Strategy
2021–24
Contents

Executive summary ............................................. 2
Foreword .......................................................... 6
At a glance ......................................................... 8
Introduction ....................................................... 10

Strategic aims ...................................................... 12
Improving quality of care .................................... 12
Equipping members with skills and knowledge .......... 14
Shaping policy and advocating for child health .......... 16
Developing our communities ................................ 20

Appendix ............................................................ 23
Executive summary

This strategy describes how the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health will continue to work to improve health outcomes for children and young people over the period 2021–24.

We have set four strategic aims:

1. **To harness knowledge, data and intelligence** to improve the quality of care for children and young people.
   - We will drive up the standard and quality of paediatric care by championing innovation and audit.
   - We will improve digital literacy across child health, develop experts in clinical information and support everyone in the paediatric community with an interest in data science. We will help to enable artificial intelligence and machine learning to be harnessed for paediatric needs, and for data to be used to identify gaps and explore deficiencies in child health and services.
   - We will encourage the paediatric and wider child health workforce to conduct research during their careers to stimulate further benefit for children and young people.

2. **To equip members with the skills and knowledge they need** through training and assessment.
   - We will continue to run the four professional exams which doctors must pass to complete their training as paediatricians in the UK, support exams in over 25 other countries and consider what part virtual exams might play. We will put in place a new UK training programme (Progress+) ready to start in summer 2023.
   - We will continue our humanitarian work, strengthening paediatric health systems overseas and giving clinicians valuable skills to be brought back to their home country.
3. **To speak with confidence and authority on the health issues that matter to children and young people**, and on policies that speak to our values and our mission.

- We will continue to shape policy around prevention and health inequalities in childhood, targeting the leaders and policymakers who have the most power to make change – internationally, nationally, regionally and locally. We will champion the issues that matter to paediatricians to ensure that paediatrics and child health remain high on the agenda.
- We will continue to lead the way in involving children and young people in our work, place them at the heart of our community, listen and respond to their ideas.
- We will engage members about differential career attainment and progression, as well as issues affecting paediatric care, to help achieve equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do.
- We will participate in COP26 and support members on sustainable healthcare, aiming to make the College a Net Zero organisation by 2040.

“**We need to build resilience, have space to get clarity and inspiration, to learn and to create a strong foundation together.**

RCPCH &Us, the voice of children, young people and families.”
4. To develop our communities, supporting members throughout their careers and attracting new recruits, ensuring the College is financially sustainable and well-resourced.

- We will seek to make the College accessible to members wherever they live, and cater for the full range of members’ needs, whatever their career stage or sub-specialty.

- We will build communities of paediatricians and child health professionals to share and develop best practice. We will use data and insight to inform our work to ensure that paediatrics is as attractive a career as possible, both for new doctors and existing practitioners.

- We will support the effective professional development of the paediatric and wider child health workforce throughout their careers, including through interactive online learning tools and our Education and Learning Board.

- We will identify new income streams, making our finances more sustainable, with less reliance on members.

These strategic aims set our vision for the next three years at the College, but achievement must be underpinned by detailed yearly operational plans and measurable objectives. A business plan to bridge the gap between our internal plans and the vision for the future is planned, with publication expected in winter 2021-22.

We will review this strategy through fresh engagement with members each year to keep it current, relevant and fit for purpose.
President’s foreword

Hello and welcome to the RCPCH 2021–24 Strategy. This is a key document for our College, representing a community of over 20,000 paediatricians committed to the care of children and advancement of child health across the UK and globally. Our community has faced extraordinary challenges over the last 18 months and there are clearly more to come. Child poverty and health inequalities are greater than they have ever been. The demands on the workforce, at a time of very real pressures, are enormous.

With the right strategy, we can rise to these challenges and the good news is, at the College, we have done much of the foundational work. This is not about a major change in direction. It is about building on what we have learnt during the pandemic, using new ways of working and interacting, and robustly addressing our workforce needs. The last year or so has placed even greater burdens on child health professionals and our strategy makes the support for lifelong careers in child health a central pillar. In our commitment to capitalise on what we have learnt, the strategy also brings the crucial role of digital innovation in our future ways of working to the fore. These and the other strategic aims outlined here will enable us to face the future and continue to advocate for the very best care and health systems for children and young people.

I commend the RCPCH Strategy 2021–24 to you. It will be the blueprint for our work. It will be a live document, regularly reviewed, that we will be measured against and that will help us respond to the challenges that lie ahead. With this strategy, we can continue to serve both paediatricians and children and young people to the best of our ability, wherever they are in the world.

Dr Camilla Kingdon, RCPCH President
CEO's foreword

Thank you for taking the time today to read our strategy. It’s never been more important for the College to map out a clear plan for the next few years which makes sense to our members and so many others we work with across healthcare. We need to be able to adapt to challenges, grasp opportunities as they arise and respond to many different needs as we emerge from the pandemic. My role as CEO lies in ensuring that we can deliver on our ambitious goals as effectively as possible.

This strategy took nine months to develop and deliver, involved conversations with many members, Officers and staff and led to the creation of the four broad aims encompassing our dual role in supporting paediatricians and improving child health. We are a charity with strong organisational values and I’m proud of how these underpin the plan. The work that we do with members to give children a stronger voice in society, and to move forward with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work, is threaded through this document. Everyone is determined that it isn’t going to languish on a shelf; instead, it will help to inform the way we take major decisions over the next three years, including emerging areas that need to be prioritised.

But firstly, we would like to have your feedback on the plans and please do email us with your thoughts to: strategy@rcpch.ac.uk.

Jo Revill, RCPCH Chief Executive Officer
At a glance

**Vision**
To lead the way in children's health.

**Mission**
To improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people across the world, by supporting paediatricians, shaping policy and improving practice.

**Priorities**
- Improve child health by harnessing the power of our members.
- Equip members with the skills and knowledge they need.
- Advocate on health issues that matter to children and young people.
- Develop our community of members.
How we’ll do it

- Support innovation and development of digital skills.
- Make the College accessible to all levels and all specialities.
- Deliver professional paediatric exams and training in the UK and abroad.
- Act on the perspective of children and young people, putting them at the heart of everything we do.

Focus on

- Creating a College that feels like a place for all members.
- Inspiring paediatricians of the future.
- Safeguarding the future of the College.
Introduction

Children and young people today are facing enormous health challenges. The global pandemic has further eroded fragile mental health services. The lasting effects of pollution and wider environmental issues are likely to impact most heavily on the youngest and most vulnerable in society.

Standing ready to tackle these challenges are the medical professionals who devote their lives to children and young people – the members of our College, the paediatric workforce.

There can be few missions more important than improving health outcomes for children and young people. To fulfil this task, paediatricians need knowledge, research, expertise and experience. They need educating and training in a particular set of skills and tools. They need to benefit from the best that innovation and digital technology can offer. They need to be supported, listened to, invested in and championed.

This is what the RCPCH 2021–24 strategy is about.

It is based on what the College can do directly to influence outcomes, how we can equip the paediatric and wider child health workforce to deliver these and what we can do as an organisation to support and sustain our members. This strategy highlights the importance of our policy and advocacy activities in the four UK nations, our digital transformation work and our commitment to children and young people.

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Be kind, inclusive and compassionate. Always smile – it puts everyone at ease.

RCPCH &Us
This document is based on more than nine months of discussion and development. Council members – who are accountable for the strategy and represent our 20,000 members – spent two dedicated strategy meetings putting themselves and their contributions at its centre. Children and young people have informed our thinking at every stage, playing a vital role in providing insight which has shaped the next three years of College activity.

The detailed work of the College, its projects, programmes and teams and their operational plans, underpin this ambitious strategy. This document spells out the high-level imperatives. We will be reviewing it every year to keep it current, but our overarching purpose will remain the same: to support the child health workforce to care for children and young people, enabling them to lead healthy lives.
We have set four strategic aims and we describe below what we will do to deliver them over the period 2021–24. Progress will be measured by yearly operational plans and objectives for each team, guided by the College’s Business Plan.

**Strategic aim 1**

Harness knowledge, data and intelligence to improve the quality of care for children and young people.

### 1.1 Standards and quality

We will drive up the standard and quality of paediatric care through championing innovation and harnessing evidence from national audits to drive quality improvement.

We will constantly seek new ways to assess and measure the standard and quality of care, working closely with the 17 paediatric sub-specialties. We will also use invited reviews, quality improvement tools and other initiatives to drive up standards where paediatric care needs to be better.

We will build on the innovations in the delivery of care that have arisen through the pandemic – for example, replacing traditional interactions with online equivalents, where they can save time and money and enhance safety.

Innovation often relies on new ways of working, so we will integrate developments on standards directly into our education and training programmes.
1.2 Digital transformation

Advances in digital technology represent huge opportunities to improve the care of children and young people. Our paediatric workforce need the right digital infrastructure and support with access to practical skills, tools and knowledge, so that they can make the most of digital opportunities. They need to feel empowered to tackle and overcome the challenges that new technology also brings.

We will therefore introduce better, more immersive online learning tools that are responsive to members’ needs. We will support these innovations through partnerships with other national organisations to improve digital literacy, develop experts in clinical information and support all in the paediatric community with an interest in data science.

Digital transformation can also be co-designed with children and young people. It can have a direct bearing on overcoming inequalities and poor access to care and help tackle climate change. We will therefore help to enable artificial intelligence and machine learning to be harnessed for paediatric needs, and for data to be used to identify gaps and explore deficiencies in child health and services.

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We need to remember that people are people with options and are not just their condition, and should be helped by services that constantly improve and reflect.

RCPCH &Us

1.3 Research and evidence

New research and knowledge are essential if better care and better outcomes for children and young people are to be achieved. Over the years, the College’s original research and evidence building work, drawn from wider research, has gained worldwide recognition. For example, the British Paediatric Surveillance Unit (BPSU), hosted by the College, is internationally renowned. Its three studies on the pandemic’s impact on different aspects of child health gained widespread acknowledgement.

The time is now right for us to build on this. While acknowledging the pressures on the paediatric and wider child health workforce, we will encourage those within it to conduct research during their careers and to see this as valuable and fulfilling. Only through such work can the potential impact of new research and evidence for the benefit of children and young people be fully realised.
2.1 Professional training and examinations

To embark on one of the most rewarding medical careers there is, a doctor needs to gain the right professional qualifications and be assessed and approved. We will continue to run the five professional exams that form the membership (MRCPCH) and Diploma of Child Health (DCH) qualifications. These are qualifications doctors must pass as part of their paediatric training or to demonstrate their proficiency and skill in child health. We run training and assessments both for doctors in the UK and for our members in over 25 other countries.

As the pandemic has disrupted education systems around the world, so too it has heavily affected these exams. Restoring assessments in the UK and internationally will be a focus in 2021–24, since it is these which allow us to uphold the highest clinical standards. We will review the experience of holding virtual exams and consider what part they might play for international and national trainees in the future.

Alongside this, we will put in place a new UK training programme (Progress+) ready to start in summer 2023. A simplified two tier structure and shortened indicative training time with core training years are designed to broaden skills and knowledge in the holistic care of children and young people, including mental health, public health and community facing capabilities. We will also provide the support necessary to ensure the updated curriculum can be delivered successfully, while integrating effectively with the 17 paediatric sub-specialties.

"Paediatricians should be trained on how to be: supportive, understanding, open-minded, and be aware of different backgrounds and experiences of children and young people and to keep being professional, positive and have a sense of humour."

RCPCH &Us
2.2 Humanitarian work

Providing humanitarian care to children in a developing country is an inspiring opportunity for anyone involved in medicine and can play an important part in developing their own professional skills. Frequently cited as one of the most exciting aspects of a paediatric career, humanitarian work is also one of the most widely understood examples of the College’s potential to improve children’s health.

In recent years, we have created humanitarian partnerships in Kenya, Myanmar, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Uganda; formed working relationships with Cambodia, Sri Lanka and the Middle East; and given technical support to countries such as India and Pakistan.

We have scaled up humanitarian programmes, with individual hospital projects becoming nationwide initiatives. Funding bases and donors are now much more varied, with new donors, the WHO and UNICEF as core partners. There has been a significant reduction in child death rates in areas served by all the College’s humanitarian programmes. The skills gained through this work by doctors are brought back into their home country to improve care.

Clearly the College is too small to operate at a truly pan-global level, and so we will continue to strengthen paediatric health systems in strategically chosen – and often disadvantaged – countries, focusing effort to achieve impact.

Through this work, we will build understanding of the effect of humanitarian programmes on child health, and we will advocate to increase the number of ways in which NHS clinicians can contribute.
3.1 Policy and advocacy

We use our voice to drive better outcomes in children’s health. This important work, combining policy development with advocacy through political engagement and profile raising across all four UK nations, underpins everything we do.

We will continue to shape policy around prevention and health inequalities in childhood and target the leaders and policymakers who have the most power to make change – locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

We will use as evidence not only the research base that paediatricians depend on to inform what they do, but also experience from the lives of our working members themselves. We will tackle Governments and national bodies on future service and workforce planning issues. We will advocate for humanitarian work to form part of an NHS career. We will provide members with the skills, practical tools and knowledge they need to help turn policy into practice and become advocates themselves.

We will champion the issues that matter to paediatricians, using the media, digital and other public channels on policy to ensure that paediatrics and child health remain high on the agenda.

To reduce inequalities, we need more opportunities that bring us together, to learn from each other and make everyone feel welcomed.

RCPCH &Us
3.2 The voice of children and young people

Children and young people need everyone who is involved in the work of the College and the child health sector to protect and promote their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Services need to meet their needs through active engagement. Our staff, teams and members will therefore involve children and young people meaningfully in developing and delivering College priorities.

Children and young people are central to our work, driving everything we do. They make a difference by working with us and our community of members to shape policy and advocacy, inform education, training and practice, and develop quality improvement programmes. The children and young people involved in turn develop skills for life, enabling them to make a lasting difference.

We will continue to lead the way in involving children and young people in our work, acting as a role model for others. We will challenge assumptions about what children and young people can do and where they should participate. We will continue to place them at the heart of our community, listening and responding to their ideas, and create accessible, aspirational and meaningful opportunities for them to change the world they live in. We will amplify children and young people’s voices and rights within child health through consultation and engagement programmes, empowering them to inform, influence and shape better care, better outcomes and better paediatricians.
3.3 Equality, diversity and inclusion

Worldwide movements in the last 12 months have dramatically raised the profile of equality, diversity and inclusion. The need for greater, more rapid change has seldom been clearer and paediatrics and child health should be at the forefront of this change.

As a College, we have looked frankly and openly at how well we are reflecting the breadth and diversity of our members and the society in which they work. We have therefore developed a clear set of targets to improve representation over the next few years.

We will engage members about differential career attainment and progression, as well as issues affecting paediatric care, as we develop a future plan for change. We will roll out this work across all of our activities, because achieving real equality, diversity and inclusion is relevant to everything we do.

3.4 Climate change action

The devastating impact of climate change on children and young people is one of the biggest challenges of our age. In autumn 2020, the College joined those declaring a climate emergency, divested from companies involved in the production of fossil fuels and started to put a climate change plan team and budget in place.

We will roll out our resulting climate change programme in earnest throughout 2021–24. This will involve significant engagement with members, a resource hub on the website, and dedicated sessions at the RCPCH Conference and other College forums.

We will collaborate with other healthcare organisations, promote research and advocacy on climate change and conduct a carbon audit of our own operations. We will also participate in the international climate change conference, COP26. Support for members on sustainable healthcare is also being planned, along with making the College a net zero organisation by 2040.
4.1. Member representation and support

The College is a membership body, formed in 1996 by gaining its Royal Charter. Members are our lifeblood. They lead and populate our key committees and teams. Providing a community through membership representation is a foundation of this strategy.

We will strive to enable our community of members to deliver better health outcomes for children and young people, no matter what challenges they face or how turbulent their working environment might be.

We will seek to make the College accessible to members, however far away they live from our main office in London. We will aim to cater for the full range of members’ needs, whatever career stage they are in and whatever sub-specialty they may belong to.

Membership has grown from 12,600 in 2011 to over 20,000 in 2021. Some 22% of members are based outside the UK and members from around 70 countries now regularly join the College’s conferences. We will finalise a plan for international membership during 2021–22, to help members understand the College’s role, functions and purposes, and the opportunities to get involved.

“We need to understand how much doctors are already doing, thank paediatricians for the work they do and help paediatricians to retain their love for their job.”

RCPCH &Us
4.2 Lifelong career support

Paediatrics is a demanding, all-consuming profession and has struggled over recent years to attract and retain sufficient practitioners. This also impacts careers in professions closely allied to paediatrics, which suffer from the knock-on effects.

In 2020 the College appointed a new Lifelong Careers Officer and began exploring a ‘Lifelong Careers’ strategy. The first outcomes of that – delivery of the first phase of research made possible by a grant from the Dinwoodie Foundation – will be completed in autumn 2021.

As part of this work, we will build communities of paediatricians to share and develop best practice, and use data and insight to inform all our activities, making the case to our partners and strengthening recruitment and retention efforts.
4.3 Lifelong learning

Once a paediatrician has completed training, career-long learning and development need to continue. We will therefore establish better interactive online learning tools and, through our Education and Learning Board, will support the effective professional development of the paediatric and wider child health workforce throughout their careers.

The lessons learned from the pandemic will be important to this, as will the roles played by the College’s courses, national conference and international events. Getting the balance right between online and face-to-face interaction has the potential to make a significant impact on the careers of paediatricians in future years, both in the UK and around the world.

4.4 Finance and governance

Funding, managing and governing the College successfully enables us to support our members with a sustainable, thriving organisation. In 2019–20, our normal operating model was significantly disrupted and business had to be swiftly realigned due to the pandemic. After prudently drawing on our reserves, we have reshaped our future business and financial plans to ensure a stable financial platform to deliver this strategy.

We will take a bolder and more innovative approach to decision-making, underpinned by a strong plan for managing risk. Our main building will be reorganised to better fit the future needs of members and staff.

We will identify new income streams so that less reliance is put on members and the financial base becomes more sustainable.

Overseeing this plan is the responsibility of our leadership and committees, in which over 3,000 members take part as volunteers. We will ensure that these governance structures operate smoothly and effectively, taking account of ever-evolving data requirements, and that our charitable objects are met. We will ensure that members are able to contribute effectively, offering remote meeting facilities where appropriate.
Appendix: Vision, mission, values and charitable objects

RCPCH Vision
Leading the way in children’s health

RCPCH Mission (in full)

♫ To make the health and wellbeing of infants, children and young people the core of all we do.

♫ To ensure every paediatrician has the knowledge, expertise and support to promote child health and to care for infants, children and young people with health needs.

♫ To make a measurable contribution to the improvement of health and wellbeing of infants, children and young people in the UK and across the developing world.

♫ To inform, influence and shape policy and practice so that UK health services provide high quality, safe and sustainable health care services for all children in all settings.
RCPCH Values

Innovate
- Approach things creatively.
- Embrace risk.
- View change as an opportunity.
- Have an open mind to new ideas.

Influence
- Advocate for better child health.
- Challenge positively.
- Share best practice.
- Work proactively.

Include
- Embrace diversity.
- Ask for the voices of children and young people.
- Work together.
- Value everyone's input.

Lead
- Develop ourselves and others.
- Act as positive role models.
- Act with integrity and honesty.
- Encourage, praise and thank.
RCPCH Charitable Objects

To advance the art and science of paediatrics.

To raise the standard of medical care provided to children.

To educate and examine those concerned with the health of children.

To advance the education of the public (and in particular medical practitioners) in child health, which means the protection of children, the prevention of illness and disease in children and safeguarding their optimal development.