

Business plan 2016

Our role

We are an independent organisation that helps to protect patients and improve medical education and practice across the UK.

- We decide which doctors are qualified to work here and we oversee UK medical education and training.
- We set the standards doctors need to follow, and make sure they continue to meet these standards throughout their careers.
- We take action to prevent a doctor from putting the safety of patients, or the public's confidence in doctors, at risk.

Every patient should receive a high standard of care. Our role is to help achieve that by working closely with doctors, their employers and patients, to make sure the trust patients have in their doctors is fully justified.

We are a charity registered in England and Wales (1089278) and Scotland (SC037750). Our work supports our charitable purpose to protect, promote and maintain the health and safety of the community by ensuring proper standards in the practice of medicine.

Our plan for 2016

Our work this year is designed to continue to achieve the strategic aims in our *Corporate strategy 2014–17*, and to make sure we continue to deliver a high-quality service across our range of core regulatory functions. A more-detailed operational plan underpins all of the activities in the business plan. The operational plan is overseen by our Performance and Resources Board, which will monitor our progress against the activities throughout the year.

Our strategic aims

The *Corporate strategy 2014–17* includes five strategic aims, which set our direction until the end of 2017. These help us to enhance and expand on our core work.

- 1 Make the best use of intelligence about doctors and the healthcare environment to ensure good standards and identify risks to patients.
- 2 Help raise standards in medical education and practice.
- 3 Improve the level of engagement and efficiency in the handling of complaints and concerns about patient safety.
- 4 Work more closely with doctors, medical students and patients on the frontline of care.
- 5 Work better together to improve our overall effectiveness, our responsiveness and the delivery of our regulatory functions.

We've also used the following priorities identified by our Council to frame the *Business plan 2016*.

Council priorities

- 1 Implementation of the Change Programme
- 2 Taking forward legislative reform/the legislative programme arising from the Law Commissions' report
- 3 Understand the context in which doctors practise
- 4 Medical Licensing Assessment
- 5 Revalidation review
- 6 Respond to the Shape of Training review
- 7 Fairness and proportionality
- 8 Supporting doctors, patients and relatives involved in fitness to practise investigations
- 9 Communications strategy and engagement
- 10 Develop the Register and deliver Data Strategy Phase 2
- 11 Speeding up fitness to practise procedures

The activities below are the main pieces of work we'll do to help us achieve our aims during 2016.

Strategic aim 1: Make the best use of intelligence about doctors and the healthcare environment to ensure good standards and identify risks to patients.

We'll continue to develop smarter ways of using our data. Our ability to understand and respond to the rapid changes in the healthcare environment, particularly risks to patients, is reliant on how well we can understand and respond to what we learn from our data.

Our work in 2016 will include the following.

- Delivering our data strategy, which sets out how we will develop and use our data. We are focusing on how we can better understand the different stages of each medical career and the different environments in which doctors work.
- Developing of the List of Registered Medical Practitioners, which will give the public more information on doctors than ever before, such as whether a doctor is in training or on the Specialist Register.

Strategic aim 2: Help raise standards in medical education and practice.

The most effective way for us to protect patients is to work with doctors to help make sure they have the education, training and resources they need to achieve high standards of professionalism and medical ethics.

Our work in 2016 will include the following.

- Engaging and influencing to press for alternative routes for legislative reform, including Section 60 Orders.*
- Publishing our updated *Confidentiality* guidance.
- Publishing our new cosmetic practice guidance.
- Continuing to improve and use technology to make our professional standards easier to access and targeted specifically to the variety of doctors' roles through our standards app.
- Continuing to consider a national Medical Licensing Assessment. Medicine is an increasingly mobile profession and we believe it would be fairer and more reassuring to the public for there to be a single standard for entry to the register that everyone can rely on.

* In order for the GMC to adapt to changing needs in regulation and introduce reforms to our functions we often need to make changes to the *Medical Act 1983*, but we can only do so by laying an order under Section 60 of the *Health Act 1999* (a 'Section 60 order') to amend the *Medical Act 1983*.

- Developing our standards in curricula and assessment, to create a more flexible and agile approach to how we approve curricula.
- Implementing the recommendations of our review of the Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board test.
- Considering a new process called credentialing to recognise doctors' capabilities in particular practice areas. This new system would let us accredit doctors' capabilities in defined areas of practice – especially areas that are not currently covered by specialty training.

Strategic aim 3: Improve the level of engagement and efficiency in the handling of complaints and concerns about patient safety.

We can only make our processes more effective by working closely with doctors, employers and patients or their relatives. Complaints about a doctor's practice need to be managed by the right person, in a way that is proportionate to the severity of the complaint and reduces the stress for all involved.

Our work in 2016 will include the following.

- Continuing to monitor doctors' performance to make sure we deal with concerns about them quickly and efficiently.
- Following the introduction of an information sharing agreement between the GMC and the Care Quality Commission, working to add new arrangements around sharing information with NHS Improvement.
- Following the 2015 review of vulnerable doctors who are involved in our fitness to practise procedures, meeting with the NHS to explore a National Support Service for doctors and implementing new guidance for our staff on how to support vulnerable doctors involved in our process.

- Following the 2015 Sir Anthony Hooper review of how we deal with fitness to practise concerns from whistleblowers, introducing process changes as well as a new annual report, so we can report on the number of whistleblower disclosures we receive.
- Expanding on our provisional enquiries pilot to include more types of enquiry in the provisional enquiries process, aiming to improve our customer relations and better understand and identify patient safety issues.
- Implementing last year's Section 60 changes. The changes give us the opportunity to appeal against decisions made by a Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service tribunal.

Strategic aim 4: Work more closely with doctors, medical students and patients on the frontline of care.

Our ability to successfully engage doctors in raising standards relies on us working more closely with others, including patients, educators, employers, medical students, and other healthcare professionals and regulators. By understanding more about the daily challenges doctors face, we can learn more about what motivates and influences their behaviour and engage them more successfully.

Our work in 2016 will include the following.

- Developing our digital media strategy as part of a four-year plan, which involves changes to the way we work internally and with partners to become a digital first organisation.
- Delivering events to promote medical professionalism among doctors and medical students, including our Medical professionalism matters events and dinners for those with an interest in our work in England.
- Organising and hosting UK Advisory Forum meetings in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

Strategic aim 5: Work better together to improve our overall effectiveness, our responsiveness and the delivery of our regulatory functions.

It is essential that we continue to provide clear value for money, especially as demand for our services increases and pressures within the health service continue.

Our work in 2016 will include the following.

- Delivering our customer service strategy to develop a set of customer principles that we'll embed across the organisation.
- Delivering our pilot of paperless fitness to practise hearings, which will allow us to move away from using paper-based bundles in fitness to practise hearings to embrace a paperless system.
- Exploring the option of sending more communications using GMC Online rather than by post.
- Continuing to deliver our *Equality and diversity strategy 2014–17*.

Our Change Programme

To make sure we continue to deliver a model of regulation that is fit for purpose for the future, our Council asked our Chief Operating Officer to conduct a thorough review of the organisation from autumn 2014 to autumn 2015. The review encompassed five main areas of focus:

- organisational culture
- organisational design and capability
- activity and demand
- our cost base
- our income streams.

The outcomes of this review were that we needed a focused and thorough programme of transformational change to help us deliver an ambitious corporate strategy, cope with rising demand for our services and to help us become more responsive and flexible as a regulator and identify and act on risks to patient safety in an evidence-led and risk-based way.

We also identified a need to become even more efficient and effective to be able to demonstrate value for money for our registrants and good stewardship of our resources in delivering our statutory and charitable functions for public benefit.

As a result of these findings, we established our Change Programme. It focuses on five key portfolios of work that will enable us to deliver the changes we need as a business while also helping us safeguard our future financial sustainability. The portfolios are:

- organisational design and capability
- income generation
- reducing costs
- working smarter
- innovation.

The Change Programme was approved by Council in 2015* and we have already started work on the five portfolios.

As part of the programme, we will be moving a number of posts up to our Manchester office and reducing the size of our London office during 2016. We continue to communicate, consult and support staff during this period.

* See www.gmc-uk.org/06___GMC_Change_Programme___published_version.pdf_63832787.pdf.