



# Business plan 2026



# Our focus in 2026

This business plan underpins our 2026-2030 corporate strategy, the second of two strategies to deliver our [2030 vision](#). It outlines our key priorities for the year ahead, although we expect these to evolve. The landscape of healthcare regulation is rapidly transforming, and it is important we remain responsive, flexible and at the forefront of change.

At the core of what we do are our regulatory functions:

- setting the standards of patient care and professional behaviours doctors, physician associates (PAs) and anaesthesia associates (AAs) need to meet
- making sure doctors, PAs and AAs get the education and training they need to deliver good, safe patient care
- checking who is eligible to work as a doctor, PA or AA in the UK and checking they continue to meet the professional standards we set throughout their careers
- giving guidance and advice to help doctors, PAs and AAs understand what's expected of them
- investigating where there are concerns that patient safety, or the public's confidence in doctors, may be at risk, and taking action if needed.

Regulatory reform will also be our top priority for 2026 and beyond. It presents a unique opportunity to transform regulation and modernise our processes, to make them faster, more flexible, and more supportive and compassionate of doctors, PAs, AAs and patients. It will fundamentally change how we do things, and we must be ready to progress this work, redeploy resources, and reprioritise activities where necessary.

Our quarterly business planning and review process helps us reassess our priorities in year and if we need to scale back on other strategic work we'll do so. We will also remain sensitive to the wider system's needs. This means 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.

We 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](#).

# Our work in numbers

In 2026, in relation to doctors, we expect to:

- process **c.67,000** revalidation recommendations
- support **c.22,000** first-time applicants to join the UK register
- review **c.16,600** concerns raised with us
- take further action in response to concerns in the form of running approximately **300** Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service hearings
- visit **15** new medical schools or new medical programmes, and use our proactive quality assurance process to review **15** postgraduate training organisations, and **42** established medical schools
- review **106** postgraduate curricula and their programmes of assessment to make sure they continue to meet our standards
- respond to **c.570** ethical enquires in relation to our professional standards
- host over **1,000** events, engaging with over **45,000** doctors and students
- host over **150** Welcome to UK Practice events, and in doing so, support more than **11,250** international medical graduates new to UK practice
- approach **73,000** trainees and **65,000** trainers to understand their views on training, and on the quality of postgraduate medical education through our national training survey.

# Physician associates and anaesthesia associates regulation

We will prepare for the end of the transition period, when registration for physician associates (PAs) and anaesthesia associates (AAs) becomes mandatory rather than voluntary, and PA and AA titles become protected by law.

- As of December 2025, we've granted registration to 3,836 PAs and 183 AAs. In 2026, we expect there to be approximately 1,000 newly qualified PAs and AAs.
- In 2025 we launched the anaesthesia associate registration assessment (AARA), which is set at the level of a newly qualified AA, and as of December 2025, 21 AAs have sat the assessment.
- We will complete the delivery of a range of registration processes for PAs and AAs, including removal and re-entry to the register.
- We are developing the model and rules for periodic assessment (revalidation) for PAs and AAs, which we expect to consult on in 2026.
- We will continue to work with providers to make sure that the curriculums are developed and approved as well as implementing quality assurance processes.

# Our new corporate strategy

As part of our 2030 vision, over the next five years, four themes will shape all our work, helping us to achieve our goal of being an effective, relevant and compassionate regulator.



# Our 2026 priorities

## Regulatory reform

In 2025, we focused on working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) as they drafted and prepared to consult on new legislation to replace the Medical Act 1983. This year, our attention shifts towards developing the legal framework, rules, policies, and processes that will support all our regulatory functions. A key priority for us is to continue engaging with DHSC to understand the outcome of their consultation and how the draft legislation may change in response to stakeholder feedback. Once the position is clearer, and the legislation moves closer to its final passage through Parliament, we can move forward with our work to develop the new framework and associated rules and processes with more certainty.

Throughout this work, we'll maintain strong engagement with stakeholders to make sure we understand the impact of legislative change on the way we regulate. Where possible, we'll adopt a co-production approach to designing key processes. We'll consult on our proposals for reform and take account of stakeholder views before any changes take effect.

Regulatory reform will transform how we regulate, giving us greater flexibility to set our own rules and adapt our approach when evidence points to opportunities for improvement. This will help us regulate in a more supportive, inclusive, and compassionate way, while also promoting greater consistency between us and other regulators.

## Engaging on the future of education and career development

We're continuing our work to review the education framework that sets out our expectations for the quality and outcomes of education to reflect the needs of a changing UK population.

In 2026, we'll build on the engagement that we completed in 2025, with the aim of reaching:

- the organisations we work closely with
- other partners in the sector
- the people who will benefit from the changes – doctors, PAs, AAs, patients, and the public.

We intend for this to be wider and more extensive in 2026, to give us a range of views on potential changes.

We will work collaboratively to make sure our future regulation helps to drive much needed improvement and innovation in the sector while continuing to protect the public. In doing so, the sector needs to play its part to make this a success.

## Fairer regulatory outcomes

Equality diversity and inclusion (ED&I), remains a vital part of our work both as a regulator and employer — it's relevant to everything we do. We've embedded revised objectives and commitments that will support us to deliver against the aims in our corporate strategy 2026–2030.

This year we aim to build on the significant progress we've made so far. The continued delivery of our four strategic ED&I priority programmes will remain a priority in 2026 to make sure that we address inequalities and make sure fairness remains central to our work.

- We will continue to make fairness central to our work by eliminating differentials in employer fitness to practise referrals.
- We are progressing the programme of work to end discrimination, disadvantage, and unfairness in education and training pathways by 2031.
- We will finalise the implementation of the findings of the 2022 internal regulatory fairness review. This will further enhance the safeguards and controls we have in place for ensuring fairness and mitigating against bias in our high impact regulatory decisions.
- We will consider how we can build a more robust evidence base on ED&I to inform how we design and deliver activities. We'll start a project to enhance how we collect, use, and monitor diversity data across our regulatory activities.

As we deliver these priority programmes in 2026, we'll also use this opportunity to more broadly reflect on our approach to setting future equality priorities, progress, and reporting as a regulator and as an employer. In doing so we'll consider how we effectively comply with the proposed ED&I duties that will be part of the legislative reform.

## Transforming our customer interactions

In 2026 we'll continue to modernise the communication system in our Contact Centre, so customers can engage with us smoothly across every platform. We will introduce automated security checks to provide a more streamlined experience for customers, while further tightening our security checking processes.

## Associate worker status

In 2026 we'll complete the system development needed to make holiday payments and pension contributions on an automatic basis whenever fees are paid to associates who hold 'worker' status. This will replace manual payment arrangements that have been operating during our transition from Agresso (our current finance, HR and payroll system) to our new systems.

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## Our people priorities

## Our responsibilities as an employer

Our people are at the heart of everything we do. We'll continue to be an employer of choice by investing in wellbeing, development, and recognition - where our people feel valued, supported, and inspired to do their best. We'll continue to attract and retain diverse talent, maintaining a competitive offer for new recruits and existing staff.

We'll make sure that our employment practices on pay, performance, progression, and engagement are fair and consistent. We'll also invest in a new product for our people system, finance, payroll, subscription billing and employee self-service processes.

As part of our commitment to being a responsible organisation and to strengthen our existing environmental management system, we'll monitor our carbon emissions. We have a target date of 2040 to become a net zero carbon organisation.

We will work with a number of universities to host widening participation events for first year medical students from underprivileged backgrounds.

We will work with the Business in the Community network to provide coaching for those enrolled on their 'back to work' programme.

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You are welcome to contact us in Welsh. We will respond in Welsh, without this causing additional delay.

Mae croeso i chi gysylltu â ni yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ymateb yn Gymraeg, heb i hyn achosi oedi ychwanegol.

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