

# Our plan for fitness to practise 2024-2026

We are committed to transforming our service and creating a culture of excellence.

We need to make swift and safe, proportionate decisions. We also need faster and fairer processes so that we resolve cases as early as possible.

In 2024, we launched our comprehensive programme of over 30 strategic and operational improvements, that we call our fitness to practise plan.

It is not possible to do everything at once, and we need to prioritise the initiatives that will make a difference for everyone involved in FtP, while not overwhelming our staff. We know that this is a long-term effort.

We will make progress by investing in our people and new technologies so that we make a sustainable difference.

Our plan is supported by external advice and support, so that we are continuing to learn from others, collaborating to find solutions.

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## Prevent delays and make prompt actions at every stage of fitness to practise

**So that we reach resolution on cases in a timely manner. We are:**

- tackling our oldest cases so that people receive resolution in a timely way, reducing frustration and anxiety that can be heightened by slow processes
- increasing our capacity across every stage of the process, and within our hearings to enable more to be held in-person, supporting quicker and fairer decision-making. We'll also facilitate hybrid options for registrants and witnesses as requested
- implementing a new case weighting tool to distribute workloads according to case complexity, promoting effective case management and colleague wellbeing.

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## Appropriately manage incoming concerns and new referrals

**So that we signpost cases that aren't for us and focus on those that need regulatory action. We are:**

- being clearer about our role and the types of incidents or concerns that need to be referred to our fitness to practise process, by improving how we triage and screen new referrals and the information we provide to the public
- working with employers to support them to understand patterns of concerns being raised with us, and to encourage local resolution, where appropriate.

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## Be consistent in making proportionate decisions

**So that we are fair, and are taking appropriate action to uphold standards of care. We are:**

- we will continue to consider how we handle our cases at different stages of the FtP process so that we are continuing to learn from registrant experience and the findings from external expertise and reviews. We are reviewing our interim order KPI to ensure the right cases get considered for interim orders when they should be so that we protect the public
- we are reviewing our screening guidance to ensure we only send on cases for further investigation that really need it because they require regulatory investigation and action. This ensures we are protecting the public, and ensuring that registrants aren't in our process unnecessarily
- embedding clinical advice at the right points in our process to ensure we always make high quality, proportionate decisions that consider the context in which an incident occurred
- refreshing our evidential standards framework to ensure consistency and proportionality in decision making, while introducing new training and induction to support high quality case management. We will consider the benefits of a future learning academy to support training our people.

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## Better support vulnerable registrants involved in our processes

**So that we focus on safety and help people to effectively engage with us. We are:**

- strengthening our safeguarding approach and setting up a safeguarding hub so that every new referral is assessed by trained experts, ensuring that people/registrants identified as high risk can receive the support they need without delay
- ensuring that memorandums of understanding are in place with external agencies so that colleagues can share information securely and quickly, where appropriate
- piloting, evaluating and embedding new ways of supporting registrants who are referred to us, or who self-refer, because of physical or mental health conditions
- taking a person-centered approach to liaising with registrants and reviewing the role we can play in supporting those who are out of the workforce while they await the outcome of our process.

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## Promote equality, diversity and inclusion and embed a working culture where people thrive

**So that everyone is treated with respect. We are:**

- incorporating the recommendations from external reviews on our workplace culture, regulatory casework and our 'Ambitious for Change' research, ensuring we remain adaptable and responsive to new ways of working to deliver equality, diversity, and inclusion for everyone
  - addressing discrimination, bias and discriminatory behaviours in hearings by improving access to and quality of training and skills development for our colleagues and panel members. We will diversify our pool of panel members by running more public facing recruitment campaigns
  - making reasonable adjustments throughout our FtP process to support everyone to engage in the way that best suits their needs and preferences
  - we will diversify our pool of panel members by running more public facing recruitment campaigns, attracting more people from a diversity of backgrounds.
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