners. We will also continue to engage with education colleagues through the Council of Deans of Health (CoDH).

## **The register**

**Q. Will the NMC hold a register of nursing and midwifery advanced practitioners?**

Transitional arrangements for the existing nursing and midwifery advanced practice workforce are being considered as a key workstream of the Advanced Practice Review Phase 2. This will consider how we can evidence and validate the knowledge and skills of existing professionals and update relevant register entries on the public register.

Professionals who meet our requirements for advanced practice (either via transitional arrangements or future qualification from an approved programme) will have their

register records publicly updated to indicate their advanced practice status or qualification.

As part of this work, we will engage with current professionals and the public to ensure that any arrangements are fair and proportionate and have public protection at their heart.

**Q. Will an advanced practice qualification result in registration on a separate part of the register?**

No. We won't record and publish advanced practice qualifications on a separate part of the register. Instead, professionals who meet our requirements for advanced practice (either via transitional arrangements or future qualification from an approved programme) will have their register records publicly updated to indicate their advanced practice status or qualification. We will monitor dependencies with other NMC programmes such as the regulatory reform programme to align approaches.

## **Revalidation**

**Q. Will professionals have to revalidate against their advanced level practice?**

Our Council has agreed to ensure that advanced level practice requirements are included in the wider reviews of revalidation and the Code scheduled for 2025/26.

Feedback from the public in Phase 1 of the Review, pointed to the need for us to set education requirements for nurses and midwives working at advanced practice level; equally the public wanted assurance about the continued competence of professionals working at this level.

A review of revalidation is scheduled for 2025/26 and we currently expect specific consideration of advanced level practice to be part of this review. It is anticipated that revalidation will treat advanced practice qualifications similarly to our existing suite of NMC-approved post-registration qualifications.

As part of our current revalidation requirements, professionals are encouraged to update their knowledge and enhance and develop their skills. The development of new advanced practice standards of proficiency will make this easier for nursing and midwifery advanced practitioners.

## **Existing NMC post-registration qualifications**

**Q. How will work on advanced level practice impact the NMC's existing suite of post-registration qualifications?**

The Advanced Practice Review is separate from our work relating to existing NMC-approved post-registration qualifications. The Review is focused on the advanced level of practice rather than areas of specialist practice, which are the focus of our existing suite of post-registration qualifications.

We recently updated our [post-registration standards](#), including for Specialist Community Public Health Nursing (SCPHN) and Specialist Practice Qualifications (SPQs).

**Q. Will the NMC automatically transition professionals with existing SCPHN/SPQ qualifications to advanced practice status?**

As part of this phase of the Advanced Practice Review, we are carefully considering the impact of regulatory interventions on existing nurses and midwives working at advanced level across the UK. We will develop a process for transitioning existing professionals that will include consideration of the knowledge, skills and experiences of professionals and how they can demonstrate alignment to the regulatory standards we will set.

We will develop these transitional arrangements for existing nursing and midwifery advanced practitioners based on co-production and an evidence-based approach, informed by Professional Standards Authority (PSA) right touch principles.

## **Levels of Practice**

**Q. Is the focus of the NMC's Review the level of advanced practice or specific advanced practice roles?**

We recognise the UK four-country understanding that advanced practice is a level of practice not a specific role or speciality. We will not be developing standards for specific roles or specialities. We also won't define the scope of practice of advanced practitioners, as this is dynamic and driven by an individual's knowledge, skills and experience.

**Q. What impact will the Advanced Practice Review have on enhanced and consultant level practice?**

The scope of the Advanced Practice Review is to consider additional regulation of advanced level practice.

Other levels of practice, including enhanced and consultant level practice, sit outside the scope of this Review. For example, we do not plan to define enhanced or consultant level practice or develop standards of proficiency for these levels of practice via this Review. However, we will consider the impacts of our decisions on enhanced and consultant level practice.

## **Transitional arrangements**

**Q. What will be the transitional arrangements for existing nurses and midwives working at an advanced level of practice and advanced practice students?**

As part of Phase 2, we are undertaking work to develop transitional arrangements for existing nursing and midwifery professionals working at the advanced level as well as students currently on advanced practice programmes.



We value the knowledge, skills and experiences of nurses and midwives currently working in advanced practice roles and those with advanced practice education and professional experience. We acknowledge the hard work, dedication and commitment of professionals in developing their careers and providing safe, kind and effective care at the advanced level for people across health and social care settings.

We will be engaging with key stakeholders such as professionals, students, employers, educators and the public across the UK as we develop our plans. We want to develop a proportionate and fair process which recognises the knowledge and skills of the existing workforce and ensures safe, kind and effective care for the public.

We will provide further information about this process, including guidance for professionals, students, employers and educators as we develop and finalise our plans.

## Finance

### **Q. Who will be responsible for any cost implications resulting from the additional regulation of advanced practice by the NMC?**

As part of Phase 1 of the Advanced Practice Review we undertook an independent initial economic analysis to understand the cost implications of different approaches to the regulation of advanced practice. This initial work informed our recommendations.

We are committed to developing proposals that both uphold public protection and are proportionate.

## Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

### **Q. Will the Advanced Practice Review consider equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)?**

We value the diversity of the people on our register and the people and communities we and our professionals serve. We have a responsibility as a regulator to do everything in our power to tackle discrimination and inequality and to promote diversity and inclusion.

We have developed our [EDI plan](#) which sets out the steps we're taking to include EDI in all aspects of our work.

EDI is central to the Advance Practice Review and work to regulate advanced practice across the UK. It will be embedded across all aspects of the Review and all workstreams. For example, we will embed EDI within our new standards of proficiency and programme standards.

Phase 1 of the Review included an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), which considered the potential impacts of this work on people with different protected characteristics. We have published this [EqIA](#), which is the foundation for our thinking for the next phase of the Review. A further EqIA is being completed, including any

lessons learnt and ambitions for Phase 2. This will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis throughout the Review.

We will continually update our understanding of the EDI implications to ensure that the regulation of nursing and midwifery advanced practice has positive impacts for all people, including professionals and the public, and that we meet our legal obligations, including via the Equality Act 2010 and our Public Sector Equality Duty.

**Q. How are the experiences of internationally educated professionals being considered in this work?**

We have commissioned the Florence Nightingale Foundation (FNF) to undertake independent research to inform our future decision-making regarding the impact of additional regulation of advanced practice on internationally educated nurses and midwives on the NMC register.

In particular, we are interested in understanding what comprises advanced practice in the countries where the majority of internationally educated professionals are from and the extent to which internationally educated professionals use their advanced practice knowledge and skills in UK practice.

For more information, please see the FNF rapid evidence check [report](#).

**Q. How will the Advanced Practice Review consider the Welsh Language?**

We comply with [the Welsh Language Standards Regulations](#) which make our services available in both Welsh and English.

We undertook a Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIA) as part of Phase 1 of the Advanced Practice Review. This helped us to identify increased opportunities for professionals and the public to use the Welsh language and for the Welsh language to be treated equally to the English language. The WLIA for Phase 1 will shortly be available on our website in both Welsh and English. We will update our WLIA as part of Phase 2 of the Review and publish this on our website.

## **Advanced practitioners who are not NMC professionals**

**Q. I'm a health and social care professional working at an advanced practice level, but I'm not a nurse or a midwife. How will the NMC's Advanced Practice Review impact me?**

In line with our regulatory role, any changes we make will only apply to nurses and midwives on our register.

However, we are working closely with other health and social care professional regulators and systems regulators, including the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), via a joint regulatory group to understand the implications of our new regulatory approach on advanced practitioners in other professions.

Alongside this, we are working to produce joint principles and explore the opportunities a unified UK-wide advanced practice framework offers.

### **Q. How will the Review impact multi-professional advanced practice teams?**

Advanced practice is considered to be a level of practice throughout the UK. However, not all the UK frameworks are multiprofessional.

The NMC is the professional regulator for nurses and midwives in the UK and nursing associates in England.

We are, however, working with other regulatory and professional bodies, including via a joint regulatory group, to understand the implications of our work on other health and social care professions and to inform the development of joint principles and explore the opportunities a unified UK-wide advanced practice framework offers.

Regulation already differs for different health and social care professionals working in the same health and social care settings. We are, however, confident that the additional regulation of nursing and midwifery advanced practitioners will ensure safe, kind and effective care for the public, better enable employers to support their nursing and midwifery professionals working at an advanced level and support the continued effectiveness of multi-disciplinary teams.

## **Timelines**

### **Q What is the timeline for the Review?**

This is a complex programme of work and our evidence from Phase 1 suggested that no single proposed regulatory option would by itself mitigate the risks to public protection. Our independent steering group also recommended that a phased approach to the development of additional regulation would be required. Our Council agreed to this phased approach and through Phase 2 we are developing a number of approaches and processes.

We've now revised the timeline for this work from the one included in our May Council papers. This is to ensure we give our partners, professionals and the public sufficient opportunity to input into this work. Our revised timeline will be published with our [Council papers](#) for the meeting on 3 July 2024.

Following Phase 2 a further implementation phase (Phase 3) will follow.