

NMC response to the Social Work England consultation on their strategy for 2023 to 2026

Introduction

- 1 Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this [consultation on Social Work England's strategy for 2023-26](#). We support the ambition of your key themes of regulation and protection, prevention and impact, and delivery and improvement.
- 2 We share similarities in themes that we identify in [our strategy](#), namely improvement and innovation, proactive support for our professions, more visible and informed, engaging and empowering the public, professionals and partners, insight and influence.
- 3 Professionals on our register work in a multi-professional environment with social workers and other professionals, and it is important to recognise how we can take action together for better, safer care of people. We would welcome working together, where we have a shared interest to keep people safe via intelligence sharing, identifying risks at an early stage and enhancing public understanding of the importance of regulation. We would be pleased to follow up on our previous conversations about how to work together.
- 4 In education, where we jointly approve programmes, we have a mutual interest to share any concerns and promote best practice. We can share our experience and the impact of launching our resources on [managing concerns](#). We can also share our experience of working with the public, professionals, and partners to help you clarify how you will deliver key themes.

Regulation and Protection

**What do you think about our ambition to resolve concerns about social workers locally, where it is safe and appropriate to do so?
How could we continue to improve our approach to regulation?**

- 5 We agree with your ambition for concerns to be managed locally, where it is safe and appropriate to do so, and we would be happy to share our experiences of developing resources to support employers as well as the work of our [Employer Link Service](#). As an example, we have developed a resource to identify best practice on [managing concerns](#), by collaborating with employers, professionals, regulatory partners and gaining understanding of the lived experiences of people who use services. It provides principles for employers to consider where they manage concerns locally and supports employers to act valuing fairness and kindness, with regulatory involvement only where necessary.
- 6 We have experienced a positive impact through this initiative. Since the launch, there has been a gradual decrease in referrals, and we have also found improvements in the quality of referrals that we receive from employers.

- 7 We have made significant changes to our [approach to fitness to practise](#), developing a more person-centred approach where people, families and the public are at the heart of everything we do. A key principle of this revised approach to fitness to practise is that employers should act first where there are concerns, unless the risk to people or the public is so serious that we need to take immediate action. This helps people to understand that the core purpose of regulation is to protect the public. This might be something you want to consider making explicit in your strategy.
- 8 We recommend that you take the opportunity to encourage learning among professionals to improve care and keep people safe. We want to ensure that professionals on our register are encouraged to be open and supported in their learning and to adopt [just culture](#) approaches.

Prevention and Impact

We want to develop our leadership role in addressing risks to public protection. Where should we focus our activity?

- 9 We believe that collaboration with fellow regulators will help you to develop your leadership role in prevention and impact.
- 10 We would be happy to discuss in more detail how we might work together to share intelligence at an early stage on professionals on our register and where we jointly approve education courses. It would strengthen our ambitions to prevent harm, by sharing insight where professionals work in a multi-professional environment.
- 11 We [responded](#) to your recent consultation on standards relating to specific mental health roles. Where professionals are jointly registered with Social Work England and the NMC we are keen to work with you to ensure proportionate regulation and to enable these professionals to deliver safe, effective and kind care.

Delivery and Improvement

What could the barriers to us achieving our aims over the next 3 years be? Please give reasons for your answer.

How could we share data and insight to drive positive change in the sector and profession? Please give reasons for your answer.

What do you most need from the regulator of social work and is this reflected in the strategy? Please give reasons for your answer.

- 12 We have not specifically responded to the question on barriers, as we have distinctive regulatory remits. We know that there are extreme pressures on the sector with recruitment and retention, and as regulators it is vital that we are aware of the environment in which our professionals are working including the cost-of-living crisis and the continued impact of Covid-19.
- 13 We are pleased that like us you are a signatory to the [Emerging Concerns Protocol](#), as this helps regulators to share information sooner about potential risks

to people using services, families and professionals, and work together and as we say above we would be happy to discuss more how we can work together more effectively.

Questions across all themes

Do you think that the strategy could impact any persons with a protected characteristic? If so, is it positively, or negatively?

Do you have any other comments that you would like to share with us?

- 14 We would be keen to see the equality impact analysis which has informed this draft strategy, how the strategy will deliver for groups with protected characteristics and how you intend to monitor this going forward.
- 15 We look forward to working with you further on our shared ambitions, as your strategy and future plans are finalised.

About us

- 16 We are the UK's independent, statutory regulator of nursing and midwifery professions. We regulate [758,303](#) nursing and midwifery professionals, [including 591,453](#) nurses, midwives and nursing associates in England. Our purpose is to promote and uphold the highest professional standards in order to protect the public and inspire confidence in the professions.
- 17 Our vision is safe, effective and kind nursing and midwifery that improves everyone's health and wellbeing. Our core role is to **regulate**. To regulate well, we **support** our professionals and the public. Regulating and supporting our professionals allows us to **influence** health and social care.