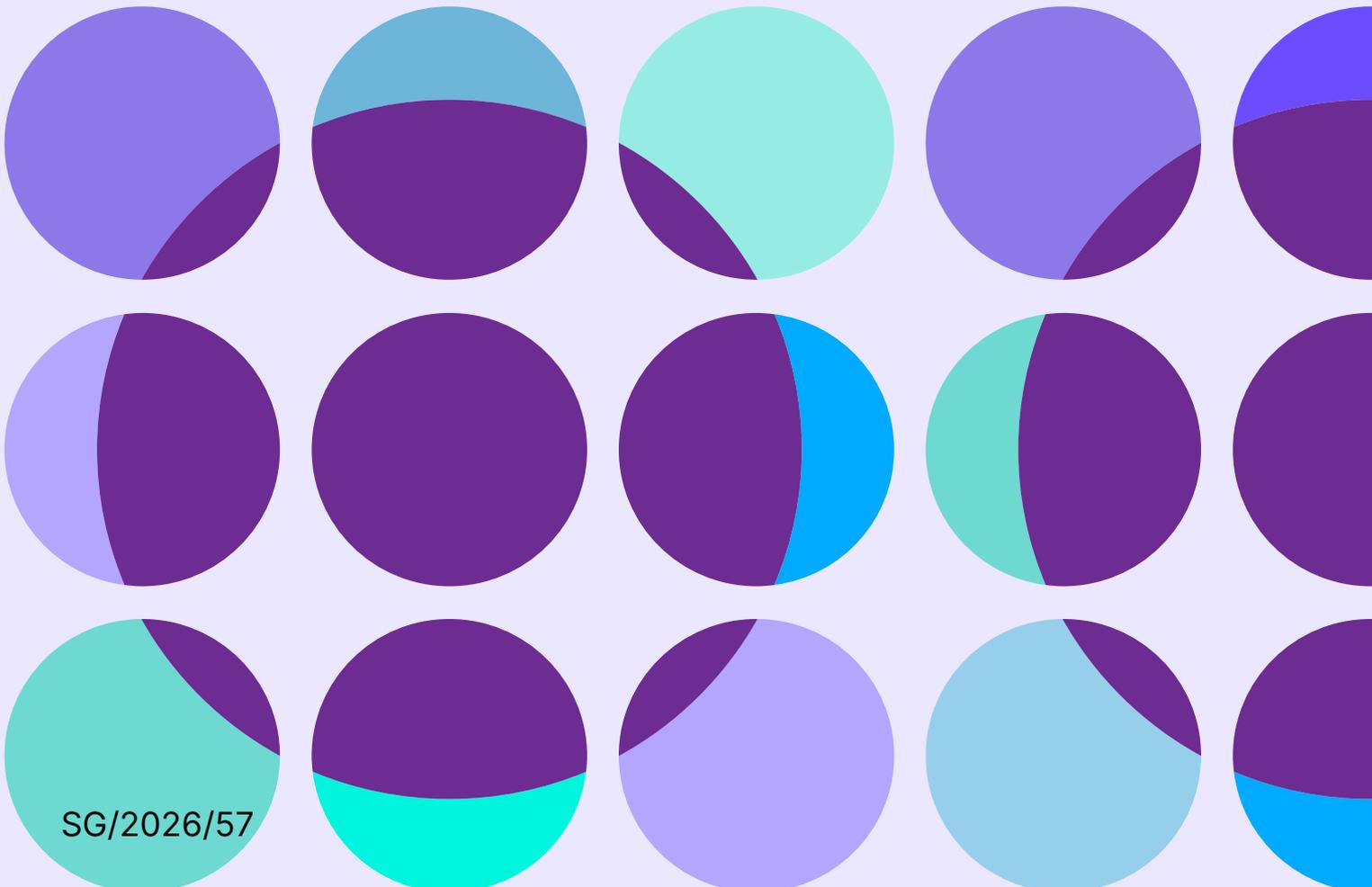


Strategic Plan

Vision, mission and aims

2026-2029



SG/2026/57

Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care

Strategic Plan 2026-2029

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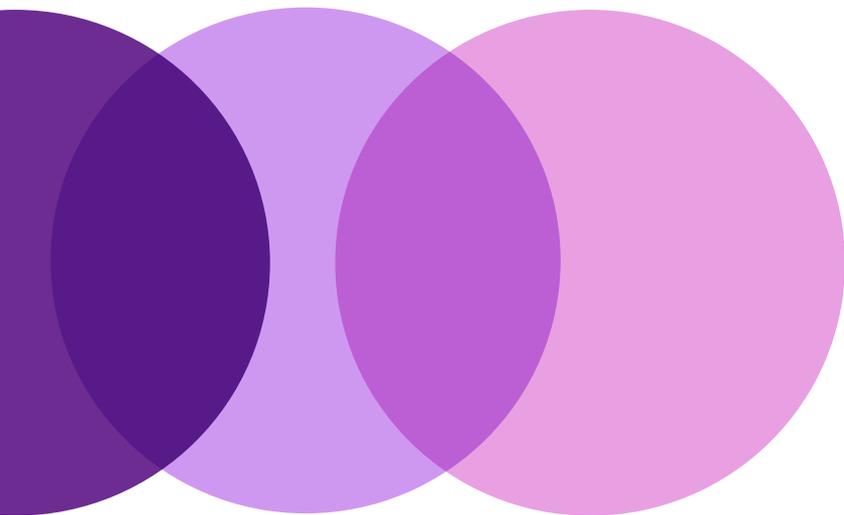
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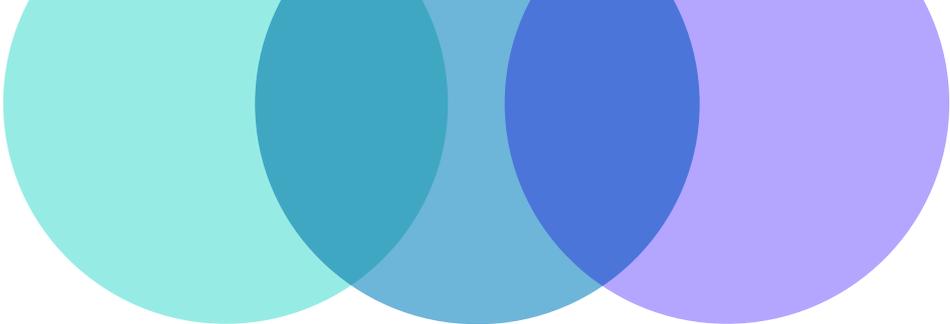
About the Professional Standards Authority

The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA) is the UK's oversight body for the regulation of people working in health and social care. Our statutory remit, independence and expertise underpin our commitment to the safety of patients and service-users, and to the protection of the public.

There are 10 organisations that regulate health professionals in the UK and social workers in England by law. We audit their performance and review their decisions on practitioners' fitness to practise. We also accredit and set standards for organisations holding registers of health and care practitioners not regulated by law.

We collaborate with all of these organisations to improve standards. We share good practice, knowledge and our right-touch regulation expertise. We also conduct and promote research on regulation. We monitor policy developments in the UK and internationally, providing guidance to governments and stakeholders. Through our UK and international consultancy, we share our expertise and broaden our regulatory insights.

Our core values of integrity, transparency, respect, fairness, and teamwork, guide our work. We are accountable to the UK Parliament. More information about our activities and approach is available at www.professionalstandards.org.uk.



Foreword

This strategic plan for 2026-29 sets out our proposed approach to delivering our statutory duties as effectively and efficiently as possible over the coming years. It is based on our core aim of protecting the public. We strive to do all we can within our powers and our organisational capacity to achieve this aim.

Since our last strategic plan was published in May 2023, the challenges facing health and care have intensified. While each UK nation faces distinct pressures, all share a need for resilient, safe, and effective systems of health and care.

Regulation can support this, when it is targeted and proportionate. Over the next few years, we will work to achieve this through our oversight of the regulators and Accredited Registers we oversee.

This Strategic Plan sets out our vision for 2026–29: to deliver our statutory duties with maximum impact, efficiency, and integrity. We have identified five themes that will be important for how we improve regulation over the next few years: oversight, prevention, reform, governance, and collaboration.

At its heart is our unwavering commitment to protecting the public. We will continue to do all we can – within our powers and organisational capacity – to uphold this aim.

Our work must reflect both the commonalities and differences across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. We recognise

that regulation and registration are part of a wider safety and quality system – and that we must do more, together, to improve outcomes for the public.

Over the next few years, the UK Government intends to continue its programme of reform of the statutory regulators that we oversee. This will begin with the General Medical Council (GMC), and we expect its draft new legislation to be consulted on in the first year of our new Strategic Plan. The UK Government has committed to subsequent changes to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) within this Parliamentary term.

Regulatory reform brings significant opportunities for greater consistency and collaboration across the regulators. We will do everything we can to support the successful implementation of reform, using our role to identify and promote good practice.

We will also introduce new standards that support the direction of travel on reform of the regulators, and of the wider health system,

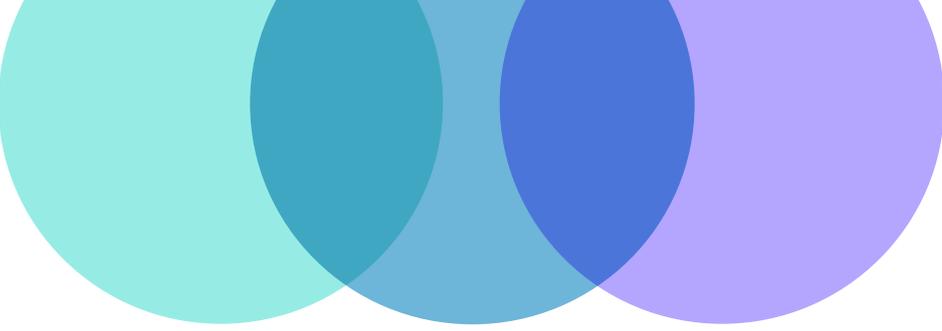
through their focus on prevention of harm. This will be achieved through new areas of focus, such as governance and greater collaboration with others on complaints.

We recognise that priorities may shift over the life of this plan. Some ambitions depend on collaboration with others. In line with our right-touch regulation approach, we will remain agile, focused, and transparent – prioritising work that delivers the greatest impact with the resources available.

Above all, we will keep patients, service users, and public protection at the centre of everything we do. We will listen. We will learn. We will speak out. And we will not hesitate to act when it is in the public interest to do so.

Caroline Corby, Chair

Alan Clamp, Chief Executive



Operating context

The independence and expertise of the PSA, together with our overview of professional regulation and registration, put us in a unique position to respond to regulatory challenges in health and social care. Our primary purpose is to improve the regulation and registration of professionals working in health and social care to better protect the public.

The 10 Year Health Plan for England, published in July 2025, states that ‘the choice for the NHS is stark: reform or die’. The Plan emphasises the important role of the workforce in delivering the three shifts – hospital to community, analogue to digital and sickness to prevention. We recognise the ongoing significant challenges in demand for services and resource availability that are faced by registrants, patients and service users in the health and social care sector across the UK. Many professionals work in difficult environments, yet it is vital that patients and service users receive safe and effective care.

Looking forward, it will be very important to develop effective workforce plans to meet future staffing requirements and keep people safe. This will require consideration of proportionate and effective regulation of different professional groups. In addition, all those working in health and social care have a role in promoting positive workplace cultures that support registrant wellbeing and encourage learning and continuous improvement.

The report of the [10 Year Health Plan working group: people](#) (December 2025) talks about a shift in the mindset of the regulators from “fit to practise” towards one that ensures graduates are “fit for purpose” to deliver the workforce of the future.

Regulators are being urged by the UK Government to reduce burdens and administrative costs, and promote innovation and growth. The regulators we oversee also need to improve their performance, address backlogs of fitness to practise cases and increase collaboration with other regulators and wider stakeholders to better protect the public. Effective legislative reform will help facilitate these changes. Finally, regulation and registration have a key role to play in addressing equality, diversity and inclusion issues and providing appropriate protection for all.

What we do

The Professional Standards Authority has four key functions.

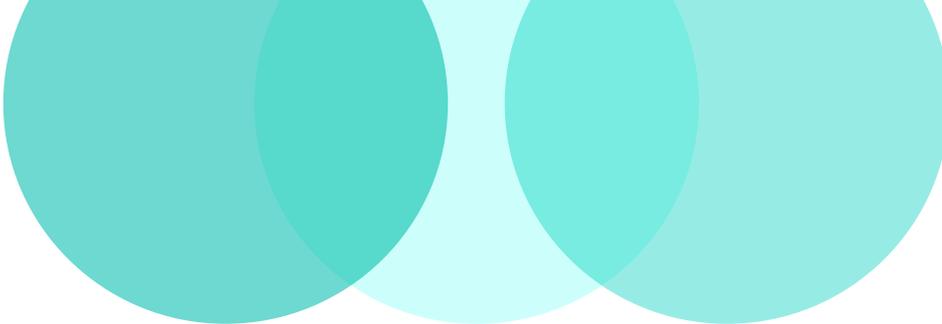
- 1** We drive improvements in the 10 statutory regulators in health and social care by undertaking annual reviews of effectiveness.
- 2** We provide a safety net for any fitness to practise decisions that are insufficient to protect the public (known as Section 29 reviews).
- 3** We raise standards in health and social care professionals in non-statutory roles through our Accredited Registers programme.
- 4** We use research, policy development and guidance to improve regulation and registration to better protect patients, service users and the public.

Vision

Safer care for all 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

This strategic aim relates to our statutory duties to report on the performance of regulators and to accredit registers of unregulated groups.

- To deliver our statutory duties, targeting our resources where there is greatest risk to the public in line with right-touch principles.
- To support high standards in health and social care regulation and registration through our performance reviews, Section 29 reviews, Accredited Registers programme, policy and communications functions.
- To seek greater engagement with stakeholders to assess the performance of regulators and Accredited Registers.
- To review and improve our processes (including legislative changes where necessary) to ensure they remain effective and efficient.

► **By 2029:** We will further develop our proportionate and risk-based oversight functions to report on the work of regulators and registers, driving improvements to protect the public.

From July 2026, the PSA will be implementing its updated Standards of Good Regulation and Standards for Accredited Registers. These are the standards against which we assess regulators when undertaking our annual performance reviews. We believe that our new standards better reflect the challenges facing regulators today.

► **We will know that improvements have been made if:** We have implemented successfully our new Standards for regulators and Accredited Registers; our processes are proportionate and cost-effective; our reporting on the performance of regulators and Accredited Registers is clear, accessible and supports improvements; and we have adapted our oversight as needed in response to legislative reform, to enable us to continue to fulfil our statutory functions effectively.

To achieve these outcomes,

► In 2026/27, we will:

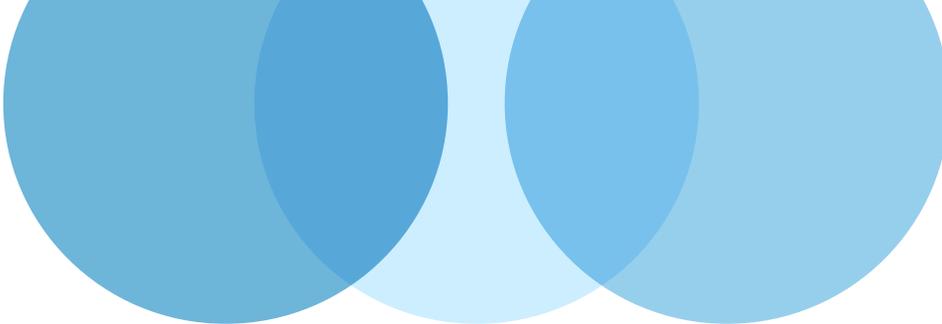
- Implement our new Standards for regulators and Accredited Registers.
- Deliver robust and fair performance reviews of the statutory regulators; use our Section 29 powers to review the outcomes of fitness to practise panels; manage the Accredited Registers programme; and report our findings to Parliament.
- Explore how we can expand the range and diversity of perspectives on the regulators and Accredited Registers we oversee through our Share Your Experience approach.
- Improve our risk assessment processes and use this information to plan our oversight approach, in line with right-touch regulation.
- Seek ways to increase the awareness and use of Accredited Registers by employers, patients and service users.
- Review what needs to be changed in our processes and legislation to ensure that we are effectively supporting the implementation of regulatory reform for better public protection.

► In 2027/28, we will:

- Review the impact of changes to our new Standards for regulators and Accredited Registers.
- Implement the legislative and operational changes needed to ensure effective oversight of the GMC, NMC and HCPC in the context of reform of the legislation for these regulators.

► In 2028/29, we will:

- Make any necessary changes to our new Standards, guidance and/or processes that arise from the review in 2027/28.
- Ensure that our oversight remains effective across: regulators that have undergone reform and those that have not; differing regulatory approaches across professions in health and social care; and different models of regulation in the four countries of the UK.



Strategic Aim 2:

To drive improvements in regulation and registration in health and social care

This strategic aim builds on our core reporting duties to cover facilitating, advising and reporting to promote and support continuous improvement in the work of regulators and Accredited Registers.

- To use advice, guidance and targeted and timely interventions (such as enhanced monitoring, issuing recommendations and requiring performance improvement plans) to support regulators and Accredited Registers to meet our standards.
- To support continuous improvement in regulators and Accredited Registers using research, data analysis, policy advice, stakeholder engagement, the principles of right-touch regulation and feedback on performance.
- To use guidance, regulatory data and AI to support a more positive, innovative, anticipatory and preventative approach to regulation and registration.
- To promote, influence and support regulatory reform in line with the Government's objectives.
- To promote and monitor equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in our work and in those we oversee.

► **By 2029:** There will be clear improvements in the performance of all regulators and Accredited Registers; the PSA will be playing

an active role in the effective implementation of regulatory reform (which should be completed for the GMC, NMC and HCPC); regulatory approaches will be more positive and preventative; indicators of equality, diversity and inclusion across the regulators and Accredited Registers will show significant progress when compared to 2025/26.

► **We will know that improvements have been made if:** There is comprehensive coverage of appropriate professional suitability (including criminal records) checks for those working in health and social care; the average number of standards met by the regulators and Accredited Registers has increased; backlogs in fitness to practise have reduced; the average number of conditions for established Accredited Registers has decreased; there are fewer Section 29 appeals and our success rate for these appeals continues to exceed 80%; regulators and Accredited Registers will have adopted a more preventative approach to regulation; and indicators of equality, diversity and inclusion have significantly improved.

To achieve these outcomes,

► In 2026/27, we will:

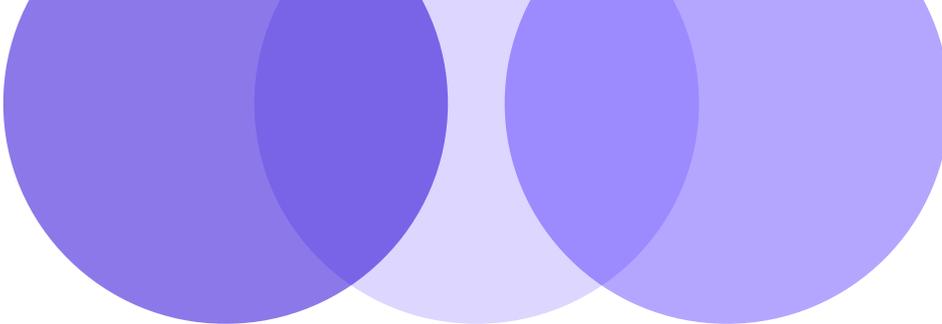
- Provide feedback to regulators and Accredited Registers on where improvements are needed and use targeted interventions to support these improvements and address performance issues.
- Encourage research, hold a research conference, provide policy advice, issue guidance and share good practice to improve regulation and registration.
- Promote a four-country approach to improving regulation, including through stakeholder engagement and seminars in all four countries of the UK.
- Support continued regulatory reform that is focused on public protection and support the implementation of that reform.
- Promote further improvements in the promotion and monitoring of EDI by the PSA and those we oversee and accredit.

► In 2027/28, we will:

- Evaluate PSA interventions used to support quality improvement in regulators and Accredited Registers to identify those that are most effective.
- Support regulators and Accredited Registers in using the right-touch regulation framework to promote continuous improvement.

► In 2028/29, we will:

- Enhance our interventions with regulators and Accredited Registers to further improve their performance.
- Assess the changes made by regulators and Accredited Registers to adopt a more positive and preventative approach to their work.



Strategic Aim 3:

To work with others to make the overall system of healthcare regulation more cohesive, supportive and preventative

For the regulation of health and care professionals to be effective, it must reflect multi-disciplinary teamworking and be aligned to the regulation of the places where care is delivered, as well as with the regulation of medicines and other products. Requirements set by regulators and employers also need to align in ways that minimise unnecessary burdens and maximise opportunities to support professionals in delivering high quality care. Through this strategic aim, we will help shape a more joined up regulatory system that prioritises prevention in seeking to address the causes of poor practice and consequent harm. The regulatory system should also foster collaboration, support and learning.

- To encourage the UK governments to develop regulatory strategies to support the delivery of workforce plans whilst maintaining safety and public confidence.
 - To urge on any areas of over- or under-regulation in the health and social care workforce across the UK, working in collaboration with others.
 - To support collaboration between regulators and with wider stakeholders to develop safer working environments.
 - To work with regulators, Accredited Registers, and other stakeholders to improve workplace cultures which support registrant wellbeing, learning, continuous improvement and the prevention of harm.
- ▶ **By 2029:** All four countries of the UK will have: regulatory strategies that support workforce planning; priority areas of over- or under-regulation, including non-surgical cosmetic interventions, have been addressed; and health and social care professionals report more positive workplace cultures that enable professionals to perform their roles effectively and keep people safer.
 - ▶ **We will know that improvements have been made if:** Workforce planning around the UK is underpinned by regulatory strategies; regulation and registration processes for each profession are proportionate to the risk of harm; and that candour, learning and quality improvement underpin safe care in all working environments.

To achieve these outcomes,

► In 2026/27, we will:

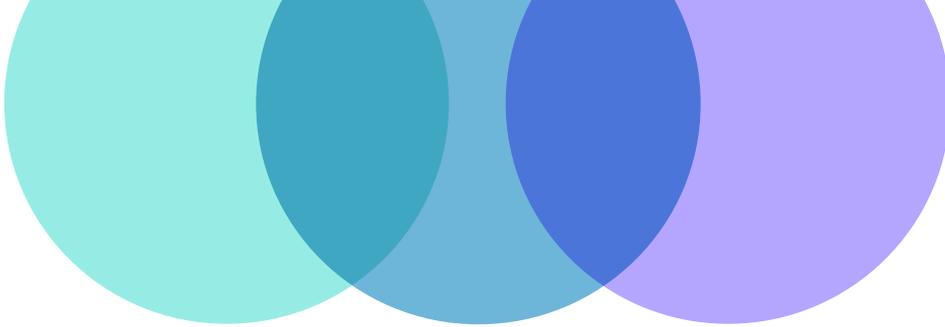
- Engage with UK governments to review how regulatory strategies might be developed that will help to support national workforce plans.
- Develop and implement a model for how we identify, prioritise and urge action on areas of under- and over- regulation.
- Continue to act to reduce risks for known priority areas such as non-surgical cosmetic interventions by supporting a more robust model of regulation for people carrying out these procedures.
- Facilitate regulatory models for all regulated and registered professionals, including NHS managers, that support registrant wellbeing and positive working cultures.
- Convene regulators, Accredited Registers and other stakeholders to identify and promote enablers and to start to address barriers to safe and effective professional practice in workplace settings.

► In 2027/28, we will:

- Develop our right-touch assurance methodology to bring about proportionate changes in regulatory approaches to keep people safe from harm.
- Continue to support enablers and to address barriers to safe and effective professional practice in workplace settings.

► In 2028/29, we will:

- Assess the need to further develop regulatory strategies to support national workforce plans.
- Further improve the effectiveness of collaboration between regulators, Accredited Registers and other stakeholders to promote registrant wellbeing and to protect patients and service users.



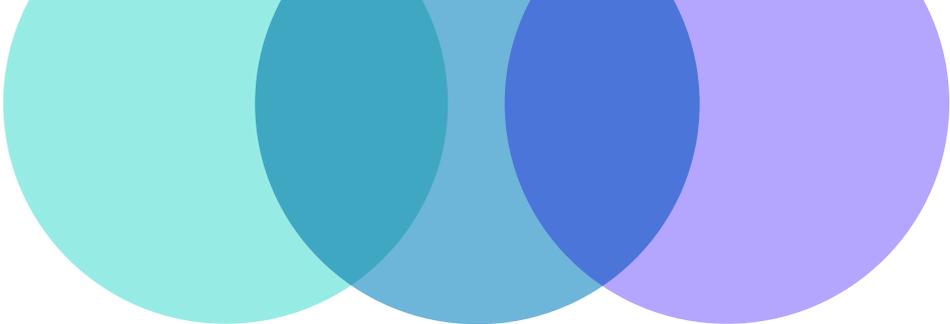
How these strategic aims work together

The diagram below shows how the three strategic aims are inter-related. The core work of the PSA enhances public protection and also drives improvements in regulation and registration.

Together these make a key contribution to safer care for all. Equality, diversity and inclusion are key themes underpinning all three strategic aims.

Regulatory reform has the potential to support improvements in regulation and registration; and could enable professional regulation to make a greater contribution to safer care for all.





How we will work to deliver our strategic plan

How we will enhance how we work in 2026-29

To deliver the aims set out in this plan we will need to make the best use of our resources. The PSA is committed to providing value for money. We aim to do so in three ways: carefully reviewing expenditure and controlling costs; systematically evaluating core processes to identify improvements in effectiveness and efficiency; and maximising the benefits of our work in the interests of better regulation and registration. For example, we have taken steps to reduce our expenditure on office accommodation, IT services and pensions; and we have reviewed and improved processes for our Accredited Registers function, Section 29 processes and performance reviews.

Our new standards will be very important for our oversight work and for driving improvements in regulation and registration.

We will seek ways to achieve greater input from patients and service users into all our work; and ensure that our work reflects the different health and social care contexts across the UK.

We will consider how we can make best use of digital tools and artificial intelligence to improve our effectiveness and efficiency.

We will also develop a Communications Strategy and a People Strategy for 2026-29 to support the delivery of our objectives.

We will further enhance our culture of internal learning and transparency, so that we can continually improve, and expect those we oversee to do the same.

We will hold ourselves to the same standards that we expect of others. This will mean working to improve diversity through development and recruitment, particularly at senior levels in the organisation, and through inclusive policies and training relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. We currently have two equality objectives supported by annual action plans: to build an inclusive workplace; and to develop our EDI leadership. We will keep these objectives under review throughout this 2026-29 plan.

Finally, we will have a strong focus on supporting our staff and ensuring the wellbeing of all who work at the PSA.

Our values

We will strive to ensure that everything we do is underpinned by our 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, service users 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.

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