

# Social Justice and the 'good' nurse

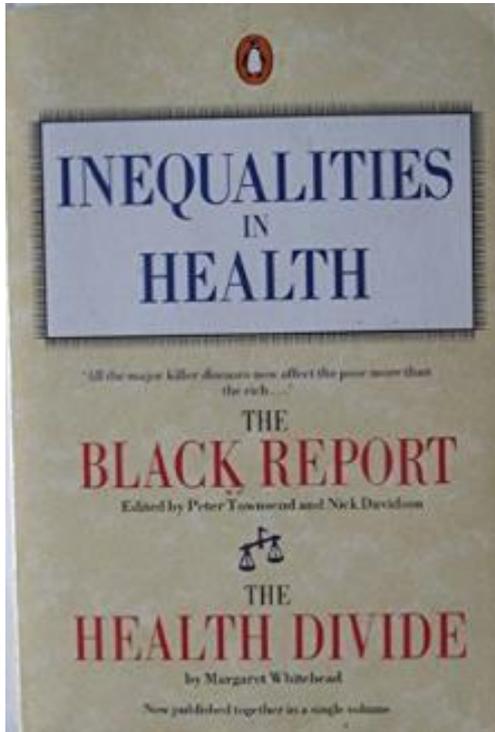
Paul Snelling, University of Worcester

Maddy Carson, Bristol Children's Hospital

# Outline

- The link between disadvantage and poorer health and wellbeing
- Nurse as advocate
- The role of the nurse, expressed in codes
- Framework of advocacy
- Practical application
- Implications and discussion

# Inequalities in health (as social injustice)



1980

Investment

1997 +



2010

Austerity



# Nurse as advocate

A person, group or organisation that supports and champions individuals or groups, ensuring that their views are considered and their rights upheld.

NMC Standards for Pre-Registration education

- It's contested – seen as self-serving, augmenting nursing's professional claims
- Recognised in codes and official documents, but ill defined here also.

# Link between codes and socio-political activities

1. If nursing is a profession and therefore can be said to represent its ideologies in its body of knowledge; and
2. if nursing is a profession and therefore uses its voluntary organization to formulate and promulgate documents representing that ideology in the nature, scope, and regulation of the profession; and
3. if that organization identifies the scope of nursing in the documents used in this analysis; and
4. if the scope and ideologies of professional nursing practice identify the obligations of its individual members; and
5. if the state boards of nursing, identified as the regulating arm of the profession, identify all RNs as members of the profession; and
6. if the body of knowledge and the scope of nursing practice documents reflect adequate evidence that there is an obligation of its members to be involved in sociopolitical activities; then
7. **all RNs are obligated to be involved in socio-political activities.**

## The Code

Professional standards  
of practice and behaviour  
for nurses and midwives

prioritise people

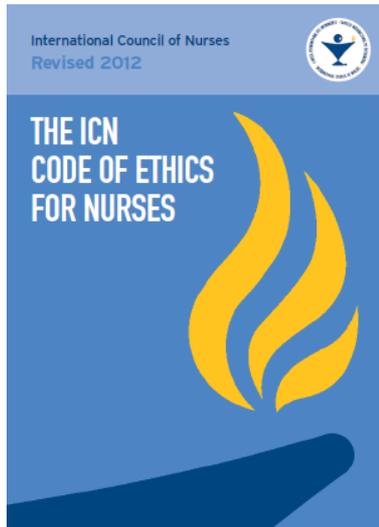
practise effectively

preserve safety

promote professionalism and trust

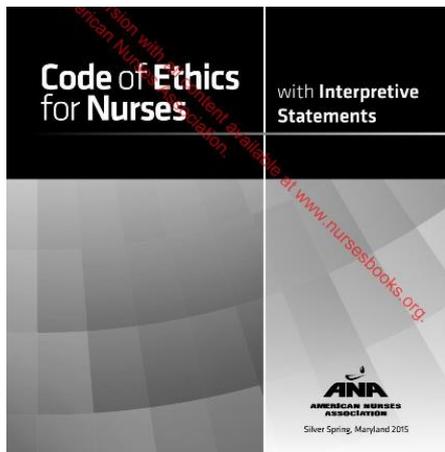
# Nursing and Midwifery Council (UK)

- 3.4 act as an advocate for the vulnerable, challenging poor practice and discriminatory attitudes and behaviour relating to their care.



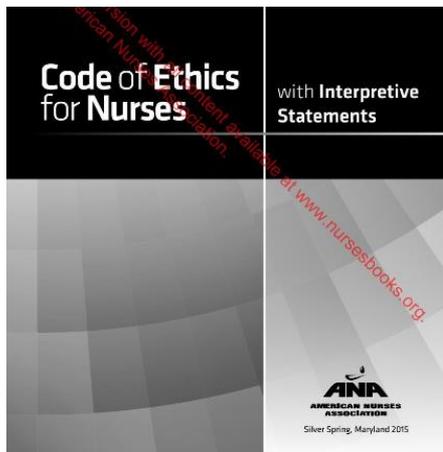
## International Council of Nurses

The nurse **advocates** for equity and **social justice** in resource allocation, access to health care and other social and economic services.



## American Nurses Association (1)

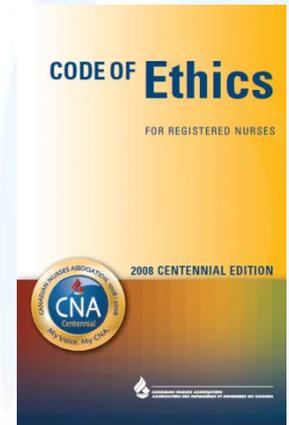
Nurses must address the context of health, including the **social determinants** of health such as poverty, access to clean water and clean air, sanitation, human rights violations, hunger, nutritionally sound food, education, safe medications and health care disparities.



## American Nurses Association (2)

All nurses, through organizations and accrediting bodies involved in nurses formation, education and development, must firmly anchor students in nursing's professional responsibility to address unjust systems and structures, modelling the profession's commitment to social justice and health through content, clinical and field experiences and critical thought

# Canadian Nurses Association



As well, nursing **ethics** is concerned with how broad societal issues affect **health** and **well-being**. This means that nurses endeavour to maintain awareness of aspects of **social justice** that affect health and well-being and to advocate for change. Although these endeavours are not part of nurses' core ethical responsibilities, they are part of ethical practice and serve as a helpful motivational and educational tool for all nurses.

## Imagine a 'scale of nurse quality'



excellent

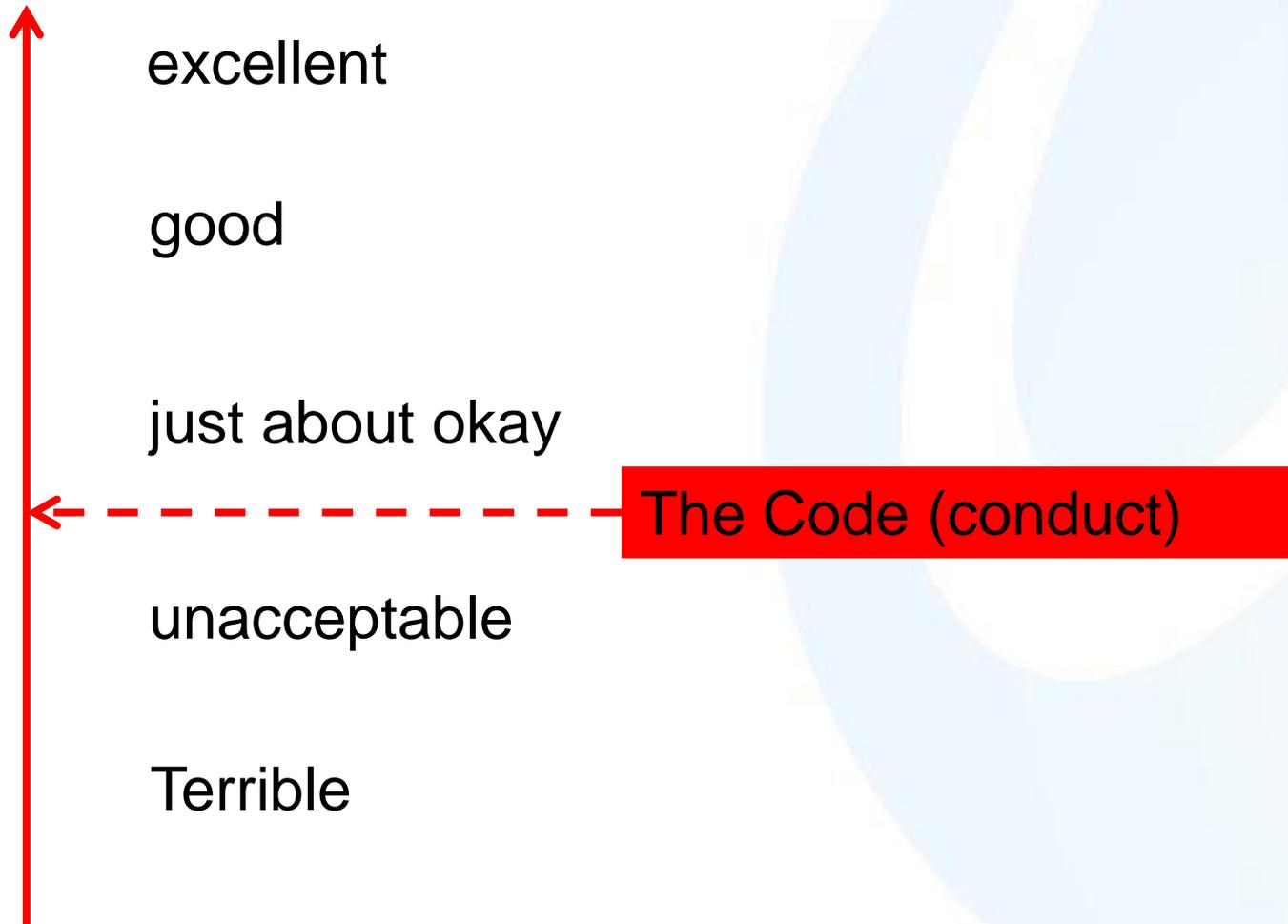
good

just about okay

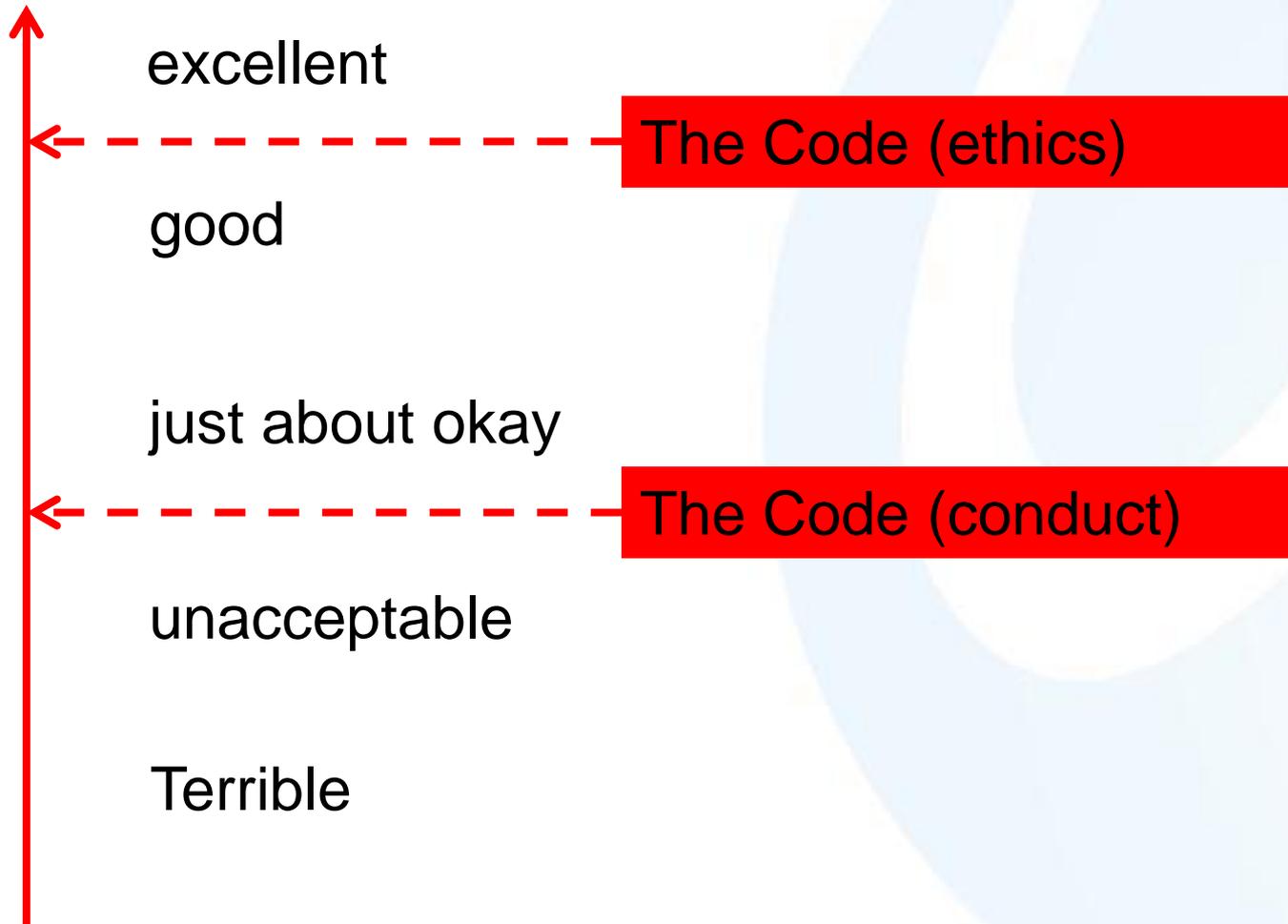
unacceptable

Terrible

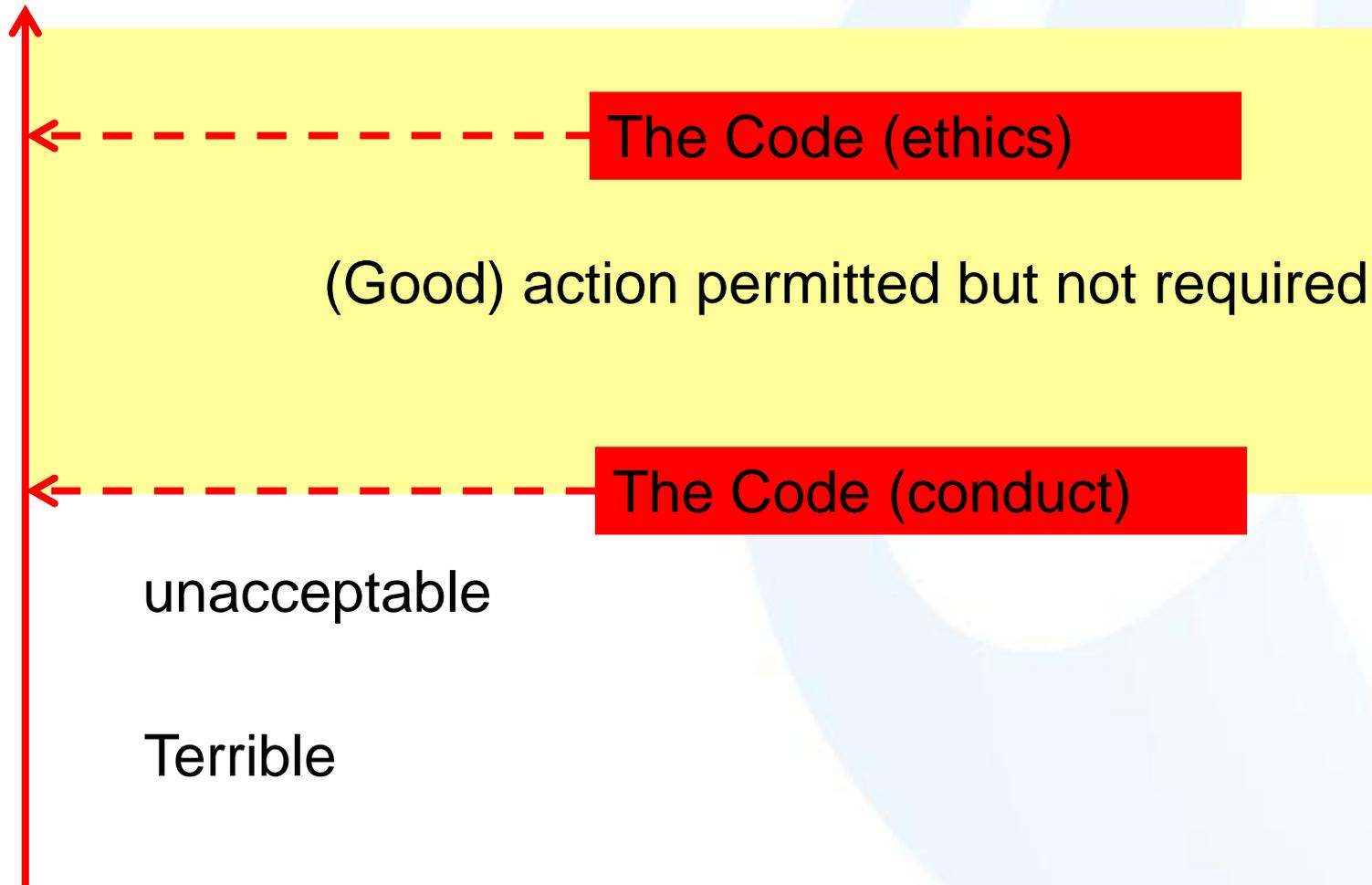
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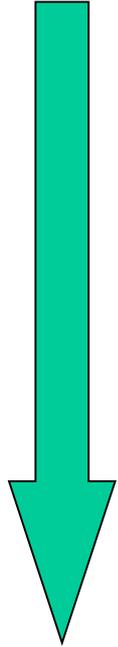


## Different sorts of codes

	Ethics (ANA, CAN, ICN)	Conduct (NMC)
Authorship	Professional bodies	Regulatory bodies
Level	Good nurse	Just-good-enough nurse
Consequence of transgression	Disapproval, indignation	Official sanction

# Levels of Advocacy - UK

Individual



Level	Methods	Professional Status
Micro	Individual patient advocacy	Required
Intermediate	Patient groups (also through pressure groups, charities...)	Permitted
Macro	Advocating for <b>health</b> through social justice (also through trade unions, political parties)	Permitted, but...

Social / Collective

## The Code

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for nurses and midwives

prioritise people

practice effectively

promote safety

promote professionalism and trust

# Nursing and Midwifery Council (UK)

21.5 never use your professional status to promote causes that are not related to health, and

20.7 make sure you do not express your personal beliefs (including political, religious or moral beliefs) to people in an inappropriate way

20.8 act as a role model of professional behaviour for students and newly qualified nurses and midwives to aspire to

## Health inequality

**People living in the most deprived places generally tend to be less healthy than their wealthier peers – with a difference of 17 years in male life expectancy between London's richest and poorest areas.**

Marmot, M., 2010, *Fair Society, Healthy Lives - the Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England*, p.37.

# Child mental health

‘The prevalence rates of mental health disorders were greater among children:

- **In families with neither parent working compared with both parents at work – 20% compared with 8%**
- **In families with a gross weekly income of less than £200 compared with £500 or more – 16% compared with 6%’**

The Office for National Statistics (2000) *The mental health of children and adolescents in Great Britain* Available: [source](#)

**‘Children and adolescents from families with low Social Economic Status were up to three times more likely to have mental health problems than their peers from families with a high Social Economic Status’**

Reiss, F. (2013). Socioeconomic Inequalities And Mental Health Problems In Children And Adolescents: A Systematic Review. *Social Science and Medicine*. 90, 24-31.

**1 in 10 children and young people aged 5-16  
years have a diagnosable mental health  
disorder**



**From 2010-2016 A&E child mental health  
attendances have doubled**



**Mental health budget cut by £50 million**

# Example of nursing practice

## Adolescent Unit

Surgical  
Gastro  
Orthopaedic  
Oncology  
Respiratory  
Endocrine

**Suitable for  
acute  
environment**

**Mental health**



**Place of safety  
but acute  
environment not  
suitable**

# Actions of a 'good nurse'?

Level	Actions	Organisations	Problems
<b>Micro</b>	Nurse to advocate, and liaise for appropriate care  Access relevant training	Named nurse	Unintentionally Inequitable, therefore <b>not alleviating social injustice</b>  Will training be universally accessible?
<b>Intermediate</b>	Advocate for groups of patients	Local pressure groups advocating for child mental health	Specialist mental health role, expected?
<b>Macro</b>	Advocating for social justice	Trade unions, political party members	A very big ask for nurses currently? <b>Supererogatory.</b>

# Professional body – Royal College of Nursing

We lobby governments and other bodies across the UK to develop, influence and implement policy that improves the quality of **patient care**.

[reference](#)

RCN fully **endorses** *Fair Society, Healthy Lives*....**called** on government to recognise links...  
**signalled** concern (about proposed welfare benefit)

# Professional regulator –Nursing and Midwifery Council



## Standards for pre-registration education

All nurses must understand public health principles, priorities and practice in order to recognise and respond to the major causes and **social determinants** of health, illness and health inequalities.

# Conclusion and discussion

- Clear difference in stated purpose between UK and other nursing professional organisations
- In UK, there doesn't appear to be a professional duty to promote social justice, individual / organisational
- RCN criticised by Francis for conflating roles and NMC unlikely to see political activity as part of the role of nurses
- Promoting social justice likely to be regarded as part of what it is to be a 'good' nurse (at least our account)