



**Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council  
for Nursing and Midwifery**

***ANNUAL QUALITY  
REPORT  
2022/23***

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# FOREWORD

Welcome to the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council's (NIPEC) 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Quality Report for the period April 2022 to March 2023. We are delighted to share this report which outlines how we continuously strive to improve the quality of the services we provide. NIPEC remains committed to driving the quality agenda through supporting the professions of nursing and midwifery to provide safe, effective high-quality care in Northern Ireland (NI).

The Covid-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for the planning and delivery of health and social care (HSC) services in Northern Ireland. During 2022-23 NIPEC continued partnership and flexible working with key stakeholders to deliver its business objectives in line with the Rebuilding Services Framework (2021)<sup>[1]</sup>.

We acknowledge the contribution that nurses and midwives make to the work of the NIPEC team. Despite the relentless pressures in their operational roles they are passionate in making sustainable improvements in how they deliver care and services. We will continue to support them through innovative approaches and project management expertise, to co-produce improvements with their patients and service users. In 2023/24, NIPEC will seek opportunities to build on existing relationships and create new partnerships to extend our influence regionally, nationally and internationally for better outcomes in health and social care.

As Interim Chair and Chief Executive, we give our commitment to assuring and improving quality going forward. We will continue to work in partnership with the nursing and midwifery professions and wider stakeholders to respond to the emerging priorities across the HSC system. We believe this report demonstrates not only how far we have come but also our continued collective drive to achieve the vision set out by Quality 2020.



**Kieran McCormick**  
Interim Chair



**Linda Kelly**  
Chief Executive



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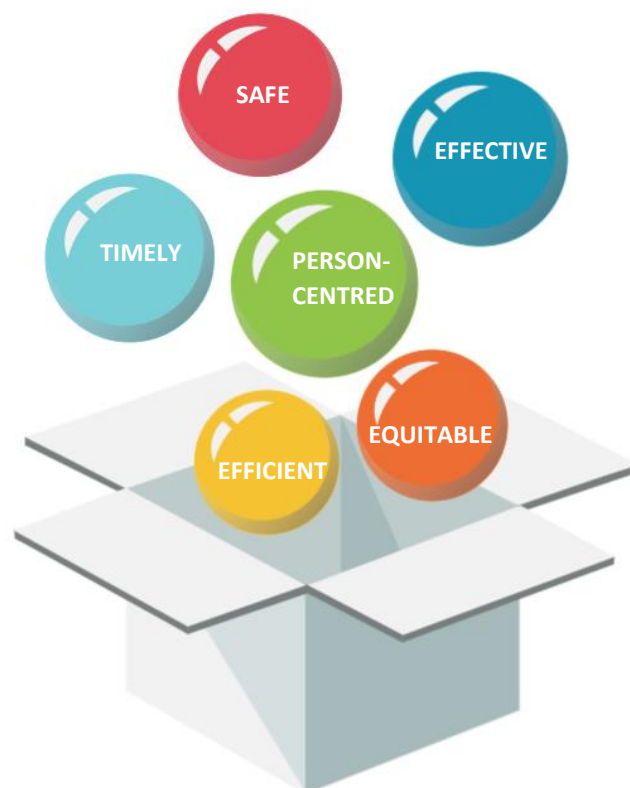
<sup>[1]</sup> Department of Health (2021) Rebuilding Health and Social Services Framework. Belfast. DoH.

## WHAT IS THE ANNUAL QUALITY REPORT?

In 2011 the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) launched Quality 2020: A 10 Year Strategy to '**Protect and Improve Quality in Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland**'. This strategy set out the vision for quality across health and social care in NI and our focus on achieving this is relentless.

One of the priorities of this strategy is that each Health and Social Care (HSC) organisation publish an annual report to outline their compliance against a range of regionally agreed themes and indicators. The Quality Report aims to increase public accountability and drive quality improvement within HSC organisations. It reviews the past annual performance against quality priorities, identifies areas for further improvement, and includes the commitment to our communities about what activities and ambitions will be undertaken and monitored over the coming year.

### Quality is:



# AN INTRODUCTION TO NIPEC

The Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing & Midwifery (NIPEC) was established through primary legislation as a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) in 2002. The work of NIPEC reflects the requirements set out by the regulatory body for nurses and midwives, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), which is articulated in *The Code: Professional Standards of Practice and Behaviour for Nurses and Midwives* (NMC, 2018)<sup>2</sup>.

NIPEC plays a significant role in supporting the vision and objectives of the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) Department of Health (DoH) in the continued pursuit of excellence in the delivery of nursing and midwifery services to the population of Northern Ireland. Our commitment to quality is reflecting how we deliver the five statutory responsibilities which include:

The promotion of:

- *high standards of practice among nurses and midwives*
- *high standards of education and learning for nurses and midwives*
- *professional development of nurses and midwives*

and provision of:

- *guidance on best practice for nurses and midwives*
- *advice and information on matters relating to nursing and midwifery.*

NIPEC staff comprise a Chief Executive supported by senior team of six Senior Professional Officers and a Head of Corporate Services. A Corporate team led by the Business Manager provides administrative and IT support to deliver NIPEC's programme of work. NIPEC's Council is made up of a Chair, professional and lay members. NIPEC's corporate objectives align to our vision, mission and values.



<sup>2</sup> Nursing and Midwifery Council (2018) *The Code: Professional Standards of Practice and Behaviour for Nurses, Midwives and Nursing Associates*.. London: NMC

# THEME 1:

## TRANSFORMING THE CULTURE



- *We will make achieving high quality the top priority at all levels in health and social care.*
- *We will promote and encourage partnerships between staff, patients, clients and carers to support decision making*

Creating a just and learning culture ensures balanced accountability for both individuals and the organisation providing a shared level of responsibility for designing and improving systems. NIPEC continuously strives to adopt a learning culture that is constantly improving. In complex, dynamic, environments, there is an expectation for a high level of human performance but we recognise that even competent people can make mistakes. Our staff are not only accountable for their actions and choices, but they are also accountable to each other with a strong focus on risk, systems design and human behaviours. Below you will see information relating to NIPEC's structure and how we strive for good organisational governance.

## 1.1 Our Vision & Values

Our vision, co-produced with stakeholders and the public, reflects the intention to work as an organisation that will continue:



This vision was developed through a series of engagement events with our stakeholders, including the public, demonstrating how we value partnership working with staff, patients, clients and carers. That means that our vision has been defined by the people with whom, and for whom, we work.

NIPEC is a unique person-centred organisation guided by a set of values that directly impacts on what we do and how we do it. They are set in a context of the requirement for all nurses and midwives to adhere to the Nursing and Midwifery Council's (NMC) *Code: Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates*<sup>2</sup>. Our values which were also informed through a series of engagement events with our stakeholders, underpin **what** we do and **how** we do it, thereby shaping the culture of the organisation



As a HSC organisation, NIPEC’s values align with those underpinning HSC strategy and delivery plans across Northern Ireland (below).



NIPEC is committed to the promotion of good relations between people of differing religious belief, political opinion and, or racial group. As a health and social care organisation we are committed to promoting respect for diversity and to challenging sectarianism and racism in both employment and services.

## 1.2 Maintaining Good Governance

The key organisational structures which support the delivery of good governance in NIPEC are:

- NIPEC Council;
- Audit and Risk Committee
- Remuneration Committee
- The Senior Management Team

### NIPEC Council

NIPEC’s Council is charged with setting the strategic direction of the organisation and overseeing governance responsibilities. Meeting quarterly, it monitors NIPEC’s activities and performance. Feedback is provided by staff through written and verbal reports as well as presentations on the initiatives, projects and governance issues.

NIPEC’s Council comprises a Chair, the Chief Executive and up to sixteen members who are a combination of registrants and lay members. In January 2022, the DoH Public



Appointments Unit announced the appointment of five new non-executive members to NIPEC Council; extensions were also authorised by the Public Appointments Commissioner to the terms of two members who served under the previous Council until January 2023 however eight vacancies remained.

NIPEC's Chair continued to escalate this issue to the DoH Public Appointments Unit (PAU) via Sponsor Branch throughout 2022, and in February 2023, eight further new members were appointed to the Council, bringing the total current membership to thirteen non-executive members, the Chair and the Chief Executive.

Previously the DoH CNO was an ex-officio member of NIPEC Council however during 2022, and following discussions between CNO and NIPEC's Chief Executive and Chair, it was agreed that this position no longer served a useful purpose. Departmental officials reviewed NIPEC legislation and deemed that there were no legislative requirements governing this membership and therefore Sponsor Branch requested that the ex-officio membership of the CNO be removed. This will take place with effect from April 2023 and NIPEC's Standing Orders will be updated to reflect this position.

The duties and functions of the Chair, Council Members and the Chief Executive are set out in the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (tabled at the June 2022 Council meeting) and also in NIPEC's Standing Orders and Standing Financial Instructions.



NIPEC Council Meeting

### **NIPEC Audit and Risk Committee:**

The Audit and Risk Committee's purpose is to provide assurance to the Council that NIPEC has an effective system of integrated governance, risk management and internal control, across the whole of the organisation's activities that supports the achievement of the organisation's objectives. Membership comprises four Council members, two professional and two lay, with the Chief Executive, Head of Corporate Services and representatives from NIPEC's External and Internal Auditors in attendance.

### **NIPEC Remuneration Committee:**

The responsibility of the Remuneration Committee is to advise the Council about appropriate remuneration and terms of service for NIPEC's Chief Executive, who is currently the only member of NIPEC staff on a Senior Scale Executive Contract.

The Committee comprises the Chair of the NIPEC Council who acts as Chair of the Committee and at least two other Council members, to include Professional and Lay Members. With the increase in membership to thirteen non-executive members with effect from February 2023, expressions of interest were requested from all members at the March 2023 Council meeting and the final membership of both Council Committees will be ratified at the September 2023 Council meeting.

### **Senior Management Team:**

For the operational management of the organisation and in support of the Chief Executive, NIPEC has a Senior Management Team (SMT), which is comprised of the Chief Executive, six Senior Professional Officers and the Head of Corporate Services. The SMT meets on a 4-6 weekly through a Business Team Meeting which also has the Business Manager in attendance. There are a number of other meetings to support organisational decision making including a Professional Team meeting, Health & Wellbeing Committee, Health & Fire Safety Committee, an Information Governance Group and a Website Governance Group. The Chief Executive also meets regularly with individual members of the SMT to review progress on their individual objectives.

## **1.3 Equality and Diversity**

NIPEC works together with 10 other HSC organisations on equality matters, supported by the BSO Equality Unit. Together with our partners, we participated in two Disability Awareness Days and based on input from staff, this year the focus was on Autism (in February 2023) and Bowel Conditions (in March 2023). On our behalf, the BSO Equality Unit organised a live online session with a speaker (from the voluntary sector and from within HSC) on each of the days. Evidence suggests that more staff access these online sessions (either on the day or the recorded versions of these) than previously when sessions were held in person.

During 2022-23, much of our time was dedicated to developing our new 5-year Equality and Disability Action Plans. In line with the mainstreaming nature of the equality and disability duties and with Equality Commission guidance, the review and development of our new action plans was based on the following principles:

- actions were to be outcomes-based and specific to functions;
- consideration of new meaningful actions across all functions;
- engagement with key stakeholders and public consultation on draft plans.

NIPEC's draft Equality and Disability Action Plans 2023-28 were submitted to the BSO Equality Unit on 10 February 2023 following sign off by the Senior Team, Chief Executive and Chair. By the end of March, we were ready to start a public consultation on our draft plans. We spoke to members of Tapestry, our joint staff network on disability and carers issues, to find out what some of the key workplace issues are for them that we need to address. They also told us more about how to ensure our consultation is accessible to as wide a range of people as possible.

In addition to developing our new 5-year Equality and Disability Action Plans in 2022-23, NIPEC submitted its Equality Annual Progress Report 2021-22 to the Equality Commission NI in August 2022, a statutory requirement for public authorities.

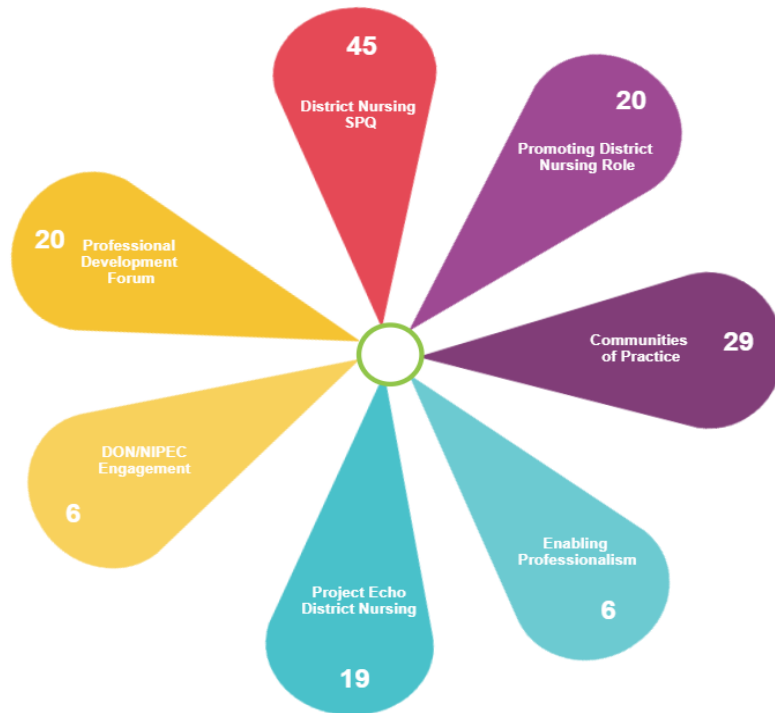
Details of what the organisation has done to deliver its equality, diversity, disability, Human Rights and Good Relations actions are set out in the Annual Equality Progress Reports which can be found on our website at <https://nipec.hscni.net/publications/equality-human-rights/>.

## 1.4 Communication & Engagement

NIPEC's internal communications structure ensures that the team remain engaged and well informed, where staff are valued as equal partners in delivery of our objectives. It also aims to foster a safe environment for staff to raise concerns, share solutions and respond through a learning focused, fair blame culture. During 2022/23 NIPEC offices moved to James House in Belfast which has created a modern ambient environment with open office space and a number of single office accommodation along with access to meeting spaces.

NIPEC's plan for communication and engagement with stakeholders during 2022-2023 has been built on a model of connectivity to include both face to face and virtual engagement. NIPEC has responded flexibly to engage with registrants and key stakeholders through the Microsoft Teams platform as many staff continue to welcome the opportunity to connect without having to travel. The media environment is also shifting and so we recognise that we must change and adapt our communications practice in response to this to ensure we are providing targeted information in a way that our audiences want and expect to receive it. NIPEC profiles it's work via website and social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter and will look to strengthen this into the future.

The pandemic caused a seismic shift in how people connected across the health and care system, having access to collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams has enabled that transition to be smooth and effective. NIPEC continues to work in collaboration with key stakeholders to consider the most appropriate ways to communicate and to evaluate our activity using a range of data and information methods examples of which can be seen below.



Examples of numbers attending Virtual Connections

Alongside connecting virtually NIPEC facilitated a range of face to face workshops and meetings during the year. Staff really welcome the ability to connect in a space that offers a platform for networking, sharing best practice and collaborating with peers.



Examples of numbers attending face to face workshops



## **THEME 2:** **STRENGTHENING THE WORKFORCE**

- *We will provide the right education, training and support to deliver high quality service.*
- *We will develop leadership skills at all levels and empower staff to take decisions and make changes.*

The organisational culture in which our staff work has a critical bearing on their ability to do their job effectively. Now more than ever must we focus on developing an inclusive and respectful culture and promoting good communication across the workforce. Workforce development planning has been a huge part of NIPEC's strategic agenda over the past year whilst continuing to ensure that existing staff remained motivated and enthused.

## 2.1 Valuing Our Staff

NIPEC recognises the importance of valuing staff and showing appreciation as this is what creates a strong positive culture, if staff feel valued at work they will be happier and more productive.

The past year has not been without its challenges in NIPEC with staff turnover having increased due to a number of ongoing retirements and leavers resulting in approximately 25% of vacant posts. Although a great loss of organisational memory this was also an opportunity to seek out new talent and to review existing roles and responsibilities. A report of the Internal Scoping Exercise was prepared and following measured consideration of the information, it was concluded that the current organisational structure of the Corporate Services Team would be refined and developed to enable NIPEC to maximise the effectiveness of the team while ensuring that the organisation continued to meet its business needs and statutory functions.

The Covid-19 pandemic forced many organisations to consider the best way to support their workforce and as a result, many had to pivot and offer flexible working options to accommodate personal lives and unique situations. NIPEC has been experimenting with hybrid working arrangements to find a model that will continue to work for staff and the organisation. This has meant staff have been working part of their hours from home or having greater control over their working hours. This relatively new concept of hybrid working for our staff will require a significant culture shift and establishing new ways of working and associated policies and practices.

The role of NIPEC's Health and Wellbeing Committee has been instrumental in seeking to nurture and improve staff relationships and support staff to improve their health and wellbeing. The committee's membership includes staff from across all levels of the organisation to promote a positive working environment through a range of team engagement events and opportunities.

## 2.2 Supporting Education & Learning

Nurses and midwives are accountable and responsible for practicing in line with best available evidence and maintaining the knowledge and skills needed for safe and effective practice (NMC 2018)<sup>2</sup>. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities for nurses and midwives are essential, not only for patient safety, but to ensure that health and social care is fit for purpose.

In fulfilling NIPEC's responsibility to promote high standards of education during 2022-23, we undertook a range of activities to assure education standards and influence educational developments, for the registrant population.

One example of this is the Review of the Maternity Support Workers education programme and development of resources for the Maternity Support Worker role.

Maternity Support Workers (MSWs) are an integral part of the maternity care team providing safe and effective women centred care to women and their families, working under the direction and supervision of a registered midwife and within agreed guidelines and protocols.

In 2021, the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO), Department of Health, (DoH) and the Director of Workforce Policy Directorate (DoH) commissioned NIPEC to lead a review of the Maternity Support Workers (MSW) education programme and develop resources to support the MSW role.

NIPEC began this project in February 2022 with the aims of:

1. Reviewing and updating the regional Maternity Support Workers education programme and;
2. Developing resources for the Maternity Support Worker role to include:
  - a. MSW Standards
  - b. MSW Competencies
  - c. MSW Induction Development Pathway

Both a Steering Group and a Working Group were established to take forward the work, with wide representation from a range of stakeholders to include: the HSC Trusts, Public Health Agency (PHA), education provider organisations, Vocational Workforce Assessment Centre, professional bodies, staff side organisations, service users and Maternity Support Workers.

The following work strands were completed to achieve the project aims:

- Regional review of the MSW core skills across the 5 HSC Trusts;
- Review of the MSW core skills, competencies, education programmes/requirements across the 3 UK countries;

- Regional agreement on the MSW core skills and MSW competencies;
- Updated the MSW education programme and development of MSW Training and Competency Booklet;
- Development and agreement of MSW Standards taking account of the NMC Code (2018) and local and national UK Codes of Conduct;
- Development and agreement of MSW Induction and Development Pathway;
- Review of the regional MSW Job Description.

The project was successfully achieved through effective engagement with key stakeholders. This has resulted in the successful development of MSW Standards (2023) which will provide clarity on the role and responsibilities of the MSW and provide assurances to the public that MSWs are working to an agreed standard. The newly revised MSW education programme reflects the current role and responsibilities of the MSW in providing safe and effective women-centred care now and into the future and the induction and development pathway provides a structure for MSWs to develop their professional career.

## 2.3 Developing Our Workforce

Although NIPEC is a relatively small organisation we have a big ambition to continuously adapt, innovate and stay ahead of the curve enabling us to become a more agile learning organisation. In order for this to work we must ensure that our staff are connected to this ambition and have the skills and knowledge to continuously improve. Building capacity and capability for improvement takes time and needs to be grounded in experiential learning and the application of the concepts, tools and methods to daily work. To date 40% of staff within NIPEC are trained in Quality Improvement at Level 3 of the Q2020 Attributes Framework with one Senior Professional Officer currently undertaking training at Level 2. Moving forward we will be reviewing our Quality Strategy and through this ensuring we include staff development as a priority.

NIPEC continues to support the development of knowledgeable and competent practitioners who are vital in ensuring leadership across the professions for the delivery of safe and effective care. An example of this during 2022/23 was the completion of the District Nursing Career Pathway in partnership with key stakeholders, HSC Trust District Nursing Leads, colleagues in Human resources, education providers, professional bodies, staff side, Public Health Agency and DoH. The career pathway was endorsed by CNO for adoption and implementation in each of the five HSC Trusts. It comprises regionally agreed core competencies, education requirements and job descriptions (JD) for the core roles in the District Nursing Service across NI. The importance of this career pathway is to ensure that the staff in District Nursing Services have the learning and development to enhance the capacity and capability of the workforce to meet the needs of the population they



care for. The pathway is also aligned with the recommendations of the Nursing and Midwifery Task Group report (DoH 2020).



District Nursing Career Pathway Group

## 2.4 Influencing Policy and Practice

NIPEC has developed internal processes to ensure professional input is provided to consultations and outcomes of reviews, enquiries and inspections. It is recognised that NIPEC has a particular role to play in ensuring that consultations are meaningful and aim to represent the views of the nursing and midwifery workforce in Northern Ireland. During the 22/23 period NIPEC responded to 13 consultations.

NIPEC has also developed with key stakeholders Preceptorship Framework (2022)<sup>3</sup> and Reflective Supervision Framework (2022)<sup>4</sup>. The former reflects and is aligned to the NMC Principles for Preceptorship (NMC 2020)<sup>5</sup> which NIPEC worked with the NMC and the other three UK countries to develop. Both frameworks are designed to support the practice, learning and professional development of Nurses and Midwives working in NI.



<sup>3</sup> Department of Health (2022) Northern Ireland Preceptorship Framework for Nursing and Midwifery. Belfast: NIPEC.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Health (2022) Reflective Supervision Framework. Belfast: NIPEC  
<sup>4</sup> Department of Health (2022) Reflective Supervision: a framework to support Nursing and Midwifery in Northern Ireland. Belfast: NIPEC.

<sup>5</sup> NMC (2020) Principles for Preceptorship accessed at [Principles of preceptorship - The Nursing and Midwifery Council \(nmc.org.uk\)](https://www.nmc.org.uk/principles-of-preceptorship/)



## THEME 3: MEASURING THE IMPROVEMENT

- *We will improve outcome measurement and report on progress for safety effectiveness and the patient/client experience.*
- *We will promote the use of accredited improvement techniques and ensure that there is sufficient capacity and capability within the HSC to use them effectively.*

It is important for organisations to track their improvement in order to be able to understand how to continue to enhance its services. While there are many ways to measure improvement, continuous improvement metrics collect and consider data over long periods of time. This can help to understand how effectively an organisation is improving by observing how permanent the changes it makes might be. To ensure continuous improvements in the quality of its work and relevance to professional practice, NIPEC examines the impact of its products and resources, all of which are evidence based, designed and developed with stakeholders.

### 3.1 Managing Data and Information

Measurement and gathering data are vital elements of any attempt to improve the quality of our services and are needed to assess the impact against set objectives. NIPEC’s performance against our corporate and business objectives is monitored by their Sponsor Branch, the Nursing Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals (NMAHP) Directorate. This monitoring continues throughout the year with more formal arrangements such as Ground Clearing and Accountability meetings with the Department. Effective management of our information creates intelligence that we as an organisation must use to become smarter and more productive. We also recognise the need to embrace data visualization in a different way. We will do this through promoting the presentation of data in a graphical format to make it easier for decision makers to see and understand trends, outliers, and patterns in our data. This approach will take time to develop but we have taken our first steps in this journey through our Communication and Engagement Report using time series charts to track data from our media pages. Below are examples of our website activity where we are able to see a significant reduction in hits and visits to the site. Tracking this back over the 5-year period enables us to see that we are well below the pre-Covid performance. Changes within the NIPEC team due to staff leaving and retiring creating a number of vacancies will likely have contributed to the decline in numbers but is an area we now need to focus on for improvement.

Figure 1: NIPEC Monthly Website Hits

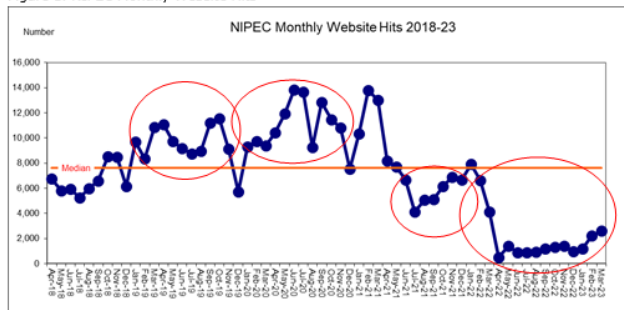
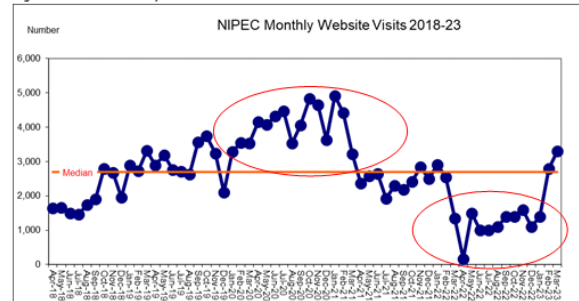


Figure 2: NIPEC Monthly Website Visits



Within NIPEC we lead and facilitate a range of projects with stakeholders from across the system. We are continuously seeking information to inform our approach to enable us to refine this based on feedback we receive. Measurement for improvement aims to identify the changes that occur while the intervention is being tested so that the intervention can be refined over time in response to these data. Although post project evaluations are completed we recognise the need to embrace a process of ongoing evaluation throughout the lifespan of the project.

## 3.2 Organisational Governance

Business planning and risk management are central to governance arrangements to ensure that statutory obligations and ministerial priorities are properly reflected in the management of NIPEC at all levels within the organisation. Business Planning is an activity undertaken in the governance cycle and is approved by NIPEC's Council and performance against objectives is reported to Council on a quarterly basis via the Professional Workplan and the Head of Corporate Services' report. Leadership on risk management is provided through the Council with delegated authority to the Audit and Risk Committee for reviewing the arrangements and systems in place for risk management. The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for risk management and the Head of Corporate Services is the designated officer on behalf of the Chief Executive for co-ordinating risk management activities throughout NIPEC.

NIPEC's risk management process seeks to identify the principal risks which may prevent the achievement of corporate aims and objectives, and to evaluate the nature and extent of those risks and manage them efficiently and effectively. NIPEC have in place a Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan which is reviewed annually by the Audit & Risk Committee.

NIPEC acknowledges that management of information risks is an essential component of good governance and has robust measures in place to manage and control information risks. The Head of Corporate Services is the Data Guardian and Senior Information Risk Officer for the Organisation and NIPEC's Data Protection Officer (DPO) function is provided via an SLA with BSO. The DPO SLA supports NIPEC's compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR) and also provides an independent assessment and recording of actual and suspected data breaches. Senior Professional Officers and senior corporate staff are responsible as Information Asset Owners (IAOs) for managing and addressing risks associated with the information assets within their function and provide assurance to the SIRO on the management of those assets.



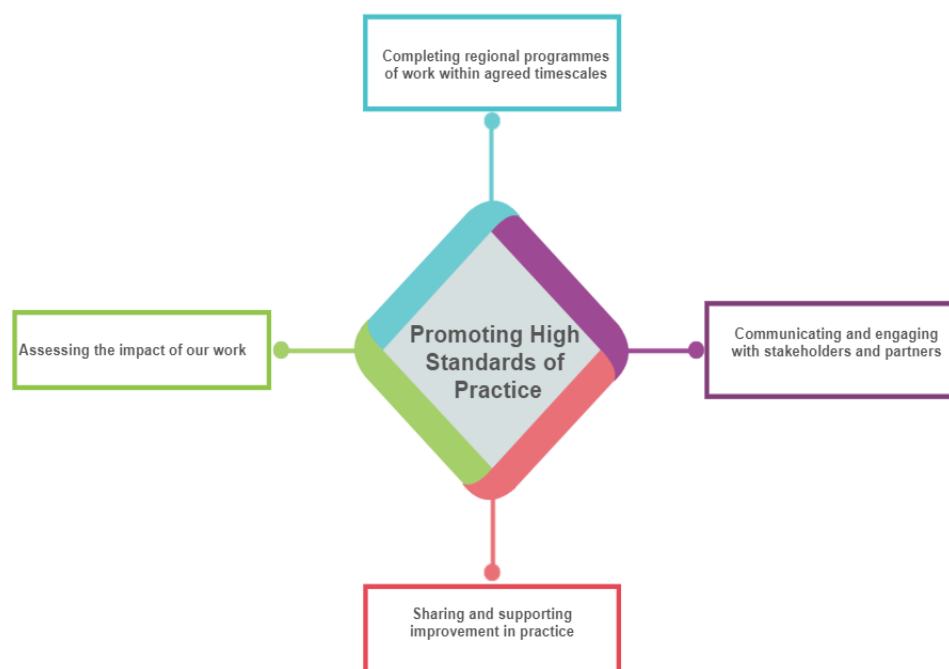
## **THEME 4:** **RAISING THE STANDARDS**

- *We will establish a framework of clear evidence-based standards and best practice guidance.*
- *We will establish dynamic partnerships between service users, commissioners and providers to develop, monitor and review standards.*

In order for NIPEC to be effective as an organisation we need to ensure that we set clear expectations for our staff and stakeholders. Being clear and upfront ensures that we can work together cohesively. We also need to ensure that people are accountable for the work they deliver as this breeds pride in their role and helps to keep standards high.

## 4.1 Supporting Best Practice

In fulfilling NIPEC's responsibility to promote high standards of practice among nurses and midwives during 2022/23, we continued to provide strategic leadership underpinned by The Code and the outworking of the Nursing and Midwifery Task Group Report. Nurses and midwives play a critical role in improving health outcomes, actively enabling co-production and decision making at all levels of policy making and service provision. They have the clinical innovation to help meet the challenges facing health and social care, supporting improvements in practice to uphold the standards of the professions for the good of the public. NIPEC is committed through its corporate objectives to promote high standards of practice through 4 key actions as outlined below:



In fulfilling NIPEC's responsibility to promote high standards of practice among nurses and midwives during 2022-23, NIPEC continued to implement a proactive, flexible and responsive work programme. This included leading or facilitating regional projects and initiatives along with developing, monitoring and reviewing resources to enable improvements in professional practice.

## 4.2 Improving Standards

The provision of high-quality education and learning for nurses and midwives enables the delivery of evidence-informed care that is safe, person-centred and enhances patients' experiences and outcomes. NIPEC has a statutory responsibility to promote 'High Standards of Professional Development among Nurses and Midwives'.

One of the organisation's corporate objectives is to:

'Contribute to the quality assurance of non NMC approved education, learning and development programmes for nurses and midwives.

The '*NIPEC Quality Assurance Framework for monitoring Nursing and Midwifery Education, Learning and Development Programmes commissioned by the Department of Health*<sup>6</sup>' (known as the Framework) outlines the requirements that education provider organisations need to demonstrate in order to provide assurances that their education programmes meet the required standards.

Using the Framework, NIPEC quality assure a selection of post-registration programmes that have been commissioned by the Department of Health (DoH) every year. These programmes are selected by the DoH based on a range of factors including:

- Themes arising through Serious Adverse Incidents (SAIs) / service user feedback
- Patient Safety Alerts
- Changing service demands
- New models of nursing and midwifery care/ career pathways
- Feedback from students/participants who have previously undertaken the education programmes
- Feedback from the Education Commissioning group (DoH).

In 2023, NIPEC updated the Framework taking into consideration recommendations from the education provider organisations including: the Approved Education Institutions (AEIs), the HSC Clinical Education Centre (HSC CEC) and the Royal College of Nursing.

<sup>6</sup> Quality Assurance Framework for Monitoring Nursing and Midwifery Education, Learning and Development Programmes Commissioned by the Department of Health. Available at: [Quality Assurance Framework \(2023\) for DoH Commissioned Education Activities | NIPEC \(hscni.net\)](#)

The key changes made to the Framework (2023) included:

- The alignment of the Framework to the five themes within the NMC Standards Framework for Nursing and Midwifery Education<sup>2</sup>
- Integration of a co-production approach where lay visitors are invited to participate in the quality assurance monitoring process
- Timelines within the monitoring cycle were revised
- Recommendations and actions from the monitoring review to be completed within a six-month time period (if applicable)
- Facilitating an annual 'Sharing and Learning' forum with the education providers to discuss, reflect and share the findings and optimize the key learning points

The newly revised Quality Assurance Framework and the monitoring process was tested in the 2022/23 quality assurance monitoring cycle with plans now in place to evaluate both these with the education providers, lay visitors and the NIPEC Senior Professional Officers. The outcomes from this evaluation will be feedback into the Framework and quality assurance process accordingly.

NIPEC is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the access to education by the ethnically diverse workforce of Nurses, Midwives, Allied Health Professionals and support staff. NIPEC conducted two surveys with HSC Trusts and Open University, Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast in June and December 2022 to monitor improvements in access to education for the ethnically diverse workforce. A stakeholder engagement event was held on 30th March 2022 to share the findings and shape the recommendations necessary to progress this work. NIPEC has agreed to establish a collaborative to take this work forward during 2023-2024.

### 4.3 Enabling Professionalism

During 2022/23, NIPEC continued to work on the Enabling Professional Agenda. In 2019, The Chief Nursing Officers (CNOs) of the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland pledged to undertake a collaborative work stream aligning with the ethos of the Year of the Nurse and Midwife and Nursing Now 2020, linked to the Enabling Professionalism (EP) framework (2017).

The initial phase of this work, was to refresh the original Enabling Professionalism work to co-produce a resource to support the collection of 'narratives' describing 'Defining characteristics' of nurses and midwives in a modern context: Enabling Professionalism 2022. NIPEC continued to lead the work in preparation for a campaign to be launched on 12 May 2022, encouraging nurses, midwives and the public to tell their story and why they are 'Here for Life'. Measuring impact evaluation



of the 'Here for Life' campaign was undertaken and the findings of a second wave survey were presented to the UK CNO Forum, in 2023. The campaign reached 3.3m individuals in 4 days (more than Britain's Got Talent), there were 23,021 unique visitors to the website reaching 141 people for every pound spent on the campaign.

The universally positive findings of this research indicate that the 'Here for Life' campaign has achieved its objectives of helping the public understand the breadth, diversity and expertise of nursing and midwifery, and how important they are to society

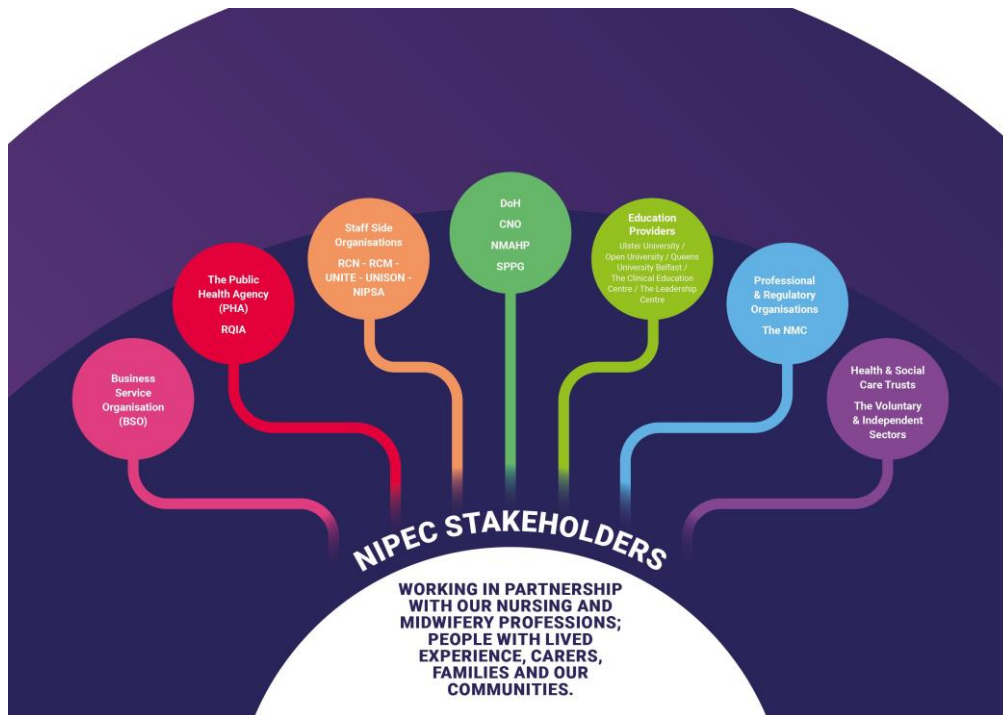
*Here for life*



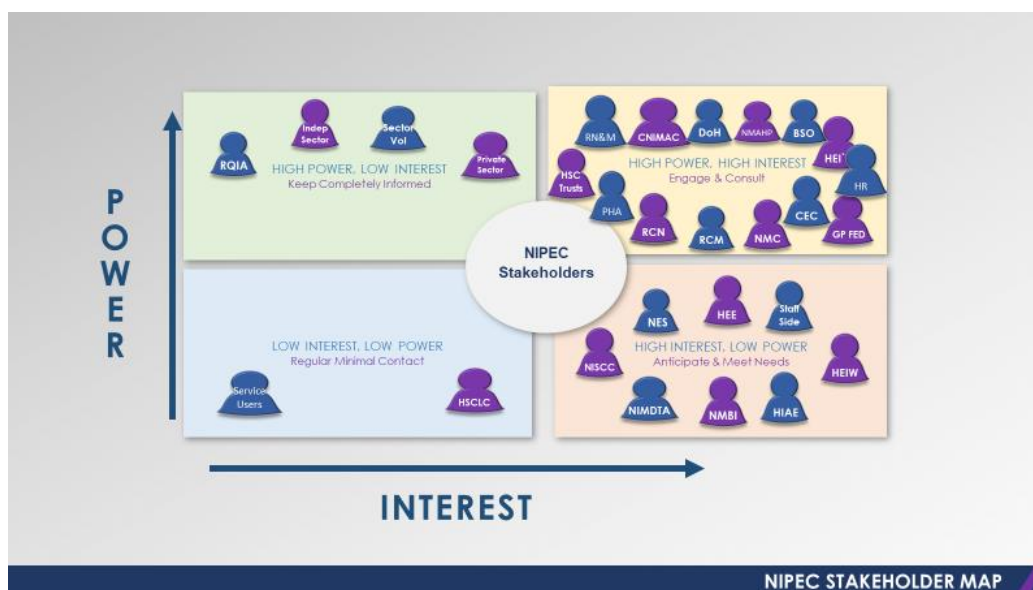
## **THEME 5:** **INTEGRATING THE CARE**

- *We will develop integrated pathways of care for individuals.*
- *We will make better use of multidisciplinary team working and shared opportunities for learning and development in the HSC and with external partners.*

NIPEC works through robust strategic alliances to strengthen the capacity and capability of the nursing and midwifery professions in Northern Ireland. This involves effective, positive multi-professional partnership working and collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders from various sectors. NIPEC continually explores opportunities for increasing its involvement in multidisciplinary projects and initiatives. NIPEC’s approach to partnering with stakeholders and working together is underpinned by its ‘Engagement and Communication Strategy’ which sets out how the organisation involves, communicates and collaborates with its stakeholders to achieve corporate objectives.



The stakeholder map above has been developed to illustrate the breadth and strength of our stakeholder’s representation and participation within all aspects of NIPEC’s work. Below you will see a visual representation of all the people who can influence NIPEC’s programme of work and how they are connected.



This demonstrates how stakeholders can influence, and enable successful outcomes dependent on the programme of work being undertaken.

## 5.1 Working Together

Working together with our stakeholders is a fundamental part of NIPEC's work and is crucial to achieving our aim of influencing and guiding improved standards of practice, education and the professional development of nurses and midwives. This process enables NIPEC to ensure that the voice of stakeholders is heard at the highest level of the organisation. During 2022/23, NIPEC played a significant role in supporting the vision and objectives of the CNO (DoH) in the continued pursuit of excellence in the delivery of nursing and midwifery services to the population of Northern Ireland. NIPEC continued to reflect the priorities of the DoH in support of nursing and midwifery in the delivery of safe, effective and person-centred care.

NIPEC's work programme is also closely aligned with the strategic direction of the NMC. Previously with key stakeholders, NIPEC led the implementation of the Future Nurse Future Midwife standards. In July 2022, the NMC published the new post-registration standards for Specialist Community Public Health Nursing (SCPHN) and Community Nursing Specialist Practice Qualifications (SPQs)<sup>1</sup>. NIPEC once again adopted a regional approach with key stakeholders to support the implementation of the new post-registration standards by September 2024. NIPEC will ensure that the systems and processes already in place for the implementation of Future Nurse Future Midwife (FNFM) are applied for the introduction of the post-registration standards.

NIPEC continued to use a range of methods to encourage an open dialogue with stakeholders, including DoH, CNMAC, other ALBs and special agencies, HSC Trusts, the NMC, PPI, the voluntary, independent and private sector, education institutions and organisations across the devolved UK administrations. This is important to ensure the role and remit of NIPEC is fully understood in order to influence, develop and maintain working partnerships and relationships which support NIPEC as an organisation. NIPEC seek engagement from others on relevant projects and provides opportunities to encourage others to be involved in our work.



Stakeholder Engagement Examples

In addition to staff and students, people with a lived experience of care and services are important stakeholders in the development of our clinical career pathways. The following Steering Groups were enriched by the expertise of those with a lived experience of services in District Nursing, Cancer Nursing and Perioperative Nursing.

## 5.2 Shared learning

As individuals we have naturally curious minds and are constantly absorbing information around us through conversations we have, training courses we attend or from reading articles. We must use this learning to support both individuals and organisations as a whole to build capability and drive improvement. Our working environments are becoming more complex so it is more important than ever to apply our learning in every day practices. NIPEC continuously strives to create a transformative learning culture where we appreciate each small opportunity to learn something new and value learning as a path to mastery.

NIPEC supports a flexible approach to the learning and development of nurses and midwives and continues to explore the production of resources, to enable registrants to enhance their competence and performance in order to improve the quality of care they provide to their patients and clients. NIPEC collaborates with education and service providers to promote high standards in the delivery of education for nurses and midwives.

During 2022-2023, NIPEC began working in partnership with the Health Innovation Network, South London to support a Communities of Practice (CoP's) workshop series. Participants from across HSC Organisations receive support through a series of virtual workshops and drop-in clinics. Covering the fundamentals of the CoP approach to quality and transformation, these workshops help to develop an

understanding of how CoPs work and why the approach might be useful to us in our work.

Communities of Practice (CoP's) are self-organising, self-managing groups of people who share a passion for practice. They come together as peers in shared inquiry, learning from and with each other about what works, what doesn't and why. They share promising practices and know-how in pursuit of improving practice where they work and across the system, deepening capability and capacity for greater improvement in patient care.

These social learning communities will support members to:

- Establish a social learning space where staff can build and nurture effective and supportive relationships;
- Provide a powerful means for people working within the MDT to come together to lead on improving practice across services;
- Offer protected time for reflective learning and sharing knowledge and good practice, with the aim of developing stronger collaborative working relationships
- Continually learn and improve quality of care and patient experience.

The aim is to drive improvements across the HSC system in NI and to spread innovation, ideas, and best practices. It is anticipated that this approach will also provide support for implementation of the Nursing and Midwifery Task Group (NMTG, 2020).

In March 2023, NIPEC hosted an engagement event with senior nursing and midwifery staff across organisations in attendance. This was an opportunity to consider the appetite and potential benefits of establishing a senior nursing and midwifery strategic CoP. There was a focus on the recording care/digital agenda, with visiting speakers from Manchester. The event was enthusiastically received by attendees who felt that the region and they as individuals would benefit from a senior nursing and midwifery CoP.



Moving forward, as part of the development of a network of CoPs across HSC, this CoP will bring together professional staff responsible for setting and delivering the strategic agenda, from across NI organisations in a regional leadership community

that focuses everyone on a core purpose, aligns resources and effort, and acts as a lever for turning strategy into action.

### 5.3 Making Connections

The Health Improvement Alliance Europe (HIAE) is a coalition of leaders who are united for change. The group aims to improve work processes, create new health co-production and healthcare delivery models relevant to European health systems and deliver the best care at affordable costs. It is led by the Institute of Healthcare Improvement (IHI) and brings together some of the most accomplished leaders and innovators responsible for driving quality and improvement across the complete spectrum of health and health care in Europe. In November 2022 NIPEC signed up to become part of this learning and innovative community.

By joining this network NIPEC aims to encourage innovative thinking and build relationships both nationally and internationally with other organisations to surface common challenges and work towards solutions. We will do this by:

- Building and strengthening connections across boundaries creating a deeper understanding of Quality Management to support the development of the Regional Excellence Framework and Quality Strategy within NIPEC
- Drawing upon a collective knowledge around continuous improvement and learning across cultures
- Promoting innovation in professional development activities and encouraging bold new ideas
- Leveraging successes across the Nursing and Midwifery profession in Northern Ireland and sharing internationally

NIPEC commits to actively participating in the events and workshops planned through the alliance and to connect with any regional networks or events to promote shared learning beyond our own team.

Photos from the HIAE Multiday meeting in Scotland



## Learning from Covid-19

The challenges which have arisen as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to rebuild services has placed even more importance on the need to enhance the capacity of the nursing and midwifery workforce in order to enable the delivery of safe, effective, person centred care. NIPEC's work portfolio during 2022-23 focused on relevant projects and initiatives which involved co-designing resources to support the workforce in the delivery of services and to enhance the capacity and leadership capability of nurses and midwives where they work across NI. The experience of staff during the pandemic also highlighted the safety critical nature of the roles of nurses and midwives. Policy makers and the public have continued to listen to commentary relating to the need to enhance the image of the professions, promote professional pride, support nurses and midwives to stay in their professions, and empower them to bring about better health and care outcomes.

NIPEC continues to seek unique opportunities to work with partners in support of the broader transformation and innovation agenda within Northern Ireland.



## Conclusion

This report reflects a sample of the approaches and activities which NIPEC has engaged and delivered during 2022/23 to maintain and improve the quality of care provided by nurses and midwives in Northern Ireland and the wider HSC system. No matter what we achieve, we're always striving to do more and exceed the expectations of our stakeholders. Going forward, NIPEC will build on our excellent achievements and maintain a focus on developing the knowledge, expertise and standards of practice of staff to ensure they can fully support the transformation agenda to deliver improved outcomes for the staff and the population we serve. The pursuit for quality excellence is at the heart of what we do.

