



**General
Chiropractic
Council**

Business Plan

2021

About the GCC

The General Chiropractic Council is an independent statutory body that regulates the chiropractic profession. We protect the health and safety of patients undergoing chiropractic treatment by ensuring high standards of practice, and by approving and monitoring chiropractic education programmes.

The GCC was established as a result of The Chiropractors Act 1994 but remains independent of government and the chiropractic profession. The Health and Social Care (Safety and Quality) Act 2015 implemented new over-arching objectives across health and care regulators, which reinforced the role of regulators to:

- protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of the public
- promote and maintain public confidence in the profession of chiropractic
- promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for members of that profession

The GCC has a duty within its Act to develop the profession.

As the UK's regulator of chiropractors, we take our duties seriously. It is vital that:

- patients and the public can be assured that they are seeing a well-trained and competent chiropractor. Should they have any concerns about a chiropractor, we will investigate them and take action if necessary
- registered chiropractors and UK professional bodies feel engaged with the work we do to promote standards and develop the profession and can collaborate with us should they wish to. The profession values our approach to best practice to enable continuous learning and is confident in our right touch approach to regulation
- key stakeholders want to work with us to uphold our core duties to protect patients and improve professional standards and trust us to deliver effective and efficient services

Background

The GCC five-year strategy was first considered by Council in September 2018 and was agreed in December 2018. Our strategy intentionally sets out to:

- move to being less reactive and more proactive in our regulatory work
- increase our activity in enabling the development of the profession
- place stronger focus on engagement and collaborative working
- emphasise our commitment to ensure the public, patients, registrants, associations and stakeholders are satisfied with the service we provide
- deliver cultural improvement to the way we work alongside core regulatory process changes

Our Aims for 2021

During the first two years of our strategy we have worked towards giving ourselves a platform to build on; developing our foundations and transforming how we work.

In 2019, the first year of the new strategy, we implemented key technological changes to the organisation, changed some of our fitness to practise and CPD processes and made progress on our financial sustainability plan.

In 2020 we have continued to work to refine the building blocks laid in 2019 in areas such as fitness to practise, communications and registrations. We have progressed our work into developing the profession, which has garnered new research which we will endeavour to use as part of our ongoing guidance and engagement with the profession.

Our aims for the business plan 2021, the third year of the five-year strategy, is for the projects that we undertake to contribute to lasting change; increasing our knowledge base; improving our ability to carry out our core functions and meeting our regulatory duties even more effectively.

An area of focus will be on supporting professionalism within chiropractic and enabling it to flourish and develop. This key theme will cut across our broader strategic aims and encompass much of our work and thinking. We aim to:

- develop engaging content and build on research findings and emerging themes from 2020, to bring our work on professionalism in 2021 to life
- use our growing knowledge and insights to carry out activities, allowing us to work with our stakeholders to create cultures and working environments that promote and support our registrants' professionalism
- enable education providers to develop and deliver learning that embeds professional values and behaviours.
- ensure that registrants have, and maintain, the right knowledge, skills and expertise to deliver safe, high quality care

This will require us to evolve our existing reactive model of regulation while also investing in work that helps to prevent poor professional practice.

Professionalism is the thread that runs through undergraduate education, into practice and throughout a chiropractor's career. Ensuring professionalism is embedded early on a registrant's journey will have an impact on the whole profession in the long term.

We will not be able to do this on our own. As a regulator, we are tasked with statutory responsibilities and have the powers to carry them out. Equally, we work within a discreet system of chiropractic for example, the Royal College of Chiropractors and the Education providers each seeking to make an impact on the professionalism of current and future registrants. As such, we will work collaboratively with these stakeholders influencing their actions such that the system itself leads the way for the benefit of patients and the public.

We will also engage more actively with the profession, patients and the public, particularly in relation to misinformation and equality, diversity and inclusivity – areas that currently present issues in wider society.

Projects and areas of work relating to our strategic objectives of 'Promoting Standards' and 'Developing the Profession', have been developed through discussions with Committees and Council member reference groups and with other stakeholders important in the implementation of our ambitions.

Changes made to our staff structure in 2020 allow us to now carry out our core tasks fully. With a solid foundation, we can enhance what we do as standard, and do it well consistently. In 2021 we can be more ambitious in relation to our regulatory functions which will allow us to tackle our work programme confidently.

The proposed actions within the business plan should not be viewed separately as areas of improvement isolated from our core work. Projects that we will undertake relate directly to our core duties and our staff doing all our work well, not just in 2021 but in years to come.

The business plan is ambitious. As 2020 ends, there is still uncertainty as to how 2021 will unfold. As such, we will implement a plan to enable us to reconsider all work currently in progress and any other work that is yet to be started to determine whether the continuation is feasible in financial and any other terms.

GCC Strategy 2019 – 2023



WE PROMOTE STANDARDS

We will set, assure compliance and promote educational, professional & registration standards alongside lifelong learning



WE DEVELOP THE PROFESSION

We will facilitate collaborative strategic work to support the profession in its development



WE INVESTIGATE AND ACT

We will take right touch action on complaints, the misuse of title or where registration standards are not met



WE DELIVER VALUE

We will be a great place to work, work together and deliver effective/efficient services

Our continued development of professional and registration standards will ensure those standards are relevant and meaningful	Our support for further research and clinical governance work will assist the profession in building the available evidence base for chiropractic care	Our development of more 'right touch' fitness to practise approaches will provide assurance that appropriate action/support has taken place to ensure patients are safe	Our communication, engagement and collaboration will build confidence and trust
Our publicity on the benefits of seeing a registered chiropractor will promote confidence in the public and patients	Our contribution to creating a clearer shared professional identity will help enhance the profession's development of its identity and reputation	Our sharing of learning and intelligence from complaints will support registrants in preventing issues and concerns	Our financial planning and use of resources will provide a secure future for the GCC
Our assurance and support of education provision will reflect best practice in education and healthcare	Our involvement in a profession wide development strategy will support the profession to play its part in the wider/national health and well-being system	Our focus and transparent work on protecting the title 'chiropractor' will provide clarity to the public and registrants	Our effective procedures, processes and IT will provide staff, chiropractors and the public with an efficient modern experience
Our assurance and support of continuing professional development will facilitate best practice lifelong learning	Our communication of guidance and policy will support chiropractors and the profession to deliver great care	Our approach to decisions on registration standards will provide clarity to the public, students and registrants	Our culture, values and people development will make us an employer of choice



We Promote Standards

We will set, assure compliance and promote educational, professional & registration standards alongside lifelong learning

In 2021 we aim to build on the findings of the public perceptions research - the profession is largely trusted and perceived as giving benefits. However, a significant number of people are not aware that the profession is regulated and chiropractors must be qualified. A key area of focus will be maintaining public confidence in regulation and that patients understand the risks and benefits of treatment through informed consent and shared decision-making. We will also take regulatory action and promote evidence-based practice to counter misinformation and disinformation.

Actions

- ✓ Develop a digital toolkit to assist chiropractors to reflect on their own website and web material
- ✓ Develop a digital toolkit to support chiropractors with their communication with patients/public.
- ✓ Produce engaging, supporting information for patients/public and a dedicated area on our website
- ✓ Respond to potential legislative changes relating to Education and Registrations including CPD, emerging from Department of Health and Social Care's regulatory reform agenda
- ✓ Determine the need for changes to our Education Standards and Quality Assurance processes by carrying out a scoping review

Core tasks

- ✓ Publish the Code and guidance covering the standards of chiropractic practice and professional conduct that all chiropractors must meet
- ✓ Publish and communicate relevant research findings (both GCC and others)
- ✓ Continue to assure the quality of undergraduate chiropractic education and training
- ✓ Set educational standards for individuals training to become chiropractors
- ✓ Approve new and support current education programmes throughout the year
- ✓ Maintain the register of chiropractors and register new applicants
- ✓ Carry out annual Continuing Professional Development (CPD) monitoring
- ✓ Carry out annual monitoring of the five chiropractic colleges to enhance the quality of chiropractic education
- ✓ Meet the demand for carrying out Test of Competence assessments for overseas graduates
- ✓ Continue to progress our student engagement plan

Our guidance sets out best practice, explains processes to follow, provides information about legislation and shows where additional support and advice can be found. Our Education Standards and assurance of chiropractic education will produce high quality graduates who are ready to practise.



We Develop the Profession

We will facilitate collaborative strategic work to support the profession in its development

The GCC is under a duty to support the long-term development of the chiropractic profession and understanding the public and patients' experience of chiropractic such that the policies of the GCC better take that into account.

By the end of 2020 we completed several projects under the strategic aim of developing the profession.

Developing the profession in 2021 will be about developing *professionalism*. We will reflect upon intelligence gained from 2020 and undertake work that will enable us to support registrants to meet the standards that we expect of them. We aim to ensure that registrants have, and maintain, the right knowledge, skills and expertise to deliver safe, high quality care.

Actions

- ✓ Embed best practice in imaging and incident reporting to ensure safer care
- ✓ Complete research started in 2020 to survey existing chiropractic patients on their experiences and satisfaction to strengthen patient voice
- ✓ Enhance professionalism within chiropractic by promoting opportunities for graduates, researchers, academics and other career pathways

Core tasks

- ✓ Continue to work closely with professional bodies
- ✓ Continue to participate in the UK Chiropractic Forum, meeting at least three times in the year
- ✓ Participate in Forum of Chiropractic Deans to identify sector challenges, share good practice and support the development of chiropractic educators and education programmes and progress work on outcomes for graduates twice a year
- ✓ Engage effectively with registrants
- ✓ Ongoing engagement with students at all stages of their training
- ✓ Attend each professional association's annual conference or equivalent event
- ✓ Ongoing supportive communication and engagement with registrants around CPD and becoming reflective practitioners
- ✓ Collect, analyse and report on generic learning points from IC meetings and fitness to practise hearings and consider implications and lessons for the profession

We will build on our relationships with all our key stakeholders and seek to build in the 'patient voice' to our work, capitalising on our research in 2020 with the public and planned work with patients/public in 2021.



We Investigate and Act

We will take right touch action on complaints, the misuse of title or where registration standards are not met

The organisation's new staff structure allows us to carry out work in the fitness to practise department fully and effectively.

In 2021 we will work to streamline the department further in order to deal appropriately with cases to better protect the public.

Covid-19 has impacted on Department of Health and Social Care's regulatory reform agenda. Should this work move forward we will move quickly to respond to any requirements, pursuing the changes we require.

Actions

- ✓ Respond to potential legislative changes relating to FTP and Governance emerging from the Department of Health and Social Care's regulatory reform agenda
- ✓ Continue to streamline our processes and make relevant operational changes within FTP within the remit of our current legislative framework
- ✓ Consider our expert witness arrangements
- ✓ Improve our processes around obtaining feedback from individuals involved in the FTP process

Core tasks

- ✓ Investigate all complaints received from the public
- ✓ Investigate all complaints that relate to illegal use of the title of 'chiropractor'
- ✓ Hold a minimum of twelve Investigating Committee meetings
- ✓ Conclude the increased number (30%) of Professional Conduct Committee hearings to reduce our caseload caused by Covid-19
- ✓ Hold Interim Suspension Hearings in a timely manner
- ✓ Report quarterly on our progress to the Professional Standards Authority
- ✓ Report quarterly on key performance indicators to Council
- ✓ Continue work started in 2020 to recruit new Committee members
- ✓ Continue to engage with committee members, including carrying out appraisals, training and learning opportunities
- ✓ Start work on IC member term extensions
- ✓ Carry out relevant appointments and reappointments for IC members

Our current legislative framework limits how we can progress our fitness to practise work. In 2021, we aim to streamline our current processes as much as possible within the restraints of our current statutory capabilities. Our plans to recruit new experts, gather feedback on FtP case progression and streamline operationally all work towards improving our ability to investigate complaints efficiently pre-regulatory reform and meets our aim to be more 'right touch' in our fitness to practise approach.



We Deliver Value

We will be a great place to work, work together and deliver effective/efficient services

As a regulator we have a role to play by promoting equality and diversity and we recognise that we can do more.

In 2021 we will work to ensure we are an inclusive regulator, committed to working together with all our stakeholders to build confidence and trust.

Covid-19 has caused all organisations to consider their financial situation and the GCC is no different. We will aim to find efficiencies where we can in 2021.

Actions

- ✓ Review our Equality & Diversity policy and engage with the profession on equality and diversity to ensure we are an inclusive regulator
- ✓ Seek operating efficiencies to achieve maximum value
- ✓ Review IT support contract arrangements
- ✓ Review our IT document management arrangements
- ✓ Review our physical documentation in the office and external archive

Core tasks

- ✓ Continue to improve our communication methods – continual updates of the website, social media updates and engagement, monthly newsletter, new blogs and vlogs
- ✓ To improve our service responsiveness and to continue to improve our website and registrant portal
- ✓ Deliver the third year of our three-year financial sustainability plan
- ✓ Engage and collaborate effectively with other regulators to share best practice
- ✓ Ensure we meet the annual PSA performance standards
- ✓ Maintain and review our governance policies and procedures
- ✓ Continue our work to increase the contentment and wellbeing of our staff team
- ✓ Implement a learning and development programme for our staff and assess performance and development needs on an individual basis

Our work to deliver effective and efficient services will continue in 2021 with our identified actions ensuring long term benefits. Work in these areas will ensure value and good practice in the future.