

General
Pharmaceutical
Council

Strategic plan 2020-25: year three



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Strategic plan presented to Parliament and the Scottish Parliament pursuant to Paragraph 8 of schedule 1 to the Pharmacy Order 2010



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Foreword

April 2022

The COVID-19 pandemic had a huge impact during the first two years of implementing our five-year strategic plan and our ten-year vision.

Our Vision 2030 is one of safe and effective pharmacy care at the heart of healthier communities. During the pandemic, pharmacies have really shown how they are indeed at the heart of their communities, providing safe and effective care to people in extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

Over the last year, we have seen pharmacy teams in all settings playing a critical part in the response to COVID-19, including having a vital role in the successful delivery of the COVID-19 vaccination programme. We would like to thank everyone in pharmacy for the work they've done under sustained pressures to help us all keep safe and improve our health.

Putting our vision and strategy into practice

Our strategic approach, outlined in this plan, has helped us meet the challenges caused by the pandemic.

A key priority for us has been to support pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy owners to continue to provide safe and effective care to everyone.

For example, we have continued to relax the revalidation requirements for pharmacy professionals and have paused routine inspections of pharmacies during periods of high COVID-19 cases and significant pressures.

Our inspectors have instead focused on supporting pharmacies with the roll-out of the vaccination programme. They have given help to pharmacies and suggested other organisations to contact and resources that may be useful, to help make sure the programme could be delivered safely and effectively. We have also continued to share examples of good practice in how pharmacies have successfully managed challenges and effectively delivered services throughout the pandemic, for others to learn from.

Throughout the pandemic, we have continued to act quickly on any information we have received which suggested a risk to patient safety. We have carried out intelligence-led inspections, and taken enforcement action where appropriate.

Delivering our strategic aims

Like everyone, we have had to be flexible in our approach over the last two years, and some of our plans and timelines have had to change. But we have also kept moving ahead with delivering our strategic plan and vision, as the pressures of the pandemic have shown powerfully why we must achieve these aims.

One of our strategic aims is to deliver improvements in pharmacy care by



modernising how we regulate education and training. These major changes will help to achieve ambitious strategies for pharmacy and health across the UK, by enabling newly qualified pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to play a much greater role in providing clinical care to patients and the public.

This year we have continued to make significant progress in implementing our new standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists, working closely with key stakeholders across England, Scotland and Wales.

We have also published two key strategies that will help us to meet the aims in our Vision 2030 and this strategic plan.

Managing concerns about pharmacy professionals: our strategy for change

describes the steps we will take to improve how we manage concerns about pharmacy professionals, to help us to achieve our Vision 2030. The significant challenges we continue to face in managing concerns have been made worse by the pandemic: we received high numbers of concerns, could not progress investigations as quickly as usual and had to switch to remote hearings at short notice. It is a key priority for us to improve our fitness to practise service – both in the short term and the long term – to help us respond effectively to these challenges.

The strategy and action plan set out how we will improve the way we work, so that we take action to protect patients when needed, while at

the same time promoting and encouraging a learning culture that allows pharmacy professionals to deal with any concerns and go back to practising when this is appropriate.

Delivering equality, improving diversity and fostering inclusion: our strategy for change

has also been published this year. This strategy sets out a framework for how we will build considerations of equality, diversity and inclusion into all aspects of our work as a regulator and as an employer.

Looking ahead

We know there are further changes and challenges ahead as we begin the third year of this five-year strategic plan.

For the GPhC, there will be a significant change this year. Nigel will leave his role as Chair after eight years and will be succeeded by our new Chair, Gisela Abbam.

Looking ahead, we can see some significant developments which will have a big impact on what pharmacy is expected to do and on how we regulate pharmacy.

These include:

- the short-term and longer-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on health and social care, and on wider society – including the need to tackle health inequalities that have been further exposed by the pandemic
- pharmacy professionals and pharmacies playing a much greater role in providing

clinical care and providing a wider range of clinical services, including independent prescribing

- the effects of new technologies and advances in science on medicines and clinical care
- patients and the public having high expectations of evolving 'person-centred' care

We also expect to see further integration of health and social care in each country in which we regulate, including through the planned reforms in England set out in the Health and Care Bill. This will further increase the demand for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to work in a greater variety of settings as part of multi-professional clinical teams.

Governments across Great Britain are also working together on plans for reforming professional regulation to better protect patients, support our health services and to help the workforce meet future challenges.

We will continue to keep this strategic plan under review, as we've done throughout the pandemic, and will be agile and responsive to these and other developments. We may need to reprioritise our work and will make sure we continue to reflect on and use the lessons learnt to improve how we regulate pharmacy.

We will also continue to further develop and implement our new ways of working, and to put in place improved structures, systems and

processes. This will help us to work flexibly and to successfully achieve our aims.

One of the real positives that has come from the pandemic has been the real spirit of collaboration we have experienced. We look forward to working in partnership with patients and the public, the pharmacy professions and other stakeholders over the coming years to support the delivery of safe and effective patient care.



Gisela Abbam
Chair



Duncan Rudkin
Chief Executive and Registrar



What we do

We have an important part to play in making sure people receive safe and effective care when using pharmacy services, and have trust in pharmacy.

We:

- promote professionalism within pharmacy
- help make sure pharmacy professionals have the appropriate knowledge, attitudes and behaviours
- assure the quality of pharmacy, including its safety
- support the improvement of pharmacy

We have a number of ways in which we do this. These include:

- registering and listing publicly the pharmacy professionals and pharmacies that provide care to patients and the public
- setting and promoting the standards needed to enter and stay on our register
- receiving assurances, in a number of ways, that pharmacy professionals and pharmacies continue to uphold our standards – and acting appropriately when they do not
- sharing with others what we learn through our work
- investigating concerns about the people or pharmacies we register and taking proportionate action to protect the public and promote our standards

Our strategic plan

Our strategic plan for the years 2020-25 marks the start of our journey towards delivering our ambitious Vision 2030, for 'safe and effective pharmacy care at the heart of healthier communities'.

To make major progress in delivering our vision over the five years to 2025, we will focus on achieving the five strategic aims set out below. These are to:

1. Deliver an adaptable standards framework that meets public and professional needs that are changing quickly.
2. Deliver effective, consistent and fair regulation.
3. Drive improvements in pharmacy care by modernising how we regulate education and training.
4. Shift the balance towards more anticipatory, proportionate and tailored approaches to regulating pharmacy.
5. Enhance our capabilities and infrastructure to deliver our vision.

Each aim is supported by a short narrative for explanatory purposes, the key programmes of work we will be focussing on, along with some high-level examples of success.



Our strategic aims

1. Deliver an adaptable standards framework that meets public and professional needs that are changing quickly

Having an up-to-date and relevant standards framework and supporting guidance – for professionals and pharmacies – will allow us to regulate flexibly, proportionately and effectively. The standards and guidance will help professionals deliver a broader range of clinical services, working in a variety of settings and within different models of service delivery. These service models will incorporate more and more use of advanced technology.

To achieve this aim over the remaining three years of this strategic plan, our key programmes of work will focus on:

1. Developing new regulatory standards for updated roles in medicines legislation.
2. Making sure our core standards and supporting guidance meet the changing needs of the public and professionals.

We will know we are successful if:

- pharmacy governance has been strengthened with rules and standards for chief pharmacists, superintendent pharmacists and responsible pharmacists
- our regulatory standards framework reflects the main issues needed for the safe and effective practice of pharmacy
- standards expected are understood by the public, professionals and pharmacy owners
- professional responsibilities and accountabilities are clear and evidenced by feedback and through inspections, and the concerns that are raised

2. Deliver effective, consistent and fair regulation

As a good-quality regulator, all our services will be performing consistently well. We will understand what difference our regulatory approaches and activities are making to patient safety and the continuous improvement in the quality of pharmacy practice in all settings. We will also be making sure the way we regulate is grounded in equality and diversity, and a good understanding of the systems and cultures professionals and the communities they serve are based in.

To achieve this aim over the remaining three years of this strategic plan, our programmes of work will focus on:

1. Meeting all the standards of good regulation.
2. Reporting broadly on our regulatory and service performance.
3. Regulating fairly.

We will know we are successful if:

- we are consistently meeting all 18 standards of good regulation set by the Professional Standards Authority
- we are reporting on the productivity, efficiency and effectiveness of our services and organisational performance
- we understand the impact of our regulatory approaches and use this to improve the quality of pharmacy practice
- we can effectively assess the safety and quality of the broad range of pharmacy care
- we are using all our regulatory levers and influence to support and – when necessary – to drive positive change in pharmacy, tackling discrimination and making sure everyone can access person-centred care, fostering equality of health outcomes

3. Drive improvements in pharmacy care by modernising how we regulate education and training

We aim to make sure that all aspects of how we regulate the education and training of pharmacy professionals, and their ongoing learning and development, are up to date and working effectively together. Through this we will be better able to support the shaping of confident and capable professionals that can meet patients' needs now and in the future.

To achieve this aim over the remaining three years of this strategic plan, our programmes of work will focus on:

1. Refreshing standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.
2. Developing our role in the post-registration assurance and practice of pharmacy professionals.
3. Implementing a tailored and intelligence-led approach to accrediting and quality assuring initial education and training providers.
4. Updating the delivery, content and timing of the registration assessment for pharmacists.
5. Enabling the efficient registration of overseas pharmacy professionals, considering Brexit.

We will know we are successful if:

- employers tell us that newly qualified pharmacy professionals have the skills needed
- there is effective assurance of post-registration practice
- education providers meet our refreshed standards, with pharmacists having the necessary knowledge and skills to independently prescribe at the point of registration
- our registration assessment is delivered online in a network of test centres across the UK and tests the necessary knowledge and skills of a 'day-one' pharmacist
- there is a fair and proportionate assessment for all overseas nationals reflecting the changes created by Brexit

4. Shift the balance towards more anticipatory, proportionate and tailored approaches to regulating pharmacy

We will be focusing more and more of our regulatory efforts on getting ahead of issues before they happen or become a bigger issue. We will be using data, intelligence and insights to help us do that. We will also use them to guide our decision-making so that we are increasingly tailoring our regulatory responses, to make the most impact. As a result, our responses will be based more around the context and issues we are dealing with, rather than the way we are structured. This approach will also include engaging and working with others and communicating more directly with the public as well as with pharmacy.

To achieve this aim over the remaining three years of this strategic plan, our programmes of work will focus on:

1. Practising an approach to how we regulate that is increasingly informed by intelligence.
2. Managing the flow of incoming information, intelligence and concerns more strategically.
3. Delivering the implementation plan for our strategy for managing concerns about pharmacy professionals
4. Developing a more strategic approach to regulating pharmacy.

5. Building the views of patients and the public into our work and raising the public's awareness and understanding of the standards they should expect from pharmacy.

We will know we are successful if:

- we are identifying issues that apply generally across pharmacy and are acting on them
- we make key regulatory datasets available to the pharmacy sector on our website
- our regulatory responses are increasingly tailored and co-ordinated based on the issues and context that apply
- our approach to managing concerns about pharmacy professionals is fair, inclusive and free from discrimination and bias, and encourages openness, learning and improvement in pharmacy
- we are ready to roll out a strategic approach to regulating the quality of registered pharmacies
- we are working in partnership with patients and the public to co-produce our standards, guidance and policies, and are informing patients and the public about the standards they can expect when using pharmacy services

5. Enhance our capabilities and infrastructure to deliver our vision

To successfully achieve our vision and to regulate efficiently, it is important we have the right foundations in place. This includes having the right people, and the right culture and ways of working. To be successful we will be supported by the right technology and be in a financially stable and sustainable position.

To achieve this aim over the remaining three years of this strategic plan, our programmes of work will focus on:

1. Improving customers' experience of our services.
2. Making sure we are organised for success.
3. Improving our IT infrastructure to support us in delivering our vision.
4. Establishing a sustainable and fair financial position.

We will know we are successful if:

- all our services for pharmacist and pharmacy technician registrants are available online, and we are consistently meeting customer service standards
- the organisation is led effectively, and we have improved structures, systems and processes to allow us to change with the times and deliver value for money
- we are operating more flexibly and from a smaller headquarters
- we have the capability, skills and knowledge to work in partnership and collaboration with the public, pharmacy professions and other stakeholders to support the delivery of safe and effective patient care
- we are in a financially stable and sustainable position, funded appropriately and fairly by those we regulate

Given the fast pace of change, and the significant implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will keep the plan and our aims under regular review. This will make sure we can adapt quickly to any changes in priorities that may arise.

Our strategic approach

The strategic aims we have set ourselves and the level of ambition we have committed to mean we will need to be able to adapt quickly to the fast-changing environment around us. We will need to use intelligence more and be anticipatory in our approach to the way we regulate, to make sure we are proportionate and effective.

It is important that in doing so, we keep our key operating principles at the centre of the way we work. These are to:

Promote professionalism

We believe the professional knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of the people working in pharmacy offer the best assurance to people using pharmacy services. Our most effective role is in helping to promote an environment in which professionalism can flourish, and making sure that the standards expected of pharmacy reflect this.

Be person-centred

At the heart of everything we do is the recognition that everyone is an individual and has differing needs which we must understand

and take account of in our work. This applies to everyone – including people using pharmacy services, people working in pharmacy, people working in the wider health and care sector and people in our own organisation.

Focus on outcomes

We will continue to focus on the outcomes we want to achieve on behalf of the people using pharmacy services. This will mean we can give the people working in pharmacy the flexibility to innovate and adapt in a way that improves quality.

Promote learning and improvement

We will work to continuously improve the quality of pharmacy. We will collect information from our work, and the work of others, so that we can share learning and promote improvement. And we will make sure that we also improve ourselves and work in the most efficient and effective ways.

Collaborate

We are one part of a wider system that makes sure people receive safe and effective care from pharmacy and ensures that public trust in pharmacy is maintained. If we are to be successful, we must work alongside the people using pharmacy, the leaders of pharmacy, other regulators, and the wider health and care sector.



Recognise the contribution of the whole pharmacy team

People receive safe and effective care when the skills, knowledge and contributions of everyone in the pharmacy team are used to their best effect. We will work in a way that recognises the whole pharmacy team's role in quality and improvement.

This strategy is our commitment to work with the people using pharmacy services, people working in pharmacy, and others, to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of people in Great Britain.



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