GUIDANCE FOR STUDENT NURSES AND MIDWIVES RAISING AND ESCALATING CONCERNS

Date approved at SMG: 7th January 2014
Date for review: November 2015
GUIDANCE FOR STUDENT NURSES AND MIDWIVES RAISING AND ESCALATING CONCERNS

YOUR ROLE IN RAISING CONCERNS

NMC Guidance on professional conduct for nursing and midwifery students identifies that as a student nurse / midwife you have a duty to report any concerns from your practice learning experience / environment which put the safety of people in your care or the public at risk (NMC 2009).

We recognise that it is not easy for you to raise a concern; you may be worried if you are doing the right thing, unsure what to do or worried about the consequences for you and other people.

This guidance aims to:

- encourage you as a student to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice in accordance with NMC Guidance for nurses and midwives: Raising and escalating concerns (NMC 2013);
- reassure you that if you raise a concern the Higher Education Institute (HEI)¹ will support you at every stage of the process;
- provide advice about how you may go about raising a concern;
- ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied.

This guidance is intended to cover incidents which cause concern and where you think the safety and well-being of those in your care or others may be put at risk, for example (this list is not exhaustive):

- issues regarding care delivery involving nurses / midwives or other staff members;
- issues regarding staff conduct, such as unprofessional behaviour;
- danger or risk to health and safety, such as health and safety violations;
- misuse or unavailability of clinical equipment or lack of training;
- financial malpractice, including criminal acts and fraud.

¹ HEI refers to: University of Glasgow Nursing & Health Care School
Glasgow Caledonian University - Department of Health and Community Sciences
University of the West of Scotland School of Health, Nursing and Midwifery
AEI in NMC documentation
In effect, any concerns that you have about any aspect of service provision or patient care. This may be something that:

- makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe the NMC subscribes to,
- falls below standards of practice,
- amounts to improper conduct.

This guidance does not replace NMC complaints process or local NHS complaints policy.

**SUPPORTING YOU**

The HEI is committed to good practice and high standards and will support you in raising a concern. Throughout the process of raising a concern that is shown on the attached flowchart your liaison lecturer\(^\text{2}\) will help you with any action you need to take such as writing a report, act on your behalf where necessary and do everything that is necessary to protect you and make the process as least daunting as possible. Your liaison lecturer will endeavour to support you throughout the process. This will involve keeping you up to date with what is happening, acting on your behalf with regard to raising a concern with and being available to talk with you through any worries that you may have regarding the process.

The HEI recognizes that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If you raise a concern in good faith you are acting on your professional duty to safeguard the people in your care or the public. Raising a concern will not affect your progress on the programme and the HEI will not tolerate any criticism or negative responses regarding your actions when you raise a concern in good faith.

As well as getting support from your lecturer you may find it useful to contact your professional body or trade union student adviser who will be able to give advice and information about raising concerns.

**CAN YOU BE GUARANTEED CONFIDENTIALITY WHEN RAISING A CONCERN?**

The NMC strongly recommends that you raise a concern openly, giving your name. This makes investigating your concern easier. It may be possible to keep your identity confidential; however there may be circumstances when this is not possible, perhaps because of legal issues or where the concern cannot be resolved without revealing your identity. You can be assured that all concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal without discussing it with you first. However, it is important for you to consider that by not identifying who you are or agreeing to discuss your concern could limit an investigation by the Practice Learning experience provider.

**UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS**

If you raise a concern in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, this will be considered a breach of the Code of Professional Conduct and Fitness to Practise for students.

---

\(^2\)Lecturer refers to: link lecturer (UoG), liaison lecturer (UWS), academic adviser (GCU)
HOW SHOULD YOU RAISE A CONCERN?
NMC Guidance on professional conduct for nursing and midwifery students (NMC 2009) expects you to:

- Seek help immediately from an appropriately qualified professional.
- Inform your mentor, clinical manager (if able) and your liaison lecturer at the earliest time possible.
- Write down exactly what you see and hear and give this to your liaison lecturer (remember to maintain patient confidentiality).

STAGE 1
As a first step, you should normally raise your concerns with your mentor or the clinical manager of the practice learning environment. If for any reason you are reluctant to raise a concern with clinical staff you should follow this Raising and Escalating Concerns Guidance and raise your concern with the liaison lecturer designated to your practice learning experience (See appendix 1).

Concerns must be raised verbally with your lecturer and you should keep a factual record of the events at the time of the event a copy of which will be placed in your file.

You may be asked at a later date to write a factual statement with the help of your lecturer.

The earlier an expression of concern is made the easier it is to take action.

STAGE 2
Your liaison lecturer will inform the PEF/CHEF and try and find out more from you about your concern or the incident you are reporting. This is to enable them to judge whether what you are reporting may be an adverse incident that can be dealt with using the usual practice learning environment reporting of an adverse incident mechanism.

At this stage if your lecturer feels that the concern falls outside an adverse incident the programme lead, practice learning lead will be informed.

At this stage the practice education facilitator will inform the board lead for practice education or the manager of private and independent areas.

STAGE 3
The programme lead / practice learning lead will consult with the board lead for practice education or the manager of private and independent areas.

If necessary, arrangements will be made for you to be removed from the particular practice learning environment and an alternative practice learning environment arranged for you.

There will be an investigation into your concerns and action as appropriate.

The student and HEI will receive some feedback on the outcome of the investigation.

STAGE 4
If both the student and the HEI feel the concerns are not adequately addressed through investigation the student or HEI escalates concern to higher level. This could be senior management level such as Nurse Director, Matron, Lead/ Senior Nurse, Clinical Service Manager.

STAGE 5
If both the student and the HEI feel the concerns are not adequately addressed at this level the HEI escalates concern to NMC/HCP or a care regulator.
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE CONCERNS HAVE BEEN ADDRESSED BY THE CARE PROVIDER OR APPROPRIATE BODY?

If your concern is of a serious nature e.g. a serious incident, involve more than one incident, more than one staff member, likely to have legislative, professional or disciplinary implications, the Senior Charge Nurse* will take immediate action and refer the concerns to the Senior Clinical Manager for further investigation / action in line with organisation’s policy. Details of the outcomes cannot be divulged to the HEI as it could breach confidentiality however you will receive some feedback on the outcome of the investigation.

IMMEDIATE CONCERNS

If you witness or suspect that there is a risk of immediate harm to a person in your care, you should report your concerns to the appropriate person or authority immediately. You must act straightaway to protect their safety (NMC, 2013, p10).

Policy adapted for student use from NIPEC Confidential reporting Policy (Whistleblowing) NIPEC 03/06 and Raising Concerns: Guidance for nurses and midwives (NMC 2013)
Appendix 1: Student Guidance for Raising and Escalating Concerns

1. If you witness or suspect a Care Concern or have a concern about staff conduct you should notify your Mentor and/or Senior Charge Nurse* immediately (if able).

   At the same time you MUST also inform your Liaison Lecturer (LL) that this concern has been raised.

   Resolved?
   - Yes - Stop and file a record of the concern
   - No

2. Your Liaison Lecturer will inform the Programme Lead & Practice Learning Lead and put your statement in your student file.

   Programme Lead & Practice Learning Lead will make a decision regarding whether or not you will remain within the associated practice learning area.

   Resolved?
   - Yes
   - No

An investigation will be undertaken and feedback given to you and HEI

Concern adequately addressed?
- Yes
- No

4. You or HEI escalate to higher level Eg. Executive or senior management level.

Concern adequately addressed?
- Yes
- No

5. You or HEI escalate to higher level Eg. NMC/HCP or a Care Regulator (see NMC, 2013)

* Senior Charge Nurse , this term refers to identified nurse with overall responsibility inclusive of Nurse Team Leaders and other Nurses in Charge.