

**Nursing and Midwifery Council
Fitness to Practise Committee**

**Substantive Order Review Meeting
Tuesday 28 July 2026**

Virtual Meeting

Name of Registrant:	Valerie Jean Howard
NMC PIN:	09L0384E
Part(s) of the register:	Registered Nurse – Adult 27 October 2010
Relevant Location:	Leicestershire
Type of case:	Lack of competence
Panel members:	Mark Gower (Chair, lay member) Claire Cawley (Registrant member) Farrah Pradhan (Lay member)
Legal Assessor:	Juliet Gibbon
Hearings Coordinator:	Salima Begum
Order being reviewed:	Suspension order (12 months)
Fitness to practise:	Impaired
Outcome:	Striking-Off order to come into effect on 21 September 2026 in accordance with Article 30 (1)

Decision and reasons on service of Notice of Meeting

The panel noted at the start of this meeting that the Notice of Meeting had been sent to Ms Howard's registered address by secure post recorded delivery on 22 June 2026.

The panel took into account that the Notice of Meeting provided details of the review, that the review meeting would be held no sooner than 27 July 2026 and inviting Ms Howard to provide any written evidence seven days before this date.

The panel accepted the advice of the legal assessor.

In the light of all of the information available, the panel was satisfied that Ms Howard has been served with notice of this meeting in accordance with the requirements of Rules 11A and 34 of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2004 (as amended) (the Rules).

Decision and reasons on review of the current order

The panel decided to make a striking-off order. This order will come into effect at the end of 21 September 2026 in accordance with Article 30(1) of the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001 (as amended) (the Order).

This is the fourth review of a substantive conditions of practice order originally imposed for a period of 12 months by a Fitness to Practise Committee panel on 24 August 2023. This was reviewed on 15 August 2024 and the panel decided to extend the conditions of practice order for a further six months. It was reviewed again on 4 March 2025 whereby the panel extended the conditions of practice order for a further six months. On 17 September 2025 a reviewing panel replaced the conditions of practice order with a suspension order for a period of 12 months.

The current order is due to expire at the end of 21 September 2026.

The panel is reviewing the order pursuant to Article 30(1) of the Order.

The charges found proved which resulted in the imposition of the substantive order were as follows:

‘That you, between 18 February 2016 and 22 March 2019 failed to demonstrate the standards of knowledge, skills and judgement required to practise without supervision as a band 5 nurse in that you:

- 1. On or around 19 February 2016 administered medication, namely Lorazepam, to the wrong patient. – **Found proved***
- 2. On or around 28/29 August 2016 failed to attend the patient’s bedside when acting as a second checker for intravenous medication, namely Flucloxacillin. – **Found proved***
- 3. On or around 1 September 2016 administered intravenous fluids/medication which was not prescribed. – **Found proved***
- 4. On 1 April 2017:*
 - a) Administered the incorrect medication to Patient C, namely 20mg of immediate release Oxycodone instead of the prescribed 20mg prolonged release Oxycodone; – **Found proved***
 - b) Made the medication error in 4(a) above whilst you were subject to a first written warning for capability. – **Found proved***
- 5. On 21 March 2019 administered an incorrect dose of medication, namely 7mg of Warfarin to Patient A. – **Found proved***

AND, in light of the above, your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your lack of competence.’

The third reviewing panel determined the following with regard to impairment:

‘The panel noted that the previous reviewing panels found Ms Howard had not suitably engaged with the NMC or provided any response to the regulatory concerns raised.

The panel further noted that Ms Howard has provided no new information since the conditions of practice order was first imposed in March 2023. It determined that as a result there remained a risk of repetition due to the lack of evidence of strengthened practice or current insight into the impact her actions may have had on patients, colleagues, and the reputation of the profession and maintaining public confidence.

In light of the above continued risk to patients, the panel determined that a finding of continuing impairment on public protection grounds is necessary.

The panel has borne in mind that its primary function is to protect patients and the wider public interest which includes maintaining confidence in the nursing profession and upholding proper standards of conduct and performance. The panel determined that, in this case, a finding of continuing impairment on public interest grounds is also required.

For these reasons, the panel finds that Ms Howard’s fitness to practise remains impaired.’

The third reviewing panel determined the following with regard to sanction:

‘The panel next considered the continuation of the current conditions of practice order.

The panel noted that Ms Howard has not engaged with the NMC since the original imposition of the conditions of practice order on 24 August 2023 and there is no information before it to conclude that Ms Howard is willing to comply with any conditions imposed upon their practice.

On this basis, the panel concluded that a conditions of practice order is no longer practicable in this case. The panel concluded that no workable conditions of practice could be formulated which would protect the public or satisfy the wider public interest.

The panel determined therefore that a suspension order is the appropriate sanction which would both protect the public and satisfy the wider public interest. Accordingly, the panel determined to impose a suspension order for the period of 12 months would provide Ms Howard with an opportunity to engage with the NMC. It considered this to be the most appropriate and proportionate sanction available.

This suspension order will take effect upon the expiry of the current conditions of practice order, namely the end of 21 September 2025 in accordance with Article 30(1).'

Decision and reasons on current impairment

The panel has had regard to all of the documentation before it, including the NMC bundle.

The panel has considered carefully whether Ms Howard's fitness to practise remains impaired. Whilst there is no statutory definition of fitness to practise, the NMC has defined fitness to practise as the ability of a professional on our register to practise as a nurse, midwife or nursing associate safely and effectively without restriction. In considering this case, the panel has carried out a comprehensive review of the order in light of the current circumstances. Whilst it has noted the decision of the last panel, this panel has exercised its own judgement as to current impairment.

The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal assessor.

In reaching its decision, the panel was mindful of the need to protect the public, maintain public confidence in the profession and to declare and uphold proper standards of conduct and performance.

The panel considered whether Ms Howard's fitness to practise remains impaired.

The panel noted that the last reviewing panel found that Ms Howard had no insight into her lack of competence. At this meeting, the panel determined that there had been no change since the previous review. It noted that Ms Howard had not engaged with the NMC and she has not provided any information to demonstrate that she has reflected on the concerns or developed any insight into her previous failings. The panel considered that this lack of engagement demonstrated an absence of insight into the seriousness of the concerns and her professional responsibility to cooperate with her regulator.

In its consideration of whether Ms Howard had taken steps to strengthen her practice, the panel concluded that there was no evidence that she had done so. It noted that Ms Howard had not provided any evidence of relevant training, strengthened practice, reflective work or any other information to demonstrate that she had addressed the concerns identified at the substantive hearing or by previous reviewing panels.

The last reviewing panel determined that Ms Howard was liable to repeat matters of the kind found proved. Today's panel received no new information demonstrating remediation, improved insight, or engagement. The panel considered that there is no evidence of change since the last review hearing. In particular, in the absence of insight or strengthened practice into her lack of competence, the panel determined that Ms Howard remained liable to repeat matters of the kind found proved. The panel therefore decided that a finding of current impairment was necessary on the grounds of public protection.

The panel bore in mind that its primary function is to protect patients and the wider public interest, which includes maintaining confidence in the nursing profession and upholding proper standards of conduct and performance. In view of the seriousness of the original findings, Ms Howard's continued lack of insight, complete disengagement from the regulatory process and failure to address the concerns over a prolonged period, the panel concluded that a finding of current impairment on public interest grounds was also required.

For these reasons, the panel finds that Ms Howard's fitness to practise remains impaired by reason of her lack of competence.

Decision and reasons on sanction

Having found Ms Howard fitness to practise currently impaired, the panel then considered what, if any, sanction it should impose in this case. The panel noted that its powers are set out in Article 30 (1) of the Order. The panel has also taken into account the 'NMC's Sanctions Guidance' (SG) and has borne in mind that the purpose of a sanction is not to be punitive, though any sanction imposed may have a punitive effect.

The panel first considered whether to take no action but concluded that this would be inappropriate in view of the seriousness of the case. The panel decided that it would be neither proportionate nor in the public interest to take no further action.

It then considered the imposition of a caution order but again determined that, due to the seriousness of the case, and the public protection issues identified, an order that does not restrict Ms Howard's practice would not be appropriate in the circumstances. The SG states that a caution order may be appropriate where *'the case is at the lower end of the spectrum of impaired fitness to practise, but the Committee wants to mark that what happened was unacceptable and must not happen again'*. The panel considered that Ms Howard's lack of competence was not at the lower end of the spectrum and that a caution order would be inappropriate in view of the issues identified. The panel decided that it would be neither proportionate nor in the public interest to impose a caution order.

The panel next considered whether a conditions of practice order on Ms Howard's registration would be a sufficient and appropriate response. The panel was mindful that any conditions imposed must be relevant, proportionate, measurable and workable. It noted that Ms Howard had previously been subject to a conditions of practice order for two years but had failed to engage with the NMC and comply with the conditions imposed. The panel further noted that, despite subsequently being given the opportunity during a 12 month suspension order to demonstrate insight, remediation and strengthened practice, Ms Howard had provided no information whatsoever. In these circumstances, the panel concluded that there was no evidence that Ms Howard was willing or able to comply with conditions of practice and determined that such an order would neither be workable nor capable of adequately protecting the public or addressing the concerns relating to her lack of competence.

The panel then considered extending the current suspension order. It noted that Ms Howard had failed to engage with the NMC and had provided no evidence of insight, remediation, reflective work, relevant training or strengthened practice. The panel also noted that she had failed to engage with the NMC and comply with a conditions of practice order over a two-year period before the current suspension order was imposed and had not complied with the recommendations made by the previous reviewing panel. Further, the panel had received no information regarding Ms Howard's intentions to return to nursing or how she intended to address the concerns. The panel concluded that Ms Howard had been afforded sufficient time and opportunity to remediate her lack of competence but had failed to do so. In these circumstances, it determined that there was no realistic prospect that a further period of suspension would result in meaningful remediation or reduce the risk of repetition.

The panel noted that Ms Howard's registration lapsed in October 2021 due to her failure to pay her registration fee and remains active only because of the substantive order currently in place. The panel had regard to the NMC guidance in *'Removal from the register when there is a substantive order in place'* (Reference: REV-2h last updated on 13 May 2026). It considered whether it would be appropriate to allow the order to lapse with a finding of impairment but concluded that this course was not appropriate because Ms Howard had not engaged with the NMC at all and the panel had no information about her future intentions or whether she wished to return to practice.

The panel further noted that more than two years had elapsed since the substantive order took effect and that a striking-off order was therefore available. It was satisfied that Ms Howard's complete disengagement from the regulatory process, whilst subject to previous orders, and the absence of any evidence of insight and strengthened practice demonstrated that there was no realistic prospect of her addressing the concerns in the foreseeable future.

The panel was satisfied that members of the public would expect the regulator to take decisive action where a nurse has failed to address serious concerns relating to lack of competence despite three years of regulatory restriction, comprising two years of conditions of practice followed by a suspension order. It concluded that extending the suspension order would serve no useful purpose and would undermine public confidence in the nursing profession and the regulatory process.

In all the circumstances, the panel determined that a striking-off order was the only sanction that would adequately protect the public, maintain confidence in the nursing profession and uphold proper professional standards.

This striking-off order will take effect upon the expiry of the current suspension order, namely the end of 21 September 2026 in accordance with Article 30(1).

This decision will be confirmed to Ms Howard in writing.

That concludes this determination.