



NIPEC ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN

2026-27

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Chief Executive Foreword

As Chief Executive, I am pleased to present our 2026-2027 Business Plan which is the third annual business plan in support of the delivery of our strategic goals set out in our [Corporate Plan \(2024-28\)](#)¹

The development of the plan has provided an opportunity for us to reflect on our achievements during 2025-26 and outline what we will do over the next year to promote high standards of practice, education and professional development of the Nursing and Midwifery workforce.

We have experienced some strategic change over the last year with the retirement of our Chair, Bronagh Scott in December 2025. Bronagh registered as a nurse in 1984, specialising as a critical care nurse and throughout her career she held a number of Executive Director of Nursing roles in Northern Ireland, London and Wales. In 2015, she was appointed by the Health Minister as the Nurse Adviser to the Expert Independent Panel chaired by Professor Rafael Bengoa, tasked with leading an informed debate on the best configuration of Health and Social Care services in Northern Ireland.

On behalf of NIPEC Council and staff, I wish to offer sincere thanks to Bronagh for her leadership, guidance and friendship throughout her time as Chair.

I would also like to thank Kieran McCormick for stepping into the role of Interim Chair pending the recruitment of a permanent Chair by the DoH Public Appointments Unit in 2026. Kieran was reappointed to NIPEC Council by Health Minister, Mike Nesbitt, in December 2025, along with three other members: Karen Diamond, Brenda Kelly and Siobhán Caslin. We have great strength and expertise in our Council and staff and I look forward to continuing to work with them all to deliver our strategic and business aims in 2026-27 and beyond.

NIPEC continued to lead and facilitate a wide range of regional initiatives in 2025-26 and details of these can be found in the Performance section of our [Annual Report](#) which is published on our website. However, one achievement which we are exceptionally proud of is the development of a Career and Development Model for nurses and midwives which was produced by our Senior Professional team and launched by the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO), Maria McIlgorm, at the NIPEC conference on 2 December 2025.

¹ <https://nipec.hscni.net/publications/corporate-strategies/>



L-R: Linda Kelly (NIPEC Chief Executive), Mike Nesbitt MLA, Health Minister; and Prof Maria McIlgorm OBE (Chief Nursing Officer)

We were delighted to welcome Health Minister Nesbitt and Jason Leitch, former National Clinical Director for the Scottish Government and Senior Fellow at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) to give keynote speeches at the NIPEC conference in December, along with a number of other speakers from across the system. Overall it was a very successful and enjoyable day and we received some excellent feedback from attendees and participants. Further details and related resources can be found on our website at <https://nipec.hscni.net/about-us/nipec-2025-conference-resources/>



L-R: Brenda Carson (NIPEC Senior Professional Officer), Olga O'Neill (Executive Director of Nursing, Midwifery and AHPs BHSCT), Jason Leitch (former National Clinical Director for the Scottish Government and Senior Fellow at IHI), Linda Kelly (NIPEC Chief Executive), Prof Maria McIlgorm OBE (Chief Nursing Officer)

In 2026-27, we will continue to build on our success of the last year and details of our key priority objectives / initiatives are included in this document. Despite the potential of funding and resource constraints, our statutory functions will remain at the centre of everything we do to ensure that NIPEC's business objectives demonstrate improvements and support across the Nursing and Midwifery professions in Northern Ireland. We will continue to work in partnership with the Department of Health, employers, registrants and all of our stakeholders to support the creation of an environment which is valued across the health and social care system.

We hope you find this Plan useful.



Linda Kelly
Chief Executive

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Who we are

The Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery (NIPEC) was established as a Non-Departmental Public Body in 2002, under the Health and Personal Social Services (2002) Act.

As per the Act, the Statutory Functions of NIPEC and its Council include the promotion of:

- High standards of practice among nurses and midwives;
- High standards in the education and training of nurses and midwives; and
- The professional development of nurses and midwives

Without prejudice to the generality of the above, the Council may;

- Provide guidance on best practice for nurses and midwives; and
- Provide advice and information on matter relating to nursing and midwifery

The Council, shall in the exercise of its functions, act;

- In accordance with any directions given to it by the Department; and
- Under the general guidance of the Department

NIPEC is led by a Council of non-executive members who are appointed by the Department of Health on behalf of the Minister for Health. The purpose of the NIPEC Council is to provide effective leadership and strategic direction to the organisation and to ensure that the policies and priorities set by the Minister for Health are implemented. The Council sets the culture and values of the organisation and sets the tone for the organisation's engagement with stakeholders and customers. The Council is also responsible for holding the Chief Executive to account for the management of the organisation and the delivery of agreed plans and outcomes.

NIPEC's work is supported by a small but dedicated team of 16 permanent staff and a number of bank staff who temporarily increase capacity for specific projects. An Organisational Chart can be found in Appendix 1. During 2025-26, the Chief Executive commissioned a review of the staffing structure to propose potential options for a revised organisational structure that would improve efficiency and effectiveness into the future. The review primarily considered the staffing associated with the clinical professional work of NIPEC, however, in doing so account was taken of the corporate and business side of the house. The outcome of the review began to be implemented in the latter part of the year and will continue into 2026-27.

1.2 Our Mission and Our Vision

Everything we do is focused on the delivery of high quality safe and effective care for people who use HSC services. This aim is reflected in our **Mission** “*to promote further the highest standards of practice, education and professional development of nurses and midwives to facilitate the delivery of safe, effective, compassionate, patient-centred services.*”

NIPEC’s **Vision** is ‘*Leading and Inspiring nurses and midwives to achieve and uphold excellence in professional practice*’.

The HSC Values underpin everything NIPEC does as a unique professional organisation and an integral part of the HSC. They are used to guide staff on their behaviours and to send a message to our stakeholders on the service they can expect.



Working Together: We work together for the best outcome for the people we care for and support. We work across Health and Social Care and with other external organisations and agencies, recognising that leadership is the responsibility of all.



Compassion: We are caring, sensitive, respectful and understanding towards those we care for and support and our colleagues. We listen carefully to others to better understand and take action to help them and ourselves.



Excellence: We aim to be the best we can be in our work, aiming to improve and develop services to achieve positive changes. We deliver safe, high-quality, compassionate care and support.



Openness and Honesty: We are open and honest with each other and act with integrity and candour.

2.0 Strategic Context

2.1 Health and Social Care NI: A three-year plan to Stabilise, Reform and Deliver

This Plan reflects the priorities of the Department of Health (DoH) three-year strategic plan (December 2024), setting out a path for the future based on the three pillars of Stabilisation, Reform and Delivery. This includes:

- Stabilisation of services, including mitigating the inevitable deterioration of some services as a result of budgetary pressures;
- Accelerated Reform of HSC to make the strategic changes necessary to enable the system to address the health needs of our citizens; and
- Delivery of safe, sustainable, high-quality health and social care services as close as possible to citizens through primary, community, social and hospital care, with services configured effectively and efficiently to meet demand for both planned and unscheduled care. This also means delivering for the workforce, who are the heart of the HSC.

2.2 Programme For Government

On 27 February 2025, the NI Executive launched Programme for Government 2024-27: Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most. The document sets out the nine priorities for making a real difference to the lives of citizens in NI and identifies three key missions – people, planet and prosperity.

The objectives in this plan will support the Ministerial strategic direction through participation in the CNO's vision of "Shaping our Future" – further detail below.

2.3 CNO Priorities: Shaping Our Future Vision

During 2025-26, NIPEC supported the review of the Nursing and Midwifery Task Group (NMTG) 2020 recommendations. This review led to the transition of the outstanding actions to the CNO's Shaping our Future programme of work, which focused on four key areas:

- Workforce and Workload Planning;
- Pre and Post Registration Education and Training;
- Career Pathways beyond Clinical Roles and Leadership; and
- Quality Assurance Framework for Nursing and Midwifery.

In September 2025, NIPEC's Chief Executive joined the Shaping Our Future oversight group to direct the delivery of the work of four subgroups aligned to the four priority areas. The majority of NIPEC's Senior Professional Officers continue to fully participate in the development and functioning of the Career Pathways and Leadership and Quality Assurance subgroups, whilst the Chief Executive co-chairs the Education, Regulation and Research subgroup.

NIPEC works in partnership with CNO Directorate and the majority of NIPEC's work is directly commissioned by the Chief Nursing Officer and her team. The objectives in this plan are directed and approved by CNO, therefore there is strategic alignment between the aims, objectives and expected outcomes and results of NIPEC and DoH, as reflected in this plan and NIPEC's 4-year Corporate Plan.

3.0 Delivering in Collaboration

3.1 Working in Partnership

NIPEC holds a unique position in HSC as a trusted professional regional lead on delivering service improvement and we wish to acknowledge our continued collaboration with our registrant colleagues both in NI and across the UK. We look forward to continuing that engagement in 2026-27 in support of the Chief Nursing Officer's vision 'Shaping Our Future', which aims to enhance the impact of nurses and midwives in delivering high-quality healthcare and addressing health inequalities across the HSC.

NIPEC has a broad range of primarily nursing and midwifery stakeholders. Registered nurses and midwives in Northern Ireland make up almost 27% of the HSC workforce. There are over 29,000 nursing and midwifery professionals in the NI workforce on the NMC register (*NMC Register for NI 2024-25*), an increase of 3.3% from 2023-24 with an increase of 5.9% of first-time joiners.

We deliver our functions by working collaboratively across the nursing/midwifery and health care system and through our established partnerships. We have a number of Partnerships with key stakeholders:

- CNO's Directorate / NIPEC Sponsor Branch;
- Executive Directors of Nursing (EDONs);
- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) – Queen's University of Belfast, Ulster University and the Open University;
- The Public Health Agency;
- Working groups made up of senior staff from the HSC and Independent and Voluntary sectors
- The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC).

In respect of engagement with service users, NIPEC does not have a statutory duty of involvement and consultation (*Circular HSC (SQSD) 03/2012 “Guidance for the HSC organisations on arrangements for implementing effective personal and public involvement (PPI) policy in the HSC”*). However, NIPEC does undertake PPI and co-production when appropriate to ensure our work is informed by engagement with service users.



3.2 Working with the NMC

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) exists to protect the public and has a vital role in building a safety culture that is open and fair. NIPEC's work programme is closely aligned with the strategic policy direction of the NMC. The NMC has 2 key functions, the core function being regulation and the secondary function of supporting registered nurses and midwives along with the public. The NMC share intelligence from regulatory activities across the UK and work with partners, one of which is NIPEC, to support workforce planning and sector-wide decision making.

NIPEC continued to engage with the NMC throughout 2025 with the Chief Executive joining nursing and midwifery leaders from Northern Ireland at a meeting with the NMC in Castle Buildings in April 2025. Regular NMC meetings are now scheduled with Nursing and Midwifery from NI senior leaders over the year, to strengthen the governance and ongoing partnership working to promote shared learning and improvement. In addition, NIPEC staff continue to inform the National Professional Advisory Group and are represented on a number of specific professional practice development initiatives, presenting the Northern Ireland professional perspective.

NIPEC also extended an invite to the NMC to speak at our conference in December 2025 and were delighted to welcome Prof. Paula Holt MBE DL, Senior Nursing Adviser for the Code & Revalidation, and Paula McLaren, Senior Nursing Adviser for Advanced Practice. An update was provided on Revalidation, The Code & ANP Standards.



L-R: Brenda Carson (NIPEC Senior Professional Officer), Linda Kelly (NIPEC Chief Executive), Prof. Paula Holt MBE DL (Senior Nursing Adviser for the Code & Revalidation, NMC) Paula McLaren (Senior Nursing Adviser for Advanced Practice, NMC)

On 19 March 2025, following the publication of the Independent Culture Review in 2024, the NMC published an NMC Culture Transformation Plan. The plan comprises a three-year programme designed to transform NMC organisational culture. The plan is based on six pillars:

- Strong and effective leadership;
- Values-based decision-making;
- Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI);
- Ensuring psychological safety;
- Enjoying work; and
- Regulatory fairness.

NIPEC continues to support the CNO and Nursing and Midwifery senior staff in representation of the nursing and midwifery Northern Ireland registrant voice and oversight of the implementation of the lessons from this review.



L-R: Brenda Kelly (NIPEC Senior Professional Officer); Linda Kelly (NIPEC Chief Executive); Kieran McCormick (NIPEC Interim Chair); Jonah Atos (International Nurse Coordinator, WHSCT); Prof. Paula Holt MBE DL (Senior Nursing Adviser for the Code & Revalidation, NMC) Paula McLaren (Senior Nursing Adviser for Advanced Practice, NMC); and Deepthi Roshan (Clinical & Patient Flow, Co-ordinator, SHSCT)

In 2025, the NMC also released their new strategy 2025-2027 focusing on five themes spanning culture, regulation, systems and processes.

Building a new NMC: Strategy 2025–2027

NMC vision

Safe and effective nursing and midwifery education and practice across the four countries of the UK – regulated by the NMC – a fit for the future organisation, with fairness and equity at the heart of everything that we do.

NMC mission

To be a strong and independent regulator that protects the public and inspires confidence in the nursing and midwifery professions – by setting and upholding high professional standards.

- We achieve our mission through a positive and inclusive culture that enables our people to thrive.
- Achieving our mission will ensure we are an effective part of the wider health and social care system.

NMC values

We're building a new NMC with:

- **Integrity**
- **Fairness**
- **Respect**
- **Equity**
- **Effectiveness**



Ensuring trust in professionals

Reviewing and enhancing our regulatory tools to better protect the public and support professional



Improving fitness to practise

Improving the fairness, timeliness and quality of decisions while focusing on safeguarding and equity



Culture transformation

Creating a fair and positive culture to become an effective, safe and trusted regulator and employer



Strengthening leadership

Building a new NMC with stronger accountability and united, values-based, empowering leadership



Modernising the NMC

Updating our technology, systems, legislation and learning to be more agile and efficient

The NMC have streamlined their professional practice work over the past year: The focus includes supporting the modernisation of the Code and revalidation guidance which is due to come into effect in October 2027, consultation on changes to NMC practice learning requirements and the development of standards for advanced practice in the 2027-28 financial year. NIPEC continue to provide professional input and support for the NMC priority professional practice work.

4.0 Strategic Priorities

This Plan explains what we will do in the 2026-27 year in support of our strategic priorities set out in our Corporate Plan 2024-28. In addition to the objectives outlined below, NIPEC will make best use of their resources and time through adopting a dynamic approach. Whilst this Plan outlines our current objectives, there is an ongoing programme of work in collaboration with our stakeholders to address shorter-term and longer-term goals associated with education, practice and professional development for the professions. We report on our activities for 2025-26 in our [Annual Report](#)² which is published on our website. However, we have provided one key achievement from 2025-26 under each Strategic Priority below:

² [//nipec.hscni.net/publications/annual-reports-accounts/](https://nipec.hscni.net/publications/annual-reports-accounts/)

OUR PRIORITIES

To deliver to our vision and fulfil our mission, we have four strategic priorities for the next four years. NIPEC's strategic priorities have been developed in partnership with our key stakeholders. They will support our overarching vision to lead and inspire nurses and midwives to achieve and uphold excellence in professional practice.

NIPEC Strategic Priorities 2024-28



Practice



Education



Professional Development



Guidance, Advice and Information

The objectives contained in this plan have been developed in partnership with our key stakeholders. NIPEC will continue to work closely through the Office of the Chief Nursing Officer to secure the necessary resource to expand the portfolio of work in partnership with key stakeholders.

4.1 Strategic Priority 1: Practice



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: PRACTICE

OUTCOME:

NIPEC's programme of work contributes positively to Nurses and Midwives' practice standards

OBJECTIVE:

NIPEC will promote high standards of practice among nurses and midwives by:

1. Incorporating best evidence and continuous improvement in our work at local and regional levels.
2. Sharing and disseminating best practice based on robust evidence, regionally, nationally and internationally.

We will measure progress by:

1. Progress and endorsement of practice improvement focused projects to agreed timescales.
2. Stakeholders' activity relating to professional participation, including feedback of their experience and assessment of the impact of the work.

4.1.1 Example of Achievement in 2025-2026

Quality Excellence Framework

In 2022, the CNO asked NIPEC to lead the development of a new Assurance Framework for nurses and midwives. The aim of the Framework was to provide consistent and robust processes for measuring, assuring and reporting on the quality of nursing and midwifery professionalism and care delivery.

A Regional Project Steering Group was convened by NIPEC and chaired by Donna Keenan, Executive Director of Nursing, Midwifery and AHP Services in the Western HSC Trust. The Quality Excellence Framework was subsequently launched at NIPEC's conference on 4 December 2025: [Quality Excellence Framework | NIPEC](#)

The Quality Excellence Framework is built on leading person-centred practice within a culture that is safe and where people can speak up. It emphasises shared power and promotes the use of improvement skills to create learning whilst adopting a systematic approach to managing and improving quality. Through adopting the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's Quintuple Aim (<https://www.ihl.org/library/topics/quintuple-aim>) we present a forward-looking framework aligned with evolving health and social care needs. As professionals we will strive to improve the health for all populations, enhance the experience for providers and recipients of care and ensure there is value in all that we do. We will have a series of metrics that demonstrate the quality of the care we deliver.



Launch of the Quality Excellence Framework L-R: Brenda Carson (Project Lead, NIPEC Senior Professional Officer), Olga O'Neill (Executive Director of Nursing, Midwifery and AHPs BHSCT), Kieran McCormick (NIPEC Council Interim Chair), Linda Kelly (NIPEC Chief Executive), Prof Maria McIlgorm OBE (Chief Nursing Officer)

4.1.2 Strategic Priority 1: Practice Areas of Focus for 2026 - 2027

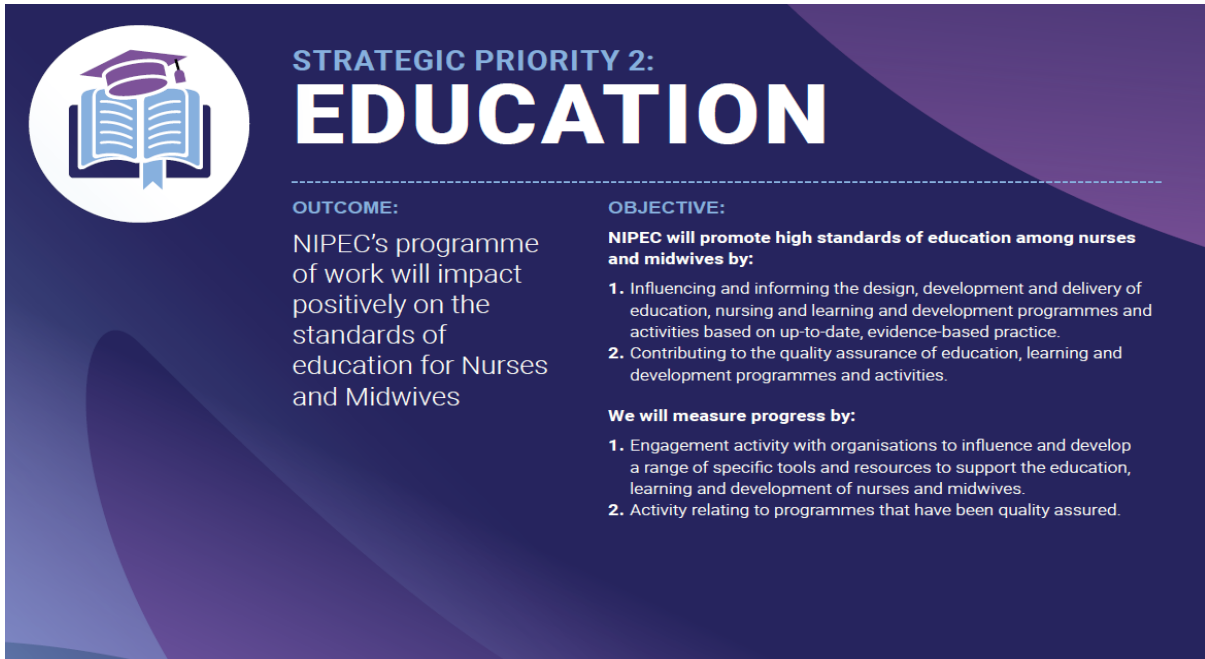
Outcome: NIPEC's Programme of work, contributes positively to Nurses and Midwives' practice standards

Area of Focus	What this means
<p>Quality Excellence Assurance Framework</p>	<p>Following the launch of the Quality Excellence Framework NIPEC will now support implementation through the Shaping Our Future Assurance workstream. Awareness sessions across organisations have taken place with senior nursing and midwifery staff. Testing of the maturity matrix is underway and online resources will be provided as required to support completion. An agreed minimum dataset will also be developed and agreed across all areas.</p>
<p>Development of a regional Quality Dashboard for Maternity and Neo-natal services</p>	<p>In line with the Quality Excellence Framework work will commence on the development of a maternity and neo-natal dashboard with quality indicators focused around the delivery of the Quintuple Aim – population health, equity, value, workforce wellbeing and safety and experience of care.</p>
<p>Establish a Community of Practice to support focus on improvement priorities</p>	<p>NIPEC will invite nurses and midwives to join a community of practice with a focus on improvement. This will create a collaborative learning environment where they can come together to share knowledge, skills and experience providing opportunities for professional development.</p>
<p>Support the implementation of the RNLD Model as outlined in the Equity of Access and Outcome Report</p>	<p>Following the launch of the Equity of Access and Outcomes Report last year, NIPEC will support the CNO and her team in progressing a number of recommendations outlined within the report to enable the delivery of a new model for Register Learning Disability Nurses (RNLDs) within Northern Ireland. The initial focus will be to develop a career pathway for RNLDs.</p>

Area of Focus	What this means
<p align="center">Revalidation and the Code: Implementation</p>	<p>NIPEC will continue to support the NMC in the review of the Code of Practice and Revalidation Process, ensuring the views of nurses and midwives in Northern Ireland are represented.</p>
<p align="center">Support the implementation of the NMC Principles for Advanced Practice in NI</p>	<p>The NMC has established a 4 country Oversight Group to share learning of successes and challenges of implementation of the Principles. In addition, on behalf of CNO, NIPEC has established a regional Task & Finish Group to support HSC organisations across NI to establish the governance structures, systems and processes required to ensure the effective implementation and embedding of the new NMC <i>Principles for Advanced Practice</i>. A tool has been developed and will be issued to relevant organisations in February 2026 to gather a range of baseline information on each HSC organisation's readiness to support Advanced Practice Principles and any subsequent standards. This will help to inform an action plan and next steps.</p>

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4.2 Strategic Priority 2: Education



**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:
EDUCATION**

OUTCOME:
NIPEC's programme of work will impact positively on the standards of education for Nurses and Midwives

OBJECTIVE:
NIPEC will promote high standards of education among nurses and midwives by:

1. Influencing and informing the design, development and delivery of education, nursing and learning and development programmes and activities based on up-to-date, evidence-based practice.
2. Contributing to the quality assurance of education, learning and development programmes and activities.

We will measure progress by:

1. Engagement activity with organisations to influence and develop a range of specific tools and resources to support the education, learning and development of nurses and midwives.
2. Activity relating to programmes that have been quality assured.

4.2.1 Example of Achievement in 2025-2026

Learning Needs Analysis Guide and Tool

In partnership with key stakeholders, NIPEC developed a comprehensive Learning Needs Analysis Guide to provide clear context, information, and direction for undertaking an effective Learning Needs Analysis. The Guide supports alignment with strategic policy, workforce planning priorities, and service needs across the health and social care system.

To complement the Guide, NIPEC also produced a Learning Needs Analysis Tool, offering a structured and standardised framework for managers at all levels to capture, organise and prioritise learning needs within their teams. This Tool enables a consistent approach to identifying development requirements and ensures that decisions are informed by robust evidence.

Together, the Guide and Tool strengthen the capacity of managers across all healthcare organisations to make informed, evidence-based learning and development decisions. This supports targeted and purposeful investment in education and training, aligned to the overarching aim of delivering safe, effective and person-centred care.

4.2.2 Strategic Priority 2: Education Areas of Focus for 2026 - 2027

Outcome: NIPEC's Programme of work, will impact positively on the standards of education of Nurses and Midwives

Area of Focus	What this means
<p>Establish a NI Multi-Professional Advanced Practice Academy</p>	<p>NIPEC has convened a Regional Steering Group, which includes a range of key stakeholders, including HEIs (Higher Education Institutes), employers and healthcare professionals to establish a Multi-Professional Advanced Practice Academy. The aim is to promote collaborative working in a safe and supportive environment and ensure high quality education, mentorship, CPD, networking and research opportunities for its members. This is the first of its kind in NI and the Academy will focus on key areas in relation to Advanced Practice including governance, standardisation and accountability, agreed areas for focus and development, influences from population health demographic trends, evaluation measurement of impact, associated resources and costing and future requirements and recommendations.</p>
<p>Development of a regional midwifery mandatory training matrix</p>	<p>A regional training matrix will be developed to provide a consistent, region-wide approach to mandatory training, ensure midwives meet legal, professional, and organisational requirements and reduce variation across Trusts or services.</p>
<p>Launch the Career Pathway for Nurses in Care Homes</p>	<p>The career pathway for nurses working in care homes is under development with an anticipated launch date of May 2026. This career pathway is the first of its kind in the UK and will support nurses to develop and progress in their job roles.</p>

Area of Focus	What this means
<p>Promote the implementation of the Career and Development Model</p>	<p>The Career and Development Model was launched in December 2025. The Career side of the model provides resources such as role frameworks and career pathways to support nurses, midwives and support workers. The Development side of the model houses the Learning and Development Framework, an online resource for nurses, midwives and support workers. The Framework provides information and signposting to support colleagues learning and development. This is where the Learning Needs Analysis guide and tool can be found. It is also a useful resource for managers to support their staff. NIPEC will promote its implementation through strategic engagement opportunities and the use of social media.</p>
<p>Support the implementation of the Collective Leadership Framework</p>	<p>The Framework was launched in September 2024 at CNO Conference. It is applicable to all HSC staff and includes a self-assessment and development tool. During 2025, NIPEC further developed an animation, available on NIPEC's website, and a e-learning programme to support promotion and implementation of the Leadership Framework across the system. These will both be available on the Learn HSCNI website in 2026.</p>
<p>Quality Assure (QA) non-NMC approved education programmes using the NIPEC Quality Assurance Framework (2023)</p>	<p>The CNO endorses an annual programme for NIPEC to quality assure education programmes. For 2025/26 this will include a rapid review of a cervical screening programme.</p>
<p>Role Framework for Education and Research Career Pathway</p>	<p>NIPEC will further explore opportunities to maximise nurses and midwives' impact through the development of an education and research core career pathway Nursing & Midwifery Careers Nursing and Midwifery Careers NI</p>

Area of Focus	What this means
Education requirements for cervical screening programme	NIPEC will review of Cervical Screening Programme to ensure it meets NI Cervical Screening Sampling Education Programme Standards (2025).
Update the In-house Teaching Activities Quality Assurance Process Self-Assessment Tool	Completed in 2013, NIPEC facilitated a project to develop a Quality Assurance process and self-assessment tool specifically focused on the contribution of in-house education and development activities. The tool aims to support nurses and midwives planning to, or delivering an educational activity. The application of an agreed Self-Assessment Tool aims to provide assurance that teaching activities delivered in-house meet an agreed standard, improve safety and quality, enhance the patients experience and make best use of partnership working. A group will be established to review and update the current Tool.

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4.3 Strategic Priority 3: Professional Development



The graphic features a dark blue background with a white circular icon on the left containing a person silhouette, a lightbulb, and a checkmark. To the right, the text 'STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT' is displayed in white. Below this, the 'OUTCOME' and 'OBJECTIVE' sections are presented in white text, with the latter including a numbered list of two points. A 'We will measure progress by:' section follows, also with a numbered list of two points.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

OUTCOME:
NIPEC's programme of work will impact positively on the regional professional agenda for Nurses and Midwives

OBJECTIVE:
NIPEC will promote the professional development of nurses and midwives by:

1. Influencing and informing the delivery of the CNO's strategic professional vision for nursing and midwifery based on up-to-date, evidence-based practice.
2. Informing the strategic HSC/NHS policy direction and transformation agenda through strong professional leadership in order to reflect the professional priorities for nursing and midwifery.

We will measure progress by:

1. Activity and outcomes relating to projects reflecting professional development and transformation.
2. Evidence of influence of nursing/midwifery priorities reflected in HSC/NHS strategic transformation.

4.3.1 Example of Achievements in 2025-2026

Service Specific Pathways

Developing clinical career pathways for nurses within specific service areas serves several important organisational, workforce and patient-care purposes. It aims to strengthen recruitment and retention, support high-quality patient care and enable service areas to grow and transform sustainably. These NIPEC service specific career pathways aim to maximise the impact of the nursing profession, assisting nurses to develop their career journey within their chosen specialty, thereby benefiting both staff experience and patient outcomes.

In 2025, a number of service specific clinical career pathways were coproduced by staff working in these areas and the NIPEC team: Perioperative, Critical Care and Cancer Nursing career pathways were approved by CNO in December 2026: [Service Specific Clinical Pathways & Frameworks | Nursing and Midwifery Careers NI](#) The service specific career pathways are aligned with the NI Career Model outlined in Section 4.4.1.



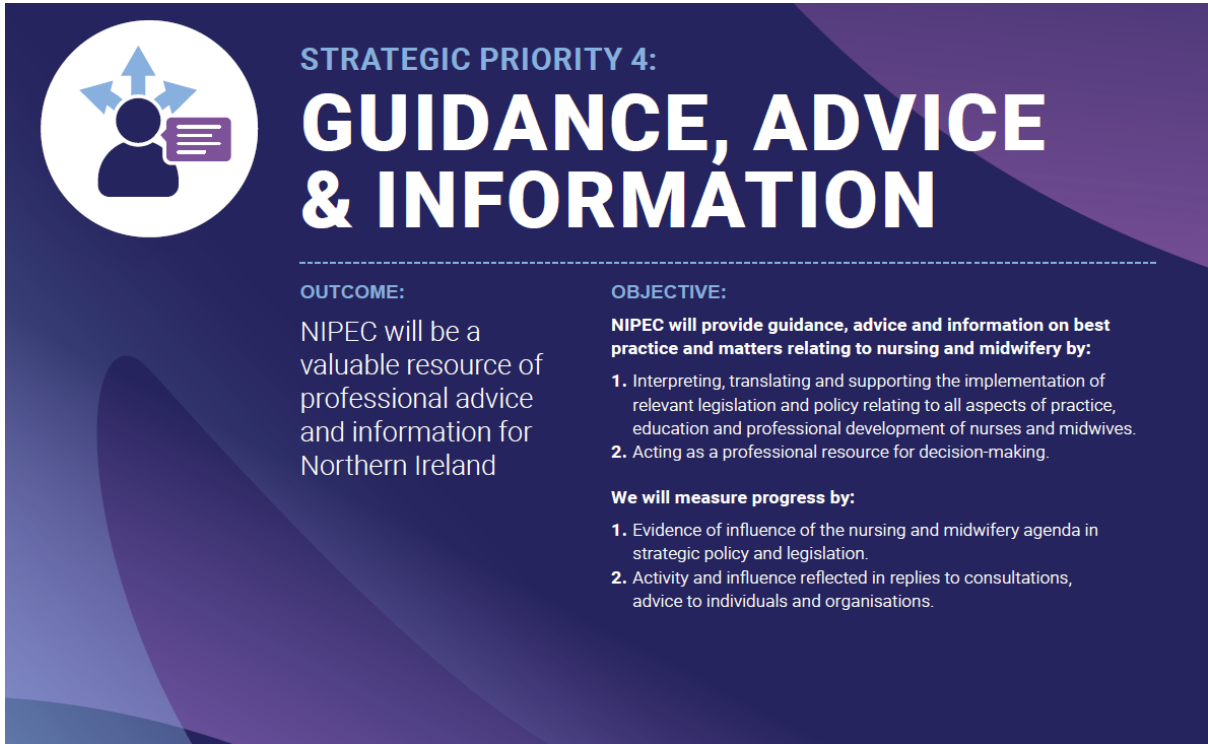
Members of the NIPEC Senior Team with some of the staff involved in the coproduction of the Cancer, Perioperative and Critical Care career pathways.

4.3.2 Strategic Priority 3: Professional Development Areas of Focus for 2026 – 2027

Outcome: NIPEC’s Programme of work, will impact positively on the regional professional agenda for Nurses and Midwives

Area of Focus	What this means
<p>Lead the implementation of the Career Model for NI - Establish career clinics across NI</p>	<p>NIPEC will develop content for career clinics and conduct a 3-month pilot and following an evaluation, will update the content for clinics and set up a 12-month programme.</p>
<p>Support DoH, CNO Group through a Task and Finish Group for Delegation of Healthcare Interventions</p>	<p>NIPEC will continue to progress learning and recommendations to support safe delegation of health care interventions to enable shared care delivery to meet the population’s health care needs.</p>
<p>Review model for Mental Health Nursing to inform new model going forward</p>	<p>NIPEC will support a partnership approach with a wide range of stakeholders to develop a new person, family, community and population centred model for mental health nursing practice in Northern Ireland.</p>
<p>Develop a Job Planning Framework/Toolkit</p>	<p>NIPEC will develop a Regional Job Planning Framework/Toolkit for Specialist, Advanced and Consultant Nursing and Midwifery Roles.</p>

4.4 Strategic Priority 4: Guidance, Advice and Information



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4:

GUIDANCE, ADVICE & INFORMATION

OUTCOME:

NIPEC will be a valuable resource of professional advice and information for Northern Ireland

OBJECTIVE:

NIPEC will provide guidance, advice and information on best practice and matters relating to nursing and midwifery by:

1. Interpreting, translating and supporting the implementation of relevant legislation and policy relating to all aspects of practice, education and professional development of nurses and midwives.
2. Acting as a professional resource for decision-making.

We will measure progress by:

1. Evidence of influence of the nursing and midwifery agenda in strategic policy and legislation.
2. Activity and influence reflected in replies to consultations, advice to individuals and organisations.

4.4.1 Example of Achievement in 2025-2026

The Regional Career and Development Model for Nursing and Midwifery

In 2024, CNO asked NIPEC to refresh our existing nursing and midwifery careers website at <https://nursingandmidwiferycareersni.hscni.net/> to ensure it aligned to her 5-year vision *Shaping Our Future 2023-2028*.



Professor Maria McIlgorm's (CNO) Vision 2023-2028

A NIPEC Working Group was established to progress this work, Chaired by Linda Kelly, NIPEC Chief Executive.

The aim and objectives were to:

- design an overarching career and development model
- align to CNO's priorities
- clearly identify the range of career pathways
- articulate required knowledge skills and behaviours
- support workforce planning and service delivery models
- link to effective learning and development strategies
- accessible via NIPEC's careers website.

Subsequently, at NIPEC's Annual Conference in December 2025, the new NI Career and Development Model for Nursing and Midwifery was launched by the CNO.

The Model is comprised of two inter-related sections: *Nursing and Midwifery Careers* and *Learning and Development*. It can be used by individuals to benchmark existing knowledge and skills and provides information and resources to help guide their professional development. Managers, educators and commissioners can also use the model to support workforce planning and service delivery models which are linked to effective learning and development strategies, programmes and activities.

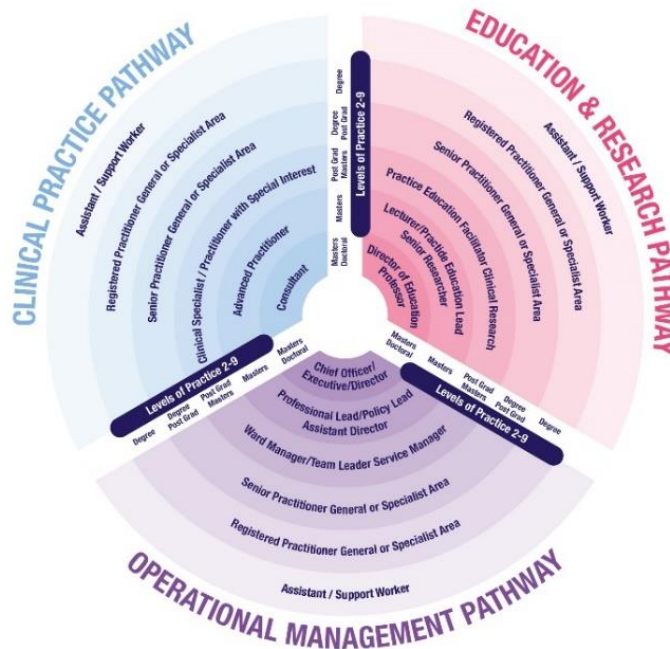
NI Career & Development Model for Nursing & Midwifery

A continuous journey towards maximising individual impact and growth



The Nursing and Midwifery Careers Section introduces 3 Core Career Pathways; Role Frameworks; Levels and Pillars of Practice; and Service Specific Career Pathways.

Nursing & Midwifery Core Career Pathways



Pillars of Practice

 <p>Clinical Practice</p> <p>Knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to provide high quality healthcare that is safe, effective and person centred.</p>	 <p>Education and Learning</p> <p>Knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to enable effective learning in the workplace.</p>	 <p>Leadership</p> <p>Knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to lead and to fulfil management responsibilities.</p>	 <p>Research and Development</p> <p>Knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to use evidence to inform practice and improve services.</p>
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The Learning and Development Framework is designed to support professional growth by providing access and signposting to resources such as the Learning Needs Analysis Guide and Tool, the Learning and Development Matrix along with information to support Workforce Planning and Continuous Professional Development.

NIPEC continues to support the promotion and implementation of the Career and Development Model which includes Career Clinics within HSC Organisations. These have proved to be very positive and informative for Nurses and Midwives from a range of roles and practice areas.



NIPEC Senior Professional Officers Dr Carole McKenna (3rd from left) and Cathy McCusker (3rd from right) facilitating a Career and Development Clinic with Nurses in the Northern HSC Trust.

4.4.2 Strategic Priority 4: Guidance, Advice and Information Areas of Focus for 2026 – 2027

Outcome: NIPEC will be a valuable resource of professional advice and information for Northern Ireland

Area of Focus	What this means
<p>Shaping Our Future Nursing and Midwifery Vision</p>	<p>NIPEC will support the strategic vision to guide the future of nursing and midwifery in Northern Ireland through leading and contributing to the four workstreams: Workforce/Workload Planning; Education, Research and Regulation; Quality Assurance and Leadership; and Career Pathways.</p>
<p>Support the professional regional agenda through responding to relevant Consultations</p>	<p>NIPEC will respond as an organisation or on behalf of the Central Nursing and Midwifery Council to relevant consultations that impact on the health and wellbeing of our population and/or the nursing and midwifery workforce.</p>
<p>Represent Nursing and Midwifery Professions: Regionally, Nationally and Internationally</p>	<p>NIPEC provide a key role in representing the professions of Nursing and Midwifery at regional, national and international events, ensuring the opportunity to contribute and learn from others.</p>
<p>Provide a professional resource for registrants within Northern Ireland through access to advice, best practice/evidence-based resources and information.</p>	<p>NIPEC provide an advice and supportive role on professional best practice issues. This year we are updating our website to make it more accessible for our registrants and enable interaction with our Team.</p>

Area of Focus	What this means
Develop Quality Improvement and Career Clinics to advise and support Nurses and Midwives undertaking improvement work and on their career journey	NIPEC will set up a series of clinics where staff can access some advice and support with using quality improvement tools and methods. A hub will be developed and a number of resources will also be made available on the website.

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5.0 Governance and Performance

NIPEC has robust governance and financial systems in place to provide assurance to our Council – this includes managing risks and production of: an Annual Report & Accounts, a Mid-Year Assurance Report, an Annual Quality Report, an Annual Equality Scheme Progress Report, a Business Continuity Plan and various policies and strategies including financial, Human Resources, Communications, Performance Management and Risk/Governance.

The organisation is committed to equality and diversity and will continue to pursue positive change in this area by delivering its 5-year Equality and Disability Action Plans. In 2026-27, NIPEC will undertake a Five-Year Review of our Equality Scheme in line with our statutory responsibility. To produce the report, we will engage with our Council and other stakeholders to ensure the contents reflect our remit and the final version will be submitted to the Equality Commission by 30 June 2026 as per the statutory deadline.

It is anticipated that for HSC, there will be significant resourcing challenges in 2026-27 as the funding available at NI block level will remain constrained and budgets will be reduced due to overspending in 2025-26. Like all ALBs, NIPEC have been asked to significantly reduce current levels of expenditure and we will continue to cooperate with the DoH and our Sponsor Branch to identify savings where available.

This Business Plan will be monitored quarterly and update reports across all objectives will be provided to NIPEC Council and its Committees. The Business (BTM) and Professional Teams (PTM) will be collectively responsible for ensuring the objectives and associated KPIs are achieved. Where actions are not on target to deliver, these will be considered by the senior team and mitigating actions agreed to ensure maximum progress is made by March 2027.

6.0 Key Objectives

Please note that performance against objectives for 2025-26 can be found in the [Annual Report & Accounts 2025-26](#)

	Objectives/Timescales	We Will Deliver These Objectives by: Actions	We Will Measure This By: Outcomes
5A	Continue to maintain a robust governance and accountability framework through the effective management and monitoring of corporate and financial performance, considering DoH requirements and timescales. Timescale: 31 March 2027	Reporting of performance to Council meetings, Audit & Risk Committees, Sponsor Branch and Ground Clearing/Accountability meetings	Uncertified Annual Report/ Governance Statement and Accounts All meetings take place and are quorate
5B	Comply with HSC corporate governance, legislative requirements and best practice through risk management, internal controls systems and external assurance processes. Timescale: 31 March 2027	Annual Internal Audit Plan External Audit Audit & Risk Committees x 4 per annum	Satisfactory Compliance with Internal Audits Uncertified Annual Report/ Governance Statement and Accounts All take place and are quorate
5C	Achieve the financial breakeven target of 0.25% or £20k (whichever is the greater) of revenue allocation by the financial year end. Timescale: 31 March 2027	Monthly meetings with BSO Finance Submission of monthly FMR Financial reporting to each Council and Audit & Risk Committee	Uncertified Annual Accounts
5E	Produce a Business Plan for 2027-28, taking account of any targets/outcomes set by the DoH.	Develop a Business Plan in line with the Corporate Plan 2024-28	Approval of Business Plan by DoH Sponsor Branch.

	Objectives/Timescales	We Will Deliver These Objectives by: Actions	We Will Measure This By: Outcomes
	Timescale: 31 March 2027	and in consultation with Council, Sponsor Branch and key stakeholders.	
5F	To monitor and maintain staff absence rates below the DoH target. Timescale: During 2026-27	Standing agenda item at Business Team, Council and Audit & Risk Committees Consult with HR if rate higher than target.	Achievement of the target Outcome included in Annual Report.
5G	Meet NIPEC's Equality and Disability Legislative requirements including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a new 5-year Equality Scheme 2026-31 (Final Scheme to be approved by Council by June 2026) Timescale: April – June 2026 • Monitor year 3 actions within NIPEC's Equality and Disability Action Plans 2024-28, reporting progress to the Equality Commission NI (ECNI). Timescale: During 2026-27 	Working with BSO Equality Unit, NIPEC Council, staff and stakeholders. Draft report to be approved by Business Team and Council Submitted to ECNI by 31 August.	Review of the current Equality Scheme to Council in March 2026. Approval of Equality Commission Northern Ireland.
5H	Ensure compliance with the DoH processes and timescales for the completion of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-year Assurance Statement Timescale: October 2026 • End of year Governance Statement for 2025-26 Timescale: 31 March 2026 • Board Governance self-assessment Tool Timescale: 31 March 2026 	Present to Audit & Risk Committee in October 2026 Present to Audit & Risk Committee May & June 2026 Draft to be reviewed by Council Actions to be agreed for 2025-26	Ratification by DoH Uncertified Opinion by External Audit Successful Completion of previous year's actions

	Objectives/Timescales	We Will Deliver These Objectives by: Actions	We Will Measure This By: Outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NIAO Audit Committee Checklist Timescale: 31 August 2026 Sponsor Branch meetings, plus DoH mid-year and end of year accountability review meetings. Timescale: During 2026-27 	<p>Completed by Head of Corporate Services (HoCS). Any mitigating actions to be included in Governance Statement/Board self-assessment</p> <p>Timetable for meetings to be agreed</p>	<p>Satisfactory Independent Review: 3-yearly</p> <p>Successful Completion of previous year's actions</p> <p>All take place and are quorate</p>
5J	<p>To achieve the prompt payment targets for the payments of invoices of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 95% for 30 days. 70% for 10 days. <p>Timescale: 31 March 2027</p>	<p>Standing agenda item at Business Team, Council and Audit & Risk Committees</p> <p>Take mitigating action if not meeting target including liaison with Payments Shared Service</p>	<p>Achievement of the target Outcome included in Performance Section of Annual Report & Accounts 2026-27</p>

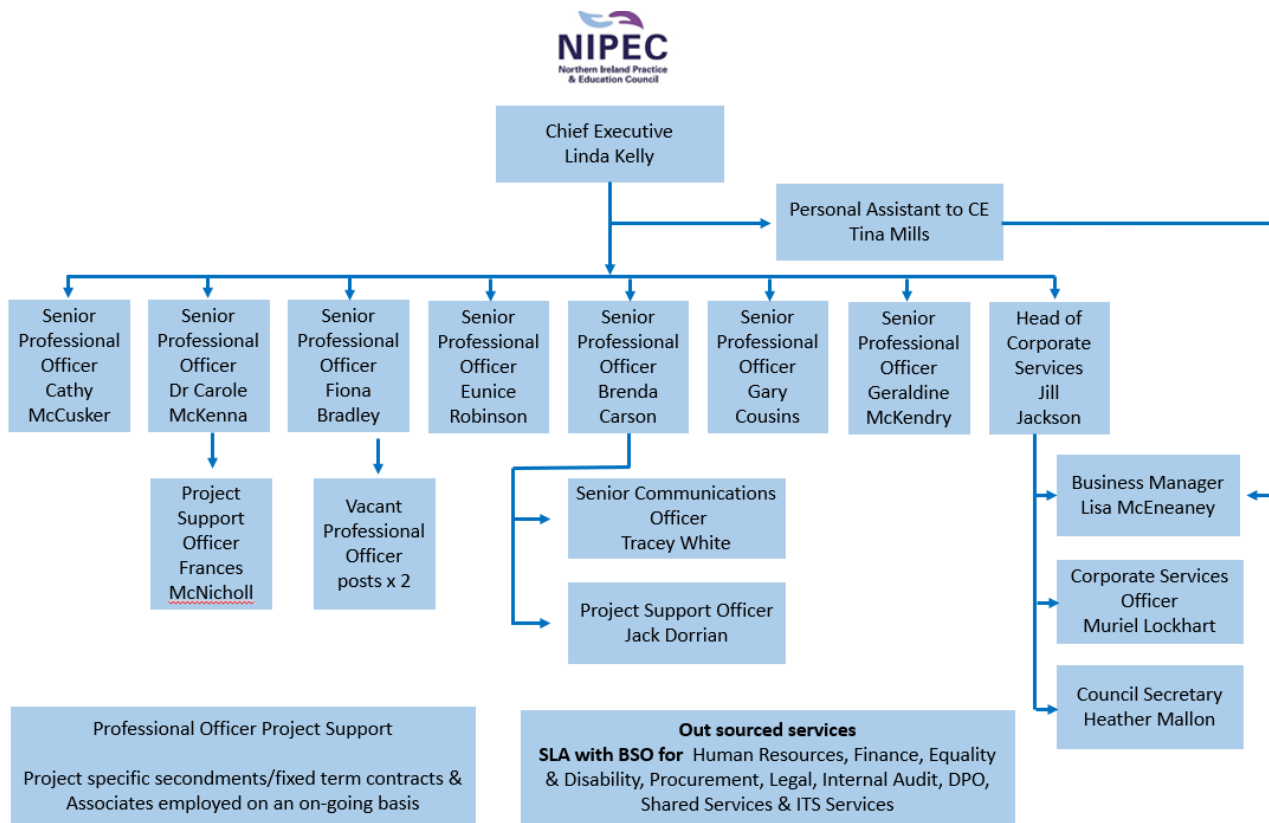
	Objectives/Timescales	We Will Deliver These Objectives by: Actions	We Will Measure This By: Outcomes
5K	<p>Property and Accommodation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset Management Plan 2026-27 to 2030-31. Timescale: December 2026 Explore options for accommodation from 5th February 2028 when NIPEC's License in James House ends. Timescale: 31 March 2027 	<p>Prepare draft PAMP and seek approval from Business Team Submit to DoH Property Management Branch in line with timescales set down</p> <p>Liaise with Sponsor Branch and DoH Property Management Branch to discuss options including financing of license/lease costs.</p>	<p>Approval of Plan by DoH</p> <p>Approval of arrangements by NIPEC Council</p>
5L	<p>NIPEC Quality Strategy 2024 - 2028.</p> <p>NIPEC will continue to implement the priorities set out within the Quality Strategy - <i>Lead, Inspire & Improve</i> Timescale: Throughout 2026-27</p>	<p>NIPEC will: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on our staff and our partners through listening and understanding what really matters to them using a range of surveys and conversations. Continue to build relationships with our partners and work to improve how we collaborate with them Deliver the Annual Quality Report for 2025/26 ensuring publication in November 2026. Continue to work on the development of a dashboard for our quality measures. 	<p>Approval by DoH of NIPEC's Annual Quality Report 2025-26</p>

7.0 Equality Statement

This Business Plan will be screened for equality implications as required by Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Equality Commission guidance states that the purpose of screening is to identify those policies which are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be devoted to these. Using the Equality Commission's screening criteria, no significant equality implications have been identified and the Business Plan will not therefore be subject to an equality impact assessment.

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APPENDIX 1– Organisational Chart / Internal Structure



Appendix 2 Abbreviations

ALBs	Arms' Length Bodies
BSO	Business Services Organisation
CNO	Chief Nursing Officer
DoH	Department of Health
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HoCS	Head of Corporate Services
HSC	Health and Social Care
HEI	Higher Education Institute
LNA	Learning Needs Analysis
MSW	Maternity Support Worker
NIPEC	Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery
NMC	Nursing and Midwifery Council
PHA	Public Health Agency
PPI	Personal and Public Involvement
QA	Quality Assurance
QI	Quality Improvement
SPPG	Strategic Planning & Performance Group



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