

Consultation on proposals to increase our registration fees

3 November 2025



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About the NMC

We are the independent regulator of more than 853,000 nurses, midwives and nursing associates. 1 in 50 working age people in the UK is on our register. We are responsible for protecting the public through the registration and education of our professionals, setting and upholding standards including the Code, and investigating and acting on concerns.

We are building a new NMC – one that inspires trust and confidence. The public we serve, the professions we regulate, and the bodies we work with need us to be a strong and independent regulator. However, having frozen the registration fees for the last decade, our income has fallen by 28%, compared to where it would have been had we kept pace with inflation, and we are now at risk of not having sufficient funding to carry out our work. This means we may not be able to continue investing in:

- Ensuring Fitness to Practise is timely and fair
- Updating our Code and standards to support safe and effective practice in the nursing and midwifery professions
- Assuring the quality and safety of nursing and midwifery education
- Building a strong anti-racist culture
- Ensuring fit-for-purpose technology and data.

Executive summary

Mindful of cost-of-living pressures, we have not raised our fees for 10 years. As a consequence, the value of our fee income has declined by 28%¹ in real terms over that period, at a time when our work has increased in volume and complexity, and our own costs have risen. Had we increased the main fee in line with inflation over this period it would now be £166² and had we increased all our fees in line with inflation we would have benefitted from additional income of £180 million in the 10 years up to the end of March 2026.

As a result of not increasing our fees in line with inflation, while expanding our workforce to deal with our larger and more complex workload, we are facing intense financial pressures. We are now having to draw on our reserves – spending more than our income in order to fulfil our statutory role and make investments in the areas we must improve. In 2023-24 we spent £1.1 million more than we raised from the fee.

Last year, our deficit was £19 million and this year we are facing a projected shortfall of up to £27 million. It is not sustainable for us to continue funding our day-to-day work from reserves. In accordance with best practice, we aim to have the equivalent of three to six months of operating costs in reserve, in case of unforeseen circumstances. We are now at risk of reaching unsafe levels of reserves by summer 2027.

Controlling our costs

To control our costs, in October 2025, we published proposals to remove 145 roles from our headcount. This amounts to a reduction in our workforce of 10%. We are making further savings in non-staff costs of £3.1m per year.

But reducing our staff headcount and reducing non-staff costs will not be enough.

Our register of more than 853,000 nurses, midwives and nursing associates is the biggest professional register in the UK and one of the biggest in the world.

Carrying out our important work needs sufficient funding – but over the last 10 years we have been undercharging for our work.

What we are proposing

We are now consulting on increases to our fees for the first time in 10 years. We are proposing to raise our main registration fee³ by the equivalent of £1.92 per month. This would mean a rise from £120 a year to £143.

For those registrants who pay by quarterly instalments this will be an additional £5.75 every three months.

For internationally qualified applicants, we are proposing to increase the initial registration fee from £153 to £182.

We are also proposing to increase all other registration fees, which include the fees for evaluating international qualifications and fees for adding additional qualifications to the register.



We are
proposing to
raise our main
fee from **£120**
a year to **£143**.

About this consultation

This consultation document sets out all the changes we are proposing to the fees. It includes a financial analysis of the income we need to be able to continue to deliver our regulatory work and sets out the steps we have taken to ensure we are using our income effectively.

Have your say



This consultation is open for 12 weeks from 3 November 2025 to 26 January 2026.

We are undertaking this consultation in accordance with the requirements of articles 7 and 47 of the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001. Following analysis of the responses, we will present the findings and proposed rule changes to our Council in spring 2026. If our Council approves the proposals, it will make the amendments to our fee rules, prior to final approval by the Privy Council. The new fee could then come into effect in October 2026. We will publish an analysis of the responses to this consultation after any changes that are made by the Council in spring 2026. We will also publish our Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) at the same time.

This document sets out our policy proposals. The draft rules Amendment Order can be found alongside this consultation on [the NMC website](#). Responses to this consultation will help us to understand the impact of our plans, including on groups who are protected under the Equality Act 2010 and the relevant legislation in Northern Ireland.



The survey takes around 15 minutes to complete. You can respond via [this link](#).

We want to hear from you, but taking part in this survey is optional. You can skip any section of the consultation not relevant to you. The exception is the 'About you' questions where we use this information to understand the extent to which we have heard from a diverse and broad range of people. Within this section you can select 'Prefer not to say' for any information you do not wish to share. We will analyse responses on behalf of organisations separately from responses from individuals, so it is important that we know the capacity in which you are responding.

If you are responding as an individual we will not ask for your name, which means you won't be able to change your responses after you have submitted them. We also won't be able to provide a record of your responses.

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation we will ask for your name and the organisation's name. We ask you to provide your organisation's name, but you have the option to remain anonymous if you wish.

All data shared (with the exception of organisation name) will be aggregated and anonymised (this means removing anything that could identify you or anyone else mentioned in the data).



Your personal data will be collected and stored in line with our privacy policy [here](#).

If you cannot submit your response using the online survey, please contact us at consultations@nmc-uk.org for an alternative format. You can also use this email address if you have any questions.

Context

The registration fees paid by nurses, midwives and nursing associates account for about 97% of our income. The other 3% is income earned on our reserves of cash and investments. We do not receive funding from the UK or devolved governments. This ensures our independent status as a regulator.⁴

Registration fees account for about **97%** of our income.



Our overarching objective as set out in the Nursing and Midwifery Order is the protection of the public, which our legislation defines further as:

- protecting and promoting the health, safety and well-being of the public
- promoting and maintaining public confidence in our professions
- promoting and maintaining proper professional standards and conduct in our professions.



We fulfil this purpose through specific statutory functions that are unique to the NMC:

- Establishing and maintaining a register of qualified nurses, midwives and nursing associates
- Establishing and maintaining standards of education, training, conduct and performance for nurses, midwives and nursing associates – including the Code
- Approving and monitoring education programmes
- Investigating concerns about the conduct or practice of registrants and taking action when needed to protect the public.

We also have statutory obligations as a public body that are not set out in our legislation, such as duties under equalities legislation or requirements to comply with statutory inquiries.

Increasing volume and complexity of work

The complexity and volume of our work has grown over the last decade, driven by public expectations and increased activity around the quality and safety of healthcare. Patient and public dissatisfaction with health and social care contributes to a rise in Fitness to Practise referrals.

Since the last fee increase, our register has grown from 686,782 to 853,707⁵ and now represents 1 in 50 of the working age UK population. Our activities have also increased to correspond with the growth of the register. In 2018, we became the regulator for a new profession in England – nursing associates.

We now quality assure more education programmes: currently, we oversee 99 approved education institutions (AEIs) across the UK, offering more than 2,527 programmes serving more than 115,000 students. More AEIs are working with placement partners that are severely stretched, and this has an impact on concerns management in our education work.

We oversee **99** approved education institutions across the UK.

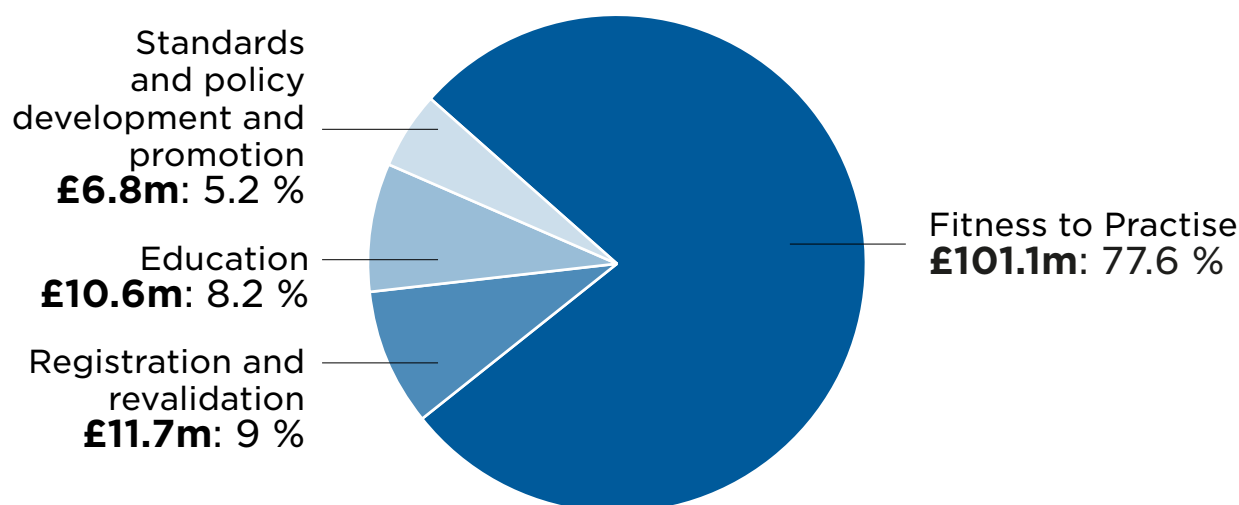
We receive an ever-growing number of monthly Fitness to Practise referrals. In April 2024, the rolling average of referrals stood at 499 per month. This figure has risen to an average of 574 per month – an increase of 15%.⁶

Our rolling average of referrals has risen to an average of **574** per month.

There are more public inquiries into the delivery of health and care. We must engage with these complex processes and respond to recommendations made by inquiries so that we learn and improve. We are significantly involved in UK inquiries⁷ related to maternity care, adult social care and mental health.

Our register has grown over recent years and that has increased our income in cash terms, but a bigger register means more regulatory work to deliver. Our decision to freeze our registration fees has resulted in our income being 28% lower than it would have been had our fees kept pace with inflation, with our foregoing £180 million up to the end of the current financial year. While our income has not kept pace with inflation, our costs have been subject to inflationary pressures over the last decade – our utility bills, staff costs, supplier costs and rent have all increased substantially. Fitness to Practise activities account for three-quarters of our expenditure. The following figure shows the distribution of our spending.

Expenditure by function 2024-25



Our priorities

Following the publication of the Independent Culture Review, in July 2024, which highlighted a number of challenges within the NMC, we are under new management and are building a new NMC.



As we transform our performance, we are investing in:

- Investing in how we handle Fitness to Practise cases to ensure clarity, fairness and reasonable timeframes
- Updating our Code and standards so that registrants, students and educators know what's expected of them and they can provide the best possible care and advice
- Assuring high-quality training and education that properly prepares nurses, midwives and nursing associates and maintains high standards of safety
- Investing in our work to make sure we promote equality, diversity and inclusion across our regulatory processes to ensure they're fair for all registrants and others involved
- Investing in the right technology and data systems at the NMC to work efficiently and best support registrants, stakeholders and our teams.

We work in a challenging healthcare environment and with a complex, outdated legislative framework. For many years, we have been asking for the modernisation of our legislation, which would allow us to make further efficiencies, especially to resolve Fitness to Practise cases earlier without the need for a hearing, which would reduce the cost and stress for registrants and witnesses. Regulatory reform has not been forthcoming, but we are pleased that the UK government has recently confirmed its commitment to replacing our legislation before the end of the current parliament. This will lead to benefits for everyone involved in our processes, but we will need to invest in changes to realise those benefits.

Our financial position

In 2024-25, as a result of taking steps to invest in improving our organisational culture and our regulatory performance, we spent more money than we received from registrants' fees. In 2023-24, we spent £1.1m more than we brought in from registration fees. Last year we posted a deficit of £19 million (after investment gains) and we are projecting a deficit of up to £27 million for 2025-26. If we don't increase our fees – along with taking steps to reduce our costs – we are at risk of our reserves reaching unsafe levels by summer 2027.



We now need to bridge the gap between what it costs to deliver effective professional regulation and our available income. With our costs outstripping our income, doing nothing would cause us to continue in a cycle of overspending. Eventually, we would be at risk of having insufficient funds to deliver our statutory duties.

As well as the impact of inflation, our financial forecast has taken into account register growth. We have seen growth in the register slowing in the past two years and we forecast it will flatten further to below 2% a year. This is informed by our latest register data which shows that the number of internationally qualified professionals joining our register fell by nearly a third in just one year (2024-25). There was also a smaller rate of growth in UK qualified professionals joining our register last year.⁸

Reserves

The impact of our decision to freeze the registration fee, while expanding our workforce to cope with the growth in the volume and complexity of work, is that our reserves – our cash and financial investments – will have reduced from £101 million in March 2024 to £45 million by March 2026 and £16 million in August 2026. We need to rebuild our reserves so that we have the financial resilience long-term to deal with uncertainty and invest in the future.

With the proposed fee increase, we would expect our reserves to stand at £27 million in March 2027. Without raising the fee, our reserves would reach unsafe levels by summer 2027.

Other steps we have taken

We are controlling our costs. In October 2025, we announced proposals to reduce our staff headcount by 10%, by removing 145 roles from our structure. We are also making savings across non-pay costs. We have maintained our 23 Portland Place offices due to a very low rent of £250 per year. We have foregone planned refurbishment and slowed the pace of investment in technology.

We have been able to absorb cost pressures to a degree through our investment policy, which aims to maximise returns on our investable cash balances. In 2023–24, investment income and gains on our investments contributed £7 million to our reserves – but these amounts are not likely to be repeated as interest rates and our cash balances fall.

We have invested heavily in addressing our Fitness to Practise caseload by increasing casework support and we are accelerating our Fitness to Practise Improvement Plan.

Our proposals

We are consulting on proposals to increase all registration fees as set out in the following table.

Fee type	Registrants	Current fees	Proposed new fee
Initial registration application fee	UK applicants	£120	£143
Initial registration application fee	Overseas applicants	£153	£182
Retention fee (paid annually on the 1st and 2nd anniversary of registration)	All	£120	£143
Renewal fee (paid at the end of the registration period on the 3rd anniversary)	All	£120	£143
Evaluation fee (to evaluate international qualifications and assess eligibility to apply for registration)	Overseas applicants	£140	£167
Application fee for entering an additional pre-registration qualification	All	£23	£27
Application fee for entering a recordable qualification (post-registration qualifications)	All	£25	£30
Application for readmission or restoration to the register	All	£120	£143

The proposed fees increases will begin strengthening our financial position in the latter part of 2026-27 and will provide us with about an additional £20 million in a full year from 2028-29.

Modern and effective regulation



Managing the Fitness to Practise caseload will continue to be our main area of expenditure for the foreseeable future. We have committed to:

- delivering fast and fair outcomes
- appropriately managing and signposting cases that aren't for us, so we can focus on those that need regulatory action
- improving safeguarding for registrants and witnesses
- embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into our decision-making and taking measures to prevent bias in our decision-making so everyone has confidence in our decisions.



But we also need to invest in other core regulatory work and in modernising our systems including:

- updating our standards, the Code and revalidation approach with the aim of providing more effective support for our registrants working in a changing context with evolving expectations of care
- investing more in our education quality assurance to make sure that nursing, midwifery and nursing associate students are educated safely and effectively
- regulating advanced practice
- upgrading technology and improving data to enable informed decision making and better services
- investing in staff capability, and improved culture and performance
- preparing for and implementing regulatory reform
- building regulatory fairness in our processes, tackling bias, and embedding equality, diversity and inclusion considerations – in all that we do.

Without the proposed increase, we would not have the means to move forward, which would leave us unable to meet our statutory obligations and protect the public effectively.

Comparison of health and care professional regulator annual renewal fees across the UK

While there are differences in the types of fees and renewal periods, our annual registration fee is amongst the lowest charged by any of the UK health and care professional regulators:

Regulator	Current registration/renewal fee ⁹
General Chiropractic Council	£800
General Dental Council	£621
General Medical Council	£463
General Optical Council	£415
General Osteopathic Council	£570
General Pharmaceutical Council	£293
Health and Care Professions Council	£123.34
Nursing and Midwifery Council	£143 (proposed new fee)
Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland	£398
Social Work England	£120

Financial support for nurses, midwives and nursing associates

We recognise that this is a significant increase to the fees that nurses, midwives and nursing associates will pay to join or stay on our register. There are two things that may help:

Tax relief



Registrants who are UK taxpayers can claim back the tax on registration fees. Claiming back tax is called 'tax relief' and claims can be made in relation to the last four years of fee payments.

More information on how to claim tax relief can be found by visiting the HMRC webpage called '[Claim tax relief for your job expenses](#)' and following the instructions.

Payment by quarterly instalments



Registrants can spread the cost of the annual registration fee in four instalments during the year. Currently, the quarterly payments are £30. Under the proposals, the quarterly payments would rise to £35.75. This can be set up via [NMC online](#).

Impact assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

Under the Equality Act 2010 we must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not when we carry out our regulatory functions (the public sector equality duty).



We recognise that all of our registrants will be affected by a fee rise, irrespective of their protected characteristics, pay, grade or occupation. However, we have identified that there is a potential for a fee rise to have a disproportionately adverse impact on the following groups sharing a protected characteristic:

- **Registrants aged over 55** who may decide to work part time or retire earlier. During the consultation on the fee increase in 2015, over 50% of registrants aged over 55 said that a fee increase was likely to impact on their decision to continue working. One respondent organisation carried out its own survey. It found that half of the registrants aged over 55 who responded to the survey said that the fee increase would not make it economical to return to work on a part-time basis
- **Younger registrants** who, as newly qualified professionals at the start of their careers, will be in the lower pay bands and repaying student loans
- **Women** who are more likely to take maternity leave than men are to take paternity leave and to take career breaks or work part time
- **Registrants in lower socio-economic groups.** Black, Asian and other ethnic minority groups, and disabled registrants, may be overrepresented in the lower socio-economic groups.

We will continue to assess the impact on groups sharing a protected characteristic as we receive responses to this consultation. We will use responses to update the assessment we have undertaken and feedback may cause us to change our proposals in line with our duties under the Equality Act. We will publish the Equality Impact Assessment with findings and outcomes when we publish our response to the consultation.

Welsh Language Impact Assessment



The Welsh Language Standards are duties imposed on organisations by the Welsh Language Commissioner to use Welsh (in areas including policy making and formulating new policy), in a way that gives Welsh speakers the right to use the language when dealing with those organisations. The standards promote and facilitate the Welsh language and ensure that it is not treated less favourably than English in Wales. Drawing on the responses to our consultation questions, we will highlight any relevant impacts, and our proposed response to these, within our report on the findings of this consultation.

Consultation questions

- 1 Considering the information in this consultation document, how far if at all, do you understand the financial context in which we are now operating?
- 2 Given the information we shared with you about the financial context we are now operating in, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal to increase the main registration fee is reasonable?
- 3 Given the information we shared with you about the financial context we are now operating in, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal to increase the overseas application fees is reasonable?
- 4 Given the information we shared with you about the financial context we are now operating in, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal to increase the additional qualification fees is reasonable?
- 5 If you are a nurse, midwife or nursing associate, do you pay your own registration fee or does your employer reimburse you?
- 6 Are you aware that you can pay your registration fee in quarterly payments and, if so, do you do this?
- 7 Are you aware that you can claim tax relief on the annual registration fee, if so, do you do this?
- 8 We are keen to understand your views on where the NMC is focusing its investment and resource following this consultation. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the NMC should continue to invest in the following areas:
 - Investing in how we handle Fitness to Practise cases to ensure clarity, fairness and reasonable timeframes
 - Updating our Code and standards so that registrants, students and educators know what's expected of them and they can provide the best possible care and advice
 - Assuring high-quality training and education that properly prepares nurses, midwives and nursing associates and maintains high standards of safety
 - Investing in our work to make sure we promote equality, diversity and inclusion across our regulatory processes to ensure they're fair for all registrants and others involved

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- Investing in the right technology and data systems at the NMC to work efficiently and best support registrants, stakeholders and our teams.

- 9 When thinking about the proposed changes to fees, can you identify any potential impacts – positive or negative – on some individuals more than others based on their protected characteristics?
- 10 When thinking about the proposed changes to fees, can you identify any potential impacts – positive or negative – on either the promotion of the Welsh language or on Welsh speakers?

How to respond

We welcome feedback from any individual affected by the proposed changes to our registration fees. We also ask you to share some information about yourself so that we can understand what different groups of respondents say about our proposals. Your comments will not be attributable to you.



You can access our online survey [here](#). You can also find the draft Amendment Order (which would amend the current rules by inserting the increased fee amounts) via this [link](#). If you cannot submit your response using our online survey, please contact us at consultations@nmc-uk.org for an alternative format.

While all respondents can remain anonymous, if you are responding on behalf of an organisation, we'll ask for your name and organisation. We will also ask if you are happy for your comments to be attributed to your organisation in reporting.

Endnotes

- 1 Based on actual published CPI index from the Office for National Statistics for May 2025.
- 2 Based on actual published CPI index from the Office for National Statistics for May 2025.
- 3 The term main registration fee includes the initial registration application fee (for UK educated professionals), the retention fee, the renewal fee, the readmission fee and the restoration fee.
- 4 We have occasionally received a grant in aid from the government to fund a specific piece of work. The most recent example was the regulation of nursing associates in England, in 2018-2019.
- 5 There were 686,782 nurses and midwives on the register as at 31 March 2015. https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/annual_reports_and_accounts/annual-report-and-accounts-2014-2015.pdf.
- 6 NMC [Annual Fitness to Practise Report 2024-2025](#).
- 7 For example, Independent Review of Maternity Services at Nottingham University Hospitals, Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry, Thirlwall Inquiry, Lampard Inquiry and Liverpool Community Health Independent Review.
- 8 March 2025 Annual Registration Data Report <https://www.nmc.org.uk/about-us/reports-and-accounts/registration-statistics/>.
- 9 These are the standard rates as at time of publication. Some regulators, such as HCPC and GMC, offer discounts for certain categories of registrants.

This document is also available in Welsh
on our website.

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y
Gymraeg ar ein gwefan.



The nursing and midwifery regulator for
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