

How could AI impact regulation and practice?

Insights from the NMC
Professional Strategic
Advisory Group (PSAG)

April 2026

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Background

The NMC Professional Strategic Advisory Group (PSAG) was established as a forum for expert professionals to provide the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) with constructive challenge on strategic issues. It offers a regular opportunity for senior registrants to steer the NMC's initiatives, through insights and reflections from contemporary practice, education and training. The group also considers emerging themes in nursing and midwifery, helping the NMC to anticipate and prepare for innovations and risks which could impact its regulatory role.

This paper summarises insights from PSAG members at their March 2026 meeting, also attended by the NMC Strategy Team and colleagues working on the Code and revalidation reviews. These insights will support our strategic commitment to develop our understanding of emerging technologies, including AI, as they affect regulation and practice in our professions.

1. Overall energy and concerns

Areas members found most energising

- Patient experience and trust (most frequently cited)
- Fitness to Practise (FtP)
- Education standards and training needs
- Supporting clinical decision-making
- Automation of routine tasks
- Equity, accountability, and ethical use of AI

Areas members were most nervous about

- Fitness to Practise (seen as the highest-risk area)
- Education standards and revalidation
- Over-reliance on AI and patient safety consequences
- Bias, discrimination, and equity risks
- Complexity and uncertainty in decision accountability

2. How AI may affect regulation and practice

Key reflections

- Decision-making AI is high-risk and not an early priority (too complex, too great a public protection risk).
- Revalidation and academic integrity are immediate challenges, with an “arms race” between AI tools and AI-detection tools.
- Nursing and midwifery are fundamentally relational professions, and AI must not erode the central human element of care.
- Rapid pace of change requires NMC agility – three years (i.e., duration of the next NMC strategy) is a long time in AI development.

NMC Governance and Standards

- Members stressed the need for:
- Clear governance and guiding principles for NMC's own use of AI
- Integration of AI considerations into the Code, education standards, and revalidation
- Regulatory alignment with NMC values and public protection duties
- Learning from other regulators and professional bodies

Future-proofing the Code

- Strong concern about how the NMC can keep standards current without constant revision.
- Desire for high-level, flexible principles that can remain relevant as AI evolves.

3. Opportunities and strategic risks for the NMC

Opportunities

- Improved synthesis and analysis of information in FtP (e.g., triaging referrals, summarising evidence) – but must tread carefully.
- Support for registrants in documenting and explaining clinical decision-making, improving transparency.
- Potential for AI to improve public-facing information, triage, and signposting, including:
 - Referral guidance
 - Chatbots/decision aids
 - More accessible website content

Strategic risks

- Liability concerns – members felt this is unavoidable and must be addressed urgently.
- AI-generated complaints and subject access requests that increase workload and complexity.
- Risk of widening inequalities, especially for internationally educated nurses and over-represented groups in FtP.
- Reputational risk if the NMC moves too slowly while AI becomes embedded in practice.

4. Accountability, safety, and the role of clinical judgement

Common themes from discussions

- Clinical judgement must always override AI output; AI is a tool, not a decision-maker.
- Registrants need to feel empowered to challenge AI advice, even when tools appear authoritative.

- Accountability remains with the registrant, regardless of employer-mandated technologies.
- Organisational responsibilities are separate from NMC responsibilities; many challenges stem from workplace culture and implementation.
- AI use must be transparent, evidence-based, and properly governed, with appropriate training and equality impact assessments.

The NMC's role

- Members expressed a strong desire for the NMC to:
- Be vocal and visible about expectations of accountability when using AI
- Provide clear messaging for students and registrants
- Highlight that AI supports but does not replace human decision-making
- Address rapid obsolescence of guidance and provide adaptive, principles-based direction
- Consider information governance implications and new layers of accountability emerging with AI use

Registrants' real-world experience

- AI already used in support planning, documentation, research, plagiarism checking, and clinical tools.
- Some clinicians still avoid AI due to mistrust; others fear “automation bias.”
- Generational differences in adoption are becoming visible.

5. Equity and discrimination concerns

- AI bias presents risks for fairness in FtP, service delivery, and patient care.
- Need to ensure AI tools do not worsen outcomes for over-represented groups (e.g., Black men, IENs).
- NMC should emphasise equity and anti-discrimination principles in standards and any AI-related guidance.

6. Implications for NMC Strategy (2027–2030)

- Based on member reflections, strategic priorities for the NMC should include:
- Developing AI governance principles aligned with NMC values.
- Embedding AI considerations across the Code, FtP, revalidation, and education standards.
- Investing in low-risk, high-impact AI applications first (e.g., public-facing tools, internal triage).
- Providing clear, stable accountability messaging for registrants.
- Ensuring fairness and mitigating AI-driven discrimination.
- Strengthening NMC's visibility and leadership in safe and ethical AI use in health and care.
- Working with system partners and regulators to maintain consistent expectations.
- Supporting registrants to maintain professional judgement in an increasingly AI-enabled environment.

Actions and next steps

- Members agreed the NMC should develop a joint statement on AI alongside the CNOs and CMidOs of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Feedback from members will be considered as part of the NMC's Code and revalidation reviews, as well as strategy development for 2027 onwards.

For more information, please contact PSAG@nmc-uk.org.