



Comhairle na
nDochtúirí Leighis
Medical Council

Medical Council Statement of Strategy 2025 - 2028

Protecting the public through
effective medical regulation



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Protecting the public through effective medical regulation

A hand wearing a blue nitrile glove points at a medical monitor. The monitor displays a yellow waveform, likely an ECG, against a dark background. To the right of the waveform, there are several large yellow numbers: '54', '99', and '10.1'. Below the waveform, there are several blue buttons labeled 'SILENCE', 'FREEZE', and 'MARK'. The overall scene is dimly lit, with the monitor being the primary light source.

**This strategic plan
outlines our commitment
to continuous
improvement,
transparency, and
accountability.**

Foreword

In an ever-evolving healthcare landscape, the role of the Medical Council, as the regulator of doctors, is more critical than ever. Doctors are working in a healthcare system that is undergoing fundamental change and experiencing continual growth in expectation, demand and complexity. Conscious of this environment, the Council is committed to ensuring that the public is protected and that doctors are supported to achieve high standards of medical practice.

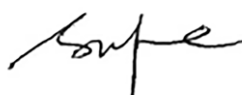
Medical regulation was established in the interest of protecting the public. As a regulator, our role is to ensure that the public is safe in their interactions with doctors. Doctors continue to be one of the most trusted professions in Ireland. We will continue to support doctors maintain these high levels of public trust by meeting the highest standards of competence and professional conduct.

Council members and executive staff are acutely aware of the changing nature of medical practice and the new (and persistent) risks that are emerging in the delivery of healthcare. We are aware that patient outcomes are not solely under the control of doctors and that the broader healthcare system or environment has a significant impact on patient safety. We will continue to work with our stakeholder organisations to identify areas of change and improvement that will positively impact patient safety.

This strategic plan outlines our commitment to continuous improvement, transparency, and accountability. We understand that the traditional perception of professional regulation is one of policing and enforcement, but it must also be about guidance, support, influence and collaboration. In the lifetime of this strategy, we aim to work more closely with doctors, helping them navigate their professional responsibilities while also fostering a culture of lifelong learning and patient-centred care.

Our strategic plan envisages a proportionate, compassionate approach to regulation that is balanced across the entire life cycle of doctors, from undergraduate education to retirement. With the support of our dedicated staff, the cooperation of the doctors we regulate, and the trust of the public, we look forward to helping to shape a future where every patient in Ireland receives safe, effective, and compassionate care from our doctors.

Our sincere thanks to the patients, doctors, staff and stakeholders who generously gave their time to help develop this strategy.



Dr Suzanne Crowe

President

Our Core Activities

The Medical Council is the body responsible for the regulation of registered medical practitioners in Ireland under the Medical Practitioner's Act 2007 ('the Act').

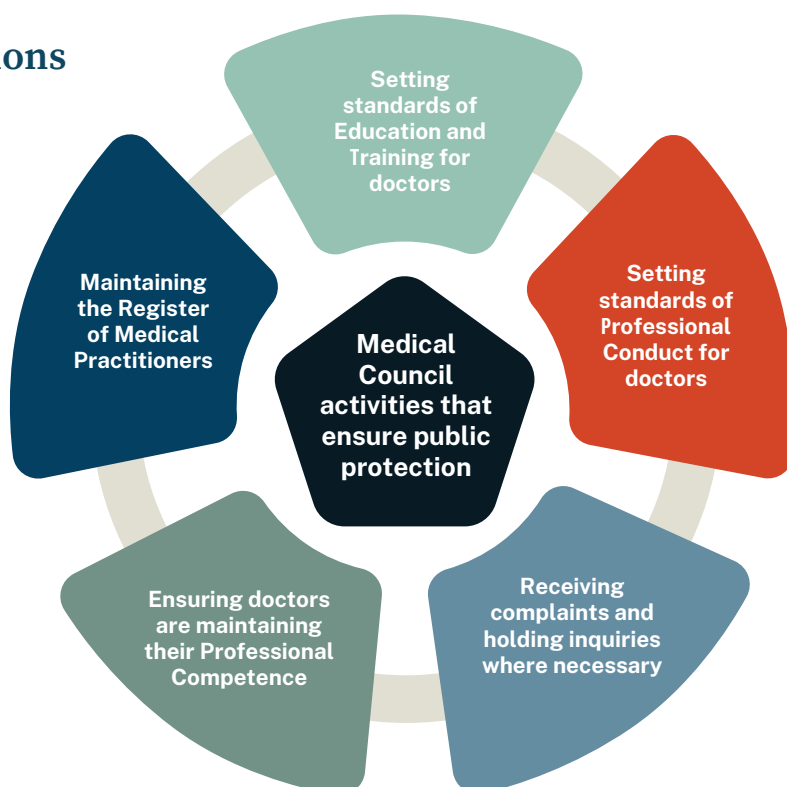
The primary responsibility of the Council is described in the Act as being 'the protection of the public'. The Council has a range of functions that enable it to fulfil this responsibility.

Our functions are:

- Setting, monitoring and maintaining the -
 - standards of education and training for registered medical practitioners
 - standards for the maintenance of professional competence
 - standards of professional conduct for registered medical practitioners.
- Maintaining the register of medical practitioners, establishing procedures and criteria for registration and the issue of certificates of registration and renewal.
- Managing complaints made about doctors to ensure that the public is protected and that doctors are fit to practise.

Throughout this document, we use the term 'doctor' to mean medical practitioner and a person who is qualified and entered on the register of medical practitioners.

Key Functions



Implementation of this Statement of Strategy

This statement of strategy will be implemented over four years. While the strategy outlines high level objectives, more detailed objectives will be set out in annual business plans.

The annual business planning process will allow Council to incorporate additional or modified objectives over the lifetime of the statement of strategy, taking account of changed circumstances.

The Consultation Process

The Medical Council ran a public consultation in August and September 2023 to inform the development of our four-year strategic plan. It ran a second public consultation process on a draft strategy in September 2024.

Members of the public, including patients, patient groups, the medical profession, media, and other stakeholders were invited to give their views by participating in online survey questionnaires. It enabled us to obtain a broad range of feedback from individuals and organisations and inform this plan.

Key Themes emerging from the first consultation

The feedback received from the consultation process largely fell under the following four themes which are addressed in this strategy:

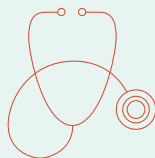
- Increased transparency, visibility and trust.
- Increased collaboration and integration with stakeholders and other agencies.
- Improved structure and efficiency of core processes.
- Better managed expectations of applicants, doctors, the public and key stakeholders.

Key Themes from the second consultation

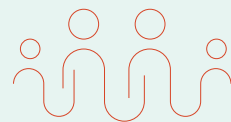
The feedback from the second consultation process on a draft strategy was largely positive. It highlighted the need for clarification on some key concepts such as compassion and kindness in regulation and in right-touch regulation. Clarification was also sought on how the Medical Council would support doctors.



**Total of
580**
responses over two
public consultations



75%
Doctors

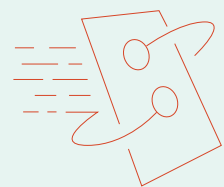


8%
Public and patient
representatives



**This plan is also informed
by structured interviews
with patients and doctors**

7
stakeholder
organisations
made submissions
about the draft
strategy outside of
the published
questionnaire



Our **PURPOSE** is
public protection,
ensuring safe and
professional doctors

Our **VISION** is
to be a trusted,
compassionate and
effective regulator
of doctors

Our Purpose and Vision

Our Purpose, Vision and Values reflect the focus of the Medical Council over the next four years.

Our Vision is to be a professional regulator in which members of the public and doctors have confidence, to carry out our statutory functions fairly, efficiently, and with compassion.

In order to implement our vision as an effective regulator, we are committed to improving our core administrative processes, being kind¹ and compassionate in our communications with doctors and the public, ensuring their interactions with us are a positive experience, insofar as is possible.

We will also implement the principles of Right-Touch Regulation² in our complaints and investigations processes and take greater steps to support doctors' professional wellbeing throughout their professional lifecycle from entry to medical school to retirement.

- 1 Finding Space for Kindness: Public Protection and Health Professional Regulation June 2022, International Journal for Quality in Health Care 34(3) is available at <https://academic.oup.com/intqhc/article/34/3/mzac057/6614629>
- 2 Further information about 'Right Touch Regulation' is available at: <https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/what-we-do/improving-regulation/Right-Touch-Regulation>



Our VALUES

At the heart of our strategic plan are our core values, which guide our action, decisions and interactions with members of the public, doctors and our stakeholders.

We pledge to uphold these values, fostering a culture that empowers our staff, supports doctors, and ensures patient safety. These values underpin our interactions with everyone across the healthcare continuum.



Trust

We act with integrity, honesty and consistency.



Respect

We treat everyone with dignity, kindness, compassion and fairness, embracing diversity, equality and inclusion.



Accountability

We take responsibility for our actions and decisions to transparently meet our obligations as a regulatory body.



Collaboration

We proactively engage and work with everyone to achieve our shared goals.



Excellence

We achieve excellence through continuous improvement, empowerment, innovation and learning.

Our STRATEGIC THEMES

While continuing to deliver our core statutory functions, the following strategic themes will underpin our development in the years to come.

Transform



We will transform our services and supports to deliver effectively for doctors and the public.

In the lifetime of this strategy, we will continuously improve our core functions in accordance with the Act.

We will continue to review and improve the efficiency of our **registration processes**, utilising all of the powers in the Act to support the timely **registration of doctors**.

Data will play a vital role in transforming our services and supports, and will enable our delivery of clear actionable insights, helping our teams make informed decisions and as well as informing doctors and our stakeholders about our processes and outcomes.



Empower and Support

We will create a regulatory environment that enhances the quality of patient care through empowering and supporting doctors.

We are dedicated to supporting a professional environment that enhances **public protection** and supports the continuous professional growth and well-being of doctors.

The **standards and guidelines for education and training for doctors** which are central to effective proactive regulation will be informed by data and insights from our regulatory activities.

As an outcome of our work in **receiving complaints and holding inquiries**, we will be proactive in the identification of patient safety risk areas.

Our **accreditation of training programmes and site inspection processes** will allow us to identify where the environment does not support safe medical education, training or maintenance of professional competence.

Balance



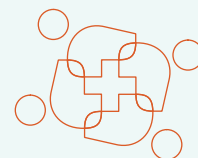
We will use the full range of our regulatory powers to protect the public.

We will apply our regulatory functions proportionately across **registration, retention, education and training, maintenance of professional competence and our complaints processes** to proactively **protect the public** and uphold confidence in the medical profession.

Our functions in **the management of complaints** will be improved by amendments to our legislation and by continuous improvement processes.

We will also implement legislative changes to improve and strengthen our **registration and retention** process, under part 6 of the Act in addition to a programme of continuous improvement.

Continuous improvements to **medical education and professional competence programmes** will be informed by our insights from the complaints process, emerging trends in regulation and evolving healthcare environments.



Invest

We will invest in our People, Culture and Governance to achieve our objectives.

Our people* are key to ensuring that the Medical Council meets its regulatory obligations and fosters a culture of excellence, integrity, and continuous improvement.

We are committed to retaining, developing and attracting highly skilled and motivated people capable of adapting to the ever-evolving demands of the regulatory environment

We will continue to empower our people to enable them to efficiently **deliver our functions in accordance with the Act**.

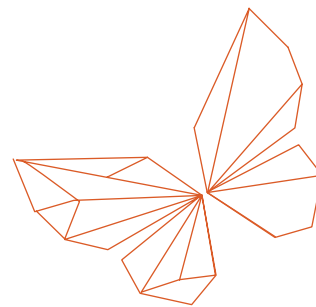
We will continue to foster a positive and inclusive work environment that promotes well-being and professional growth, where everyone has a voice, feel that they belong and are valued for their individual skills and abilities.

*Our People is a collective term that includes Medical Council staff, Council members, Committee and panel members, assessors and other experts who work at the Medical Council or support the Council as it makes decisions to protect the public.



The Council is committed to ensuring that the public is protected and that doctors are supported to achieve high standards of medical practice.

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Data will play a vital role in transforming our services and supports, and will enable our delivery of clear actionable insights, helping our teams make informed decisions and as well as informing doctors and our stakeholders about our processes and outcomes.

Strategic Objectives

1 Develop and implement key strategies that drive our future direction and the sustainable evolution of our core functions and service standards.

We aim to achieve this objective through the following actions:

- 1.1. Develop and implement an organisation-wide data strategy.
- 1.2. Develop and implement a digital transformation strategy which incorporates new and emerging technologies to advance and improve our current and future regulatory processes.
- 1.3. Utilise new data and digital transformation strategies to underpin the implementation of new systems that optimise and expedite the delivery of our core services to include registration, annual retention, complaints and professional development.
- 1.4. Develop and implement a Climate Action Strategy that will support the Medical Council in becoming an environmentally conscious and sustainable organisation.

2 Capitalise on the data captured through our regulatory functions and processes to streamline and enhance our regulatory interventions proportionate to the level of risk.

We aim to achieve this objective through the following actions:

- 2.1. Define, capture and align key data across the full regulatory lifecycle of the doctor.
- 2.2. Maximise the use of the data captured from our regulatory processes to inform performance metrics, streamlining the registration and annual retention processes, improving timelines and efficiency.
- 2.3. Leverage process data to identify patterns of patient safety risk to inform the level of regulatory intervention required to protect patients.
- 2.4. Utilise our data insights and reports to inform national policy development and strategic workforce planning.
- 2.5. Use our data to improve learning opportunities and ensure safer training and practice environments at all stages of the life cycle of the doctor.

3 Implement effective and efficient resource management to deliver our strategic goals and statutory functions in a sustainable way.

We aim to achieve this objective through the following actions:

- 3.1. Develop a sustainable financial model that facilitates the continuous improvement of our core functions and service standards, and which addresses the growth in demand, complexity and cost of regulation.
- 3.2. Assess the best use of internal and external resources to ensure optimised organisational value and service delivery

4 Implement a Quality Management and Assurance System to support a culture of continuous improvement across all our operations and systems.

We aim to achieve this objective through the following actions:

- 4.1. Introduce an agile quality management and assurance systems across our administrative and regulatory processes.
- 4.2. Leverage reports from our quality management and assurance systems, to inform process improvements and required system changes.
- 4.3. Identify and mitigate potential biases ensuring that our systems and processes remain fair and accurate.



Data will play a vital role in transforming our services and supports.

Balance



We will use the full range of our regulatory powers to protect the public.

We will apply our regulatory functions proportionately across **registration, retention, education and training, maintenance of professional competence and our complaints processes** to proactively **protect the public** and uphold confidence in the medical profession.

Our functions in **the management of complaints** will be improved by amendments to our legislation and by continuous improvement processes.

We will also implement legislative changes to improve and strengthen our **registration and retention** process, under part 6 of the Act in addition to a programme of continuous improvement.

Continuous improvements to **medical education and professional competence programmes** will be informed by our insights from the complaints process, emerging trends in regulation and evolving healthcare environments.

Strategic Objectives

5 Continue to evolve and develop an enhanced, Right-Touch and effective regulatory model across the life cycle of a doctor.

We aim to achieve this objective through the following actions:

- 5.1. Adopt the principles of 'Right-Touch'³ Regulation that ensure risk based, robust and proportionate regulatory processes.
- 5.2. Continually revise our regulatory approach to ensure kindness and compassion is embedded in all our engagements with stakeholders.
- 5.3. Balance our focus across all our regulatory functions, including registration, retention, monitoring, lifelong training and education, performance assessment, and complaints.
- 5.4. Streamline the registration and annual retention processes to improve timelines and efficiency.
- 5.5. Utilise all our regulatory functions to improve learning opportunities and ensure safer training and practice environments at all stages of the life cycle of the doctor.

6 Develop a new approach of dealing with concerns raised about a doctor that protects the public, that is proportionate to the risk, ensuring earlier resolution and closure.

We aim to achieve this objective through the following actions:

- 6.1. Introduce a new regulatory approach to respond to concerns about a doctor's practice, expediting those requiring Medical Council intervention, and signposting others to alternative routes where practicable.
- 6.2. Implement a risk-based framework across the continuum of the complaints process to support decision making and early resolution.
- 6.3. Improve the timeframe for resolving complaints through the implementation of process improvements in accordance with provisions of the Amendment Acts⁴.

3 Further information about 'Right-Touch Regulation' is available at: <<https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/what-we-do/improving-regulation/right-touch-regulation>>

4 The Regulated Professions (Health and Social Care) Amendment Acts, 2020 and 2023.

The Regulated Professions Act (Health and Social Care) 2020 can be found at <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2020/act/16/enacted>

The Regulated Professions Act (Health and Social Care) 2023 can be found at <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2023/act/14/enacted/en/html>

7 Promote and implement new statutory frameworks to support our regulatory remit to facilitate timely and high-quality decisions.

We aim to achieve this objective through the following actions:

- 7.1. Develop new regulatory policy, rules and procedures in preparation for commencement of new legislation.
- 7.2. Work with the Department of Health on future legislation and amendments.
- 7.3. Maximise the provisions and scope provided within existing legislation and best regulatory practices in pursuit of our remit.



**We have a wide
range of regulatory
powers that are
equally important
in promoting safe
medical practice.**

Empower and Support



We will create a regulatory environment that enhances the quality of patient care through empowering and supporting doctors.

We are dedicated to supporting a professional environment that enhances **public protection** and supports the continuous professional growth and well-being of doctors.

The **standards and guidelines for education and training for doctors** which are central to effective proactive regulation will be informed by data and insights from our regulatory activities.

As an outcome of our work in **receiving complaints and holding inquiries**, we will be proactive in the identification of patient safety risk areas.

Our **accreditation of training programmes and site inspection processes** will allow us to identify where the environment does not support safe medical education, training or maintenance of professional competence.

Strategic Objectives

8 Listen and proactively engage with doctors, the public and our stakeholders to ensure greater understanding, fostering collaboration and developing stronger partnerships.

We aim to achieve this objective through the following actions:

- 8.1. Listen, learn, observe, and stay well informed, to deliver responsive regulatory processes.
- 8.2. Use our regulatory voice to raise patient safety risks identified through our processes.
- 8.3. Support doctors and complainants going through the Medical Council regulatory processes through the provision of professional guidance and information.
- 8.4. Engage meaningfully with our stakeholders including other regulatory agencies to gain and share insights and further strengthen our relationships.
- 8.5. Continue to forge relationships and strategic partnerships with national and international organisations to drive innovation and best practice in medical regulation.

9 Apply our insights on emerging issues and trends in professional regulation and the wider healthcare system, strengthening our regulatory voice.

We aim to achieve this objective through the following actions:

- 9.1. Evolve our work in undertaking research, shaping regulatory policy and developing position statements to inform, develop and communicate our regulatory response.
- 9.2. Engage in horizon scanning to identify and address emerging themes in regulation and within the broader healthcare system.
- 9.3. Maximise our opportunities to share our data, research and insights to contribute to dialogue and policy and on the regulation of doctors at national and international conferences.

10 Provide timely regulatory guidance for doctors and stakeholders on new policies, initiatives, legislation and technologies in healthcare.

We aim to achieve this objective through the following actions:

- 10.1. Align our regulatory functions and processes with emerging legislation where applicable.
- 10.2. Provide supplementary guidance to the Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics to support doctors in their practice.
- 10.3. Utilise our data, research and policy capability to enhance public protection and to engage in and influence policy and legislation developments in the healthcare environment.

11 Leverage key insights from our regulatory operations to inform the evolution of undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing professional development programmes.

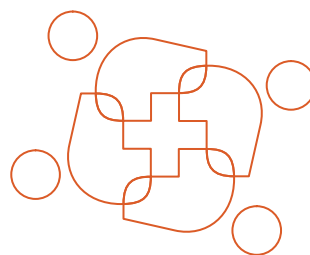
We aim to achieve this objective through the following actions:

- 11.1. Utilise data obtained from our regulatory processes together with relevant data provided by accredited medical schools, postgraduate training bodies and clinical sites, and from related national and regional entities to effect improvements across the life cycle of the doctor.
- 11.2. Share our data and insights with doctors, medical schools and postgraduate training bodies to inform their programmes and provide wider context, ensuring empowered partners across the continuum.
- 11.3. Work with our partners on emerging issues and challenges that includes doctor wellbeing, multidisciplinary professional relationships, planetary health, artificial intelligence, equality, diversity and inclusion and sustainable healthcare.



We are committed
to listen to all
voices that inform
and influence the
work we do.

Invest



We will invest in our People, Culture and Governance to achieve our objectives.

Our people are key to ensuring that the Medical Council meets its regulatory obligations and fosters a culture of excellence, integrity, and continuous improvement.

We are committed to retaining, developing and attracting highly skilled and motivated people capable adapting to the ever-evolving demands of the regulatory environment.

We will continue to empower our people to enable them to efficiently **deliver our functions in accordance with the Act.**

We will continue to foster a positive and inclusive work environment that promotes well-being and professional growth, where everyone has a voice, feel that they belong and are valued for their individual skills and abilities.

Strategic Objectives

12 Cultivate a strong and intentional culture based on our values to progress our strategic objectives and goals.

We aim to achieve this objective through the following actions:

- 12.1. Embed our values and behaviours across the entire organisation, including Council, staff and committees.
- 12.2. Identify and address areas that will enhance staff experience, productivity and retention on a regular basis, through undertaking regular culture evaluations and initiatives.
- 12.3. Invest in our ways of working, staff development, inter-team and external collaboration to ensure better service delivery.
- 12.4. Develop and implement an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy to ensure that the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded throughout all aspects of our work.

13 Develop and enhance our organisation, governance, decision-making operations and procedures across all functions ensuring alignment with best regulatory practice.

We aim to achieve this objective through the following actions:

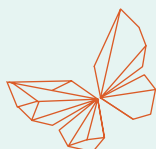
- 13.1. Progress governance compliance initiatives to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies⁵.
- 13.2. Enhance awareness and transparency of our decision-making processes to those who use our services through the provision of better guidance documentation.
- 13.3. Review, evaluate and improve Council operations, governance arrangements, structures, capacity and performance to ensure that they are efficient, optimised and sustainable.
- 13.4. Review and continuously improve the governance and operation of our statutory committees to facilitate timely and effective decision-making.

⁵ Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies can be found at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/0918ef-code-of-practice-for-the-governance-of-state-bodies/>

Strategic Outcomes

The Medical Council will have achieved its strategic objectives when:

Transform



- Our core functions and operations, particularly those in **registration** and **complaints and inquiries** are improved and are delivered more efficiently.
- Our digital systems will be informed by our data and digital strategies.
- Our interventions that **protect the public**, are proportionate to the level of risk, and support doctors in training and practice.
- Resources are managed effectively and efficiently to deliver on our strategic goals and statutory functions in a sustainable way.
- We will have developed a sustainable financial model that facilitates the continuous improvement of our core functions.
- Quality management and assurance systems are implemented across our regulatory functions.

Empower and Support



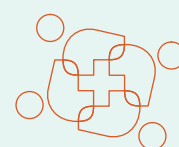
- The data generated will be used to identify patient safety risks and appropriate regulatory interventions, in accordance with the Act in the best interests of **public protection**.
- Statistical data from the register, our registration and retention processes are informing national policy and strategic workforce planning.
- We have issued regulatory guidance on new and emerging policies, initiatives, legislation and technologies in healthcare in a timely manner.
- We will have informed the evolution of undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing professional development programmes by leveraging and sharing key insights from our regulatory operations.

Balance



- We will have used a proportionate and principled approach in regulatory design, including right touch regulation principles that are embedded across all our core functions.
- A new risk-based approach to address **complaints and inquiries** has been implemented leading to earlier resolution and regulatory intervention, and a reduced number of complaints being referred to fitness to practise inquiry.
- Our core functions are supported by statutory and governance frameworks in line with best regulatory practices.

Invest



- Our values and behaviours are embedded throughout the organisation, across all aspects of our work and our people.
- Our governance and decision-making structures are efficient and sustainable.
- Our people continue to build the skills they need to perform their roles within the Council. They have greater autonomy and are empowered to speak up and learn within an inclusive work environment.
- We continue to retain and attract high-calibre staff, offering dynamic, challenging and fulfilling roles and the Medical Council has the reputation as being a rewarding place to work.

Our Strategic Enablers

Strategic enablers support the successful implementation and sustainability of a statement of strategy. Here are the key strategic enablers that will ensure that the Medical Council will deliver on this Statement of Strategy:



Leadership and Governance

Strong leadership and effective governance structures are essential for maintaining the strategic direction, making informed decisions, and ensuring accountability within the regulatory body. Our new Organisational Structure implemented in late 2023 will be a key enabler for the success of this strategy.



Stakeholder Engagement

Meaningful engagement with key stakeholders which includes the public, doctors, patients, Government Departments, employers, broader health service, regulatory bodies, medical schools, post graduate training bodies and representative organisations helps build trust, gather valuable insights, and foster collaboration.



Technology and Innovation

Leveraging modern technology and innovative solutions enhances regulatory processes, improves efficiency, and ensures that the regulatory body remains responsive to emerging trends and challenges.



Data and Analytics

Data and analytics highlight issues and trends, informs decision-making, monitors compliance, and identifies areas for improvement. This is crucial for evidence-based regulation and continuous improvement and is a key enabler for the implementation of our strategy.



Skilled Workforce

A highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce is vital for executing the regulatory strategy effectively. This includes ongoing training and development to keep staff updated on best practices and regulatory changes.



Clear Communication

Transparent and effective communication and engagement is fundamental for the delivery of this strategy.



Risk Management

Robust risk management practices help identify, assess, and mitigate potential risks that could impact the regulatory body's ability to achieve its strategic objectives.



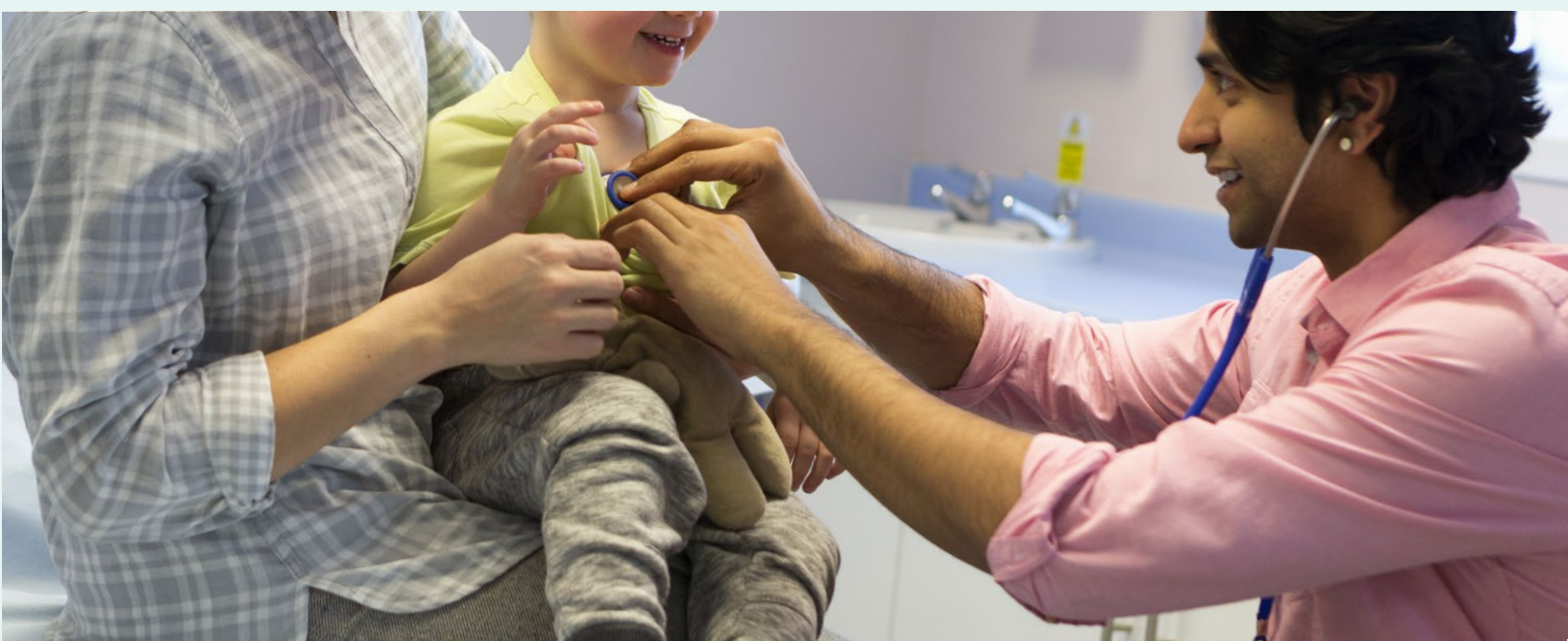
Financial Resources

Adequate financial resources are necessary to support the implementation of strategic initiatives, invest in technology, and maintain operational effectiveness.



Cultural Alignment

Fostering a culture that aligns with our values, purpose and vision, promotes a shared commitment among staff and stakeholders.





Comhairle na
nDochtúirí Leighis
Medical Council

Medical Council
Kingram House
Kingram Place
Dublin 2
D02 XY88

info@mcirl.ie
www.medicalcouncil.ie