The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and supervision of midwives

The NMC

1 The NMC is the statutory regulator of nurses and midwives in the UK.

2 Our purpose is to safeguard the health and wellbeing of people using or needing the services of nurses and midwives. We do this by:

2.1 registering all nurses and midwives and ensuring that they are properly qualified and competent to work in the UK. There are currently around 660,000 registered nurses and midwives on the register

2.2 setting standards of education, training, conduct and performance for nurses and midwives

2.3 ensuring that nurses and midwives maintain those standards

2.4 ensuring that midwives are safe to practice by setting rules for their practice and supervision

2.5 maintaining fair processes for investigation of allegations made against registered nurses and midwives.

Midwifery supervision

3 The purpose of midwifery supervision is to protect women, their babies and families by actively promoting high standards of midwifery practice.

4 In order to practise, midwives must be registered with the NMC and have a named supervisor of midwives. Supervisors of midwives are experienced practising midwives who have undertaken additional education and training to support, guide and supervise midwives. They meet regularly with the midwives under their supervision to ensure they develop and maintain safe practice that will in turn ensure the protection of mothers, their babies and families

5 Supervisors of midwives are independent of the employer and often work in a team. Their role is different from the midwifery manager who is responsible to the employer to make sure that maternity services run effectively.

6 Supervision is a statutory responsibility that is carried out on behalf of the NMC by local supervising authorities (LSAs). They are responsible for monitoring the quality of midwifery practice. The NMC makes the rules and sets standards for the functions of the LSAs. In England, there are ten LSAs, each co-located within one of the ten strategic health authorities (SHAs).
Each LSA appoints a practising midwife known as the LSA midwifery officer who has responsibility for carrying out the LSA’s functions. The LSA midwifery officer is an experienced practising midwife with a leadership role. They are able to give advice on the supervision of midwives as well as on midwifery practice and maternity services in general. They appoint the supervisors of midwives.

The NMC has a duty to monitor the LSAs to ensure they are meeting the required standards for statutory supervision. Every LSA is required to submit a written annual report containing specific information we request by a date specified each year. The annual report is an opportunity for the LSA to inform us and the public of its activities and highlight any key issues.

The NMC also monitors the LSAs through quarterly quality monitoring comprising of a written submission of information against our standards followed by a telephone conversation to review any aspects of concern, improvements, trends or effective practice.

We triangulate information from a variety of sources including the media and informal and formal reporting systems, linking with the other systems regulators where we have concerns.

**Helen Pearce, Midwifery Advisor, NMC**

Helen is registered nurse and midwife with experience of working in a range of clinical settings. Prior to joining the NMC as a midwifery advisor in February 2010, she was a Matron in Buckinghamshire with a lead role in the governance for women and children’s services.

At the NMC she is responsible for ensuring that the statutory supervision of midwives is effective across the UK. As part of this she holds particular responsibility for the NMC’s relationship with the English LSAs in the North West, North East, South Central, South East and South West regions and the LSA in Wales. She has developed close working relationships and effective communication with the midwifery officers in those seven regions. This co-operative working practice has enabled the NMC and the LSA midwifery officers to close the gap between care delivery and the regulatory function and through advice to the LSA midwifery officers, ensure consistent application of the NMC’s rules and standards.

**Further information**

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