

## Council

<b>Meeting Date</b>	26 March 2026
<b>Title</b>	Corporate Plan 2026-27
<b>Author(s)</b>	Claire Amor, Executive Director of Corporate Affairs
<p><b>Executive Summary</b></p> <p>This paper presents the HCPC's corporate plan for 2026-27, the first annual plan aligned to our newly corporate strategy 2026-31. The plan sets out the key programmes of work we will undertake over the next year to move further towards a proactive, preventative and experience-informed model of regulation.</p> <p>The plan has been developed alongside the budget and investment planning cycle. It is designed primarily as an external-facing document, providing stakeholders with a clear, accessible summary of our priorities for the year ahead, while also supporting internal alignment across the organisation.</p> <p>In summary, in 2026-27, our work will be centred on our four strategic priorities as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p><b>Putting patients and service users at the centre of smarter, preventative regulation.</b></p> <p>We will expand and deepen the ways we listen to the public, service users and registrants, ensuring that lived experience and behavioural insight shape our regulatory standards, processes and decisions. We will strengthen our use of intelligence and data to identify emerging risks earlier and intervene more effectively, while ensuring transparency through clear, multichannel communication with stakeholders.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Supporting healthcare workforce development through proportionate, agile regulation.</b></p> <p>We will continue improving the timeliness, clarity and fairness of our fitness to practise processes, including strengthening frontloaded investigations, case management and witness support. We will modernise our regulatory standards, including the standards of education and training, continuing professional development (CPD) requirements and return-to-practice pathways, to ensure they reflect evolving models of care, technological change and workforce needs. Enhanced analytical capability will generate richer insight into workforce trends and risks, supporting targeted interventions and system collaboration.</p> </li> </ol>	

### 3. Strengthening our organisational capability, technology and sustainability to enable regulatory excellence.

Delivering on our long-term vision requires a modern, resilient and high-performing organisation. In 2026-27 we will launch a refreshed people strategy, strengthen leadership capability, enhance digital skills and reinforce the behaviours needed for a high-trust, high-performance culture. We will progress our technology roadmap, including improvements to our core systems, data platform, website and artificial intelligence (AI) governance structures. These improvements will enable more streamlined services, better user experience and smarter, insight-driven regulation.

### 4. Preparing for future responsibilities, including the potential regulation of NHS senior leaders and wider regulatory reform.

The Government's intention to introduce a statutory barring scheme for NHS senior leaders represents a significant potential expansion of the HCPC's remit. Although the introduction of this scheme is dependent on legislative timelines, we will work closely with government and system partners to ensure readiness and maintain focus on public protection. Alongside this, we will continue to prepare for wider regulatory reform, which offers opportunities for more coherent, responsive and preventative regulation across the sector.

Across all areas of the plan, our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) remains central. We will continue to build on progress in understanding how different groups experience our processes, ensuring fairness, transparency and evidence-based regulation.

<b>Action required</b>	The Council is asked to approve the corporate plan 2026-27.
<b>Previous consideration</b>	None.
<b>Next steps</b>	Subject to approval, the corporate plan 2026-27 will be finalised and published on the HCPC website.  Delivery milestones will be developed to enable the Council to hold the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to account, with progress reported quarterly through the Chief Executive's performance report.
<b>Financial and resource implications</b>	The corporate plan and budget for 2026-27 are developed side by side with fundamental interdependencies.
<b>Associated strategic priority/priorities</b>	This plan outlines how the HCPC will advance its strategy in 2025-26.
<b>Associated strategic risk(s)</b>	Work is underway to develop a new approach to reporting strategic risk, recently discussed at the March 2026 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.
<b>Risk appetite</b>	Relevant to all aspects of the risk appetite.

<p><b>Communication and engagement</b></p>	<p>The corporate plan is predominantly intended to be an external facing document to use with stakeholders to provide a simple summary of the HCPC's priorities in 2025-26. We also use the corporate plan internally to promote a common understanding of priorities.</p> <p>Following the Council's approval of the plan internal and external communication will accompany the publication in the new financial year.</p>
<p><b>Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) impact and Welsh language standards</b></p>	<p>EDI is central to the aims of our corporate strategy 2026-31 and is considered within every item on the corporate plan and within all our work.</p>
<p><b>Reason for consideration in the private session of the meeting (if applicable)</b></p>	<p>Not applicable</p>

## Corporate Plan 2026-27

### Introduction

Our corporate plan sets out the work we will do in 2026-27 to progress towards a more proactive and preventative model of regulation. The plan marks the first step in achieving the priorities set against our recently published new corporate strategy.

Our focus for the year ahead centres on deepening the role of patients and service users within our regulatory activity, supporting a resilient and adaptable healthcare workforce, and investing in the organisational capabilities that will enable high-quality, future ready services. A key focus will be strengthening how we listen, how we use insight, and how we act on emerging risks. We are committed to embedding lived experience into our decisions, modernising our standards and processes so they reflect evolving models of care, and enhancing the quality of our data, intelligence and digital platforms.

Alongside this, we will continue to invest in the people, culture and leadership that underpin effective regulation. Creating a supportive, confident and digitally capable organisation is essential to delivering consistent, high-quality public protection. We will modernise our systems, enable the responsible use of technology, and strengthen the resilience and sustainability of our core operations.

We also recognise the importance of preparing for the future regulation of hospital managers. Although the timing of this work is dependent on government decisions and is not expected to commence during 2026-27, it represents a significant future responsibility for the HCPC. Over the coming year, we will continue engaging with government and system partners to help understand the shape of our future work.

The priorities in this plan reinforce our commitment to be a regulator that listens, acts early, supports the workforce, embraces innovation and prepares for reform. We regulate 15 professions that contribute essential services across the UK, and whose importance will only increase as care shifts towards being more preventative and community based. Our work this year will strengthen confidence in these professions, improve the consistency and quality of our own work and support the delivery of safe, effective care.

## **Who we are**

The HCPC was established under section 60 of the Health Act 1999 as a regulator of health and care professions in the UK.

Our mission remains clear: We protect the public by setting clear standards for professionals, using evidence to encourage safe and inclusive care and taking action when things go wrong.

We want a future where the public receiving care from the professions we regulate are protected through strong, evidence-based regulation, delivered by a high-performing adaptable and caring regulator.

## **We regulate:**

- Arts therapists
- Biomedical scientists
- Chiropodists/Podiatrists
- Clinical scientists
- Dietitians
- Hearing aid dispensers
- Occupational therapists
- Operating department practitioners
- Orthoptists
- Paramedics
- Physiotherapists
- Practitioner psychologists
- Prosthetists/Orthotists
- Radiographers
- Speech and language therapists

## **Corporate plan in context**

*[Infographic of year in numbers for a range of regulatory processes]*

Our core regulatory activity in 2026-27 will include:

- # new FTP concerns
- # Final Hearings
- # Quality Assurance of education providers and programmes
- # Registration applications
- # Renewals
- # CPD audits
- # learning sessions for registrants, employers and students

## **ONE PAGE SUMMARY VISUAL OF STRATEGY**

## Our 2026-27 Priorities

### **1. Putting patients at the centre of smarter, preventative regulation**

As set out in our five-year corporate strategy, we are committed to strengthening public protection by progressing towards proactive, preventative regulation. Embedding patient and public insight, behavioural science and high-quality data across our regulatory framework will enable us to identify emerging risks earlier and intervene more effectively. This long-term shift will ensure that the experiences of patients and service users remain at the heart of our regulatory approach.

Over the course of the strategy, we will deepen our engagement with service users, registrants and system partners to build a shared understanding of our role and support a culture of openness, safety and learning. By integrating richer intelligence and behavioural insight into both our standards and professional liaison and outreach engagement, we will help prevent harm before it occurs and continue to build public trust in our regulation.

#### **In 2026-27 we will:**

- Build on the existing ways we listen to patients and embed lived experience into our regulation, strengthening the patient voice and building greater public trust and transparency.
- Undertake research to help us understand how we can further improve our processes and day to day interactions with the public, patients, service users and registrants.
- Evolve our Professional Liaison and Outreach service to be more strategic, risk based and responsive to stakeholder needs. We will begin incorporating behavioural science into our work to strengthen how we understand and influence professional behaviour. We will focus our resources where they will have the greatest impact on public protection and the prevention of harm.
- Undertake analysis to identify the profession-specific risk profiles that can lead to fitness to practise concerns, to inform our approach to preventative regulation.
- Deliver multi-channel communication campaigns to improve understanding of our role, our regulated professions and the value of our insights, supporting greater public confidence and clearer awareness of how we prevent and address risk.

### **2. Supporting healthcare workforce development through proportionate, agile regulation**

Improving the fitness to practise process remains central to supporting a confident and resilient workforce. Timely, fair and proportionate case handling enhanced by increasing our in-house capacity to undertake frontloaded investigations, stronger

case management and better support for all involved with a strong focus on customer service quality, will help facilitate timely investigations increase clarity for professionals and the public alike.

Our strategy commits us to modernising our standards and education frameworks to ensure our regulation keeps pace with changing models of care, new technologies and the expectations of a diverse workforce. Updates to the standards of education and training (SETs), along with forthcoming reviews of continuing professional development (CPD) and return to practice requirements, will help ensure professionals can join or rejoin the Register safely and without unnecessary barriers.

As technology reshapes practice, particularly through growing use of artificial intelligence (AI), our regulatory approach will evolve accordingly. Research into how these tools are being used across professions will inform the development of standards and guidance that support safe, inclusive and innovative care.

Strengthening our analytical capability will provide clearer workforce insight and improve regulatory decision-making. Enhanced data models, dashboards and self-service tools will generate more meaningful intelligence on risk, performance and workforce trends, enabling targeted regulatory activity and supporting partners across the sector to plan effectively and improve resilience.

**In 2026-27 we will:**

- Review and modernise key regulatory standards including SETs, CPD and our return to practice requirements, to ensure they reflect evolving models of care, new technologies and the needs of a diverse, multidisciplinary workforce.
- Continue the programme of work to make best use of HCPC data through the provision of high-quality analysis and insights that support workforce planning, early risk detection and targeted regulatory interventions, while expanding data-sharing and transparency through improved dashboards, outcome reporting, enhanced data analysis of register retention and upgraded equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) insights to support system partners and build confidence in our regulatory outcomes.
- Evaluate the impact of our 2025 English language requirement changes and implement further improvements to our UK and international registration processes ensuring fairness, clarity and a more streamlined experience for applicants and employers.
- Commission research on registrants' use of AI to inform future regulatory approaches and develop our regulatory approach to the use of AI by registrants and applicants.
- Increase our capacity to undertake front-loaded investigations and strengthen case management resources to support timely, proportionate decision-making and a better experience for all parties.

- Commence a review of the threshold policy, which sets out the kinds of concerns we will accept for investigation, to ensure that the cases we progress are proportionate to the risk involved.
- Enhance witness support and the customer service we provide to all participants throughout the fitness to practise (FTP) process.
- Begin a project to improve how we list cases for hearings to reduce unnecessary delays and uncertainty for registrants, alongside undertaking data analysis to identify the key factors contributing to delays in case progression so we can better mitigate avoidable delays.

### ***3. Technology-Enabled Regulatory Excellence and Organisational Sustainability***

To deliver on our long-term vision, we will build a modern, resilient and high-performing organisation capable of regulating effectively in a rapidly changing health and care environment. This means investing in our people, strengthening leadership- and accelerating our digital transformation so that we are equipped to respond to emerging risks, support the workforce and protect the public with agility and confidence.

We will focus on developing leaders at every level, ensuring colleagues have the skills and tools needed to adapt to future challenges, and reinforcing the behaviours and values that underpin a high-trust, high-performance organisation.

At the same time, we will enhance our technology and data so that they support streamlined and consistent regulatory services. By creating future-ready digital platforms, establishing robust data governance and using AI responsibly, we will enable more efficient processes, better user experience and deeper insight across all areas of regulation.

#### **In 2026-27 we will:**

- Launch a renewed people strategy that strengthens leadership capability at all levels, builds digital skills and supports an inclusive and supportive culture, enabling a confident, adaptable workforce and consistent, values-led regulatory delivery.
- Refresh organisational values to reinforce the behaviours and expectations that underpin a high-trust, high-performance culture.
- Launch a new digital and AI strategy to set the direction for how we adopt and use digital and AI tools across the organisation, supporting delivery of our technology roadmap and providing colleagues with modern, efficient ways of working.

- Establish robust AI governance and expand the responsible use of automation to ensure AI-enabled processes are used safely and appropriately, supporting efficient regulatory operations.
- Further enhance our data platform and improve core systems, including our website, to improve user experience, strengthen analytics, support financial sustainability and enable more effective organisational decision-making.
- Design a unified single contact centre operating model to ensure stakeholders get the right information from the right people when they need it, improving customer experience, reducing duplication and increasing service responsiveness.
- Strengthen long-term organisational sustainability by implementing measures that support financial resilience and advancing our environmental sustainability strategy, ensuring the HCPC can continue to deliver high-quality, responsible and future-ready regulatory services.

#### **4. Strengthening Public Protection through the Regulation of NHS Senior Leadership**

In July 2025, the Government announced its intention to introduce a statutory barring scheme for NHS senior leaders in England, signalling an important future development in the HCPC's regulatory responsibilities. High-profile system failures have highlighted the need for stronger safeguards and clearer accountability at senior leadership levels, and the HCPC has welcomed the commitment to provide the powers necessary to support this new framework. As the legislation is developed, we will work closely with government, NHS leaders, representative bodies and wider system partners to help ensure the scheme is effective, proportionate and firmly focused on public protection.

This development sits alongside the wider programme of regulatory reform underway across all healthcare regulators. Reform of the legislative framework represents a significant, multi-year transformation that will reshape how the HCPC operates. A modernised regulatory system will deliver important benefits: more preventative, upstream regulation; greater shared learning across professions; improved efficiency through shared services; and faster, more coordinated responses to emerging risks. We will continue to advocate for clarity on the timetable for reforms affecting the HCPC.

Across 2026-27, the HCPC will remain responsive to both the emerging legislative timeline for a hospital managers regulatory scheme and the wider reform agenda. While each brings different challenges and uncertainties, both share a common aim; strengthening public protection through more modern, coherent and proactive regulation. By maintaining this dual focus and building the internal capability required to adapt at pace, the HCPC will continue to protect the public effectively, support system partners and ensure readiness for future statutory responsibilities.

## **How we work**

### **Equality Diversity and Inclusion**

As we enter the final year of our current EDI strategy, we are now laying the groundwork for the next phase of our long-term ambitions to ensure we are a fair regulator that people can trust. The progress made to date provides a strong platform for continuing to embed fairness across all our regulatory functions in 2026-27 and through to 2031. As with our broader strategic direction, collaboration with our stakeholders will be essential to shaping our next EDI strategy ensuring it is evidence-driven, impactful and aligned with the needs of the sector.

Over the course of this strategy, we have strengthened our understanding of how different groups experience our regulatory processes. Our analyses of regulatory functions mean we now publish data across the breadth of our fitness to practise and registration processes. Although we have taken reassurance from the findings to date that show little or no disproportionality, there are areas we will continue to interrogate to ensure that we meet our commitments to be fair and trusted regulator.

Our work to update the SETs, working closely with stakeholders across the UK, has brought a focus on EDI that ensures that the healthcare professionals of the future have fair training experiences, and are prepared to meet the health needs of a diverse, 21st century UK population.

Our determination to support all our registrants includes the ongoing development of resources for healthcare professionals who experience discrimination in their work or training, assisting them to use our standards to protect patient safety, and remain safe in their own practice. It is work like this that means we continue to meet the PSA's EDI Standard and are committed to ongoing development across our whole EDI agenda.