

# A Manifesto for a 21st Century Health Service

Anaesthesia, as the UK's single largest hospital specialty, is a critical bellwether for secondary care, and plays a vital role in the care of two-thirds of all hospital patients.

The Royal College of Anaesthetists (RCoA), with a combined membership of over 23,000 members and fellows, including our Faculties of Intensive Care Medicine and Pain Medicine, is the third largest Medical Royal College by UK membership.

As the next government is formed, the RCoA is keen to work with it to address the following issues which our members have identified as central to delivering a 21st century health service – putting patients first and caring for our hard working NHS staff who care for us 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



## Taking a whole-person approach

Perioperative care is the integrated multidisciplinary care of patients from the moment surgery is contemplated, through to full recovery. It can improve the patient experience, the health of populations and reduce healthcare costs. We celebrate the pioneering work of the new cross-specialty Centre for Perioperative Care, formed by a founding partnership of the Royal Colleges of Anaesthetists, Surgeons of England, Physicians of England, Nursing, General Practitioners and the Association of Anaesthetists and developing rapidly as more stakeholders come on board. **We are keen to work with the next Government to embed multidisciplinary perioperative care into routine clinical practice, ensuring that every opportunity to improve patient health is fully realised.**



## Caring for the people who care for us

Well-supported, motivated, NHS staff can improve the quality of patient care, outcomes and safety. The next Government has a chance to show its commitment to our hard working NHS staff, including a growing cohort of older doctors with vital technical skills and experience, by publishing **a national morale and welfare strategy with recommendations for improved, flexible, working conditions, with staff physical and mental health and wellbeing a priority.**<sup>1</sup>



## Ensuring a future doctor and nursing 'pipeline'

The next Government should support maintenance of staffing levels through a renewed commitment to the Medical Training Initiative, in parallel with other international schemes and a supportive immigration environment as well as encouraging retention of senior staff. **It should couple this with the additional investment needed to grow, sustainably, the NHS' domestic workforce and increase training placements.**<sup>2</sup>



## Shifting the culture of blame to maintain patient safety

A 'no-blame' culture prioritises patient safety and staff development to improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of services. It supports reductions in avoidable harm while maintaining professional accountability and improving system-wide learning. **The next Government should support all employers to make a cultural shift towards a 'no-blame' learning environment.**



## Delivering 21st Century care

Modern infrastructure is needed to support the long-term sustainability of the NHS. The next Government has a chance to improve staff and patient facilities, including modernised theatres and wards, office, study and rest spaces and IT services – based on patient experience and staff wellbeing. **The next Government should commit to an ambitious, ring-fenced, NHS capital-spending fund.**



## Supporting multi-disciplinary working

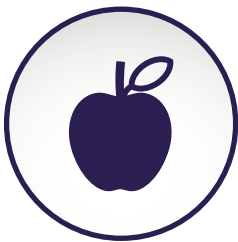
We welcome the Interim People Plan's vision to transform the way our entire workforce, including the Allied Health Professions, works together to deliver more personalised, patient-centred care. Our workforce will be multidisciplinary, supported by new technology that will change how services are organised and delivered. We also welcome the news that the GMC will regulate Anaesthesia Associates – highly trained practitioners working as part of consultant-led anaesthetic teams. **We look forward to working with the next Government to implement a statutory register as soon as possible, and to realise the vision of a multi-disciplinary workforce designed around the patient.**<sup>3</sup>



## Integrating health and care

The next government should avoid a comprehensive NHS re-organisation. Instead, it can enable providers to work collaboratively in delivering seamless, integrated health and social care, improved access to services and perioperative care, and thereby enabling long-term population health benefits. **The next Government should remove legislative barriers, realign funding incentives and provide time and financial support to integrated care leaders, enabling them to take their work to the next stage.**<sup>4</sup>

---



## Taking a population health approach

The next Government can reduce health inequalities across the life-course by tackling the key risk factors of preventable ill health, including inactivity, obesity, smoking and diet, by ensuring prevention is at the forefront of all national and local policies.

**We urge the next Government to deliver an increased multi-year public health settlement and to commission an independent, evidence-based, review into the provision and effectiveness of public health services, including the role of the NHS in prevention.**<sup>5</sup>

---



## Safeguarding a sustainable NHS

The next Government has a chance to look 15–20 years ahead, planning services around demographic trends, disease profiles and demand. It can consider the workforce and funding implications of these changes relative to that demand. In addition, it can build on the important progress made in reducing the NHS' carbon footprint by ensuring that financial and environmental sustainability are addressed in tandem and aligned with broader health policy objectives. **We urge the next Government to establish an independent Office for Health and Care Sustainability, supporting the long-term sustainability of an integrated health and social care system.**

---

## References

- 1 Response to the NHS Improvement's request for feedback for its Interim Workforce Implementation Plan. [RCoA, March 2019](#).
- 2 Views from the frontline of anaesthesia – supporting the development of the People Plan. [RCoA, November 2019](#).
- 3 Bulletin: the magazine for members of the Royal College of Anaesthetists. [RCoA, November 2019](#).
- 4 A teachable moment: delivering perioperative medicine in integrated care systems. [RCoA, February 2019](#).
- 5 Delivering prevention through perioperative care. [CPOC, October 2019](#).

## About the RCoA

The Royal College of Anaesthetists is the professional body which ensures the quality of patient care through the maintenance of standards in anaesthesia, critical care and pain medicine across the UK.

[www.rcoa.ac.uk](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk)

@RCoANews

For further information, please contact: [mweiss@rcoa.ac.uk](mailto:mweiss@rcoa.ac.uk)

Royal College of Anaesthetists  
Churchill House  
35 Red Lion Square  
London WC1R 4SG

November 2019

© Royal College of Anaesthetists