

**Review of Practice
Learning (RPL)
Equality Impact
Assessment (EQIA)
Summary
(April 2026)**

1. Introduction and purpose

The Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) considers the potential equality impacts of our Review of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Learning (RPL), and the proposed changes to education programme standards for nursing and midwifery programmes.

We have undertaken this EQIA to inform and support fair, lawful and transparent decision-making, and to identify how the proposed changes may affect people with different protected characteristics, and other marginalised groups.

EQIAs are live documents forming a part of the evidence base for consultation and final decision-making, and will be reviewed and updated following consultation feedback and other key points of the project.

2. Strategic and legislative context

This EQIA summary is informed by our statutory Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED). This includes the duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, and aligns with [our EDI strategic objectives](#). Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is at the heart of our decision-making, aiming to ensure greater regulatory fairness and contributing to a reduction in disparities for groups across our regulatory processes.

The EQIA supports these aims by considering how proposed changes to practice learning standards can:

- Contribute to reducing differential outcomes in education
- Improve consistency and fairness in learning experiences
- Address known upstream contributors to later regulatory disparities, and
- Strengthen public protection through inclusive, high-quality practice learning.

3. Scope of the EQIA summary

The EQIA considers people from a wide range of backgrounds, including:

- The nine protected characteristics set out in the [Equality Act 2010 \(Great Britain\)](#)
- The equality groups defined under [Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998](#).

In line with our EDI strategic objectives, the EQIA also considers intersectionality and wider factors that can compound inequality – including socio-economic factors, caring responsibilities, placement geography, travel, and access to reasonable adjustments.

We consider equality impacts from the perspective of:

- Nursing (including nursing associates) and midwifery students, and
- The public, recognising that inclusive practice learning underpins public protection by preventing harm, supporting professional standards and maintaining public confidence.

4. Description of the project and intended changes

The Review of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Learning focuses on the quality, inclusivity and consistency of practice learning across health and social care settings. Evidence from stakeholder engagement, Education Quality Assurance (EdQA), Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) and an independent review indicates that the quality of practice learning has a greater impact on student preparedness and public protection than the volume of hours completed alone, and has informed consideration of the proposed changes.

Intended changes include:

4.1 Education programme standards (nursing and midwifery)

- Strengthened expectations that students' diverse needs are respected across all learning environments
- Strengthened expectations that students develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours to recognise and challenge racism, bias and discrimination, and to promote culturally safe, respectful care
- Clearer requirements for collaboration between Approved Education Institutions (AEIs) and Practice Learning Partners (PLPs), particularly in relation to reasonable adjustments and inclusive learning environments.

4.2 Student supervision and assessment standards

- A targeted amendment enabling midwives with Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (SCPHN) qualifications to act as practice assessors for nursing students in public health practice learning experiences.

4.3 Nursing programme standards

- Greater flexibility in overall programme design
- The proposed revisions include changes to the minimum practice learning hours. These changes do not alter the required standards of proficiency, which must continue to be fully met, including through the proportionate and appropriate use of simulated practice learning
- Strengthened expectations for community-based practice learning across health and social care, supporting learning across the lifespan.

4.4 Midwifery programme standards

- A strengthened focus on inclusive midwifery practice, informed by evidence, professional standards and guidance, and responsive to the diverse needs of women, newborn infants and families
- Clearer expectations around holistic assessment, continuity of supervision and experience of caring for women with additional or complex needs
- Proposals relating to simulated learning and practice learning design to support equitable learning while maintaining safety for both the public and students.

5. Evidence and equality considerations

Evidence consistently shows that students with protected characteristics can experience disadvantage in practice learning, particularly where work culture, supervision quality or access to reasonable adjustments vary.

Key themes include:

- Unequal access to high-quality practice learning experiences
- Experiences of bias or discrimination from peers, staff or patients
- Inconsistent understanding of reasonable adjustments and flexible working arrangements
- Anxiety linked to inflexible or task-focused practice learning models.

Students may experience intersectional disadvantage, where multiple protected characteristics interact to increase barriers.

6. Anticipated equality impacts

6.1 Groups most likely to experience positive impacts

The proposed changes are expected to have positive impacts for:

- **Students with different protected characteristics:** through the potential of improved inclusivity, flexibility and psychological safety
- **Students with disabilities and carers:** by supporting clearer expectations around reasonable adjustments and more flexible learning pathways
- **Students from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds:** Through strengthened expectations for AEIs and PLPs to provide inclusive practice learning environments and address racism, bias and exclusion

- **Women, babies and families from ethnic minority communities:** Through strengthened standards that better prepare future professionals to provide equitable, culturally competent care
- **The public, across all protected characteristics:** potentially through improved preparation of students to deliver culturally competent, holistic care across the lifespan, driven by higher-quality, more inclusive and better-supported practice learning experiences, contributing to reduced health inequalities and stronger public protection.

6.2. Groups most likely to experience negative impacts

Potential negative impacts are most likely to arise from inconsistencies in implementation of, rather than from the intent of, the proposed standards. Groups that may be disproportionately affected include:

- **Students from minority and ethnic backgrounds:** Continued risk of exposure to bias or discrimination in practice learning environments where placement culture and the quality of supervision vary
- **Students with disabilities (including long-term health conditions and neurodivergence):** Continued risk of inconsistent reasonable adjustments, particularly in community and non-traditional placements
- **Students with caring responsibilities:** Continued potential challenges linked to travel, scheduling and placement allocation if flexibility is not applied equitably
- **Internationally educated students:** Potential challenges adapting to different practice learning experiences without consistent supervisory support
- **All students:** Risk of perceived inequity of flexibility in programme design.

At this stage, we expect the proposed changes to have overall positive equality impacts. No changes have been stopped or amended at this point due to unjustifiable negative impacts; however, we will review this position following consultation.

7. Mitigations and action planning

Key mitigations focus on reducing variation in implementation and include:

- Clear national guidance on reasonable adjustments, flexible working and inclusive practice learning
- Strengthened expectations for supervision, assessment and protected learning time
- Equity-informed placement allocation principles

- Targeted engagement with under-represented groups during consultation
- Ongoing monitoring through EdQA intelligence and stakeholder feedback of students' practice learning experiences.

8. Monitoring, review and escalation

We will monitor the following areas through our annual self-reporting and escalate to EdQA where risks emerge:

- Consistency of reasonable adjustments
- Placement culture and psychological safety
- Differential placement experiences, progression and attainment by ethnicity and disability
- Reports of racism, harassment or discriminatory treatment in practice learning
- Differential outcomes by protected characteristic
- Use and quality of simulated practice learning
- Travel, capacity and placement allocation pressures.

9. Next steps

We will publish the final EQIA summary alongside the consultation response and final standards decision – supporting transparency, accountability and our EDI commitments.

This document is also available
in Welsh [on our website](#).

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y
Gymraeg [ar ein gwefan](#).




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