



General
Osteopathic
Council

Strategic Plan 2019-24

**Together,
protecting patients**

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This publication is available from our website at:
osteopathy.org.uk/strategicplan

Strategic context

This strategic plan for the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) covers the period from April 2019 to March 2024. It has been developed at a time of significant change in the UK, as the osteopathic profession adapts to changing roles and practices within healthcare, including recognition as an Allied Health Profession in England.

These changes also present new opportunities for osteopaths to work within, and in close partnership with, the NHS. The Government is considering changes to healthcare regulatory legislation which will provide a welcome opportunity to update policies and processes. Major challenges are also expected to arise from the UK's exit from the European Union.

During the period of our previous corporate plan there have been many positive developments in our approach to regulation. We have introduced a new continuing professional development (CPD) scheme for all osteopaths, and published updated Osteopathic Practice Standards which came into effect from 1 September 2019. We have improved communications, and fostered stronger relationships both with osteopaths and patients, which are contributing to the development of the profession. We have made a range of improvements to the way we investigate complaints about osteopaths, and we continue to be recognised as a high-performing and innovative regulator. However, we recognise there is more we can do.

There is a growing appreciation, evident in our own research and elsewhere, that regulators should work to prevent poor practice and harm to patients, rather than intervening only when problems are reported. A more proactive, 'upstream' approach can enable regulators to reduce the risk of harm to patients, operate more efficiently and potentially reduce costs. This insight has already informed the design of our new CPD scheme and the update of our practice standards, but in this, our new strategy, we intend to go further. We will continue to explore new ways of resolving concerns earlier while enabling timely and proportionate action to be taken in serious cases. We also intend to strengthen further our partnerships with stakeholders in the profession, in order to support the development of the highest standards of practice.

Finally, the healthcare regulators published a joint statement of the benefits of reflective practitionership in June 2019, building on the 2014 joint statement on the duty of candour. This is part of a shared commitment to an open and honest culture across healthcare in which professionals feel able to reflect on their own experiences to inform continuous learning and development, a critical component of the GOsC's new CPD scheme.

Statutory context

The General Osteopathic Council is the independent statutory regulator for the profession of osteopathy. The Osteopaths Act 1993 requires us to develop and regulate the profession of osteopathy: our overarching objective is to protect the public.

Our statutory objectives are:

To protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of the public.

To promote and maintain public confidence in the profession of osteopathy.

To promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for members of the profession.

Vision

A partnership in professional standards that fulfils our statutory duty to protect the public and promote patient safety and well-being through modern regulation which supports and develops osteopaths

Our goals for 2024

We will support the osteopathic profession to deliver high quality care, which will protect patients and the public in the context of changes in the dynamic landscape of healthcare.

We will develop our assurance of osteopathic education to produce high-quality graduates who are ready to practise.

We will build closer relationships with the public and the profession based on trust and transparency.

We will be an exemplar in modern healthcare regulation – accessible, effective, innovative, agile, proportionate and reflective.

What happens next

This Strategic Plan is an enabling document which sets out the overarching approach that Council intends to follow during the next five years until 2024, and builds on the achievements of the Corporate Strategy 2016-2019.

This Plan signals our intention to focus on the development of the profession, consistent with our statutory remit, and where possible to invest further in that development. A priority for Council is to strengthen and deepen partnerships with all our stakeholders in a period of change both in healthcare regulatory legislation, and in the new status of osteopaths as Allied Healthcare Professionals.

Now this document has been published, Council will engage with its stakeholders in order that the business plans which follow subsequent to this Strategic Plan are properly directed towards achievement of the aspirations which have been set out, and are arrived at in collaboration with our partners.

Principles that underpin the work of the GOsC

The GOsC is committed to conducting all its activities as a regulator and an employer based on a number of key principles:

Proportionality

We will ensure that the regulatory burden is no greater than it needs to be to deliver our statutory duty, focusing our resources on areas of risk to public protection and where there is scope to achieve the most in terms of improving standards of osteopathic practice.

Anticipation

We will monitor trends in health and social care, regulation, osteopathic practice and education, in order to respond effectively to change and to support the osteopathic profession to respond accordingly.

Fairness

We will be consistent in the development and application of our policies and procedures in order to ensure fairness, with the aims of promoting equality, valuing diversity and removing any unfair discrimination.

Inclusivity

We will respond to the needs of patients, the public, registrants and other stakeholders, taking their views into account in deciding the most effective way to carry out our regulatory functions and working in partnership with others, where appropriate, to achieve our goals.

Accountability

We will publicise our actions and decisions, wherever possible, ensuring that the information is clearly explained and easily accessible. We will explain how we have taken our stakeholders' views into consideration in developing policy and in improving our performance. Council will seek to exemplify high standards of governance.

Efficiency

We will foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement, taking steps to benchmark our performance periodically and setting targets to achieve best practice.

We will use our resources efficiently, seeking to achieve further efficiencies without compromising the quality of our work.



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