

Midwifery Panel Summary 21 February 2019

This is a summary of the February Midwifery Panel meeting. You can read the full minutes once they have been approved at the next meeting.

The Chair, **Anna van der Gaag**, reiterated the importance of the Panel and the value it added to the work of the NMC. Anna and the NMC's executive team were keen to hear from the Panel about what discussions members perceived would add value to the work of the Panel. The Panel was keen to: ensure a balance between the work of the profession and the interests of the public; have more in-depth discussions about the outcomes of relevant reviews, enquiries and investigations; and ensure the Panel heard from or was representative of all areas of the profession as well as women who use services and their families.

The new Chief Executive and Registrar

The Chair introduced the NMC's new Chief Executive and Registrar, **Andrea Sutcliffe** who spoke to the Panel about the work she was beginning to shape the new Strategy 2020-2025. This was the final year of the NMC's Strategy 2015-2020, and Andrea was keen for the Midwifery Panel to play a key part in shaping the new strategy. A portion of the April Panel meeting would be in workshop-style to receive the Panel's input.

Draft pre-registration programme standards

The Panel received a presentation from **Professor Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent**, Head of Maternity, Children and Young People at NHS England on the *Better Births* initiative and how it related to the new NHS England Long Term Plan for England.

It was three years since the publication of the *Better Births* maternity review which had been undertaken following a recognition that maternity care provision was not as good as it should be. *Better Births* had now been incorporated into the NHS Long Term Plan for England, further cementing the commitment to see it through to completion. The Long Term Plan takes a "life course approach" starting with engagement with families at preconception stage, through pregnancy and birth, neonatal care, early years and to a person's transition into adulthood.

Midwifery programme length

The Panel heard at the October meeting about the NMC's planned work on the length of the midwifery programme. A review of evidence had been commissioned and a range of stakeholder engagement events were undertaken, followed by a roundtable of experts in January 2019. KPMG had been engaged to support this work.

The Panel received an update on the outcome of the evaluation and engagement work. Perspectives were gathered from nearly 700 stakeholders across the four countries.

Three scenarios were explored. These were: extending the programme length and hours with a 50:50 theory practice split in the additional year; extending the programme length and hours with all additional learning done in clinical practice; or a mandated 12 month preceptorship period for newly qualified midwives.

There was no consensus view around the need to extend or retain the current programme length and no evidence found to indicate that extended programme duration would improve competence or confidence in graduating students. Questions relating to programme length have been included in the Future Midwife consultation.

After the consultation closes, the NMC will analyse the consultation responses, review all of the evidence relating to programme length, discuss the wider implications with the Council and commission further work if necessary.

Engagement and communications on midwifery

In addition to the extensive engagement undertaken around the consultation on the draft standards, Panel members welcomed the wider engagement and other communication activities being undertaken.

The Panel heard about a survey of users of maternity services, run in December 2018 and promoted on social media, which had generated over 500 responses. This was an excellent response rate and special thanks were given to the External Affairs team.

International Day of the Midwife was on 5 May 2019. The NMC would be looking to link up with what other organisations were doing to mark the day.

Good practice and information sharing

The following was shared by members:

- Cwm Taf Health Board in South Wales had been investigating a number of adverse events. The Panel agreed to review the final investigation report at a future meeting.
- Members offered to share ideas for engaging with women and families arising from work on previous reviews, recognising this as an important part of its ongoing work.
- The RCM's Maternity support workers' competency framework was being signed off in the near future. The Panel agreed to discuss this at a future meeting.
- The World Health Organisation would be considering midwifery education for the first time at its Assembly in May 2019.

NMC February 2019