

## Factsheet for Health Care Support Workers Supplementary Information from Employers (SIFE)

### 1. What is SIFE & what does it mean for me?

SIFE is additional supporting information from an employer that certain applicants to the NMC register can provide as part of their evidence that they meet the NMC English language requirements.

SIFE can be used as additional supporting evidence of English language competence, for those people who have worked for at least 12 months (or FTE equivalent if working part-time) at the point of application in non-registered practice in a health and social care setting in the UK and who either:

- Trained in English but in a country where English is not the majority spoken language, as evidence of their clinical interaction skills.
- Or
- Missed the required score by 0.5 (IELTS) or half a grade (OET) in one of the four language domains, if all test combining options have been exhausted.

As of 27 May 2023, all prospective applicants under both groups mentioned above, who haven't yet submitted their NMC Online applications can now use SIFE via the NMC Online application process.

It is not intended to be a shortcut route to bypass taking an English language test. Its purpose is to support small cohorts of applicants that have been working in the UK for several years as a health care support worker but been unable to obtain the required English language level to registrant.

### 2. A bit about NMC code of conduct

[The Code](#) presents the professional standards that nurses, midwives and nursing associates must uphold to be registered to practise in the UK.

On communication, the Code outlines the importance of communicating clearly and the need for professional to communicate effectively, keeping clear and accurate records and sharing skills, knowledge and experience where appropriate.

To achieve this, professionals must (numbers relate to points in the code):

- (7.1) Use terms that people in your care, colleagues and the public can understand.
- (7.2) Take reasonable steps to meet people's language and communication needs, providing, wherever possible, assistance to those who need help to communicate their own or other people's needs.

- (7.3) Use a range of verbal and non-verbal communication methods, and consider cultural sensitivities, to better understand and respond to people's personal and health needs.
- (7.4) Check people's understanding from time to time to keep misunderstanding or mistakes to a minimum.
- (7.5) Be able to communicate clearly and effectively in English.
- (8.2) Maintain effective communication with colleagues.
- (8.3) Keep colleagues informed when you are sharing the care of individuals with other health and care professionals and staff.
- (8.6) Share information to identify and reduce risk.

It is every nurse and midwife's responsibility to adhere to the code, including your line manager who would be accountable for ensuring you can meet the English language skills to progress with registration. If your manager is not satisfied you can meet the required English language skills, it's perfectly in their right not to sign you off through SIFE as they are acting within their code of conduct.

### 3. How do I know if I am eligible?

To use additional supporting information from employers, you must have:

- a) Completed your pre-registration nursing or midwifery programme in English but in a country where English is not a majority spoken language. You must be able to provide evidence of a transcript and/official letter from your training institute to confirm this.

Or

Missed the required score by 0.5 (IELTS) or half a grade (OET) in one of the four language domains. You must have taken two attempts of either IELTS or OET (must be the same test) and have exhausted all test combining options. You must also be able to provide the NMC evidence of your test scores.

- b) Worked in a non-registered role in one health or care setting in the UK for at least 12 months full time (or full time equivalent if working part time) at the point of application.
- c) Had the same line manager at the same employer for at least 6 months. The NMC will accept supporting information from up to two-line managers to cover 12 months or full time equivalent if working part time.

Additional line manager information:

- Your line manager must be based at the same place of employment, be an NMC registrant and should be an NHS Band 6 (or non-NHS equivalent) or above. If your line manager is NHS Band 5 (or non-NHS equivalent), they will not be able to complete the SIFE and should liaise with their senior manager to discuss.
- SIFE also needs be countersigned via NMC Online by an NMC registrant who is an NHS Band 8a (or non-NHS equivalent) or above at the same place of employment, to confirm the process your line manager has taken to observe you and provide SIFE has been fair and consistent.

- If your line manager or counter-signatory is unable to provide a band or band equivalent, the NMC will ask them to outline their role and main duties and responsibilities so they can assess whether they have the appropriate level of responsibility.

If you are unable to meet any of the requirements above, you will need to provide an alternative type of evidence such as a language test.

Applicants practicing as a registered nursing professional in another country are not eligible to use SIFE and should consider another [evidence type](#).

#### **4. Am I entitled to be signed off by my trust through SIFE?**

Before you begin the SIFE process, you should speak with your line manager to understand if they feel able to support your application. It is a matter of professional judgement for the employer as to whether the applicant meets the requirements or not. Employers must have a fair process for making those decisions, but it is for employers to make that decision.

#### **5. What does my manager have to do? (This is the manager being accountable against NMC registration).**

The NMC will send your line manager (an NMC registrant) a link to provide SIFE information using the email address registered to their NMC Online account. Your line manager will use this to provide the required evidence of your competence.

The NMC provide a list of examples for each language domain on NMC Online. Your line manager needs to review the examples and confirm that they have seen all of these in practice. There is also space for them to include other examples if they would like.

This means your manager is accountable against the Code; they therefore must be satisfied you are competent in speaking and listening English language skills.

#### **6. Can my manager say no to completing the SIFE even if I am eligible?**

Yes. The NMC ask for registered NMC professionals to provide SIFE as they want line managers to consider seriously whether an applicant has the necessary level of English to engage in clinical interactions as a nursing or midwifery professional. The line manager will practise in line with the Code that will apply to successful applicants, so they are well placed to make this judgement.

Depending on your trusts policy, you may be asked to provide additional evidence to enable them to decide and/or be asked to take an English language indicator test and/or to enrol onto an English language preparation course.

You should meet with your manager in the first instance to discuss your options.

**7. What does it mean if I have not been practicing as a nurse for several years but still meet the eligibility for SIFE?**

The SIFE process is only for applicants who have been working in unregistered practice in a health and social care setting in the UK for 12 months or more.

You need to discuss this with your line manager in the first instance to confirm if they would be happy to support you through SIFE. It's important to be aware that not all Trusts have an OSCE programme to prepare you to sit the exam and/or is obligated to cover these costs.

**8. How do I access an English Language programme?**

You should discuss this with your line manager who will make these enquiries on your behalf. Most Trusts have links with English language leads that will advise your manager of these options.

**9. What do I do if I am on an English Language programme and been notified that I am eligible for SIFE?**

If you have enrolled on an English language programme through your Trust or ICS bureau, please stay in the course and liaise with your line manager and/or bureau leads on your next steps. Please do not drop out from the course until you receive final clearance from NMC that your SIFE referrals have been accepted by NMC as an adequate evidence of English language proficiency.

**10. Can I take the CBT and OSCE without my manager signing me off through SIFE?**

You should not book or take your CBT or OSCE until you have successfully achieved English language certification; either through passing the IELTS or OET exam or through line managers sign off with SIFE. All discussions around your registration process should be done in discussion with your line manager who can advise accordingly.

**11. What is the OSCE test of competence and what would I have to do to prepare for it? (Info on stations. Involves study/programme)**

The NMC use the Test of Competence to test their applicants for their clinical competence and knowledge via a theory test (CBT) and practical exam (OSCE). This is not an assessment of their English language competence.

The OSCE is one of the two parts of the NMC Test of Competence (ToC) for international applicants who:

- a) Do not hold a relevant European qualification (further information on automatic recognition qualifications can be found [here](#))

Or

- b) Those applying for readmission to the NMC register who don't have enough practice hours for readmission to the register (they can either complete an approved return to practice programme or a ToC, please see [this link](#) for further details).

The OSCE has 10 stations:

- Four stations are linked together around a scenario: the APIE (one station for assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation)
- Four stations to test skills (two pairs of two skills)
- Two stations to assess the candidate's values and behaviours and evidence-based practice.

The fee for the OSCE is £794. There is a reduced resit fee is £397 for applicants needing to re-sit 7 or fewer stations.

Further details regarding the OSCE and support materials to prepare for the test can be accessed here: [NMC OSCE: Test of Competence 2021 - The Nursing and Midwifery Council](#).

## 12. If my trust does not offer OSCE funding, what are my options?

If your employer doesn't offer financial support and/ or support to prepare for the OSCE you contact the OSCE test centres directly to book your exam using the links and contact details you will find on our website [NMC OSCE: Test of Competence 2021 - The Nursing and Midwifery Council](#). More details on the ToC can be found here: [A guide to the NMC Test of Competence - The Nursing and Midwifery Council](#)

## 13. Where can I find out more information?

### English Language Requirements

This page on [the NMC website](#) covers the types of evidence they accept to satisfy them that nurses and midwives have the necessary knowledge of English to practice in the UK.

### Guidance on Registration Language Requirements

This [guidance](#) sets out the evidence, information and documents nurses and midwives need to provide to satisfy the NMC of their English language competence, and how the NMC will assess

### Test Combining Calculator

This [test combining calculator](#) allows applicant to input test scores and understand what the results means for them in terms of test combining.