

Corporate Strategy and Perceptions Tracking 2020

Prepared by IFF Research for the General Medical Council

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1 Executive summary

The GMC's corporate strategy 2018-2020 set out the organisation's three year plan. The strategy seeks to introduce more proactive regulation, while continuing to deliver core functions efficiently, effectively and fairly based around four key strategic aims:

- 1) Supporting doctors in delivering good medical practice
- 2) Strengthening collaboration with regulatory partners
- 3) Strengthening our relationship with the public and the profession
- 4) Meeting the changing needs of the health services across the four countries of the UK



IFF Research was commissioned to track perceptions of the GMC's work amongst seven key audiences: doctors, Responsible Officers, medical students, providers, educators, stakeholders, and patients and the public. This research builds on a baseline survey conducted by IFF Research in 2018, alongside earlier tracking research conducted in 2014 and 2016.

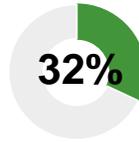
Fieldwork was conducted from 5th February to 13th March 2020. The table below summarises the methodology and number of interviews achieved by audience in 2020.

Audience	Method	Total number of responses
Doctors	Online survey, sample from GMC's database	2,156
Responsible Officers	Online survey, sample from GMC's database	101
Medical students	Online survey, sample from GMC's database	901
Providers	Online survey, sample from commercial database (Oscar Research)	406
Educators	Online survey, sample from GMC's database	35
Stakeholders	Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI), sample from GMC's database	51
Public and patients	Online survey, sample from research panel (Bilendi)	2,040

This report presents findings under each of the four strategic aims, with key strategic benefits presented under each.

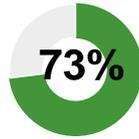
Strategic Aim 1: Supporting doctors in maintaining good practice

Doctors are supported to deliver good safe care



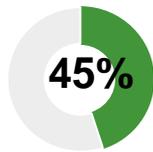
of doctors feel supported by the GMC to deliver good safe care.

Doctors have fulfilling careers



of doctors agree that being a doctor is a fulfilling career.

Enhanced trust in GMC's role



of doctors are confident in the way that they are regulated by the GMC.

It remains the case that the majority of doctors find their careers fulfilling, although as was the case in 2018 working conditions remain trying for many. Three-quarters of doctors felt unable to cope with their workload at some point in the previous year, nearly two-thirds found it difficult to provide patients with sufficient care, and over half said they had considered leaving the medical profession.

Despite working conditions remaining difficult, there is evidence that an increasing proportion of doctors feel supported in their jobs by the GMC. Nearly a third feel supported by the GMC to deliver good safe care, a significant increase from just over a fifth in 2018.

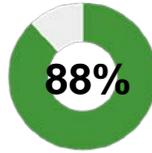
While the level of confidence in GMC regulation remains relatively low – it is still the case that most doctors do not feel confident in the way they are regulated by the GMC – this measure has also shown improvement over the past two years. Increasingly, negative sentiment relating to the GMC's handling of the Dr. Bawa-Garba case and the way the GMC is presented in the media is receding in prominence, though the case is still remembered, and, for some, has had a lasting impact on perceptions.

Doctors with low levels of confidence in the GMC and a low sense of feeling supported by the GMC are more likely to report feeling unsupported by both colleagues and management on a weekly basis – indicating that, at least among some doctors, a general sense of feeling unsupported may be driving negative sentiment towards the GMC (i.e. these doctors are struggling or dissatisfied with their working life in a broader sense, rather than their views being a reflection of something the GMC has done).

Although medical students, and to a lesser extent ROs, also confront difficult working conditions, these audiences – along with providers, educators and stakeholders – are far more positive towards the GMC. A clear majority of audiences other than doctors have confidence in the GMC's regulation, and those audiences with the most professional interaction with the GMC tend to view the organisation in the most positive light.

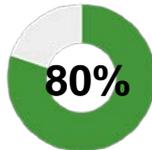
Strategic Aim 2: Strengthening collaboration with regulatory partners across the health service

Enhanced perception of regulation



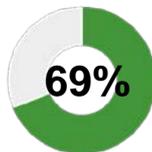
of stakeholders feel that their overall working relationship with the GMC is good.

Smarter regulation



of stakeholders agree that the requests for advice, feedback and information which the GMC makes of us are manageable.

Right response, by the right organisation at the right time



of stakeholders agree the GMC takes early action to protect patients.

More doctors, ROs, providers, educators, stakeholders and patients/members of the public feel the GMC takes action to protect patients before they are put at risk than do not, and there has been an increase in this measure for most audiences compared to 2018. Knowledge of when and how to raise concerns with the GMC remained high amongst medical professionals, although most audiences (aside from ROs) are more likely to report concerns elsewhere.

The majority of audiences feel positive about the GMC's monitoring of doctors' skills and safety, but doctors are notably less trusting of the GMC than other audiences, with fewer believing they would make a fair and appropriate decision in response to concerns about a doctor.

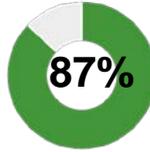
Perceptions of the GMC's impact within the health sector are mixed: providers and educators overall feel the GMC had more of a positive than a negative impact in the last 12 months, but the inverse was true for doctors. Similar patterns were seen in relation to whether the GMC focuses on the right issues, although there were consistent themes mentioned across audiences in terms of areas they felt the GMC should increase focus on, namely addressing systemic failures and providing more support for doctors than just guidance.

Most audiences agree the GMC's requirements placed on them or their organisation are reasonable and proportionate.

Most stakeholders regard their working relationship with the GMC as very positive, but they would appreciate more relationship building opportunities.

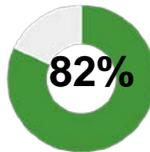
Strategic Aim 3: Strengthening relationship with the public and the profession

Contribute to public confidence in doctors



of patients and the public are confident in doctors.

Public confidence in the GMC



of patients and the public are confident in the way doctors are regulated.

Confidence in doctors and the way they are regulated remains high amongst patients and the public, medical students, and providers in 2020. Public awareness of the GMC is reasonably high, although specific knowledge remains low. Knowledge of the GMC was fairly high amongst medical students and providers.

Most doctors do not agree that the GMC promotes public confidence in the medical profession, however the proportion of those agreeing has increased in the last two years.

It is very common for ROs to refer to the GMC for advice or support on ethical guidance, although this is less common for doctors and medical students, who are both more likely to look to colleagues or medical defence bodies for this kind of support.

Generally, audiences are happy with the amount of communication they receive from the GMC, although notable minorities would like to hear from the GMC more often, particularly amongst medical students and providers.

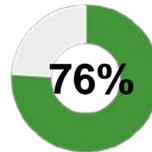
Strategic Aim 4: Meeting the changing needs of the health services across the four countries of the UK

Regulatory model and interventions are relevant, effective, appropriate and better meet the needs of the four UK countries



of stakeholders agree that 'the GMC's approach to regulation anticipates and responds to the needs of individual parts of the UK'.

We are well prepared for and can influence legislative change



of stakeholders have at least a fair amount of knowledge about legislative reforms.

Stakeholders continue to feel positively towards the GMC in 2020, with most agreeing that the GMC takes the right approach to responding to needs across individual parts of the UK and reporting strong levels of knowledge about the legislative reform the GMC is calling for.

ROs, providers and educators are mostly neutral about the GMC's approach to regulation across individual parts of the UK, likely to be due to lack of knowledge on the subject. Knowledge of legislative reform is also low amongst these groups, but the majority know at least a little.



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Our Values:

1. Being human first:

Whether employer or employee, client or collaborator, we are all humans first and foremost. Recognising this essential humanity is central to how we conduct our business, and how we lead our lives. We respect and accommodate each individual's way of thinking, working and communicating, mindful of the fact that each has their own story and means of telling it.

2. Impartiality and independence:

IFF is a research-led organisation which believes in letting the evidence do the talking. We don't undertake projects with a preconception of what “the answer” is, and we don't hide from the truths that research reveals. We are independent, in the research we conduct, of political flavour or dogma. We are open-minded, imaginative and intellectually rigorous.

3. Making a difference:

At IFF, we want to make a difference to the clients we work with, and we work with clients who share our ambition for positive change. We expect all IFF staff to take personal responsibility for everything they do at work, which should always be the best they can deliver.