

Health and Social Care Committee
Welsh Senedd

Submitted via online form

14 September 2026

Dear Health and Social Care Committee

Priorities for the Seventh Senedd - Health and Social Care Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your consultation on the Welsh Government's priorities for health and social care.

Our role is to protect the public and maintain confidence in the nursing and midwifery professions. As the largest independent regulator in Europe of more than 860,000 nursing and midwifery professionals, we have a crucial role in making this a reality. Nurses and midwives make up a substantial proportion of the health and care workforce in Wales and are central to delivering safe, effective and kind care, as well as improving population health and wellbeing.

We support the Welsh Government's priorities for health and social care. We welcome the emphasis on reducing waiting times, strengthening community and preventative care, integrating health and social care, improving mental health and women's health, addressing health inequalities and developing a sustainable workforce. As the nursing and midwifery regulator, our response focuses on those areas where our work and data can provide insight into the role of the workforce in achieving these priorities.

The nursing and midwifery workforce in Wales

On the development of a sustainable workforce, the latest NMC Register data provide an important perspective on the current workforce situation for nursing and midwifery in Wales. As of 31 March 2026, there were 42,020 professionals with an address in Wales on the NMC Register, a record number and an increase of 568 on the previous year. However, the rate of growth has slowed from 2.4% in 2024–25 to 1.4% in 2025–26. Over the same period, 1,542 professionals joined the Register for the first time, while 1,570 left. New joiners have fallen for the second consecutive year, while the number of leavers increased by 7.3%.

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We're the independent regulator for nurses and midwives in the UK, and nursing associates in England. Our vision is safe, effective and kind nursing and midwifery practice that improves everyone's health and wellbeing.

Registered charity in England and Wales (1091434) and in Scotland (SC038362)

We know from our [Leavers' Survey](#) for 2025/26 that the most common reason for professionals in Wales to leave our register was retirement, though this had decreased slightly from 2024/25. Other common main reasons selected for leaving were physical or mental health issues, lack of support from colleagues, burnout or exhaustion. Just over half (50.4%) leavers in Wales left earlier than planned, 27.4% left roughly when planned, and 21.4% left later than planned.

Workforce sustainability also depends on the experience of professionals once they enter the system. The NMC's data show that 15.3% of professionals on the Register with addresses in Wales are from Black, Asian and other ethnic minority backgrounds, up from 13.7% a year earlier. At the same time, our wider evidence shows unacceptable levels of racism and discrimination in nursing and midwifery. Forty percent of respondents to the NMC's 2025 annual survey reported experiencing discrimination in the previous year, most often related to age or ethnicity.

We are keen to work with the Committee and other partners in the health and care system on tackling discrimination, as part of our development of [anti-racism principles](#), as well as exploring more how we can address exhaustion and burnout amongst our professionals. For instance, we welcome the action identified by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) in their Strategic Nursing Workforce Plan to pilot a senior leader talent pool that supports and develops Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic leaders. We would welcome a focus on these areas from the Committee across this Senedd.

Community-based care and prevention

We support the ambition to strengthen community-based care and prevention. Our registrants are already central to delivering care closer to people's homes and communities, including through district nursing, general practice, mental health nursing, health visiting, school nursing and public health nursing.

However, we recognise that community-based care requires changes to the workforce, skills, infrastructure, education and resources. The NMC has previously highlighted the decline in some community nursing roles and the need for integrated workforce planning across health, social care and the third sector.

To achieve a greater focus on prevention we need to invest in the education, skills and proficiency that our workforce would need to analyse population health data, spot signs of illness earlier and to tailor responses to people's circumstances. The workforce needs to be supported to understand the suite of interventions that may be possible within the health service and in the community. We would encourage the Committee to focus on the education and training the workforce needs to deliver the Government's priorities.

Welsh language

While it is not listed amongst the current priorities, we note that the Welsh Government has set out the [Cymraeg 2050](#) policy to achieve a million Welsh speakers by 2050 and that there is a strategic framework for promoting the Welsh language in health, social services and social care. Since December 2023, the NMC has been required to comply with the Welsh Language Standards (No.8) Regulations, and we have put processes and guidance in place to enable people to access our services in Welsh. This includes accepting correspondence in Welsh, providing Welsh-language services and publications, supporting the use of Welsh at public meetings in Wales, and making professional standards and guidance available in Welsh where appropriate or on request.

We are committed to complying with the Welsh Language Standards Regulations and engaging with the Welsh Language Commissioner and others to be responsive and informed in our approach to meeting the needs of Welsh speakers wishing to engage with the NMC. Details of our annual reports and current work in relation to the Welsh Language Standards can be found [on our website](#).

We also note that the Welsh Government and HEIW are keen to ensure people can access healthcare in their preferred language, as reflected in the Strategic Nursing Workforce Plan, and has launched resources and guidance to support workforce planning for Welsh language. We support the *More than just words* strategy and we will work with HEIW to consider how we can support its goals through our education powers and duties in particular. As part of our current review of the NMC Code, we are exploring refreshed, strengthened content on Welsh language. The Committee may want to consider what other support could be offered to staff to further develop Welsh language skills and deliver care in Welsh where patients would prefer and benefit from it.

We hope this response is helpful and highlights additional areas, particularly related to workforce, where the Committee can focus its attention across this current Senedd. We would be very happy to discuss any of these issues or questions around the data and intelligence we hold with you further.

Yours sincerely

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