Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP)  

excellence in general practice  

Strategic Plan  

2013 - 2017  

The RCGP - A New Era  

It is a challenging time to be a GP with rapidly changing political, economic, social and medical climates affecting general practice and primary care in the UK and across the world. Yet, our members continue to provide an excellent standard of care for patients, their families and carers.  

We welcome these challenges. To provide leadership of the profession across the UK and overseas, the College needs to be responsive both to changes in society and patient needs, and also to the changing needs of our members. With a membership of over 46,000 and growing, our GP members including our Associates in Training are the heart of the RCGP. They need to be confident that the College is supporting them in delivering excellent patient care now and in the future.  

This strategic plan recognises and responds to the challenges we face as a college and as a profession. We have been working on our vision for general practice and primary care in the future - GP 2022 - and patients and the quality of their healthcare will always be at the core of what we do.  

We must continue to set the highest standards for general practice through our provision of evidence-based clinical information. We must ensure that our members continue to be trained, educated and supported throughout their careers. And that they, in turn, continue to deliver and improve on the best possible care for their patients. This strategic plan sets out how we can achieve this.  

The RCGP is embarking on a new era in this its 60th anniversary year, not least with the move into our new headquarters at 30 Euston Square, London. With change comes opportunity and now is the ideal time to shape and respond to the policy debate around our increasingly divergent healthcare systems across the UK.
Our Faculties and Devolved Councils are at the heart of the RCGP and it is important that we build on their role in providing services to members locally, regionally and nationally and release their potential to play a bigger and more important role in setting and delivering the strategic direction for the College and in identifying the key issues and challenges facing patient care and the profession in their areas. We are indebted to our members for the time they give to the College, the majority of which is on a voluntary basis. There is a need to ensure that these members are properly supported and that they feel valued for their contributions.

Like the rest of the UK the College is facing, and will continue to face, financial challenges. The following detailed strategic plan proposes realistic and achievable ways of tackling these whilst not reducing the quality of the services we offer to our members or compromising our work in supporting standards of patient care. Of increasing focus is our engagement with members across the UK and overseas, as well as our international members, to support them in their work to meet the needs of patients, families and carers.

Our new home at 30 Euston Square provides a hub for general practice worldwide and a base from which we can further strengthen our commitment to supporting our members. 30 Euston Square is just one way in which the College is evolving. Amongst its many facilities are a state-of-the-art examination centre, and impressive conference facilities, underscoring our commitment to the development of high quality general practice and our dedication to the continued support and education of our members.

Excellence in patient care is the bedrock of all that the College stands for. This strategic plan sets out a clear way forward and will become the yardstick by which we measure our performance in delivering quality and excellence to GPs and patients alike.

“We need more GPs, spending longer with their patients and communities, with longer, life-long training to ensure that patients receive the best possible care, in a timely and appropriate manner and in an environment that improves the quality of their lives.”

“At a time when organisation of the health service is being so closely questioned, it is essential that the College focuses on the essentials – quality, leadership, collaboration and analysis. Pressures on GPs are immense. Their College must be the resource they need to meet an increasing challenge.”

2
1. **OUR VISION**

*Excellence in general practice for patients worldwide*

2. **OUR VALUES**

   The RCGP is the heart and voice of general practice:

   - we promote the principles of holistic generalist care in partnership with other health professionals and our patients
   - we are committed to equitable access to, and delivery of, high-quality and effective primary healthcare for all
   - we are committed to the academic and practical development of high-quality general practice

3. **OUR PURPOSE AND STRATEGIC AIMS**

   *To promote the best possible quality of health and healthcare for the population by:*

   - setting the highest standards for general practice
   - ensuring that GPs have the best possible training
   - supporting GPs throughout their professional lives to deliver the best possible service
   - leading the profession and demonstrating the value of general practice
   - developing general practice as the foundation of effective and sustainable primary care worldwide
   - using resources efficiently to support our members and develop the College sustainably
4. PROGRAMMES OF WORK & OUTCOMES

The strategic aims above can be grouped into five key programmes of work, with outcomes, as described below. These flow from the Purpose, Vision and Object, encapsulate the ambitions of the strategic aims and will support the delivery of the vision of GP 2022.

These outcomes will be underpinned by detailed operational plans which will describe how the aims and programmes of work will be delivered. They will be reported to the RCGP Trustee Board through Key Performance Indicators and through a Balanced Scorecard reflecting the five key programmes of work. In future, these will in turn inform and be reported through the College's annual Impact Report, published in the autumn.

GENERAL PRACTICE WORKFORCE
Ensuring that patients have access to GPs with the best possible training and standards through:

- supporting recruitment into the profession
- encouraging membership of the College to all GPs
- enhancing training
- developing the crucial leadership role of GPs and supporting all GPs in leadership and management training
- supporting the retention of doctors working in general practice
- designing and delivering excellent products and events to enhance education for general practitioners and the primary care teams
- promoting access for patients and their carers to be able to consult at convenient times and in a manner that suits them
- continuing to support the health needs of health professionals
- playing a key role in influencing workforce planning

QUALITY: FOR GENERAL PRACTICE, FOR PATIENTS AND FOR OUR MEMBERS
Setting the highest standards for general practice through:

- supporting Continuing Professional Development and revalidation
- being the centre for academic excellence for GPs
- recognising academic general practice as integral to the development of all GPs
- supporting continuous quality improvement in practices through setting high quality standards
- championing primary care research and innovation including identifying, promoting and sharing innovations in practice
- addressing the barriers to high-quality care, including inequalities and promoting the provision of care proportionate to need
- promoting the efficient and sustainable use of resources
- ensuring our services are of the greatest relevance to members’ needs
- encouraging methods to ensure better access to GP services through innovation in evidence based patient management
LEADERSHIP: INFLUENCING, ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS
Promoting the best health outcomes for patients, the public and the value of general practice through:

- enhancing the image of general practice through developing its evidence base
- shaping the policy debate around healthcare systems to benefit patients
- campaigning to increase the number of GPs, to meet patient needs
- leading and engaging with membership, including with the devolved councils and faculties, to deliver our vision and charitable objective
- leading the profession in delivering safe care and better health outcomes
- building upon patient engagement to deliver stronger patient and carer links
- working with external partners, including voluntary organisations, to develop initiatives to improve the health and healthcare of patients and the public
- championing the importance of general practice and generalism
- promoting collaboration and working in teams with other healthcare professionals

GLOBAL INFLUENCE
Developing the RCGP Global Centre to foster primary health care at its best through:

- maintaining global primary care high on the policy agenda both nationally and internationally
- working collaboratively to offer advice and expertise to improve the quality of education and the delivery of general practice as the foundation of effective and sustainable primary care worldwide
- increasing awareness of EU legislation and policy relevant to the training and delivery of primary care and exerting influence to improve standards
- improving the governance and co-ordination of RCGP-led international activities
- responding to the needs of our international and overseas members
- increasing capacity, capability and evidence base within the RCGP to deliver a sustainable international strategy
RESOURCES
Ensuring that the College is equipped to deliver the strategic aims through:

People
- creating a high performance culture
- developing and acquiring the skills and expertise needed to deliver current and future objectives
- having the right people in the right place at the right time
- making RCGP a great place to work, attractive to high performing staff
- developing excellent customer service for members, staff and external stakeholders

Buildings
- providing a suitable environment which is legally compliant, supports a high performance staff culture and supports opportunities for business development

Finance
- growing income to ensure core charitable objectives are appropriately funded
- ensuring the College’s future financial sustainability

Technology
- harnessing the benefits of IT in delivering the Strategic Plan
- enabling engagement with members, patients and the public, staff and external stakeholders
5. THE CONTEXT

The RCGP operates in an environment which provides a number of challenges as well as opportunities. In developing our strategy, we have sought to align our strengths to take advantage of the opportunities available, and to develop plans to meet the challenges in the environment. Inherent to our strategy is the management of predictable risks.

The External Environment

The external environment is characterised by the following challenges and opportunities:

The Political landscape
- increased divergence in policy among the four health systems of the UK, and devolution of decision making to local level, including GP contract negotiations, education providers and research governance
- restructuring of the NHS in England and the role of GPs as commissioners
- changes to the funding and delivery of social care
- lack of consensus on out-of-hours care
- concerns regarding quality and standards triggered by high-profile failures in patient care and experience
- emphasis on choice and personalisation and the potential for service fragmentation as a result of competition
- more control by patients over their information and decisions about their care
- impact of European legislation e.g. cross-border migration, recognition of professional qualification, changing EU rules on data protection
- an increasing recognition internationally of the importance of high-quality primary health care in health systems
- public accountability

The Economic climate
- continuing public spending squeeze across the UK with challenging billions efficiency targets
- challenges to social care including coping with local authority savings
- impact of the economy on patients – e.g. of unemployment and welfare cuts on health and well being leading to increased health inequalities
- financial pressures on practices, leading to increased workload (e.g. higher consultation rates/increasing elderly complex problem patients/higher targets) and restricting ability to respond to growing need
- need to keep College subscriptions and products keenly priced according to the market
- national pension changes affecting older GPs who may retire earlier
- impact on family medicine in Europe and beyond
- increase in incidence of non-communicable diseases due to rising economic prosperity in the emerging economies (Brazil, Russia, India, China (BRIC))
The Social landscape
- ageing population leading to increased need for, and integration of, NHS and social care services across the UK
- increasing inequalities – in health, income, opportunity, employment, IT access, etc, leading to decrease in social cohesion and increases in drug/alcohol misuse and increased mental and physical health problems
- continuing high levels of support for the NHS and trust in GPs
- increased use of the internet and social media – the information revolution - leads to better informed and more health conscious/aware patients with higher expectations and potentially consequent higher levels of dissatisfaction
- shifting ethical debates – e.g. on assisted dying, patient responsibility, rationing of healthcare due to financial constraints
- responding to the challenge of climate change by contributing to a more sustainable healthcare system

Medical trends
- introduction of revalidation and the need for enhanced GP training
- improving services to members
- the shift in the delivery of care out of the hospital and into the community
- growing numbers of patients with long-term conditions and multiple morbidities and increasing numbers of carers
- changing profile of the GP workforce – e.g. change in age profile and growth in the percentage of salaried and sessional GPs
- increased opportunities for GPs to consider academia and research within their training and beyond as part of professional development

Technological trends
- increasing use of the internet and tele-health as delivery channels vs. patient safety and quality of diagnosis
- continuing advances in medical technology with opportunities for personalised care
- new opportunities to use IT both to share records and improve communication between professionals and patients
- (e-)health literacy and the potential digital divide
ABOUT THE RCGP

Founded in 1952, the RCGP is the professional membership body for family doctors across the UK and abroad. With over 46,000 members, the College is now the largest medical Royal College in membership terms.

Our Membership
At the time of writing the College has over 46,000 members. The main categories of membership are:

- **Members**: over 30,000
- **Associates in Training**: over 11,000
- **Fellows**: over 3,000
- **International Members**: 750
- **Overseas Members**: over 2000
- ** Associates**: 700
- **Honorary Fellows**: 127
- **International Fellows**: 5 (a new category in 2012)

Each year we ask members for their feedback through the Membership Survey and we use the results of the survey to continually improve our services to members and to respond to their needs. Full information on the Membership Survey and our response can be found on our website [www.rcgp.org.uk](http://www.rcgp.org.uk).

Through our Devolved Councils in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales we have a strong, collaborative, regional network designed to meet and serve local and country-specific needs and to promote and influence the provision of high quality care by engaging with devolved governments and healthcare providers. Our international department facilitates inter-government meetings in the UK and abroad to offer advice and share experience about how to develop and support the profession internationally.

The College also has 31 local branches (known as faculties) in the UK including one in the Republic of Ireland, one Faculty for overseas and international members and a Rural Forum. On passing the RCGP examination and joining the College, every Member and Associate is automatically allocated to membership of one of the geographical faculties of the College. Faculties undertake a wide range of activities including seminars, conferences, workshops, research, peer support and social events which reflect the College's aim to promote the highest possible standards of patient care.

The RCGP has an outstanding record of achievement. Milestones in its history include the establishment of vocational training in general practice, the setting up of clinical guidelines for doctors, the development of the MRCGP[INT] international exam, the expansion of research into general medical practice and the promotion of general practice and primary care.

**Promoting Excellence in Family Medicine**

Much of what the College and its Officers do goes on behind the scenes, working with other professional and political bodies to advance the cause of general practice. The College meets regularly with Ministers and senior officials in the NHS, in all four countries, and the College contributes regularly to consultations on issues of national policy. Having the support of our members lends authority to the College's voice as an advocate for general practice and primary care.

Full information on our wide range of activities can be found on the website [www.rcgp.org.uk](http://www.rcgp.org.uk)
OUR CHARITABLE OBJECT

The Royal College of General Practitioners is a registered charity with the
Object:

To encourage, foster and maintain the highest possible standards in
general medical practice and for that purpose to take or join with others
in taking any steps consistent with the charitable nature of that object
which may assist towards the same.

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) is celebrating 60 years of
delivering education, training and ongoing development to GPs and primary care
professionals. Join our celebration at www.rcgp.org.uk/60 and find out more about the
contribution GPs and the RCGP have made to health care over the last 60 years.

For more information on the work of RCGP please visit www.rcgp.org.uk