

The revised NMC Code: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The revised Code

We periodically update our Code of professional standards of practice and behaviours for registered nurses and midwives to take into account both developments in nursing and midwifery practice and society's changing expectations of health and social care.

The revised Code sets out the revised universal standards which nurses and midwives must uphold every day in order to join and maintain their position on the NMC Register. The structure of the revised Code reflects four major themes designed to support quality in health and care: putting people first, preserving safety, practising effectively, and promoting professionalism and trust.

The Code has been developed in consultation with the public, nurses and midwives, their employers, educators and others.

The revised Code was published on our website on 29 January 2015 and became effective for all nurses and midwives on 31 March 2015.

Q: What is the purpose of the Code?

A: The Code sets out the professional standards that nurses and midwives must uphold every day in order to be registered to practice in the UK. It covers core standards of conduct, performance and ethics and is key to continuously improving quality and safety of care. Fundamentally, it defines what it means to be a regulated professional. It also acts as a guide for every nurse and midwife reflecting on their daily practice, professional approach and philosophy.

Q: Why have we produced a new Code?

A: We regularly review our Code of professional practice in order to make sure that it remains in line with the public's expectations of health and social care and promotes improvement in the quality and safety of practice by nurses and midwives.

The revised Code has been aligned with other health regulatory processes across the UK and in response to high profile reports on the state of health and social care provision. It acknowledges and reflects developments in the context for nursing and midwifery.

Q: When will the revised Code come into effect?

A: The revised Code came into effect on 31 March 2015, replacing the 2008 Code. It has been available online on our website since 29 January 2015.

Q: What does the Code cover?

A: The Code covers four broad themes: putting people first, preserving safety, practising effectively and promoting professionalism and trust. Fundamentally, it defines what it means to be a regulated professional. It also acts as a guide for every nurse and midwife reflecting on their daily practice, professional approach and philosophy.

Q: What is new in this 2015 version of the Code?

A: The new Code builds on the existing foundation of good nursing and midwifery practice but includes updated guidance on the use of social media, prescribing and medicine management, the fundamentals of care, the 'duty of candour', taking emergency action, maintaining clear professional boundaries and raising concerns.

Q: Who is the Code for?

A: The Code is for every nurse and midwife practising in the UK. It is also for everyone interested in good nursing and midwifery practice:

- Nurses and midwives can use it as a way of reflecting on and upholding their professionalism.
- Employers can use it to support their staff in upholding standards as part of providing quality and safety.
- Educators can use the Code to help students understand what it means to be a registered professional.

Q: How should nurses and midwives use the Code?

A: By reading and referring to the Code, nurses and midwives can reinforce their professionalism while using it as a guide to their daily professional practice.

Q: What is the role of the new Code in the registration and revalidation of nurses and midwives?

A: Nurses' and midwives' fitness to practise is measured against the requirements of the Code when they are first registered by the NMC to work in the UK. Those joining the register agree to uphold the Code. It will be a key tool in revalidation – the re-confirmation of fitness to practise, carried out every three years.

Q: What does the Code mean for me as an employer of nurses or midwives?

Employers are responsible for ensuring that their staff are able to practice according to the requirements of the Code. The Code supports this objective by ensuring that every contact, action and decision made by a nurse or midwife is governed by core professional standards and principles.

The Code can also be used as the tool for appraisal and staff development. The standards by which nurses and midwives are judged – and judge themselves – are key to the quality of the services provided in your organisation. The Code provides the basis for how we assess the fitness to practise of nurses and midwives who are referred to us if there are concerns about their practice.

Q: Who was consulted in revising the Code?

A: We consulted the public, nurses and midwives, their employers, educators and others. Other regulatory codes used within health and care were also analysed as a comparison.

Q: Do nurses and midwives have to do anything differently to uphold the revised Code?

A: The revised Code is designed to reflect good nursing and midwifery practice. The new areas which the Code covers include updated guidance on social media, on prescribing and medicine management, on the fundamentals of care, the 'duty of candour', taking emergency action, maintaining clear professional boundaries and raising concerns.

Nurses and midwives can use the revised Code to remind themselves of their strengths and highlight areas where they may be able to improve or develop their practice.

Q: What does the Code mean for patients?

A: The Code encapsulates what patients, their families and members of the public should expect from nurses and midwives. It will reassure them that their protection is central to nursing and midwifery practice. A leaflet setting out what the Code means for patients will be available on our website from 31 March.

Q: What can patients and service users do if they have a complaint about treatment they have received from a nurse or midwife?

A: Patients and service users are encouraged to speak up if they think a nurse or midwife has not met the professional standards contained within the Code. We have produced a leaflet offering guidance if you are in this position. It is available on our website at: www.nmc.org.uk/Documents/NMC-Publications/Raising-concerns-about-nurses-or-midwives.pdf

Q: What is Revalidation?

Revalidation will come in to effect from April 2016.

Every nurse and midwife will need to revalidate every three years in order to maintain their registration and eligibility to practise. The approach was trialled by pilot sites across the UK and more information will be available on our website throughout the year.

Revalidation aims to improve public protection by ensuring nurses and midwives remain fit to practise throughout their careers.

Q: Where can I get more information about the Code or the NMC?

There is information about all aspects of the NMC's work, including the Code, on our website: www.nmc.org.uk. You can follow us on Twitter @nmcnews or Facebook www.facebook.com/nmcuk