

## A 'New Deal' for the NHS: Our priorities for the next Government

### About the Royal College of Anaesthetists

- The Royal College of Anaesthetists (RCoA) 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
- Anaesthesia is the UK's single largest hospital specialty, playing a critical role in the care of two-thirds of all hospital patients<sup>1</sup>
- With a combined membership of over 21,500 Members and Fellows, including our Faculties of Intensive Care Medicine and Pain Medicine, the RCoA is the third largest Medical Royal College by UK membership

Since the last general election, in May 2015, our members have continued to deliver a 24/7 service, maintaining the highest standards of patient care despite unprecedented demands on the NHS. That is why 99 per cent of patients would recommend their hospital's anaesthesia service to family and friends.<sup>2</sup> However, the burgeoning pressures of restricted resources and spiralling need are taking an inevitable toll on the well-being of our members.

Of the 5,196 UK anaesthetists who took part in our 2016 membership survey, one-third cited issues which impacted upon the delivery of safe and effective patient care. These issues included poor morale and severe fatigue, a lack of qualified staff and inadequate facilities.<sup>3</sup> Our 2016 morale and welfare survey showed that 85 per cent of anaesthetists in training are at risk of becoming burned out and nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) felt their job had affected their health.<sup>4</sup>

In [our reply](#) to the Prime Minister's decision to call an election on 8 June 2017, the RCoA responded by stating that we have a chance for a **'New Deal' for the NHS**, through which all parts of the health and social care system can be appropriately resourced, effectively integrated and sustainably delivered, in the best interests of patients.

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<sup>1</sup> Audit Commission. *Anaesthesia under examination: The efficiency and effectiveness of anaesthesia and pain relief services in England and Wales*, National report, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> EMK Walker, M Bell, TM Cook, MPW Grocott, and SR Moonesinghe for the SNAP-1 investigators. Patient reported outcome of adult perioperative anaesthesia in the United Kingdom: a cross-sectional observational study. [British Journal of Anaesthesia 2016](#)

<sup>3</sup> Royal College of Anaesthetists. ['RCoA warns that one-third of anaesthetists are struggling to deliver effective patient care'](#). 27 October 2016

<sup>4</sup> Campbell, D. [Two-thirds of young hospital doctors under serious stress, survey reveals](#). The Guardian. 11 February 2017

**We believe a 'New Deal' for the NHS should address the following priorities:**

1. Requisite investment to support the integration of health and social care services and budgets, to minimise the time patients spend in hospital. [Our perioperative medicine pathway](#) supports the principles of healthy living and putting the patient at the centre of their care to deliver better outcomes, embedding shared decision-making between patients, carers and healthcare professionals
2. A commitment to secure the long-term contribution of the non-UK trained health and social care workforce as a priority in negotiations for the UK's departure from the European Union. Our latest College survey reported that 30 per cent of our members received their Primary Medical Qualification from outside of the UK<sup>5</sup>
3. The introduction of a ring-fenced capital spending fund for the NHS, to ensure that modern infrastructure supports the long-term sustainability of the NHS and provides assurance of the availability of care within an appropriate geographical distance<sup>6</sup>
4. The publication of a national morale and welfare strategy for all NHS staff by September 2018
5. Support for a cultural shift in healthcare, towards a no-blame learning environment which prioritises the safety of patients and the development of staff, to improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of services. We would highlight the continuing importance of clinician-led initiatives such as the 'Getting It Right First Time' programme, with which the College is actively engaged
6. The establishment of an Office for Health and Care Sustainability, which takes an independent 15-20 year forward view of the health and social care environment<sup>7</sup>
7. The introduction of statutory regulation of non-medically qualified assistant practitioners, through primary legislation – for our speciality, these are Physicians' Assistants (Anaesthesia).

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<sup>5</sup> RCoA Survey 2016, Q9. Please indicate where you received your Primary Medical Qualification. Base: (5,196). Data collected from 1-22 April 2016.

<sup>6</sup> The House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts noted in its February 2017 report that 'NHS England admitted that capital investment has fallen short of what it had considered was needed to deliver the NHS Five Year Forward View'. The Chief Executive of NHS England stated in his evidence to the Committee that the movement of allocated capital funding to revenue spending '[W]ill have taken about £4 billion out of capital expenditure over the course of five years,' The report can be accessed here: <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmpubacc/887/887.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> House of Lords. Select Committee on the Long-term Sustainability of the NHS. [The Long-term Sustainability of the NHS and Adult Social Care](#). Report of session 2016-17. 5 April 2017