

# RCPsych Annual General Meeting 1 July 2020

## Report of the President



Over the past year the Royal College of Psychiatrists has successfully continued its work to help shape and influence the national debate on mental health.

With 3,300 (18%) of our 18,700 members being based outside the UK, we truly are an international organisation. While continuing to offer significant support to psychiatry and wider mental health services globally, we also benefitted from the knowledge and support from the best professionals and best practice from around the world.

In the UK, we maintained our high national media profile with large numbers of mentions in the National press and frequent appearances on television and radio by our spokespeople.

We continue to influence policy at a National level throughout the UK. I and other College representatives have met regularly with politicians and other key policy makers.

Our Choose Psychiatry campaign – which promotes recruitment into psychiatry – continued to be a huge success. The campaign, which was launched in 2017, contributed to an increase in fill rates for psychiatric training places in England, Scotland and Wales. This year's figure is still under embargo, but it is as good as it could possibly be.

In November, we published a service capacity report, which showed that the number of NHS mental health beds in England has fallen by 73%, from 67,100 in 1987-88 to just 18,400. As a result, hundreds of patients are being admitted to out-of-area placements, which we know has negative consequences for patients and their families.

Meanwhile, having launched our values of Courage, Innovation, Respect, Collaboration, Learning and Excellence (C.I.R.C.L.E.), we celebrated the important events of Pride and Black History Month for the first time. Following the further embedding of our values across the College, we went on to win 'Charity of the Year' in the European Diversity Awards.

At the start of the year the world was turned on its head with the onset of the Covid-19 global pandemic. As with all organisations, the pandemic caused huge disruption to the College's plans.

We began cancelling events early to keep our members safe. We have now cancelled all meetings, conferences, ceremonies and service visits up to the end of the year.

We moved very quickly to home working with all college buildings closed. We are planning for a very small number of staff to return to Prescot Street soon but don't expect the buildings to be fully open until 2021.

A third of our income comes from our Membership fees and will therefore continue despite the pandemic. The other two thirds come from conferences and events and from standard setting and research activities. These parts of our income are being severely affected. At the start of the pandemic, we were facing a potential deficit of £2m for the financial year 2020, but we have taken a number of robust measures – including reducing our staff headcount by not filling vacant posts – to reduce the potential losses, meaning we have reduced the potential deficit

for the year to £1.4m. Fortunately we have enough in our reserves to cover this, and next year's budget will take into account the possibility of the pandemic continuing.

We have had to cancel two sittings of the written exam papers. Given the ongoing challenges of the pandemic and the need to ensure that we train psychiatrists for the future, we have been running a major project at the College to deliver a fully digital MRCPsych examination. This will enable candidates to take the exam in their homes, instead of having to go into exam centres, where there would be a risk of them contracting Covid-19. We plan to run a fully remote CASC in September and remote Papers A and B in the Autumn.

Throughout the crisis, our guiding principle has been to look after the safety of our members and staff, and of patients and carers.

We have worked around the clock to be helpful and supportive to our members. We have published extensive guidance on how to handle Covid-19 in mental health services, and provided webinars and videos, in which leading members discuss the challenges of this difficult period. A greater number of people have watched our free webinars than attended our meetings in the same time period last year.

We have been active in pressing for the things that our members need to keep them safe. We will continue to support them in every way that we can.

Following the anger, outrage and hurt that followed the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police, we issued a statement condemning systemic racism and were the first medical royal college to make clear our stance by posting a statement on the home page of our website. Our President-Elect Dr Adrian James has announced a series of measures to enable the College to take a lead in tackling systemic racism.

As my period in office comes to an end, let me finish by saying it has been an enormous privilege and a huge honour to serve as your President for the last three years, and that I will leave with many special memories that I will cherish forever. It is hard to leave in the midst of such a crisis, but I know that Adrian will provide the strong leadership that is needed, and that he will have the full support of members and staff to ensure that the College moves on to even greater successes.

**Professor Wendy Burn, President**  
**30 June 2020**