



Ag Rialáil Gairmithe Sláinte
agus Cúraim Shóisialaigh

Regulating Health +
Social Care Professionals

Draft

Health and Social Care Professionals Council Statement of Strategy 2027–2030

Our Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

CORU has the confidence and recognition of both the public and health and social care professionals in its processes and standards of regulation.

Mission

To protect the public by promoting high standards of professional education, conduct, training and competence amongst registrants of the designated professions.

Values

CORU seeks to reflect a set of values that underpin and support the way it works and interacts with all its stakeholders. Our values are central to the fulfilment of our mission and vision.

Accountability for our processes, decisions and our professional conduct.

Respect and Fairness in our interactions with the public, professionals and other stakeholders.

Openness and Transparency in our communications and dealings with the public and the professionals.

High Performance Levels as an organisation in terms of overall effectiveness, value for money, efficiency of operations and governance.

Pride and Commitment in delivering appropriate outcomes relating to safety and standards for the public and professionals concerned.

Enrichment of our sector by demonstrating leadership, positivity and a quality and evidence-based orientation to our work and engagement with stakeholders.



Introduction

CORU's work is built on a set of ongoing statutory activities that form the foundation of everything in this strategy.

We open and maintain registers for designated health and social care professions; we set and approve the standards for professional education and training; we support registrants through guidance and continuing professional development; and we protect the public through our fitness to practise processes. These are not background functions — they are the substance of what regulation means in practice, and they are the platform on which every strategic priority in this document rests.

Over the coming period, these core activities will be delivered at a scale and pace that reflects a regulator in significant growth. CORU will open registers for clinical, counselling and educational psychologists, and is progressing work to establish registers for counsellors and psychotherapists — extending statutory protection to new professions and the public they serve. The registration of social care workers under Section 91 (grandparenting) represents a major operational undertaking, requiring sustained resources and focus across departments. Alongside this, we continue to serve the professionals already on our registers — across *twelve designated professions* including social workers, radiographers, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, and many more — maintaining the standards and processes that underpin safe practice every day.

It is against this backdrop that the five strategic priorities that follow should be read. They do not describe what CORU does — they describe how CORU will do it better: more responsively, more proportionately, and with greater impact for the public, the professions, and the health and social care system today.

They have been informed by an analysis of our external and internal environment in terms of opportunities and threats that we need to plan for, where risk to public protection is emerging and remains, challenges our registrants face in their practice, and what our stakeholders have told us. These can be summarised as follows:

Professional practice is evolving — and so must regulation. The places where health and social care is delivered, the tools professionals use, and the models of care being asked of them are evolving faster than at any previous point in CORU's history. Sláintecare is driving a fundamental shift in how and where care is organised. Multi-disciplinary and integrated team working is becoming the norm. The boundaries of professional roles are shifting. A regulatory model designed for a more static, more predictable world of practice must evolve to stay relevant — supporting professionals to navigate change safely.

Ireland will continue to depend on internationally-educated health and social care professionals. The health and social care workforce in Ireland cannot be sustained by domestic supply alone. Even as investment in education and training places in Ireland grows, the volume and complexity of workforce demand — driven by demographics, service expansion and the ambitions of Sláintecare — means that internationally-educated professionals will remain an essential and substantial part of the workforce for the foreseeable future. Domestic graduate output, even at projected growth rates, will not close the supply gap across the professions over the period of this strategy. CORU's approach to recognition must reflect this reality — maintaining rigorous public protection standards while ensuring its processes are efficient, fair, and accessible for those coming from a wide range of international backgrounds.

The **availability of placements** remains a significant and ongoing challenge. There is sustained pressure on placement capacity across the health and social care professions, which affects the flow of domestically educated graduates and the opportunities available to internationally educated applicants who may require a period of adaptation or supervised practice as part of registration.

In this context, compensation measures and aptitude-based assessments can play an important supporting role. Where these approaches are demonstrably robust and evidence-based, CORU will continue to develop and support them in collaboration with employers, education providers, and wider system partners, with public protection as the central guiding principle.

CORU will be 20 years old next year — and the public safety system around it has grown up too.

When CORU was established, statutory professional registration was one of the few systematic protections available to the public in health and social care. That is no longer the case. HIQA, the Mental Health Commission, QQI, the Health and Safety Authority, employment law, and a range of strengthened employer accountability frameworks now form an interconnected public safety ecosystem. CORU is one part of that system — and an important part — but it is not the whole of it. This matters for how CORU directs its effort: a proportionate, risk-based regulator that understands its place in the wider system can concentrate its finite resources where the public protection gap is real and where no other mechanism is filling it.

AI is both an opportunity and a risk — in practice, in our operations, and at entry to the register. Artificial intelligence is already reshaping how health and social care professionals work, how services are organised, and how decisions are made. For CORU, this creates obligations and opportunities in three distinct areas: supporting registrants to navigate AI in their professional practice through guidance and standards; harnessing AI responsibly to improve the efficiency, consistency and quality of CORU's own processes; and addressing the growing risk of AI-generated fraud and misrepresentation across all of CORU's regulatory activities — a concern that is emerging across health and social care regulators internationally and that requires a proactive, rather than reactive, response.

What registrants can expect from CORU — and what CORU expects from Registrants

At the heart of this strategy is a clear expectation: that the professionals on CORU's registers practise to the highest standards of conduct, competence and care. Registrants are expected to engage continuously with their own professional development, to act with integrity, to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of those in their care, and to be accountable for their practice. CORU's role is to support that expectation — through clear standards, accessible guidance, fair processes, and meaningful engagement with the professions we regulate. The five strategic priorities that follow describe how we will do that.

Our strategic priorities

Building on the foundations established in our 2022–2026 strategy, our five strategic priorities for the next cycle reflect a clear direction of travel: a confident evolution of how CORU works, grounded in what we have learned, what our stakeholders have told us, and what the changing health and social care landscape demands of a modern, mature regulator: an evolution of how CORU works to deliver on its core purpose.

Our strategic priorities describe how we will deliver on that purpose more effectively in a health and social care system that is changing rapidly and in ways that demand a more active, more connected, and more visible regulator.

Strategic Priority 1:

Building Capability and Scalability

Continuing to build organisational strength to deliver — now and for the decades ahead

CORU has grown from a register of under twenty thousand professionals to one approaching forty thousand in the space of a single strategy cycle. That growth will continue. More professions, more internationally-educated applicants, more complex cases, and higher public expectations will all place demands on an organisation that must continue to function effectively under a legislative framework that is now two decades old. Building the capability and capacity to meet those demands is not a support function for the other objectives in this strategy — it is a strategic priority in its own right. Without it, none of the other four objectives is achievable at the scale and quality the public deserves. The implementation of recommendations from the Future Regulatory Model* project will be a key strand of work within this priority. So will positioning CORU as an organisation where people can build a career as a regulatory professional — developing the reputation, internal pathways and development structures that attract and retain talented people who see regulation as a long-term professional calling.

We will aim to:

1. Strengthen operational resilience through robust succession planning, workforce capability development, and effective risk management, including the implementation of strategic workforce planning, to ensure continuity of critical functions and long-term organisational sustainability.

2. Continue implementation of the Digital Strategy 2026-2028, as an insight-driven organisation enabled by integrated digital systems, strengthened by staff adoption and training and supported by secure infrastructure, while leveraging automation and AI to improve efficiency, consistency and scalability across regulatory functions
3. Implementation of new digital portal to support applications and registrant life cycle, including continuing to invest in digital workflows, to maintain our strong processing performance, predictability and visibility for registrants.
4. Invest in the ongoing development of our people and the strength of our organisation — ensuring that staff at every level have the regulatory knowledge, technical skills, leadership capability and professional development opportunities they need to deliver a high-quality, high-trust service.
5. Work with the Department of Health to progress legislative amendments to enable implementation of recommendations on CORU's future regulatory and governance model.

By 2030, we will have:

- Delivered on our Digital Strategy 2026 – 2028, resulting in a scalable, insight-driven organisation enabled by integrated digital systems, modern infrastructure and widespread adoption of digital tools including the use of AI and automation.
- A staff capability and development framework in place, with annual investment and measured outcomes attached.
- Legislative amendments commenced that support operational scalability.

* This project will develop recommendations to guide the future regulatory model, informing how CORU operates and ensuring its governance structures support agility and responsiveness in a changing environment.

Strategic Priority 2:

Supporting Safe and Effective Professional Practice

Providing the guidance, knowledge and support that registrants and key stakeholders need to enable safe and effective professional practice.

The changes in how health and social care is delivered — explored in the preceding section — create direct obligations for a regulator. Professionals need guidance on navigating new risks. Those entering practice or returning to practice require guidance and support to enable their re-entry to the workforce. The system needs the insights that CORU's unique vantage point generates. Over the next four years, CORU will strengthen its role as an authoritative, accessible and proactive source of guidance and support for registrants and stakeholders — making its regulatory knowledge work harder for the public it serves.

We will aim to:

6. Develop and publish guidance for registrants to support safe and effective professional practice.
7. Review return-to-practice and entry-to-practice requirements to support access to the register while ensuring public protection.
8. Share learning from Fitness to Practise processes proactively for registrants, employers, professional bodies and key stakeholders.

By 2030, we will have:

- Published guidance on practice-related areas to support registrants
- Identified recommendations on return-to-practice and entry-to-practice requirements to enhance access to registers and which protect the public
- Published Fitness to Practise insights report and share publicly with key stakeholders

Strategic Priority 3:

Broadening Pathways to the Register

Widening and supporting access to regulated professions through fair and evidence-based routes

CORU's role is to assure the public that registered professionals are competent and safe to practise — not to prescribe a single route by which that competence is achieved. As demand on our registers grows, our responsibility is to maintain the standard of assurance while being open to multiple evidence-based pathways to meeting it. A more flexible approach to registration serves public protection directly: more people entering the register through fair and robust processes means more qualified, competent professionals delivering safe care. Over the next four years, CORU will strive to facilitate the expansion of pathways to the register while ensuring that every route upholds the standards the public is entitled to expect. A key enabler will be the roll-out of our principle-based standards framework, commencing with Boards in 2027. By articulating outcomes rather than prescriptive requirements, this approach creates greater flexibility in how education and training programmes are delivered while maintaining rigorous public protection standards.

We will aim to:

9. Develop aptitude and entrance-based assessment as a tested, evidence-based pathway to the register in appropriate professions.
10. Develop insights report to foster collaboration with the National Tertiary Office, SOLAS, higher education institutions and professional bodies to support existing pathways into professional practice.
11. Further develop our registration pathways, aligned with strategic workforce planning, to ensure they are fair, transparent and accessible for an increasingly diverse workforce.

By 2030, we will have:

- Completed transitional period for application of existing practitioners to the clinical, counselling and educational psychologists register.
- Completed processing social care worker applications received during the grandparenting period.
- Commenced processing applications for approval of education and training programmes for counsellors and psychotherapists.
- Commenced transitioning to principle-based standards of proficiency and revised criteria for education and training programmes across the regulated professions.
- At least one additional aptitude-based assessment pathway piloted.
- Apprenticeship pathways continued and expanded, building on existing approved programmes, in partnership with higher education institutions and sector bodies.
- Piloted a new pathway enabling applicants to demonstrate proficiency for entry to the register.
- Published insights report on pathways into and through approved education and training programmes.

Strategic Priority 4:

Proportional Regulation for Public Protection

Directing our regulatory effort where the risk is greatest — protecting the public and the integrity of the professions

The purpose of fitness to practise is public protection, not punishment. Yet when every complaint — however serious or however minor — is handled through the same process, the system becomes slow, inconsistent, and disproportionate in the burden it places on registrants, complainants and the regulator alike. A regulatory body that spends equal time on an isolated, once-off error and a serious, repeated breach of the code is not protecting the public effectively — it is protecting it less, by diverting finite capacity from the cases that matter most. Over the next four years, CORU will concentrate effort and resource where the risk to the public is real, serious and not otherwise being managed (e.g. through employer processes, employment law etc).

We will aim to:

- 12.** Complete an end to end review of our Complaints Management (FTP) processes to identify opportunities to enhance efficiency, effectiveness and experience.
- 13.** Explore the development and implementation of a risk-based complaints triage model informed by research on proportionate regulation — ensuring serious and systemic cases receive the scrutiny they warrant while lower-risk matters are resolved through faster, more appropriate routes.

- 14.** Implement legislative amendments to the complaints management approach that have been enacted and are awaiting implementation — including the introduction of undertakings at PPC level, which is expected to be enacted through the current legislative amendments bill.
- 15.** Work with the Department of Health to identify future legislative amendments that would give CORU even greater flexibility to operate a proportionate fitness to practise system.
- 16.** Apply risk-based principles to our education and training programme monitoring processes, concentrating resource and scrutiny on programmes that present the greatest risk to standards — streamlining engagement with programmes where risk is demonstrably low.

By 2030, we will have:

- A risk-based triage model operational across all incoming complaints.
- A broader range of complaint resolution options available within the fitness to practise process.
- A risk-based approach to education and training programme monitoring in place, with differentiated engagement levels reflecting risk profiles.

Strategic Priority 5:

Making the Value of Regulation Visible to the Public

Making the value of regulation visible — to the public and the professionals we regulate

CORU holds a distinctive position in Ireland's health and social care system. We currently regulate over forty thousand professionals across *twelve professions*. We generate data that no other body holds. We see — through registration, education approval and fitness to practise — patterns of risk, workforce supply and professional practice that are directly relevant to national policy. But neither the public nor, in many cases, the professionals on our registers always understand what CORU does or why it matters. The value of CORU's insights — in informing health policy, workforce planning and system-level decision-making — could also be more consistently leveraged. Over the next four years, we will change that — making the value of professional regulation visible, accessible and influential.

We will aim to:

- 17.** Develop and deliver a sustained communications strategy that builds clear, accessible understanding of CORU's role and the significance of statutory registration, including continuing to develop our registrant communications and engagement — improving how we share information, consult with professionals, and articulate the purpose and value of statutory registration.
- 18.** Publish annual State of the Register reports providing workforce data insights — supporting employers, the Department of Health, higher education institutions and other key stakeholders with the intelligence they need to plan for future workforce supply.

- 19.** Continue to develop CORU's profile and relationships within broader regulatory ecosystem nationally and internationally.
- 20.** Explore the development of CORU as a student placement site — giving students direct, first-hand experience of what statutory regulation means in practice.

By 2030, we will have:

- Developed a communications strategy to enhance public understanding of CORU's role and the value of statutory registration.
- Published annual State of the Register reports.
- A student placement model explored and piloted.

Enablers

The five strategic priorities in this strategy cannot be delivered without the right foundations in place. Three enablers — our people, our governance, and our financial sustainability — underpin everything we do. These are not background considerations: they are the conditions that make delivery possible.

Our People

CORU's people — staff, Council members, Registration Board members, assessors and reviewers — are its most important asset. Delivering a strategy of this scope — across registration, recognition, education, fitness to practise and stakeholder engagement — requires a skilled, motivated and well-supported team, both paid and voluntary. Over the period of this strategy, we will:

- Maintain a workforce plan aligned to the demands of a growing organisation, ensuring we have the right skills, experience and capacity at every level.
- Invest in learning and development so that staff have the regulatory knowledge, technical skills and leadership capability they need to do their jobs well.
- Build a positive, high-performing culture centred on our values — one that supports staff wellbeing, recognises contribution, and enables people to do their best work.
- Embed equality, diversity and inclusion in how we recruit, develop and manage our people, ensuring CORU is a fair and respectful place to work for everyone.

Governance and Accountability

Good governance is the foundation of public trust. CORU is committed to meeting the highest standards of accountability, transparency and integrity in everything it does. Over the period of this strategy, we will:

- Comply fully with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and maintain robust internal audit, risk management and reporting arrangements.

- Ensure Council and the Registration Boards have the information, training and support they need to provide effective strategic oversight and make well-informed decisions.
- Be open and transparent in our communications and decision-making, publishing Council minutes, performance data and key decisions in line with our commitments to openness.
- Work with the Department of Health to pursue legislative modernisation that gives CORU governance structures appropriate to its scale and maturity as a regulator. The implementation of the Future Regulatory Model is central to this — providing an updated governance model that will underpin delivery not only of this strategy but of CORU's long-term mission.

Financial Sustainability

CORU's legislation requires it to be self-funded through registration and renewal fees. Delivering the ambitions in this strategy requires a stable and sustainable financial base. Over the period of this strategy, we will:

- Continue to work toward full cost recovery
- Demonstrate value for money in how public and registrant funds are used, with clear financial management, regular reporting to Council and full compliance with audit requirements.
- Plan and manage finances over a multi-year horizon, anticipating the resource implications of opening new registers, delivering digital investment and meeting the growing demands of a larger regulatory body.

Climate Action Plan and Human Rights and Equality Public Sector Duty

Climate Action

CORU is committed to playing its part in Ireland's response to climate change — not simply because it is required to as a public body, but because it reflects our values as an organisation. We will prepare and publish a Climate Action Plan, setting out concrete actions to reduce our environmental impact and embed sustainability across our operations. Over the period of this strategy, we will:

- Publish and implement a Climate Action Plan in line with government requirements, with clear targets and annual reporting on progress.
- Reduce our carbon footprint through digital-first working, sustainable travel practices, energy efficiency in our offices, and environmentally responsible procurement.
- Embed environmental awareness into the day-to-day decisions of the organisation, including in how we design and deliver our services.

Human Rights and Equality Public Sector Duty

Under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, all public bodies are required to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of those they employ and those they serve. CORU is committed to meeting this duty in full. Over the period of this strategy, we will:

- Publish and implement a Human Rights and Equality statement that identifies the human rights and equality issues relevant to our functions and sets out how we will address them.
- Ensure our services are accessible and fair for everyone who interacts with CORU, regardless of background, identity or circumstance — including registrants, applicants, complainants and members of the public.
- Report annually on how we are meeting our Public Sector Duty, as part of our Annual Report.

How We Will Report and Measure Delivery

A strategy is only as good as its delivery. CORU is committed to being clear about what it has set out to do, honest about progress, and transparent in how it accounts for performance to the Department of Health, to registrants, and to the public.

Annual Business Planning

Each year, CORU will publish an Annual Business Plan that translates the commitments in this strategy into a concrete programme of work for that year. The Business Plan will set out the specific actions to be delivered, the teams responsible, the resources allocated and the measures by which progress will be assessed. The Business Plan will be approved by Council and shared with the Department of Health.

Performance Monitoring

Progress will be tracked against the outcomes and commitments set out under each of the five strategic priorities. Council will receive performance updates quarterly. Performance data will include quantitative measures — such as registration volumes, processing timelines, complaint resolution rates and stakeholder engagement — alongside qualitative assessment of progress on longer-term commitments. Where targets are not being met, we will be clear about why, and what we are doing about it.

Annual Reporting

CORU will publish an Annual Report each year, accounting publicly for delivery against the strategy and the Business Plan. The Annual Report will include a summary of progress under each strategic priority, performance against published KPIs, and reporting against our Climate Action Plan and Public Sector Duty obligations. The Annual Report will be laid before the Oireachtas and made publicly available.

Horizon scanning

An organisation's environment never stands still and CORU will continue to horizon scan during the strategic cycle to identify new opportunities and threats and adjust its strategy or priorities accordingly.

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