

Making care safer for all

a manifesto for change

The next UK government will face many challenges within health and social care – including funding constraints, workforce shortages and safety issues. Professional regulation is just one part of the safety system, but with the right support from government it can do much more to help tackle these big issues.

As the oversight body for the 10 health and care professional regulators and for the Accredited Registers, the PSA has a unique view of the system. This manifesto outlines the PSA's policy priorities to help the next government deliver better and **safer care for all**.

Fix the safety gaps in our healthcare system

1

1 in 20 patients are affected by preventable harm – compared to other OECD countries, the UK could have had 17,356 fewer deaths annually had it performed better on key patient safety indicators.

Multiple inquiries over the last 10 years, from Mid-Staffs to Cumberlege to East Kent, find similar failings and lessons are not learned.

What can government do?

1 in 20
patients are
affected by
preventable
harm

Work quickly to modernise the powers and governance of the healthcare professional regulators – this will give regulators more flexibility to help tackle some of the major patient and service-user safety challenges.

Ensure that public inquiries and reviews receive the right kind of response, at the right time, and that lessons are learned and acted upon. This could be achieved by expanding the Patient Safety Commissioner role to create an oversight function for patient and service-user safety.

Tackle the health and care workforce crisis

2

Staff vacancies within the NHS in England are over 112,000 and over 150,000 in adult social care – staff leaving the NHS rose from 9.6% in the year to September 2020 to 12.5% in the year to September 2022.

Based on current trends, England's waiting list for routine hospital treatment could rise to over 8 million by summer 2024.

What can government do?

12.5%
staff leaving
NHS England in
2022 (up from
9.6% in 2020)

Deliver the ambitious long-term workforce plans for the NHS.

Develop a regulatory strategy to ensure that:

- risks in the current health and care workforce plans are managed;
- there are no unnecessary regulatory barriers to these plans;
- regulation supports the successful delivery of these workforce plans and maintains public confidence and safety.

Improve workplace culture in health and care

3

- ▶ The Lucy Letby case has revived the debate on whether NHS senior managers, who play a key role in shaping culture and promoting safety, should be regulated.
- ▶ In 2022, NHS staff from ethnic minority groups were over twice as likely to experience discrimination than white staff.
- ▶ 91% of female doctors experienced sexism at work, with 56% experiencing unwanted verbal conduct, and 31% experiencing unwanted physical conduct. Almost 1/3 of female surgeons have been sexually assaulted.

What can government do?

91%
female doctors
on receiving
end of sexism

- ▶ Take steps to enhance the professional development and accountability of NHS senior managers.
- ▶ Support robust action within health and care to address discrimination in the workplace.

What is regulation doing to make care safer?

- ▶ Regulators are addressing barriers to workforce development by supporting work on retention as well as growing the workforce – modernising their powers will help them do this better.
- ▶ Learning from complaints helps the system to improve and operate more safely. The PSA and regulators are working to get a clearer picture of who is and is not complaining, to break down barriers to complaints, to support work to tackle healthcare inequalities and ultimately to improve care for everyone.
- ▶ The PSA is promoting wider use of the 130,000 practitioners on PSA Accredited Registers to help alleviate pressures in key areas such as mental health and supporting the creation of an accredited voluntary register for social care workers to help with professionalising and retaining this workforce.
- ▶ The PSA has called for regulators to take a firm line on racist and discriminatory behaviour by healthcare professionals and will be leading work to coordinate a cross-regulator response to issues identified in the handling of sexism and sexual misconduct cases.
- ▶ The PSA is scoping the case for a common code of conduct for all healthcare professionals as a potential way to support improvements in culture and teamworking across health and care.

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Would you like to
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If you are interested
in meeting to
discuss our
recommendations,
you can contact
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