

Agenda item:	6
Report title:	A new approach to developing and managing our strategic relationships
Report by:	Paul Spindler , Assistant Director (Interim) – Strategic Relationship Development, Strategic Communication and Engagement Directorate paul.spindler@gmc-uk.org , 020 7189 5119
Action:	To consider

Executive summary

This paper describes a new strategic approach to improve our relationships with other national-level bodies. These relationships are critical to the success of our corporate strategy. The key points to note are as follows:

- At the centre of this new approach are two strategic aims. The first is designed to help us focus our resources on those relationships which have the highest strategic value to our work. The second will change the dynamic of our current approach, making us more proactive in how we manage our relationships in the future.
- A Relationship Framework will give our management of relationships both direction and structure, as well as clear language to describe the different types of relationships that we have and their value.
- This new approach will deliver a range of benefits both for us and our stakeholders; improved connections and reduce the burden of engagement between us and other organisations

Recommendations

The Executive Board is asked to:

- a** Approve this new approach for managing our relationships with other organisations (Annex A).
- b** Note the requirements on Directors who will act as 'sponsors' for our most strategically valuable relationships.
- c** Note that an operating model to implement this new approach is in development, supported by a resource plan to cover staffing requirements and costs.

Background

- 1** Good relationships with our audiences and partners are at the heart of our Corporate strategy for 2018-2020. One of its four strategic aims is for us work more collaboratively with our regulatory partners. By 2020 the strategy says that we should expect to see improved perceptions of collaborative working and trust among our 50 key partners (as measured by our annual tracking survey).
- 2** Delivering this outcome requires us to change how we manage these relationships currently. We must be more planned and deliberate in our approach. We must change our internal culture around relationship management, managing these relationships as 'One GMC' and sharing the intelligence which comes from our engagement with them across our directorates and their teams.
- 3** The origins of this new approach can be found in a review that we commissioned from PA Consulting in 2014/15. This review highlighted the following issues with:
 - a** Although we have an instinctive knowledge about who our key organisational relationships are with, no formal recognition of these relationships exists and we are unable to articulate - consistently across Directorates or staff levels - why these key relationships matter to our work.
 - b** Relationship intelligence is not shared as often or as efficiently as it should be. The causes of this are cultural, reflecting our siloed ways of working, as well as technological. There are limitations with the functionality and usability of the Relationship Management System (RMS) developed within Siebel back in 2008.
 - c** We lack a central co-ordinating function and a consistent process to help manage the wide and complex range of relationships that we hold across the UK.
- 4** Little has changed since 2015 as the recommendations made by this review were accepted but not progressed. Our approach to relationship management continues to lack the necessary direction and coordination. This creates inefficiency, friction (both internally and externally) and therefore risk. A recent survey of GMC policy and operational staff found that nearly 40% said they feel unsighted when a risk or issue emerges in a relationship that affects their work. Only 19% agreed that we have a clear strategy for managing our external relationships.
- 5** From a stakeholder's perspective, the engagement opportunities that we provide are sometimes rushed, poorly coordinated with other exercises, and insensitive to the pressures and capacity issues which many stakeholders experience (particularly those within the Devolved Nations). Our structure, organised as it is along functional lines, means we cannot always connect easily with other organisations, particularly at the operational level. A stakeholder may therefore be forced to have multiple touchpoints with us. Finally we do not always make best use of the opportunities that we have created to have strategic conversations with stakeholders.

- 6** Annex A provides a new methodology for relationship management at the GMC. It must be supported by an operating model, something which turns that methodology into everyday practice. The model, which is already in development, will articulate the set of processes (such as relationship planning, account management, and risk management) which are required to make the new approach work. It will be supported by a resource plan, covering staffing requirements and any costs associated with the development of a new Stakeholder Relationship Management (SRM) system based within our Siebel platform, to ensure the new approach can be fully realised and sustained. The operating model and resource plan will be considered by a future meeting of the Executive Board.
- 7** Instead of being mainly reactive in how we manage our relationships, we will adopt a more proactive stance – planning and finding ways to continuously improve the quality of our relationships over time. Growing our relationships will create the space for us to be more assertive in situations when our role as a regulator requires us to speak out and take action.
- 8** Closer, more collaborative relationships with our regulatory partners (in particular system regulators and quality improvement bodies) will enable a system of collective assurance that protects and improves the quality of patient care.
- 9** Improved planning by directorates that draws out more detail about the impact which our work has on individual groups of stakeholders will provide the platform for us to plan the growth of our relationships and identify opportunities for partnership working. This, combined with the drive to be stricter in the setting of our corporate priorities every year, should simplify our agenda and reduce the external impact which our work creates. An agenda which remains too complicated for our external partners to absorb has the potential to work against the aims of this new approach and restrict the benefits which we seek to deliver.
- 10** The implementation and ongoing delivery of this new approach will be overseen by the ENGAGE board, chaired by the Director of Strategic Communication and Engagement.

Equality and diversity

- 11** The relationship framework includes a category called 'key relationships' in which there are a number of organisations that we want to manage and monitor quite carefully in the future. Some 'key relationships' are with organisations that represent doctors with particular characteristics.
- 12** Realistically the framework will not be able to accommodate all organisations that fall across the full spectrum of the nine protected characteristics. Some of these organisations, because of their public profile, may be considered to be higher priority. This could mean that other organisations with a lower profile but with important equality issues to raise may not feature within the framework.

- 13** This requires us to develop clear criteria when making any decisions about the framework and subsequent supporting activity. We should also use the intelligence that we know about groups who share protected characteristics to inform this.

6 – A new approach to developing and managing our strategic relationships

6 – Annex A

Corporate strategy

- 1** One of the four aims of our Corporate strategy for 2018-2020 states that we will strengthen our collaboration with our partners across the health systems. We need these relationships to reduce the risk of harm to both patients and doctors, reduce unnecessary burden, and deliver more proportionate and targeted regulatory interventions.
- 2** The corporate strategy sets this objective because it recognises quite rightly that we cannot address these critical issues on our own. We operate in a complex health environment made up of four, increasingly divergent health and care systems. To be effective we must look beyond the limits of our statutory responsibilities and work in partnership with others in these systems to achieve a level of collective assurance about the quality of patient care and doctors' training.
- 3** Strong, collaborative relationships with other national-level organisations in each country of the UK are therefore critical to the achievement of our strategic ambitions. These relationships are assets requiring growth and the investment of our time and care. Our development of them must be deliberate, planned and underpinned by a new strategic approach adopted throughout the organisation.

Strategic communication and engagement

- 4** This new approach will contribute to our broader ambition for improving our communication and engagement capability as an organisation. It is through this enhanced capability that we will achieve a higher degree of influence within our environment. This influence is a strategic tool that can help us achieve our mission as a professional regulator.
- 5** To be effective we must be seen as a relevant, proactive and engaging actor within the healthcare environment. We will achieve this by having:
 - a** A powerful and compelling narrative about our corporate vision and strategy

- b** Tailored products and content which create value for our audiences.
 - c** Positive, collaborative relationships with our regulatory partners and others
 - d** Advocates in the political/public policy space
 - e** A media profile which shows we are relevant and part of the debate
 - f** Continued engagement 'on the ground'
 - g** Effective channels which enable us to reach our audiences in a variety of ways.
- 6** A new approach to managing these critical relationships (translated into everyday practice by an operating model) will facilitate the delivery of many of these elements.

Vision

- 7** The goal of our new approach is that:

By the end of 2020 (the end of our current Corporate strategy) we have better relationships with our regulatory partners and other national-level organisations of strategic importance to us in each country of the UK. The increased influence within the healthcare environment that we achieve by having these stronger, more collaborative relationships enhances our capability to deliver our mission as a professional regulator – *'to prevent harm and drive improvement in patient care'*.

- 8** We will measure improvements in our relationships through our annual tracking survey and through regular evaluation carried out as part of our external engagement. The Corporate strategy expects to see improved perceptions of collaborative working and trust among our 50 key partners by 2020.

Strategic aims

- 9** We will achieve the vision described above through the delivery of two strategic aims. These aims are simple, action-orientated statements making it clear how we intend to develop our relationships in the future. They will have the effect of changing the dynamic of our current approach. Instead of being mainly reactive in how we manage our relationships, we will adopt a more proactive stance – planning and finding ways to continuously improve the quality of our relationships.

Strategic Aim 1: We will focus

- 10** Our environment is complex and, by virtue of the fact that we are a regulator operating in all four countries of the UK, the number of stakeholders we must engage with to deliver our agenda is vast. This means we must prioritise our management of relationships, concentrating our resources on those organisations which have the

greatest strategic value to our work. We will do this with the aid of a relationship framework which groups organisations into a series of categories.

Strategic Aim 2: We will grow

- 11** We will strengthen, deepen and continuously improve our relationships with organisations within the framework. To achieve this growth, we will develop a simple annual improvement plan for each of our most critical relationships. A relationship sponsor will oversee the development of a relationship supported by an account co-ordinator. Work will also proceed through the review of our 'field forces' to understand how we can align ourselves better with the structures of other organisations, particularly those which have an extensive regional and local footprint, to facilitate closer co-operation 'on the ground'. Growing our relationships will create the space for us to be more assertive in situations when our role as a regulator requires us to speak out and take action.
- 12** We will support our policy, operational, 'field' and data teams to forge productive working relationships with their peers. Improving our connections with other organisations (in particular those with whom we have highly-transaction relationships) will enable us to be more responsive to the ever-changing nature of our external environment.
- 13** We will actively seek and develop opportunities to work together with other organisations, prioritising partnerships with our regulatory partners as directed by the Corporate strategy. One way we will achieve this is through our use of data and insight, working with and supporting our partners to develop targeted interventions aimed at addressing known concerns.

Principles

- 14** We will embed the following principles in our management of relationships – within the processes that form part of a new operating model, but also in the internal and external behaviours exhibited by staff who are building relationships on behalf of the organisation:
 - a** Our relationships are open, genuinely collaborative, respectful and responsive.
 - b** We are proactive in how we manage our relationships, continuously finding ways to make them stronger over time.
 - c** Leadership of relationships is shared across the organisation, empowering a culture of collective ownership. We will manage our relationships as 'One GMC'.
 - d** We are disciplined in how we capture, share and analyse information from our relationships, to ensure we can anticipate, respond and adapt swiftly to the changing external environment in which we deliver our responsibilities.

- e Across our organisation we have a good understanding of our relationships, why they matter to our work, and how their interests align with or differ to ours.
- f We are sensitive to the effect which our work has on our relationships and which those relationships have on our work. We take steps to plan, understand and mitigate that impact.
- g We are quick to identify and resolve concerns which emerge in a relationship.

Relationship framework

15 The framework will provide our management of relationships with direction and structure, as well as clear language to describe the different types of relationships that we have.

16 The framework identifies three categories of relationships:

- a A regulatory partner
- b A strategic relationship
- c A key relationship

17 All three categories of relationship are important to our work. However, following the direction set by the Corporate strategy, we will invest the greatest amount of resource in growing and maintaining relationships with organisations which we class as regulatory partners and strategic relationships.

18 We define a 'regulatory partner' as:

A relationship containing a high degree of strategic value and mutual interest, with extensive collaboration at local and national levels (consisting of information sharing, as well as joint work or action) which helps us to influence the quality of the environments in which doctors practise and train.

19 We define a 'strategic relationship' as:

A relationship with assets or abilities that can enhance or hinder the delivery of our strategic ambitions or statutory functions.

20 We define a 'key relationship' as:

A relationship that is important to our work. We may share one or two common interests with this organisation, and work with it but in a limited way. It is possible that this relationship contains some latent strategic value which can be developed over time.

- 21** The relationship framework will be a 'living document' managed by Strategic Communication and Engagement. It will be kept under regular review (at least every six months), to ensure we continue to invest the right amount of time and resource in those relationships which are strategically valuable to our work. Our ever-changing environment means that organisations may move positions within the framework, as their agendas and remits change over time. We will need to monitor our environment carefully for changes of this kind, as well as for new organisations that could prove to be valuable partners in the future.

Benefits and evaluation

- 22** This new approach (in tandem with the operating model) will deliver a series of internal and external benefits for the organisation and our stakeholders.

Internal benefits

- 23** Improved connections between us and other organisations (particularly at the policy level) will create the ability for us to be more responsive to changes in our external environment – with our policies, services and products.
- 24** Clearer lines of accountability in the relationships that we manage will lead to improved governance and management.
- 25** Improved understanding across all parts of our business about our key organisational relationships, their strategic value and the many touchpoints we have with them will stimulate positive changes in our internal culture of relationship management.
- 26** Increased and more efficient sharing of intelligence and insights about our external environment and how our policies are viewed by national-level organisations will lead to more effective analysis of stakeholder positions, improved internal reporting, and greater efficiencies in our internal processes (such as the production of briefings to support engagement by senior management and wider external relations activity). A key enabler of this change will be a new, intuitive IT system.
- 27** Engagement activity captured by this new IT system will be treated as a new stream of intelligence and will enrich the data that is already flowing into our internal Intelligence Module (from our various four-country liaison services). This will improve our understanding and analysis of our external environment.
- 28** We will see these benefits identified in the results of our internal perception survey (which we will repeat at key intervals during the implementation phase) and in data analysing usage of our new IT system for capturing, sharing intelligence from our external engagement.

External benefits

- 29** The more structured and organised approach we take with our management of strategic relationships should reduce the burden of engagement which our stakeholders often tell us they experience. This will improve our reputation with them.
- 30** Closer, more collaborative relationships with our regulatory partners (in particular system regulators and quality improvement bodies) enables a system of collective assurance to protect and improve the quality of patient care.
- 31** We are seen by other organisations as a listening, responsive and collaborative regulator. This, together with the elements of our new communication and engagement strategy, increases our influence within UK healthcare systems. We need this influence to deliver our mission as a professional regulator – to prevent harm and drive improvement in patient care.
- 32** Our policies, products and services are seen as more relevant, valuable and sensitive to the needs of particular countries and audiences, thereby improving our reputation.
- 33** We will see these perceptions in the results of our annual tracking survey; through regular, ongoing evaluation of our strategically significant relationships; and public statements of support for our policies and agenda (which we will track through our regular evaluation and insights programme).

Interdependencies

- 34** The benefits we describe cannot be realised through this strategy and the operating model alone. A range of strategies, initiatives and processes will contribute to its success.
- 35** We must have early and meaningful dialogue with stakeholders as we develop our policy and operational thinking. We should also make an active contribution to the policy-making of other organisations, supporting them privately and publicly where we can. Building our policy capability as an organisation, through the development of our policy profession and deployment of a new policy development framework, is therefore key to improving our relationships and transforming the perceptions of other organisations of our work and value.
- 36** Increasing and improving our data offer to better support the priorities of others will increase perceptions of our value, particularly among our regulatory partners.
- 37** Improved alignment of our 'field' teams with the structures of other organisations will deepen and therefore strengthen our relationships with other national-level bodies, especially our regulatory partners.

38 Finally, improved planning by directorates that draws out more detail about the impact our work has on individual groups of stakeholders will provide the platform for us to plan the growth of our relationships and identify opportunities for partnership working. This, combined with the drive to be more strict with the setting of our corporate priorities every year, should simplify our agenda and reduce the external impact which our work creates. An agenda which remains too complicated for our external partners to absorb has the potential to work against the aims of this new approach and restrict the benefits which it aims to deliver for the organisation.

Governance

39 The implementation and ongoing delivery of this new approach will be overseen by the ENGAGE board, together with other initiatives designed to enable the delivery of the Corporate Strategy. This board is chaired by the Director of Strategic Communication and Engagement.

40 The board will receive:

- a** A monthly report on relationship risks and issues. Risks of a highly serious nature will be escalated to the Local Risk Register for Strategic Communication and Engagement.
- b** An annual review of relationships, containing an evaluation of our relationship landscape (using results from the annual tracking survey, for example) as well as recommendations for growing and improving relationships in the next 12-month period.
- c** The annual relationship plans developed by account co-ordinators for their sponsors.
- d** A report every quarter highlighting progress against those annual relationship plans.