

Draft Strategic Plan 2023-26

Public consultation on the Professional Standards Authority's draft strategic plan for 2023-26

8 December 2022

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.

1. Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

1.1 This consultation gathers views and information relating to the Professional Standards Authority's draft strategic plan 2023-26.

1.2 You can respond to this consultation paper by completing the online survey available [here](#). You can also complete the questions in a Word document available [here](#) and submit it by email to:

1.3 strategicplanconsultation@professionalstandards.org.uk

Please return your response to us by the 11.59 pm on **24 February 2023**.

Our role

1.4 The Professional Standards Authority helps to protect the public through our work with organisations that register and regulate people working in health and social care. We are an independent UK body. Our role and duties are set out in the Health and Social Care Act 2002 (as amended).

1.5 There are three main areas to our work:

- We oversee the work of the 10 statutory bodies that regulate health and social care professionals in the UK
- We accredit registers held by non-statutory registering bodies of health and care professionals
- We aim to improve regulation by providing advice to UK government and others, conducting/commissioning research and promoting the principles of right-touch regulation.

2. About this consultation

2.1 The aims and objectives of the Authority are set out in its strategic plan. We also publish an annual business plan, setting out how we will achieve these objectives.

2.2 To date, we have published our strategic aims as part of the annual business plan. The objectives were set for a period of three years and were updated on a rolling basis.

2.3 For 2023-26, we will publish a three-year strategic plan which is not refreshed annually, although progress against the plan will be reviewed regularly. We are also consulting publicly on our strategic plan for the first time. This approach will enable a broader group of stakeholders to contribute to our plans. It will also enable us set clearer longer-term aims, against which we will monitor progress and outcomes.

2.4 The draft Strategic Plan 2023-26 is at Annexe A. The vision of the Authority is: *safer care for all through high standards of competence and conduct in health and social care professionals*. Our mission is: *to protect patients, service users and the public by improving the regulation and registration of health and social care professionals*. The draft Strategic Plan 2023-26 includes three overarching strategic aims:

Strategic Aim 1: to protect the public by delivering highly effective oversight of regulation and registration

Strategic Aim 2: to make regulation and registration better and fairer

Strategic Aim 3: to promote and support safer care for all

- 2.5 The themes from our *Safer Care for All*¹ report, which was published in September 2022, underpin these aims. These themes are: tackling inequalities; regulating for new risks; facing up to the workforce crisis; and accountability, fear and public safety.
- 2.6 Once this consultation closes, we will review feedback and finalise the Strategic Plan 2023-26. The Authority is required to submit the final version of its strategic plan to Parliament before it is published. Following this, we will publish the Strategic Plan 2023-26 alongside the Business Plan 2023/24.

3. Consultation questions

About you

To help us understand who is responding to our consultation, it would be helpful to find out more about you.

1. How would you describe your organisation (or your own role if more relevant)?
 - Member of the public
 - Health or care statutory regulator
 - Accredited register
 - Other health or care body
 - Patient representative body
 - Registrant of a health or care statutory body
 - Accredited Register practitioner
 - NHS
 - Other health or care provider
 - Professional association
 - Government department or non-departmental public body or agency
 - Local Authority
 - Non-governmental organisation
 - Other
2. Please provide the name of your organisation.
3. Are you content for us to use your comments in any published reports? If so, are you happy for us to include your name and, if relevant, your organisation?

The context for our strategy

4. Are there any factors we should consider in addition to those we have identified in the strategic plan that will affect the regulatory landscape in the next three years?
5. Which of the four themes in *Safer Care for All* do you think are most important for us to focus on?

¹ <https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/safer-care-for-all>

[tackling inequalities; regulating for new risks; facing up to the workforce crisis; and accountability, fear and public safety]

6. Are there any recommendations and commitments in [Safer Care for All](#) that you think we should prioritise for action? You can find these [here](#). Please indicate which you think are the top three priorities for us and others to work on in the immediate term.
7. Are there other activities not included in the draft Strategic Plan that you think the Authority should prioritise in the period 2023-26?

Our vision and mission

8. Do you agree that our vision (*safer care for all through high standards of competence and conduct in health and social care professionals*) is appropriate for the work of the Authority? Please explain your response.
9. Do you agree that our mission (*to protect patients, service users and the public by improving the regulation and registration of health and social care professionals*) is appropriate for the work of the Authority? Please explain your response.

Our strategic aims

10. Do you agree with our proposed Strategic Aim 1: *To protect the public by delivering highly effective oversight of regulation and registration*; and how we plan to deliver this aim and monitor progress? Please explain your response.
11. Do you agree with our proposed Strategic Aim 2: *To make regulation and registration better and fairer*; and how we plan to deliver this aim and monitor progress? Please explain your response.
12. Do you agree with our proposed Strategic Aim 3: *To promote and support safer care for all*; and how we plan to deliver this aim and monitor progress? Please explain your response.

Our future role

13. How do you think the role of the Authority should evolve in the future, particularly in the context of the reform of professional regulation in health and social care?

Impact

14. Please set out any impacts that the proposals set out in the draft Strategic Plan would be likely to have on you and/or your organisation, or considerations that we should take into account when assessing the impact of the proposals.
15. Are there any aspects of these proposals that you feel could result in differential treatment of, or impact on, groups or individuals based on the following characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Pregnancy and maternity

- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Other (please specify)

If you have responded 'yes' to any of the above, please explain why and what could be done to change this.

4. How to respond to this consultation

- 4.1 You can respond to this consultation by completing the online survey available at this [link](#).
- 4.2 You can also respond by providing a written response in a Word document to the questions outlined in this document to: strategicplanconsultation@professionalstandards.org.uk. Please include the question numbers provided.
- 4.3 We strongly urge responses by the online survey or email. If this is not possible, our postal address is:
- Professional Standards Authority
157-197 Buckingham Palace Road
London
SW1W 9SP
- 4.4 If you have any queries, or require an accessible version of this document, please contact us on 020 7389 8030 or by email at info@professionalstandards.org.uk.
Please return your response to us by the 11.59 pm on 24 February 2023.

5. Confidentiality

- 5.1 We will manage the information you provide in response to this discussion paper in accordance with our information security policies which can be found on our website (www.professionalstandards.org.uk).
- 5.2 Any information we receive, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).
- 5.3 If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential.
- 5.4 If we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality will be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Authority.

5.5 We will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in most circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

6. Our Consultation Process

- 6.1 Our consultation process is based on the current Cabinet Office principles on public consultation, 'Consultation principles: guidance'.² When conducting public consultations on aspects of the Authority's work we aim to:
- Be clear about both the consultation process and what is being proposed. This gives respondents the opportunity to influence our thinking and consider the advantages and disadvantages of our proposals.
 - Consult formally at a stage where there is scope to influence the policy in order that consultations have a purpose.
 - Give enough information to ensure that those being consulted understand the issues and can provide informed responses. We include assessments of costs and benefits of the options considered.
 - Seek collective agreement before publishing a written consultation particularly when consulting on the new proposals.
 - Consult for a proportionate amount of time, taking a judgement based on the nature and impact of the proposals. Consulting for too long will unnecessarily delay policy development and consulting too quickly will not give enough time for consideration and will reduce the quality of responses.
 - Ensure our consultation is targeted to consider the full range of stakeholders, bodies and individuals affected by the policy and include relevant representative groups. Consider targeting specific groups if necessary.
 - Consider consultation as an ongoing process, not just about formal documents and responses.
 - Analyse responses carefully and explain the responses received and how they have informed the policy. Give clear feedback to participants following the consultation. Publish responses to the consultation within 12 weeks or explain why that it is not possible.
 - Allow appropriate time between closing the consultation and implementing the policy.
- 6.2 If you have concerns or comments which you would like to make relating specifically to the consultation process itself, please contact:

Christine Braithwaite
Director of Standards and Policy
Professional Standards Authority 157-197
Buckingham Palace Road
London
SW1W 9SP
Tel: 020 7389 8030

² Cabinet Office. 2016 *Consultation principles guidance*. Available at: [Consultation principles 2016 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk) accessed on 20 July 2022.

Fax: 020 7389 8040

Email: christine.braithwaite@professionalstandards.org.uk

Annex A

Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care

Draft Strategic Plan 2023-26

For consultation

8 December 2022

Draft 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 and accredited registers, helping registrants 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.

Between December 2022 and February 2023 we are consulting on our Strategic Plan 2023-26. We encourage all stakeholders to share their views on the plan using the linked consultation document and thank you in advance for all your contributions.

We may not achieve all of what we set out here and will need to adapt to the further changes that lie ahead. We recognise, 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* may not have universal support and we will have to work with others to achieve the required outcomes. 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, put us in a unique position to respond to regulatory challenges in health and social care. These challenges include:
- the ongoing significant issues faced by registrants, patients and service users in the health care sector across the UK;
 - working with the UK governments to support effective legislative reform of professional regulation;
 - working with regulators to implement reform during 2023-26, ensuring that the changes provide effective public protection;
 - ensuring that regulation and registration address equality, diversity and inclusion issues and provide appropriate protection for the most vulnerable;
 - learning from the professional regulation 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 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, accredited registers, policy and communications functions.
 - To review and improve our processes (including legislative changes if necessary) to ensure they are effective and efficient.
- 1.6 **By 2026:** we will have proportionate and risk-based oversight functions that lead to clear improvements in the work of regulators and registers to protect the public.
- 1.7 We will know that we have succeeded because: the average number of Standards of Good Regulation met by the regulators will have increased (alongside a reduction in the average time taken to conclude fitness to practise cases); the average number of conditions for established accredited registers will have decreased; there will be fewer section 29 appeals and our success rate for these appeals will continue 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, research, policy advice and quality improvement activities, 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 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 we have succeeded because: there will be an increase in the number of accredited registers practitioners working in health and social care; there will be comprehensive coverage of appropriate safeguarding checks for those working in health and social care; and indicators of equality, diversity and inclusion will 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, provide policy advice and share good practice to improve regulation and registration.
- Promote continued regulatory reform that is focused on public protection.

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 of 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 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 we have succeeded because: all UK workforce strategies will be underpinned by regulatory strategies; the range of functions of Health and Social Care Safety Commissioners will be delivered effectively across the UK; and there will be 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.
- Make 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 patient and service user safety.

1.21 In 2024/25 we will:

- Support the development of Patient Safety Commissioner roles in England and Scotland; and the implementation of similar functions in Wales and Northern Ireland.

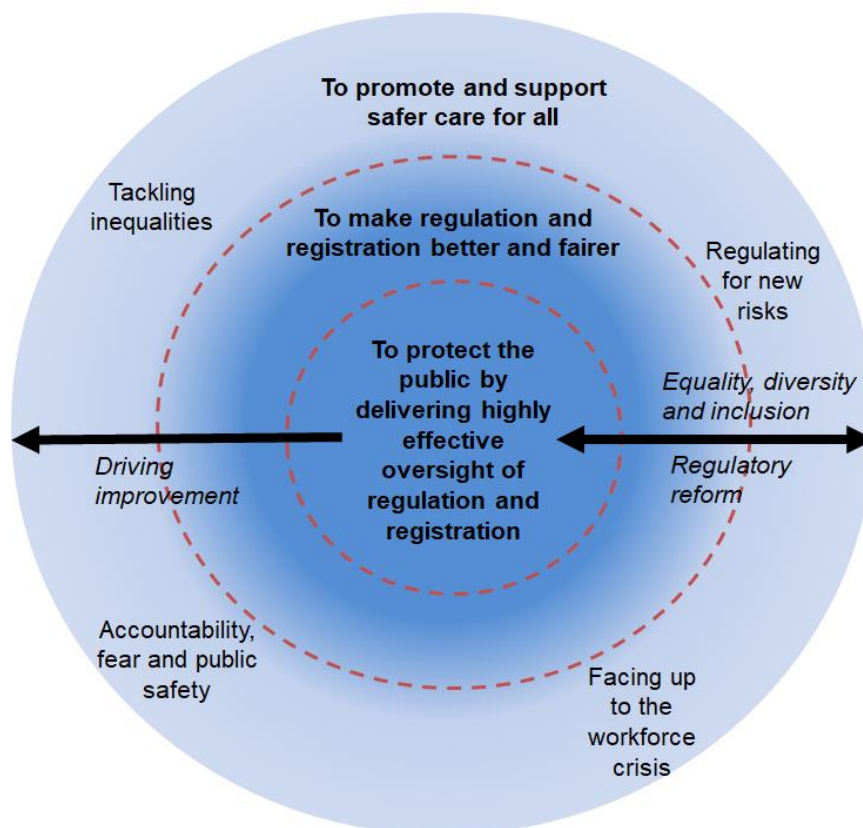
- Work with governments and other stakeholders to publish regulatory strategies that support workforce strategies.
- Work with others to implement agreed approaches to the use of safe spaces in healthcare settings.

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.

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 context 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.