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Parliamentary Bulletin

Striking the right balance in regulation

In recent years, risks in the delivery of healthcare have been brought to the public's attention in a stark way because of situations where care has failed and people have been harmed. As parliamentarians, your constituents may have shared personal experiences of this.

Such failures often reveal that the arrangements for who keeps people safe, and how, can be complicated and difficult to understand.

They can also result in a rush to solutions which have not been properly tested or thought-through, and which risk over-regulating. Overregulation can be as damaging as underregulation: stifling innovation, diverting resources from frontline protection, and placing unnecessary burdens on professionals who are doing the right thing.

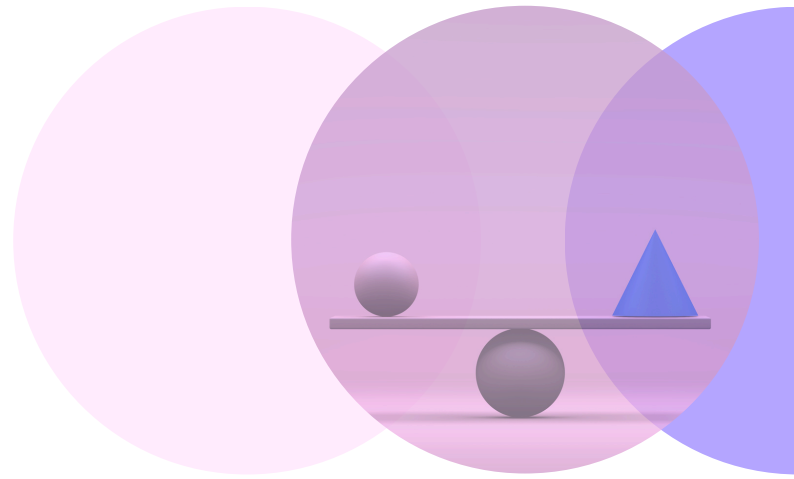
The PSA's *Right-touch regulation* (RTR) is an approach which offers a way to bring clarity to this confusion. By focusing regulatory effort where risks are greatest, Right-touch

regulation supports safer outcomes for the public while reducing waste and inefficiency - an important objective at a period of stretched resources and growing demands.

RTR means dealing with risks in the best and most effective way as near to where they arise as possible. It means being clear about who is responsible for which risks and so supports accountability. It also means acknowledging that it is impossible to eliminate all risk, but instead we need to balance risks against benefits and the wider public interest.

Right-touch regulation 2025 is forward-looking. It is designed for a world of rapid change: new technologies, evolving models of care, and increasing public expectations. By encouraging regulators to anticipate risk, adapt early and learn continuously, it supports a regulatory system that is resilient rather than reactive.

For parliamentarians, right-touch regulation offers a compelling proposition: stronger



public protection, better use of public resources, and regulation that keeps pace with change. It is not about regulating less, but about regulating better.

A summary of the RTR framework is attached and a slide deck outlining its key components is now available on the PSA's website [here](#).

Urging the next Scottish and Welsh Governments to close health and care safety gaps



Ahead of upcoming elections in Scotland and Wales, the PSA has set out its recommendations for the next Governments in both countries. We are urging them to close safety gaps and enable professional regulation to play a more active role in supporting action to address key challenges within health and care.

A number of recommendations will be relevant to all parliamentarians across the four nations including:

A unified UK-wide approach on regulation for non-surgical cosmetics to avoid 'cosmetic tourism' within the UK

This chimes with recent [findings](#) from the Women and Equalities Committee in Westminster of a 'wild west' in the regulation of non-surgical cosmetics and the need for speedy action to close the safety gaps. We welcome progress in Scotland to bring forward further safeguards, urge continued momentum with proposals for strengthening assurances in England, and encourage urgent UK-wide action in this area.

Consistent standards for NHS managers across the UK

The UK Government has committed to introduce a barring scheme for NHS managers in England and alignment across the four nations would help to ensure UK-wide coherence.



A system to ensure that learning from every major inquiry across the UK leads to real, measurable change

The Dash Review recommended that for England an updated role for the National Quality Board could include overseeing recommendations from previous inquiries and reviews. However it will be important that this joins up with any similar mechanisms in the other parts of the UK.

The manifestos can be found [here \(Scotland\)](#).

A level policy and legislative playing-field for Accredited Registers (ARs), to help them tackle the workforce crisis

The AR programme offers proportionate, independent assurance to the public and those commissioning services for roles not covered by statutory regulation (including those in mental health and healthcare science). The accreditation provides assurance that those on a register meet standards of competence, conduct, and there is access to robust complaints procedures.

and [here \(Wales\)](#).

New PSA Standards strengthen patient safety and public protection

The Professional Standards Authority (PSA) has recently published updated and combined Standards for the healthcare regulators we oversee and the organisations we accredit through our Accredited Registers programme.

At a time of increasing system pressure and evolving models of care, it is important that regulation is proportionate, risk-focused and outcome-driven.

For the first time, the PSA will have a single set of standards covering both professional regulators and Accredited Registers (more than 2 million registered practitioners). We gathered the input of patients/service-users into the development of the revised Standards, and they strengthen public protection in several important ways.

A single, consistent bar for public protection

We have introduced one unified set of standards for both statutory regulators and Accredited Registers. While these organisations operate under different frameworks, the public should expect the same level of protection irrespective of the type of body involved.



Clearer expectations, stronger accountability

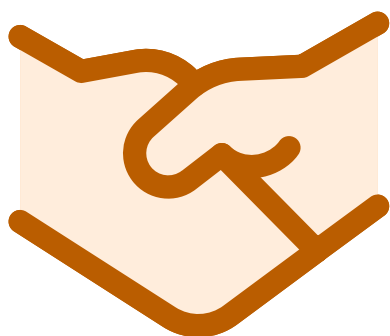
The updated Standards provide greater clarity for all stakeholders about what is required of the organisations we oversee. Clearer expectations support more effective oversight, greater transparency and strengthen accountability.

They also reinforce consistent expectations on governance and leadership. Under our new Standards, senior leaders must demonstrate effective oversight of risk, decision-making and organisational culture. Evidence consistently shows that strong governance and positive culture are closely linked to improved safety outcomes.

A stronger risk and safeguarding focus

The revised Standards place greater emphasis on evidence and risk-based approaches to determining professional suitability, including appropriate safeguarding measures such as criminal records checks where relevant.

This will strengthen assurance that those entering and remaining on registers meet appropriate standards, reducing the risk of harm to patients and service users.



Encouraging collaboration across the system

The Standards also promote better collaboration and information-sharing across regulatory partners. Missed opportunities to share intelligence or resolve concerns early can undermine public protection. Clear expectations around co-operation and early resolution support more effective system-wide ways of working.

Raising the bar at the point of entry

For Accredited Registers, we have strengthened eligibility tests and public interest assessments at the earliest stages of application. This ensures robust scrutiny before accreditation is granted, enhancing public confidence in the programme.

The updated Standards provide a clearer, more consistent framework to support regulators and Accredited Registers in protecting patients and maintaining public confidence. This reflects the guiding principles set out in our updated *Right-touch regulation*, published last October, which emphasises the importance of the areas highlighted in the new Standards.

We will continue to work closely with the UK Governments, regulators and Accredited Registers as the new Standards are implemented.

Where does accountability lie when AI influences the healthcare decisions of professionals?

Everywhere we look, conversations are taking place about how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being used. Healthcare is no exception. AI is rapidly reshaping health and care, from diagnostic tools and digital triage to the ways regulators use data to protect patients.

AI offers opportunities to strengthen public protection but it also brings new challenges around transparency, legal and ethical responsibilities, and equity. As we continue to embrace the opportunities AI brings, we also need to understand where accountability lies when technology influences care.

To support collective leadership on these issues, the PSA has established the Regulatory Data and AI Group – a forum bringing together healthcare professional regulators and Accredited Registers to share learning, identify risks, and explore how AI and regulatory data can be used to strengthen public protection.

On 26 February, we ran a workshop with the University of Bristol that brought together patients and the public and many of the regulators and Accredited Registers we oversee to discuss the challenges and opportunities in regulating AI technologies. The session focused on identifying areas where regulatory clarity is needed and sharing best practices for ensuring patient safety and ethical deployment of AI. We are using the findings to inform our contributions to the UK National Commission on the Regulation of AI in Healthcare led by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), which has been tasked with developing the overall regulatory framework. We will also publish the findings.

You can read more about our work to promote consistency and best practice in regulating for AI use on our webpage [here](#).



Our response to the call for evidence on access to primary care services

The PSA has responded to the All Party Health Group [call for evidence](#) on access to primary care services. In our response we highlighted that a focus on safety is important in any work to expand access to primary care. We said that “good access” to primary care must include safety and quality, not just speed or availability, with equal emphasis on patient experience, continuity of care and clinical outcomes.

Changes proposed in the *10 Year Health Plan for England: fit for the future* including greater use of reception and administrative staff to improve access and triage and the utilisation of new roles and voluntary organisations support the PSA’s call for a

clear, proactive regulatory strategy to support workforce transformation in primary care. This could help with ensuring new and expanded roles are introduced safely, transparently and with retaining public and stakeholder confidence.



The PSA was set up following the Inquiry into failings at Bristol Royal Infirmary to ensure that professional regulation remains focused on public protection and the public interest. We protect the public by promoting high standards of competence and conduct among health and social care professionals.

It is clear that the issues facing health and social care in all four nations of the UK require urgent attention. Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Wes Streeting has described the NHS in England as ‘broken’ and better access to safer care was at the top of the list of concerns for the public during the run up to the UK general election. The PSA’s quarterly bulletin highlights how we can work together to create a health and social care system that promotes safety for all. We hope you find the information useful.

Contact information

If you have questions, comments, or would like to meet with a member of our team, please email engagement@professionalstandards.org.uk.

