

Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care

Strategic Plan 2023-26

April 2023



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About the Professional Standards Authority

The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care promotes the health, safety and wellbeing of patients, service users and the public by raising standards of regulation and voluntary registration of people working in health and care. We are an independent body, accountable to the UK Parliament.

We oversee the work of 10 statutory bodies that regulate health professionals in the UK and social workers in England. We review the regulators' performance and audit and scrutinise their decisions about whether people on their registers are fit to practise.

We also set standards for organisations holding voluntary registers for people in unregulated health and care occupations and accredit those organisations that meet our standards.

To encourage improvement we share good practice and knowledge, conduct research and introduce new ideas including our concept of right-touch regulation. We monitor policy developments in the UK and internationally and provide advice to governments and others on matters relating to people working in health and care. We also undertake some international commissions to extend our understanding of regulation and to promote safety in the mobility of the health and care workforce.

Our organisational values are: integrity, transparency, respect, fairness and teamwork. We strive to ensure that our values are at the core of our work. More information about our work and the approach we take is available at www.professionalstandards.org.uk.



Strategic Plan 2023-26

Foreword from the Chair and Chief Executive

The Professional Standards Authority Strategic Plan 2023-26 sets out the approach to delivering our statutory duties effectively and efficiently. It also outlines our commitment to continuous improvement in our processes and providing value for money in the work of the Authority. In this plan we make frequent references to 'regulation and registration' to acknowledge that our functions cover the work of the professional regulators and of the accredited registers.

In addition to our core duties, this plan describes our work to make professional regulation better and fairer. In terms of better, this means ensuring our work adds value to regulators, accredited registers and registrants, helping them to do an even better job in the interests of patients, service users and the wider public. It also means championing the reform of professional regulation, and supporting the implementation of that reform, in order that regulators and accredited registers can make a greater contribution to safer care for all. Making the system fairer relates to our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). This means promoting and monitoring EDI in our work and in those we oversee, so that issues of unfairness and harm in regulation and registration are resolved and that improvements are seen in outcomes for all patients and service users.

This strategic plan also includes our work to deliver and support the recommendations from our *Safer care for all* report, published in September 2022. We will work with regulators, accredited registers, stakeholders in health and social care, patients, service users and governments to take forward these recommendations to improve the safety and quality of care for all.

We recognise that priorities might change during the lifetime of this plan and that we may need to adapt to the further challenges that lie ahead. We know, for example, that the responsibility for regulatory reform lies with the UK governments and we cannot control the changes implemented or the timetable for reform. In addition, some of our recommendations in *Safer care for all* require actions from other organisations and we will have to work with them to achieve the required outcomes. We will also have to prioritise work in order to deliver our objectives effectively within our resources. What we can promise is that patients, service users and public protection will remain at the heart of everything we do. We will speak out, we will listen, we will learn – and we will not hesitate to act when it is in the public interest to do so. As we look forward to 2023-26, the Professional Standards Authority remains as committed as ever to improving regulation and registration to protect the public.

Caroline Corby (Chair)

Alan Clamp (Chief Executive)

Our operating context

- 1.1 The independence and expertise of the Authority, together with our overview of professional regulation and registration, put us in a unique position to respond to regulatory challenges in health and social care. These include:
- the ongoing significant challenges faced by registrants, patients and service users in the health and social care sector across the UK;
 - working with the UK governments to support effective legislative reform of professional regulation;
 - working with regulators to implement reform, ensuring that the changes provide effective public protection;
 - ensuring that regulation and registration address equality, diversity and inclusion issues and provide appropriate protection for all;
 - learning from the sector's response to the COVID-19 pandemic to improve regulation in the future;
 - improving collaboration between regulators to better protect the public;
 - working with regulators, accredited registers and stakeholders to improve regulation and registration, including by undertaking research and sharing good practice;
 - addressing the issues highlighted in our *Safer care for all* report:
 - the impact of inequalities in regulation and health and care on patients, service users and professionals, and on public confidence more widely;
 - the challenges facing regulators in adapting to new disruptive factors in how health and social care professionals deliver care, such as financial conflicts of interest, new business models and technological changes;
 - the current workforce crisis and how professional regulation may need to evolve to better support the workforce needs across the UK;
 - and how to make learning cultures and individual accountability work for both patient and service user safety.

What we do

- 1.2 The Professional Standards Authority has four key functions.
1. We drive improvements in the 10 statutory regulators in health and social care by undertaking annual reviews of effectiveness.
 2. We provide a safety net for any fitness to practise decisions that are insufficient to protect the public.
 3. We raise standards in health and social care professionals in non-statutory roles through our accredited registers programme.
 4. We use research and policy development to improve regulation and registration to better protect patients, service users and the public.

Vision

- 1.3 Safer care for all through high standards of conduct and competence in health and social care professionals.

Mission

- 1.4 To protect patients, service users and the public by improving the regulation and registration of health and social care professionals.

Strategic aim 1

- 1.5 **To protect the public by delivering highly effective oversight of regulation and registration.**
 - To deliver our statutory duties, targeting our resources where there is greatest risk to the public.
 - To support high standards in health and social care regulation and registration through our performance review, section 29 reviews, accredited registers, policy and communications functions.
 - To review and improve our processes (including legislative changes where necessary) to ensure they are effective and efficient.
- 1.6 **By 2026:** we will develop our proportionate and risk-based oversight functions to drive clear improvements in the work of regulators and registers to protect the public.
- 1.7 We will know that improvements have been made if: the average number of Standards of Good Regulation met by the regulators have increased; the average number of conditions for established Accredited Registers have decreased; there are fewer section 29 appeals and our success rate for these appeals continues to exceed 80%.
- 1.8 To achieve these outcomes, in 2023/24 we will:
 - Deliver robust and fair performance reviews of the statutory regulators; use our section 29 powers to review the outcomes of fitness to practise panels; manage the Accredited Registers programme; and report our findings to Parliament.
 - Evaluate the changes to our performance reviews and accreditation processes that were introduced in 2021/22 to identify opportunities for further improvements.
 - Seek ways to increase the awareness and use of Accredited Registers by employers, patients and service users.
 - Review the impact of regulatory reform on our processes, together with legislative amendments for the Authority, in order to make changes to how we work to protect the public.
 - Provide feedback on reform legislation and plans for implementation of reform to ensure that changes are focused on public protection.
- 1.9 In 2024/25 we will:

- Develop any required changes to our performance review and accreditation processes that were identified in the 2023/24 evaluation.
 - Review our Standards of Good Regulation and our Standards for Accredited Registers, consulting with regulators, accredited registers and wider stakeholders to identify where changes are needed.
 - Implement any necessary changes to Authority functions and processes arising from regulatory reform.
- 1.10 In 2025/26 we will:
- Implement any changes in our Standards of Good Regulation and Standards for Accredited Registers.
 - Continue to support the implementation of regulatory reform and evaluate the impact of changes made in 2024/25.

Strategic aim 2

- 1.11 **To make regulation and registration better and fairer**
- To lead the development of more effective regulation through reviewing our standards, and undertaking other activities including research, policy advice and quality improvement initiatives, such as sharing good practice.
 - To promote, influence and support regulatory reform.
 - To promote and monitor equality, diversity and inclusion in our work and in those we oversee.
- 1.12 **By 2026:** we hope that legislative reform will be complete or clearly underway for all regulators in health and social care and the Authority will be playing an active role in the effective implementation of that reform. In addition, indicators of equality, diversity and inclusion across the regulators and Accredited Registers will show significant progress when compared to 2022/23.
- 1.13 We will know that improvements have been made if: there is an increase in the number of Accredited Registers practitioners working in health and social care; there is comprehensive coverage of appropriate safeguarding checks for those working in health and social care; and indicators of equality, diversity and inclusion have significantly improved.
- 1.14 To achieve these outcomes, in 2023/24 we will:
- Deliver our equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) commitments in the *Safer care for all* report, including reviewing our own processes and introducing new approaches to assessing EDI for the regulators and Accredited Registers.
 - Consider how safeguarding checks are used across regulators and Accredited Registers to ensure appropriate protection for patients and service users.

- Review how we report our findings about the performance of regulators and Accredited Registers so it is clear what is done well and also providing challenge where improvements are needed.
 - Undertake research, hold a research conference, provide policy advice and share good practice to improve regulation and registration.
 - Promote continued regulatory reform that is focused on public protection and support the implementation of that reform.
- 1.15 In 2024/25 we will:
- Evaluate the impact of the changes to our EDI standards for regulators and Accredited Registers.
 - Continue to undertake research, provide policy advice and share good practice to improve regulation and registration.
 - Support the implementation of regulatory reform.
- 1.16 In 2025/26 we will:
- Undertake further research into EDI issues in regulation and registration and identify actions for further improvement.
 - Review the initial impact of regulatory reform and make recommendations for any further changes needed to better protect the public.

Strategic aim 3

- 1.17 **To promote and support safer care for all**
- To work with others to establish the full range of functions recommended in *Safer care for all* for Health and Social Care Safety Commissioners in each of the four countries of the UK.
 - To work with UK governments to develop regulatory strategies to support the workforce strategies.
 - To work with regulators, Accredited Registers and other stakeholders to: promote positive workplace cultures; resolve any conflicts between business priorities and patient safety, and between safe spaces, accountability and the duty of candour.
- 1.18 **By 2026:** all four countries of the UK will have: regulatory strategies that support workforce strategies; and safety oversight functions that monitor and address risks, coordinate inquiries and monitor the implementation of inquiry recommendations.
- 1.19 We will know that improvements have been made if: all UK workforce strategies are underpinned by regulatory strategies; the range of functions of Health and Social Care Safety Commissioners are delivered effectively across the UK; and there are clear and appropriate policies in place to ensure that safe spaces, accountability and candour work together in the public interest.
- 1.20 To achieve these outcomes, in 2023/24 we will:

- Review the remit of the Patient Safety Commissioner for England and the introduction of a similar role in Scotland, and make recommendations in relation to the scope and delivery of these roles.
- Explore the case for Health and Social Care Safety Commissioners (or equivalent functions) for Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Engage with UK governments to review how regulatory strategies might be developed that will help to support national workforce strategies.
- Work with regulators and registers to address business practices that may compromise patient and service user safety.
- Convene policy discussions to review how safe spaces, individual accountability and the duty of candour can work together in the interests of positive workplace cultures and patient and service user safety.

1.21 In 2024/25 we will:

- Support any necessary development of Patient Safety Commissioner roles in England and Scotland; and, if required, the implementation of similar functions in Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Work with governments and other stakeholders to publish regulatory strategies that support workforce strategies.
- Work with others to implement agreed approaches to the use of safe spaces in healthcare settings.

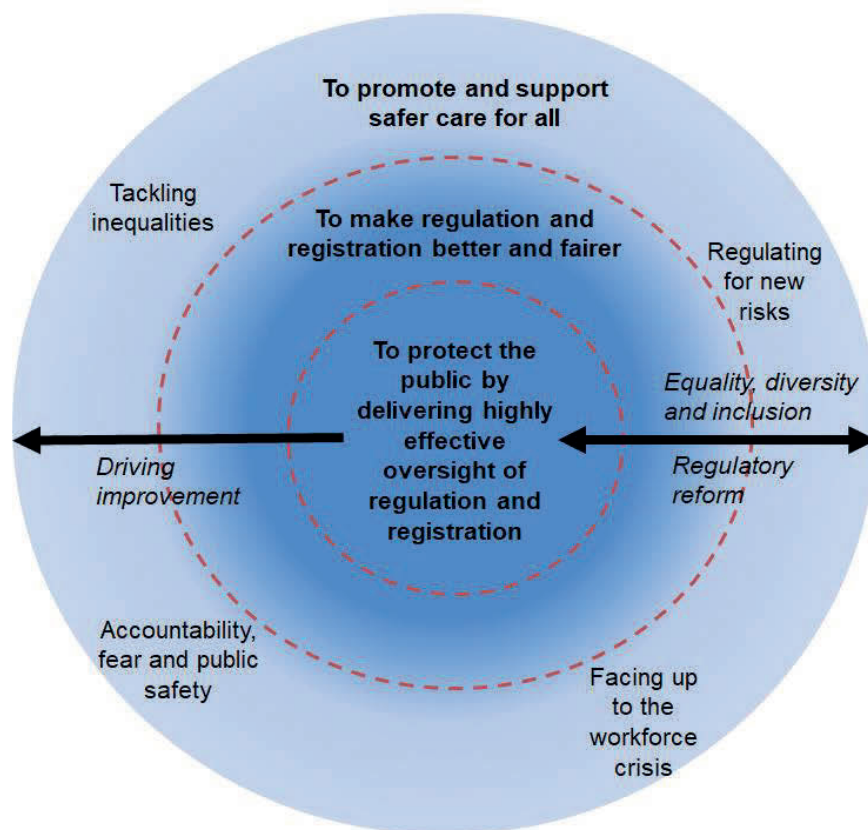
1.22 In 2025/26 we will:

- Support the implementation of regulatory strategies to address workforce issues.
- Evaluate the impact of the Patient Safety Commissioner functions and make recommendations for further improvements.

How these strategic aims work together

The diagram below shows how the three strategic aims are inter-related. The core work of the Authority enhances public protection and also drives improvements in regulation and registration. Together these make a key contribution to safer care for all. Equality, diversity and inclusion are key themes underpinning all three strategic aims. Regulatory reform has the potential to support improvements in regulation and

registration; and could enable professional regulation to make a greater contribution to safer care for all.



How we will work to deliver our strategic plan

How we will enhance how we work in 2023-26

To deliver the aims set out in this plan we will need to make the best use of our resources. The Authority is committed to providing value for money. We aim to do so in three ways: carefully reviewing expenditure and controlling costs; systematically evaluating core processes to identify improvements in effectiveness and efficiency; and maximising the benefits of our work in the interests of better regulation and registration. For example, we have taken steps to reduce our expenditure on office accommodation, IT services and pensions; and we have reviewed and improved processes for our Accredited Registers function and performance reviews. We will review our section 29 functions to ensure they continue to be efficient and effective.

As part of this plan, we will have the teams responsible for assessment of the regulators and Accredited Registers in the same directorate, to facilitate better information-sharing and a more joined-up approach to how we develop our standards. We will also look for ways to achieve greater input from patients and service users into our oversight work; and ensure that our work reflects the different health and social care contexts across the UK.

We will further enhance our culture of internal learning and transparency, so that we can continually improve, and expect those we oversee to do the same. We will hold ourselves to the same standards that we expect of others. This will mean working to improve diversity through development and recruitment, particularly at senior levels and on our Board, and through inclusive policies and training relating to equality,

diversity and inclusion. We will have a strong focus on supporting our staff and ensuring the wellbeing of all who work at the Authority.

Since achieving change in the wider system will mean more collaboration, we will develop a new communications and engagement team, that will support the rest of the organisation to engage with a broader and more diverse range of stakeholders in our day-to-day work. We will also look for ways to better explain our role to the public and ensure this information is accessible, including re-designing our website. This will help improve awareness of how health and care professionals are regulated, and what standards of care to expect. We will also share information, advice and guidance with regulators and Accredited Registers to support improvements in regulation and registration.

Our values

We will strive to ensure that everything we do is underpinned by our values. Our values describe how we work with colleagues and external stakeholders. We strive to promote, develop and demonstrate these values in everything we do. A positive culture leads to better performance and better outcomes for patients, service users and the public.

Our values are:

- Integrity – we will be open, honest and trust each other.
- Transparency – we will be clear about our performance and the reasons for our decisions with all stakeholders.
- Respect – we will treat each other, and those we work with outside the organisation, with respect at all times.
- Fairness – we will strive to be fair in all our decision-making.
- Teamwork – we will work in partnership to deliver better outcomes for patients and the public.



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