

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Action Plan

16 September 2021



Royal College
of Surgeons
of England

ADVANCING SURGICAL CARE



RCS England Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan

In this report we set out an update on our response to the [Kennedy Review](#) published earlier in 2021. The review represented our new approach to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). It was commissioned in summer 2020, when the election of four white men to senior leadership positions made us question whether our existing approaches to DEI issues were sufficient to deliver the progress that our members, the profession, and ultimately patients, deserve.

The review was a deliberate investment in stepping back, in seeking an external perspective and in taking advice from experts with both academic and lived experience of diversity. At the time of publication, our President Professor Neil Mortensen [acknowledged – and welcomed](#) – the discomfort produced by the report, as well as a determination to tackle the issues head-on, making the following commitments:

“[We will] support the vision developed by the review, and put diversity at the heart of the College’s strategy. Our commitment will be tangible and time-specific: we will adopt the reform target set by this report – that within two presidential terms, the Leadership and Council will reflect the diversity of the wider medical workforce.

Also we will commit today to investing in a Parents in Surgery study and strategy, a new flagship programme. The review team told us they believe this is the single most important thing that the College can do to support working parents, so we commit to taking this forward. Roles and responsibilities in society are changing, but the surgical model has not kept up. We know from analysis of the gender pay gap the importance of supporting both men and women to work more flexibly including less than full time working when they need to care for young children.

Finally, we must address the wider systemic problems, through education and culture change. We will build on the College’s programmes and initiatives that support inclusion and diversity, and amplify our guidance and e-learning on Unconscious Bias through surgical education and training activities.”

This action plan provides both an update on progress against these commitments and looks forward to future goals and milestones. In publishing this plan we aim to achieve the following:

1. To share our progress – and challenges – so far;
2. To begin building confidence of members and the profession – and of future entrants to the profession – that DEI issues are a key priority for the College and that *together, we're changing the face of surgery*;
3. To make it clear to all **what** we intend to do, **when** we intend to do it and **how** this activity and these milestones fit within our overall strategy and objectives.

Timeline of activity so far



A note on strategy

Our new strategy, launched in July 2021, features DEI at the level of vision, mission and values, as well as in our strategic aims – we see DEI not just as a discrete set of activities but as a theme that informs everything we do:

Our vision: we want to see excellent surgical care for **everyone**.

Our mission: we will achieve our vision by enabling **all** our members and staff, in **all their diversity**, to deliver excellence in everything they do.

Our values: **Respect, Excellence, Collaboration.**

Our strategic aims:

1. **Leading the profession;** including commitments to addressing health inequalities, challenging all forms of discrimination, advocating for working parents and delivering initiatives focused on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. **Improving Practice;** including a commitment to embrace, support and develop all members regardless of their background or training route into surgery.
3. **Engaging our membership;** including commitments to bolstering regional engagements and providing mentorship initiatives.
4. **Embracing diversity;** this is not just a ‘catch all’ for DEI issues, it is a separate pillar of our strategy that provides focus – in terms of investment, resources and leadership energy – to the transformational change we need to make and include the commitment to delivery on the 16 Point Plan in the Kennedy Review.
5. **Transforming our College;** our – and your – **new building is a physical manifestation of the change we want to make**, but we know we have much more to do. We want our membership to feel welcome and have a sense of belonging across all the physical and digital environments where the College operates.

Introducing next steps

In the table below, we set out our aims and next steps in relation to the **Recommendations: 16 Point Plan** from the Kennedy Review. There are no ‘quick fixes.’ But, as Council, Trustees and staff we have come together to produce this plan with an appetite for change. Our commitment to DEI has – if anything – been rendered even stronger by the experience of re-imagining the College and its work through the lens of the Kennedy Review. However, we recognise that we must demonstrate that change is happening, and we hope that this plan provides you with the information you need to hold us to account.

Kennedy 16 Point Action Plan

	Kennedy Review recommendation	Alignment to strategic aim	The outcome we are working towards	What you will see next
1.	Commit to the Vision and put diversity at the heart of the College strategy.	Integral to new College strategy.	Delivery of this Action Plan.	See milestones detailed below and look out for invitations to webinars later in the year to get more closely involved with our DEI work.
2.	Commit to the Reform Target.	Leading the profession.	For Council to be a diverse group of surgical professionals, representative of and accountable to the College's membership.	Member survey in October 2021 to garner opinion – what your priorities are, where you most want to see change, and how.
3.	Reform elections for Presidency.			In 2022, publication of findings and options for change paper – looking at other benchmark organisations, good practice and member insights.
4.	Reform election for Vice Presidential roles.			
5.	Reform Council.			
6.	Reform election process, appointments, Committees and conduct.			

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7.	Develop a clear Specialty or Associate Specialist (SAS) strategy.	Leading the profession.	For SAS surgeons to be respected and acknowledged for the contribution that they can, and do, make to the surgical team, the College and the profession AND to see that their opportunities to contribute are enhanced further.	<p>Our first step in this substantial piece of work is to ‘get our own house in order’ in relation to the desired outcome.</p> <p>This means until the end of 2021 we will be conducting an audit of our language and materials and of College rules and regulations, to ensure that these are aligned to the outcome.</p> <p>So look out for clear language and messaging of the importance of SAS surgeons and for more opportunities to participate in the College’s ecosystem.</p>
8.	Deliver a flagship project – Parents in Surgery.		For surgeons and dentists with parental responsibilities to have the same access to and opportunities for training and development as those who are not parents.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Immediate review of College policies and practices to ensure that they are suitable for working parents. 2. Publication of research and recommendations in June 2022 on barriers to parent participation in surgery, with recommendations for any further change in College policy and practice, along with collaborations and advocacy we should undertake to effect changes in the policies and behaviour of other organisations (e.g. NHS Trusts, HEE).

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9.	Deliver a study on differential attainment in surgical exams.	Improving Practice.	To have achieved a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to differential attainment in surgical exams, to inform focused projects to address these factors by the end of 2026.	Publication of a report into differential attainment and prioritised action plan to address in June 2022 .
10.	Launch two annual research Fellowships into surgery and DEI.		To have catalysed high quality research that creates new knowledge and improved understanding of surgery and DEI – and through this work contributing to the development of this field of research and change in practice.	The launch of two research fellowships in 2022 .
11.	Support diverse grassroots medical organisations with seed funding.	Engaging our members.	For a wider diversity of talent to become aware of opportunities to participate in the College ecosystem.	Publication of a report in December 2021 on findings from developing relationships and commitments to support to grassroots organisations.

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12.	Build on College strengths – Emerging Leaders and Women in Surgery (WinS).	Leading the profession.	<p>For individuals from diverse backgrounds and with diverse opinions and beliefs to gain leadership roles within the profession, both inside and outside of the College governance structures; for these individuals to be able to engage, be themselves, feel that they belong and have equal status to all their colleagues.</p> <p>For women to have parity of esteem, opportunity and success within the ecosystem of the College and beyond.</p>	<p>A new, refreshed Emerging Leaders programme for 2022.</p> <p>A full report outlining a data model that predicts the diversity of the pipeline into consultant posts along with a plan of interventions to strengthen the pipeline.</p>
13.	Mentorship.	Engaging our members.	For the College to support the development of mentoring as a core surgical skill and as a 'human' element of the membership package.	Mentoring programme pilot launch in December 2022.

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14.	Data collection, monitoring and career tracking.	Transforming our College.	For the College to make better informed decisions in making progress against all its DEI (and broader strategic) aims.	To begin with, this is internal work focused on building up business intelligence and data analytics capability within the College staff body. We will be asking, in 2022, for updates to membership records and we are grateful for all responses, particularly on race, ethnic origin and socioeconomic background. We know that many surgeons feel that these are private and sensitive data, but where the data are missing it is more difficult to create progress and engender accountability.
15.	Training.		For all staff and council members to be confident in how to conduct anti-discrimination recruitment and interviewing.	A comprehensive programme of training has commenced with all staff and council members attending by January 2022.
16.	New Building.		For the College building to be an inclusive, stimulating and welcoming place, accessible to all visitors on-site and online.	Take a look at our launch video and do provide feedback via the project transform team if you have visited the building. We would love to know what you think.

How we will drive forward and monitor change

This is the beginning of a multi-year programme of change. As our President Professor Neil Mortensen said in spring 2020, this is a **cultural shift that will take place over two presidential terms**.

In addition to embracing the recommendations of the Kennedy Review, we will be developing an LGBTQ+ strategy and taking further action to achieve long-term systemic change.

For this reason, in delivering against the action plan above, we are focusing not just on what we do, but how we do it. We will challenge ourselves to bring new voices into our planning and project activity. We want to stretch our thinking and ask fundamental questions about how we, as a College, can use our powers to greatest effect.

We will be reporting on our progress in March 2022 and September 2022, holding true to the long-term outcomes we're working towards, and reporting on the latest developments and publishing our work accordingly. As part of this, we will monitor progress to demonstrate improvements in attitudes of fellows and members.

We hope you will stay with us on this journey. Together, we're changing the face of surgery.

Action Plan produced and signed by the Core Team of the Royal College of Surgeons of England DEI Programme and the President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England Neil Mortensen.

Core team

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