

Supporting a sustainable and inclusive nursing and midwifery workforce

Insights from the NMC
Professional Strategic
Advisory Group (PSAG)

September 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 inform the NMC's work through insights from contemporary practice, education and training, and to consider emerging themes that may affect its regulatory role.

This paper summarises insights from PSAG members at their September 2026 meeting. The discussion was informed by the NMC's latest annual register data, which shows a workforce that is larger and more ethnically diverse than ever, but with slowing growth, fewer new joiners and a substantial fall in international recruitment. Dr Ariel Lanada explored the experiences of internationally educated professionals and the importance of effective support, inclusion and belonging, while Tracey MacCormack presented the NMC's principles to support anti-racism in nursing and midwifery education and practice. Together, the presentations prompted discussion about how the NMC and wider sector can support a more sustainable and inclusive workforce.

PSAG insights on supporting a more sustainable and inclusive future workforce

Supporting the future workforce

Members were invited to consider what the data and lived experience suggest about the workforce to 2030, including the most significant risks and opportunities. Members highlighted:

- Opportunities for the NMC to support further research into differential workforce experiences and outcomes.
- The importance of the clinical education and professional support workforce, which was described as essential but often insufficiently visible, with education posts particularly vulnerable during periods of financial pressure.
- The potential for educators to be used more effectively to support newly qualified and newly registered professionals.
- The preparedness of newly qualified and newly registered nurses, including in learning disability nursing, alongside the need to recognise the contribution of specialist fields.

2. Effective implementation of the anti-racism principles

Members welcomed the focus on organisations and systems and highlighted:

- The need for registrants to have the skills, confidence and language to recognise racism, challenge discriminatory behaviour and raise concerns effectively.
- The importance of including examples of discrimination in practice assessment, as well as academic assessment, in the supporting resources.
- The relevance of the principles to mental health services, including racism experienced by ethnically diverse ward managers from patients and others. There may be opportunities to align the work with the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework.
- The importance of informing implementation through the experiences of people working on the ground. Members offered to help the NMC engage directly with ward managers and other frontline professionals.

3. The role of the NMC

Members suggested the NMC should:

- Explain how the anti-racism principles are expected to inform education and practice, and take a proportionate approach to assessing their impact. This should focus on whether experiences and outcomes improve, rather than whether organisations have completed particular processes or tools.
- Use and triangulate fitness to practise data, student surveys and relevant workforce information to identify patterns of inequity. This should include greater scrutiny of disproportionate referrals, analysis by region or organisation where possible, and transparency about what the evidence shows and how the NMC is responding.
- Involve students, registrants and frontline professionals in developing and evaluating the principles and supporting resources. The NMC could also commission, support or bring together research and evaluation, while using its convening role to share effective practice across the sector.

4. The role of employers, education providers and system leaders

Members suggested organisations should:

- Translate the principles into a focused set of actions that reflect their local circumstances, with clear ownership and proportionate measures of progress. These should consider people's experiences of belonging, psychological safety, career progression and speaking up.
- Ensure that students and professionals can raise concerns about racism without detriment, and that concerns are acted on. Assessment and feedback processes should also be reviewed to reduce the risk of subjective or racially biased judgements.
- Strengthen oversight of fitness to practise referrals and investigate disproportionate local patterns. Organisations should also address inequities in access to leadership, development and progression.
- Treat workforce resilience as an organisational responsibility shaped by culture, working conditions and access to support, rather than as an expectation placed solely on individuals. Implementation should involve frontline professionals, students and people who use services, and build on relevant existing frameworks and effective practice.