

Business plan

2021-23



General
Medical
Council

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Business planning, the responsive way

The world is changing, and so is healthcare. Before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic unfolded, we'd started planning our shift towards a three-year rolling business plan to enable us to be more responsive and flexible. The emergence of COVID-19 has only served to highlight the importance of this approach.

While this plan sets out our key priorities for the next three years, we expect it to evolve. Where we can progress strategic work now, without undermining the focus on the pandemic response, we will do so.

We must also be ready to take on new responsibilities, redeploy resources and reprioritise activities when necessary. Our quarterly business planning and review process will help us reassess our priorities with respect to the broader health service.

Being sensitive to the wider system's needs will mean we may have a larger focus on some strategic themes than others at different times, but we will balance this over the course of our strategy.

Reporting our progress

We regularly report our progress in delivering our business plan to our Council throughout the year, as well as in our annual report. You can find these updates on our website.



Effective, relevant and compassionate regulation

We are committed to playing our part in the system-wide response to the pandemic and its longer-term impacts.

A culture of caring

The health and wellbeing of medical professionals is as key to being able to deliver high-quality care as any other aspect of the system.

While our core function of safety remains at the heart of what we do, we will also focus on what's needed to develop inclusive, supportive and well-resourced healthcare environments. And we'll renew our commitment to being proportionate, fair and empathetic in our approach to protecting the public and supporting professionals.

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Reflect, refresh and recover

Against the backdrop of the pandemic, we've been listening to those who interact with us, learning what works and reflecting on how we can improve our services. Looking forward, we are committed to:

- doing everything we can to continue to deliver timely and professional services
- investing in technology, such as digital ID checks, virtual quality assurance visits and virtual hearings
- restarting revalidation and supporting the rebalancing of appraisal to have a stronger focus on medical professionals' wellbeing, support and development needs
- increasing our clinical assessment capacity so we can assess and register more new doctors, offsetting the current reduced capacity because of social distancing
- expanding our investigation teams to progress work paused during the pandemic, so we can conclude cases as quickly as possible and minimise stress for all involved
- applying learning from the pandemic and public inquiries and reviews to maximise alignment with others across the system in how we work together.



Delivering our strategy

Alongside our regulatory duties,* we'll progress our strategic initiatives, which have been designed with and for medical professionals, patients and partners. Rather than providing an exhaustive list of all our key activities, here, we describe our immediate ambitions. These priorities have been determined both by their urgency and impact.



Enabling professionals to provide safe care

Reviewing 'Good medical practice'

We last reviewed 'Good medical practice', the core standards we expect of all doctors working in the UK, in 2013. We want to make sure the guidance remains relevant and reflects what we've learned about doctors' experiences during the pandemic. This will enable us to support the profession in providing high-quality care for patients.

Promoting supportive and inclusive healthcare cultures

The 'Supporting a profession under pressure' research highlighted particular barriers in workplace environments and cultures, which have a negative impact on medical professionals and the quality of care they give. We'll work with partners across the UK to deliver critical changes in response to these findings.

One area of focus for us will be reducing disproportionality - both in concerns referred to us by employers and in education and training outcomes. These long-standing reflections of racial discrimination and disadvantage are known to be reduced by inclusive and supportive practice environments. In working with others, we're committed to tackling the underlying causes of these issues. Equality and inclusion in healthcare is vital for medical professionals and patients.



Delivering our strategy



Developing a sustainable workforce

Improving the flexibility of postgraduate medical education and training

Our 'Flexibility in training' programme is designed to maximise trainees' and trainers' wellbeing, retention and skills development through education and training. This work implements our [plan for improving the flexibility of UK postgraduate medical education and training](#). The plan outlined issues including trainees' concerns, workforce pressures and disease prevalence. It also highlighted the need to transform to reflect changes in medicine, technology, and patients' needs and expectations.

Introducing the medical licensing assessment (MLA)

The MLA will create a common threshold of competence for all doctors practising in the UK. In turn, this will lead to better care and assurance for patients. In the future, we'll consider how we can help more professionals meet that threshold in response to the supply needs of the health service.

Regulating medical associate professionals

Physician associates and anaesthesia associates* provide a valuable contribution to patient care and expand capacity and capability of the medical workforce. We'll soon regulate these professions too and our aim is to maximise their contribution to the workforce and the provision of quality patient care.

Reviewing our registration routes

We'll begin our 'Routes to registration' programme to maximise the number of potential medical professionals who are available to deliver care. This will reconsider our existing and future potential pathways for suitable professionals to gain registration in the UK. Our initial focus will be making sure our registration framework remains fit for purpose as we manage the impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU. We'll also prioritise maximising our capacity for clinical assessments to support international medical graduates joining UK medical practice.



Delivering our strategy



Making every interaction matter

Becoming a more flexible and responsive regulator

We'll make the most of changes to our legislative framework to transform how we deliver our statutory functions. We'll deliver a model of regulation that is flexible and adaptable to the needs of the system. This work has the potential to reshape our operations and transform our approach, use of technology, and improve the experience of those that interact with us. This will form a key programme of work for the life of our ['Corporate strategy 2021-25'](#).

Understanding more about medical professionals' experiences

We'll scope work to better understand the day-to-day practice of those we regulate. We currently have limited information on the scope of an individuals' practice. This is a barrier to us providing more relevant support to doctors and to understanding fully the impact of different environments on practice. This work will explore what information we might gather, how we would apply that, and how it could inform a strategic shift in our capability as a regulator.

Listening and learning from the people we interact with

We'll work with diverse groups of patients and the public to embed their experiences into our policy development, as well as into improving our interactions and our work with the profession. Achieving our vision depends on us listening more actively to the needs of patients and the public, the profession, our partners, and our people.



Delivering our strategy



Investing in our people to deliver our ambitions

Creating a supportive learning culture

We value our people and enabling their continuous development will help us to achieve our ambitions. In 2021, we aspire to achieve Gold standard accreditation under Investors in People – a reflection of our commitment to being a good employer and a benchmark for us to continue to build on.

Becoming a more diverse and inclusive organisation

We'll improve our inclusivity as an employer and achieve full inclusivity under the [Talent Inclusion & Diversity Evaluation](#) framework. Key to this will be:

- increasing diversity at management levels
- improving retention of staff from diverse backgrounds
- ensuring everyone feels included, valued and respected.

This investment models the commitment we are expecting of the system, employers and educators.

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