

Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care

Strategic Plan 2020-2023

The independence and expertise of the Authority put us in a unique position to respond to regulatory challenges in health and social care. These challenges include:

- the professional regulation response to the Covid-19 emergency and learning from this to improve regulation in the future;
- working with the UK governments to shape the reform of professional regulation;
- improving collaboration between regulators to better protect the public, taking into account the recommendations from the Paterson Inquiry and Cumberlege Review;
- planning for the regulatory challenges brought by technological changes;
- working with regulators and academic partners to undertake research to improve regulation;
- ensuring that regulation provides appropriate protection for the most vulnerable;
- assessing the risks of different health systems and regulatory approaches in the four countries of the UK;
- addressing workforce issues in health and social care.

This strategy reflects our contribution to meeting these challenges. Effective regulation leads to safer practice.

Vision

Safe care through high standards of conduct and competence in health and social care professionals.

Mission

To protect patients, service users and the public by improving the regulation and registration of health and social care professionals.

Strategic aim 1

To protect the public by delivering highly effective oversight of regulation and registration.

- To deliver our statutory duties, targeting our resources where there is greatest risk to the public.
- To be transparent in our decision-making and reporting, recognising those who are committed to achieving high standards and being rigorous, clear and fair when reporting non-compliance with our standards.
- To support high standards in health and social care regulation and registration through the effective use of information, data and intelligence.
- To lead the development of more effective regulation through research, commissioned work, policy advice and the use of our right-touch assurance model; and by shaping regulatory reform.

In 2020-22 we will:

- Deliver robust and fair performance reviews of the statutory regulators; use our Section 29 powers to review the outcomes of fitness to practise panels; manage the Accredited Register programme; and report our findings to Parliament.
- Complete a strategic review of the accredited registers programme and commence a review of our performance review processes to ensure they are proportionate and effective and provide opportunities for thematic reviews.
- Contribute to improvements in regulation through research, policy advice and further development of our right-touch assurance model, including a consideration of the role of regulation in social care.
- Monitor the professional regulation response to the Covid-19 emergency; provide advice and guidance to regulators on changes associated with the response to the emergency; and conduct a review of the response during 2020/21.

Strategic aim 2

To ensure an effective and coherent approach to protecting the public from harm by promoting and facilitating cooperation and collaboration between regulators.

- To maintain strong relationships with statutory regulators, organisation with accredited registers and other stakeholders to improve standards in professional practice.
- To work collaboratively with professional and system regulators in health and social care to better protect the public.
- To ensure that the accredited registers programme and other forms of assurance in health and social care complement statutory regulation to provide a coherent approach to safe care.
- To extend collaboration beyond professional and system regulators to include employers, representative bodies, patients and the public.

In 2020-22 we will:

- Deliver our new stakeholder engagement strategy and use this to share knowledge, learning and good practice and to influence regulatory reform.
- Promote the interests of users of healthcare, social care and social work in the work of regulators and accredited registers.
- Review the communication, cooperation and collaboration between professional regulators, and with system regulators, in order to bring about improvements.
- Engage with employers, representative bodies, patient groups and the public to develop a coherent approach to safe care.

Strategic aim 3

To ensure the Authority is well led, with a clear focus on quality improvement, effective financial management, equality and diversity, and investment in our people.

- To promote and monitor equality, diversity and inclusion within the Authority and in those we oversee.
- To maintain and improve cost-effectiveness and quality by systematically reviewing systems, processes and procedures and by working with others.
- To retain and develop our staff and to maintain a positive working culture.
- To improve expertise and support delivery through high quality learning and development.

In 2020-22 we will:

- Deliver our finance, ICT and people strategies, and complete our equality, diversity and inclusion project.
- Review our governance arrangements and further improve our assurance processes.
- Improve our effectiveness and increase our value for money.
- Provide a range of relevant and useful professional development opportunities for all staff.

Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the work of the Authority between March and September 2020 and will continue to do so for the rest of the 2020/21 business year and beyond. The Authority has worked closely with the regulators, organisations holding accredited registers and other stakeholders to support the response of the health and care sector to the pandemic.

The likely impact of Covid-19 on the Authority in the coming year includes: ongoing risks of disruption to work activities due to staff illness and further travel/work restrictions; disruption to research work associated with reviews of the regulatory response to Covid-19; changes to timetables of performance reviews and accreditation decisions due to work pressures and/or disruptions; and possible changes in the number and type of fitness to practise decisions reviewed by the Authority due to backlogs in cases from 2020/21 and issues arising associated with the pandemic.

Reform of professional regulation

The Authority has long called for reform of the outdated and piecemeal legal framework for professional regulation. The recently published Government proposals published in July 2019 were a significant milestone for this reform and the response expressed support for many of the changes proposed by the Authority. Initial areas identified for change include modernisation of fitness to practise to allow regulators to dispose of cases without formal hearings in appropriate cases, changes to regulators' governance and increased flexibility for regulators to amend rules.

The Authority has cautioned that the proposed additional flexibility for regulators must be balanced by amended oversight powers for the Authority to ensure that patients are protected, and the public can continue to have confidence in regulation. This includes; powers for the Authority to challenge case examiner decisions that appear to be insufficient to protect the public; and a role for the Authority in overseeing rule changes by regulators to avoid unjustifiable inconsistencies in approach and to make the system clearer for patients, registrants and employers and ensure overall regulatory coherence.

Progress on these reforms has been slow, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. In February 2021, government announced its intention to introduce a Health Bill, which includes proposals to have powers to make changes to professional regulation, including an independent review of the number of regulators; and an assessment of which occupations need to be regulated. We anticipate that the independent review will include the role of the Authority. We expect therefore to commit a significant amount of time and resources over the year ahead engaging with Government and

stakeholders on the reform proposals and building our evidence base to ensure that public protection remains at the heart of a reformed system for professional regulation.
Monitoring performance

The Authority will monitor its performance against its business objectives and strategic plan using a range of quantitative and qualitative indicators. Performance monitoring will be reported at each Board meeting.

Organisational values

Our values describe how we work with colleagues and external stakeholders. We strive to promote, develop and demonstrate these values in everything we do. A positive culture leads to better performance and better outcomes for patients and the public.

Our values are:

- **Integrity** – we will be open, honest and trust each other.
- **Transparency** – we will be clear about our performance and the reasons for our decisions with all stakeholders.
- **Respect** – we will treat each other, and those we work with outside the organisation, with respect at all times.
- **Fairness** – we will strive to be fair in all our decision-making.
- **Teamwork** – we will work in partnership to deliver better outcomes for patients and the public.