

The code

Standards of conduct,
performance and ethics
for nurses and midwives

We are the nursing and midwifery regulator for England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Islands.

- We exist to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the public.
- We set the standards of education, training and conduct that nurses and midwives need to deliver high quality healthcare consistently throughout their careers.
- We ensure that nurses and midwives keep their skills and knowledge up to date and uphold the standards of their professional code.
- We ensure that midwives are safe to practise by setting rules for their practice and supervision.
- We have fair processes to investigate allegations made against nurses and midwives who may not have followed the code.

The code: Standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives

The people in your care must be able to trust you with their health and wellbeing

To justify that trust, you must:

- make the care of people your first concern, treating them as individuals and respecting their dignity
- work with others to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of those in your care, their families and carers, and the wider community
- provide a high standard of practice and care at all times
- be open and honest, act with integrity and uphold the reputation of your profession.

As a professional, you are personally accountable for actions and omissions in your practice, and must always be able to justify your decisions.

You must always act lawfully, whether those laws relate to your professional practice or personal life.

Failure to comply with this code may bring your fitness to practise into question and endanger your registration.

This code should be considered together with the Nursing and Midwifery Council's (NMC) rules, standards, guidance and advice available from www.nmc-uk.org

Make the care of people your first concern, treating them as individuals and respecting their dignity

Treat people as individuals

- 1 You must treat people as individuals and respect their dignity.
- 2 You must not discriminate in any way against those in your care.
- 3 You must treat people kindly and considerately.
- 4 You must act as an advocate for those in your care, helping them to access relevant health and social care, information and support.

Respect people's confidentiality

- 5 You must respect people's right to confidentiality.
- 6 You must ensure people are informed about how and why information is shared by those who will be providing their care.
- 7 You must disclose information if you believe someone may be at risk of harm, in line with the law of the country in which you are practising.

Collaborate with those in your care

- 8 You must listen to the people in your care and respond to their concerns and preferences.
- 9 You must support people in caring for themselves to improve and maintain their health.
- 10 You must recognise and respect the contribution that people make to their own care and wellbeing.

- 11 You must make arrangements to meet people's language and communication needs.
- 12 You must share with people, in a way they can understand, the information they want or need to know about their health.

Ensure you gain consent

- 13 You must ensure that you gain consent before you begin any treatment or care.
- 14 You must respect and support people's rights to accept or decline treatment and care.
- 15 You must uphold people's rights to be fully involved in decisions about their care.
- 16 You must be aware of the legislation regarding mental capacity, ensuring that people who lack capacity remain at the centre of decision making and are fully safeguarded.
- 17 You must be able to demonstrate that you have acted in someone's best interests if you have provided care in an emergency.

Maintain clear professional boundaries

- 18 You must refuse any gifts, favours or hospitality that might be interpreted as an attempt to gain preferential treatment.
- 19 You must not ask for or accept loans from anyone in your care or anyone close to them.
- 20 You must establish and actively maintain clear sexual boundaries at all times with people in your care, their families and carers.

Work with others to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of those in your care, their families and carers, and the wider community

Share information with your colleagues

- 21 You must keep your colleagues informed when you are sharing the care of others.
- 22 You must work with colleagues to monitor the quality of your work and maintain the safety of those in your care.
- 23 You must facilitate students and others to develop their competence.

Work effectively as part of a team

- 24 You must work cooperatively within teams and respect the skills, expertise and contributions of your colleagues.
- 25 You must be willing to share your skills and experience for the benefit of your colleagues.
- 26 You must consult and take advice from colleagues when appropriate.
- 27 You must treat your colleagues fairly and without discrimination.
- 28 You must make a referral to another practitioner when it is in the best interests of someone in your care.

Delegate effectively

- 29 You must establish that anyone you delegate to is able to carry out your instructions.
- 30 You must confirm that the outcome of any delegated task meets required standards.
- 31 You must make sure that everyone you are responsible for is supervised and supported.

Manage risk

- 32 You must act without delay if you believe that you, a colleague or anyone else may be putting someone at risk.
- 33 You must inform someone in authority if you experience problems that prevent you working within this code or other nationally agreed standards.
- 34 You must report your concerns in writing if problems in the environment of care are putting people at risk.

Provide a high standard of practice and care at all times

Use the best available evidence

- 35 You must deliver care based on the best available evidence or best practice.
- 36 You must ensure any advice you give is evidence-based if you are suggesting healthcare products or services.
- 37 You must ensure that the use of complementary or alternative therapies is safe and in the best interests of those in your care.

Keep your skills and knowledge up to date

- 38 You must have the knowledge and skills for safe and effective practice when working without direct supervision.
- 39 You must recognise and work within the limits of your competence.
- 40 You must keep your knowledge and skills up to date throughout your working life.
- 41 You must take part in appropriate learning and practice activities that maintain and develop your competence and performance.

Keep clear and accurate records

- 42 You must keep clear and accurate records of the discussions you have, the assessments you make, the treatment and medicines you give, and how effective these have been.
- 43 You must complete records as soon as possible after an event has occurred.
- 44 You must not tamper with original records in any way.
- 45 You must ensure any entries you make in someone's paper records are clearly and legibly signed, dated and timed.
- 46 You must ensure any entries you make in someone's electronic records are clearly attributable to you.
- 47 You must ensure all records are kept securely.

Be open and honest, act with integrity and uphold the reputation of your profession

Act with integrity

- 48 You must demonstrate a personal and professional commitment to equality and diversity.
- 49 You must adhere to the laws of the country in which you are practising.
- 50 You must inform the NMC if you have been cautioned, charged or found guilty of a criminal offence.
- 51 You must inform any employers you work for if your fitness to practise is called into question.

Deal with problems

- 52 You must give a constructive and honest response to anyone who complains about the care they have received.
- 53 You must not allow someone's complaint to prejudice the care you provide for them.
- 54 You must act immediately to put matters right if someone in your care has suffered harm for any reason.
- 55 You must explain fully and promptly to the person affected what has happened and the likely effects.
- 56 You must cooperate with internal and external investigations.

Be impartial

- 57 You must not abuse your privileged position for your own ends.
- 58 You must ensure that your professional judgement is not influenced by any commercial considerations.

Uphold the reputation of your profession

- 59 You must not use your professional status to promote causes that are not related to health.
- 60 You must cooperate with the media only when you can confidently protect the confidential information and dignity of those in your care.
- 61 You must uphold the reputation of your profession at all times.

Information about indemnity insurance

- 62 The NMC recommends that a registered nurse, midwife or specialist community public health nurse, in advising, treating and caring for patients or clients, has professional indemnity insurance. This is in the interests of clients, patients and registrants in the event of claims of professional negligence.
- 63 Whilst employers have vicarious liability for the negligent acts and/or omissions of their employees, such cover does not normally extend to activities undertaken outside the registrant's employment. Independent practice would not be covered by vicarious liability. It is the individual registrant's responsibility to establish their insurance status and take appropriate action.
- 64 In situations where an employer does not have vicarious liability, the NMC recommends that registrants obtain adequate professional indemnity insurance. If unable to secure professional indemnity insurance, a registrant will need to demonstrate that all their clients and patients are fully informed of this fact and the implications this might have in the event of a claim for professional negligence.

Healthcare professionals have a shared set of values, which find their expression in this code for nurses and midwives. These values are also reflected in the different codes of each of the UK's healthcare regulators. This code was approved by the NMC's Council on 6 December 2007 for implementation on 1 May 2008.

The current design was introduced in April 2010 with the addition of paragraph numbers, however the content has not changed.

Contact us

Nursing and Midwifery Council
23 Portland Place
London W1B 1PZ
020 7333 9333
advice@nmc-uk.org
www.nmc-uk.org