



Three-Year **International Strategy**



CONTENTS

Three-Year International Strategy

3	Introduction
4	The First RCPsych International Strategy
6	Values
7	Operating Model
10	Principles
12	Priority Services
16	Objectives and KPIs
23	Conclusion



Dr Lade Smith CBE, President

Sonia Walter, Interim Chief Executive

Professor Mohammed Al Uzri, Presidential Lead for Global Mental Health

Elen Cook, Interim Director of Professional Standards

Introduction

The RCPsych published its first international strategy in 2020. This three-year document set out an ambitious plan to support our members to deliver high-quality, person-centred care across the globe.

Our first international strategy was a means of focussing the RCPsych's attention and resources on the geographical and thematic areas in which our expertise and voice could be most effective in improving global mental health outcomes and ensuring sustainability for an expanding international presence.

Our international strategy realised its ambitions thanks to the collaboration of our members, staff, and partners. The COVID 19 pandemic had a huge impact on the roll out of the international strategy, but the RCPsych remained committed to following the objectives it set out in the strategy. The lessons learned during these last three years form the basis for our second international strategy.

Since 2020, we have discovered that we work most effectively and sustainably when we work in a tripartite partnership model with a host on the ground and funding or technical organisations providing logistical support, allowing the College to bring in its expertise in training and education.

The skills, knowledge and experience of our members was another key to delivering our strategy, and by building on the work of the College volunteer scheme, the strategy created the framework that allowed the international team to act as the facilitator between stakeholders and our College Faculties, committees, and departments to ensure a cohesive, structured and streamlined approach that resulted in impactful projects.

The purpose of this second international strategy is to set the values and principles that will underpin our international work and the operational model that we will use to meet the identified objectives.



The first RCPsych international strategy

Despite being largely overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020-2023 international strategy persevered with unwavering dedication, resulting in remarkable accomplishments over the past three years.

One of the notable accomplishments was the rise in international membership. Despite the challenging circumstances, we successfully attracted a significant number of new members from different countries, reflecting the global reach and impact of our organisation. This expansion in membership has allowed us to broaden our network and strengthen our collaborative efforts in advancing mental health globally.

Furthermore, our team undertook global projects across three continents, making a tangible difference in medical communities around the world. These projects not only provided valuable mental health support but also served as opportunities for cultural exchange and understanding. The dedication and passion of our volunteers were truly commendable, and their efforts have left a lasting impact on the individuals and communities they served. We engaged and mobilised over 120 RCPsych members and counting, on volunteer projects across the world. This level of engagement demonstrates the commitment and enthusiasm of our members

to contribute their expertise and skills to improve mental health outcomes globally. The collective efforts of these dedicated individuals have helped address mental health needs in Palestine, Ghana, Uganda, Iraq, India, Myanmar and more.

In terms of funding, we successfully secured two grants from the Tropical Health Education Trust (THET). These grants have provided crucial financial support for our initiatives and allowed us to expand our reach and impact in Sub-Saharan Africa. With this funding, we have been able to develop and implement innovative programmes, dovetailing our expertise in the WHO's Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) training and psychiatric subspecialty education, tailored to resource-constrained settings. Other projects have all been cost neutral and funded by partner organisations such as Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) or the Iraqi Red Crescent Society.

Additionally, we established Crisis Response Meetings and an Emergency Response Plan to facilitate timely and appropriate reactions to global crises. These initiatives have enabled us to respond effectively to critical situations such as the war in Ukraine, turmoil in Sudan, and natural disasters like the earthquake in Turkey and northwest Syria. The College's actions in these challenging circumstances have received commendations from various esteemed organisations, including the Welsh Government, the British Medical Association (BMA), and was promoted by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC) as an example of how medical royal colleges can address international crises. Such recognition reaffirms the College's commitment to being at the forefront of addressing mental health needs even during times of crisis.

Engaging our international members was another key objective of the international strategy. We were pleased to launch an International Newsletter for our members that has been well received and provides members a platform to showcase their work as well as upcoming events. We often host receptions for members at international conferences, providing the opportunity for networking and a chance to interact with Officers. Additionally, the six International Division Chairs have been welcomed as members of the International Advisory Committee (IAC) and Council, providing them further opportunity to influence RCPsych decision-making. The College has been proud to work with psychiatric Diaspora Groups, and sister organisations, and will work to find synergies for future projects.

We co-organised several advocacy events, including World Maternal Mental Health Day in Doha, Qatar, which achieved over 1,000 online registrations. This event served as a platform to raise awareness, promote understanding, and advocate for improved maternal mental health care globally. By collaborating with international partners and stakeholders, we have been able to amplify our voice and contribute to the global conversation on mental health, working towards better outcomes for patients and their families worldwide.

In an interconnected world where the vulnerability of mental health has never been more apparent, it is crucial to recognise the paramount importance of global mental health work. In accordance with our College values and mission to improve mental health and well-being by promoting the highest standards of psychiatric care, education, and research a coordinated international strategy is essential to address the challenges faced by the specialty worldwide. Only through collective efforts can we build a more compassionate and inclusive world, where mental health is prioritised, destigmatised, and supported on a global scale.

Values

The RCPsych has six values:

- C**OURAGE
- I**NNOVATION
- R**ESPECT
- C**OLLABORATION
- L**EARNING
- E**XCELLENCE

Our second international strategy will be based on our values in the following way:

Courage

We will have the courage to engage with nations in which social policies may have different standard to our own as long as we can try to improve patient care. Our work will advocate for the needs of people with mental illness, intellectual difficulties, and developmental disorders, regardless of the level of stigma that may surround mental illness, in different nations.

Innovation

Our international strategy will embrace new ways of working, new evidence bases and new partnerships which will lead to mutually beneficial innovation to improve patient care.

Respect

We will work in ways that are respectful of the peoples and culture of regions and nations in which we are working. We will also be respectful of the context of their healthcare settings. Our work will always be person-centred and will respect the needs of patients, over and above any national social policies that are different from those in the UK. We will ensure that our work does not inadvertently contribute to a 'brain drain' from any nation. We will work to reduce discrimination against those with mental illness in all its forms.

Collaboration

We will build mutual partnerships with appropriate stakeholders, such as health ministries, national psychiatric associations, international psychiatric associations, universities, third sector mental health organisations and NGOs that create shared goals and a common vision.

Learning

All our work will foster two-way learning. Whilst sharing the best of our skills and knowledge we will embrace learning from other parts of the world to improve the quality of care for people with mental illness in ways which are sustainable.

Excellence

Our work will promote excellence in mental health services and the training of outstanding psychiatrists. We will aim to deliver optimum member experience to psychiatrists globally drawing on the strength and diversity of our membership. We will encourage our members to be ambassadors for the RCPsych and the specialty of psychiatry and mental health.



Operating model for the RCPsych international strategy

The RCPsych wants to build on the success of the first international strategy by making a bigger impact on the delivery of psychiatry and wider mental health services across the world.

It wishes to do this by delivering increased services to psychiatrists and other mental health staff, through a sustainable model.

This strategy will only achieve its aims of delivering more services and delivering more funded projects and initiatives if it continues to be clear and focused.

This means being clear that we will prioritise:

- Nations and regions where the College has strong and existing collaborations,
- Nations and regions where there is a strong appetite for the development of mental health services,
- Nations and regions that have resource limitations where the College can add value.

Under the international strategy operating model, we will:

- Strive to be carbon neutral and will be transparent in relation to the use of carbon for international projects. We will strive to work remotely wherever possible, and as leanly as possible when physical travel is required,
- Ensure that our international strategy is properly resourced, including having a dedicated staff lead and member lead responsible for its delivery,



- Ensure that the staff lead, and member lead will report to the Board of Trustees on an annual basis as to the efficacy of the international strategy and include a summary of the success and challenges of the roll out of the international strategy in each annual report,
- Utilise the skills and experience of College Members, including appointing specific Members to lead on international projects,
- Ensure services offered under the international strategy are evidence led,
- Use the College's Emergency Response Plan to respond in a coordinated and impactful way to international emergencies,
- Ensure that the relevant International Division(s) officers are updated on all activity taking place in their International Division,
- Ensure all international workstreams are run according to sound project management principles, in general, and the College's project management methodology, in particular,
- Ensure that all international workstreams, including visits by Senior Officers, are in line with the overall international strategy and that they have clear objectives that are identified beforehand and evaluated at regular intervals,
- Only adopt new workstreams where a business case has been presented to the RCPsych International Advisory Committee and signed off by the Senior Management Team and Finance Management Committee,
- Manage expectations (internally and externally) around our capacity to deliver international projects, including timelines for consideration and delivery,

- Prioritise the need to build sustainable models in emerging economies,
- De-commission activity which has little or no focus, or does not meet our strategic aims,
- Resist the temptation to scale-up activities or initiatives prematurely before they have been properly piloted and assessed,
- Resist 'scope creep' – the temptation to take on projects and pursue initiatives which are not specifically linked to achieving our strategy,
- Ensure that we can add value in a sustainable way,
- Refer to other relevant College strategies, including those around the delivery of events and assessment, to ensure a consistent and cohesive approach to College work,
- Seek out partnerships with suitable appropriate stakeholders, such as health ministries, national psychiatric associations, international psychiatric associations, universities, third sector mental health organisations, patient and carers advocacy groups, and NGOs,
- Ensure that all new international work is appropriately evaluated, and key learning is shared with all stakeholders.

Under the operating model, we will not:

- Take on projects that are not specifically linked to achieving our strategy or expose us or our members to undue risk,
- Take on, or support, projects that are not sustainable, including projects that rely on "individual / parachute volunteering",
- Knowingly place the people we support in significant personal risk,
- Breach the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office policies and recommendations.



Principles

During the delivery of our first international strategy, we discovered that our projects are most effective and impactful when their sustainability is considered from the outset, and when they are based on the tripartite partnership model.

The vast experience and knowledge of our members is key to all the work of the College, including international work. The international strategy builds on the work of the College's volunteer scheme; by utilising the passion of our members for the sharing of knowledge and skills at a global level, by sufficiently resourcing our international team, by having a dedicated and senior member lead, and finally by working closely with College committees and Faculties, the international strategy has developed projects that support the training of psychiatrists and health professionals around the world. These lessons from the first international strategy will underpin the delivery of the second international strategy.

All new potential projects will need to be presented, through a clear business case, to the RCPsych International Advisory Committee and/or its working groups, as well as receiving sign off from the Senior Management Team and the Finance Management Committee.

The business cases will need to show that projects and initiatives:

- Are respectful of the peoples, laws and cultures in the relevant regions and nations,
- Are accepted by local health ministries and health professionals,
- Have sufficient interest and investment from local partners to be sustainable,
- Have considered and identified training needs and gaps in services,
- Are aligned with our international strategy and are carried out within the priority regions and/or countries,
- Have clear deliverables that are measurable and realistic and manage the expectations of all parties,
- Are human rights based and can demonstrate that the College is able to work freely with people from all cultures, and is not complicit with systemic stigma that disadvantages people with mental health problems in any way,
- Will include an appropriate evaluation,
- Demonstrate that they meet the values of the international strategy,
- Do not expose our members to unacceptable risk.

Where projects and initiatives do not meet these criteria, the College will not provide resources.

To guard against mission creep, existing projects will be evaluated on an annual basis, by the RCPsych Senior Management Team and International Advisory Committee, to ensure that they continue to meet the criteria and have not grown or changed from the initial purpose of the project.

This second international strategy will continue to embed our international work within College structures, utilising our existing knowledge and expertise. This includes ensuring we have an appropriate member lead for our work, supported by an effective staff team that can deliver the ambitious objectives of this strategy.

Priority services

What we will do	Why we will do it
Continue to run our MRCPsych written papers online, and expand our capacity to deliver CASC to international candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support the next generation of members To improve standards and quality across psychiatry To support psychiatrists to achieve their professional potential To allow service delivery through a sustainable financial model
Expand our training courses for trainees outside the UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support the next generation of members To improve standards and quality across psychiatry To support psychiatrists to achieve their professional potential To allow service delivery through a sustainable financial model
Deliver an increased number of international events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support our international members with their professional development To share evidence-based best practice To provide an excellent member experience To allow service delivery through a sustainable financial model
Increase promotion of quality networks, offering standards-based quality assurance and review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help drive up standards and quality in mental health services around the world To generate sustainable funding



What we will do	Why we will do it
Develop evidence-based mental health clinical guidelines and mental health care pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help drive up standards and quality in mental health services around the world To generate sustainable funding
Roll out the RCPsych International Diplomas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve standards and quality across psychiatry and wider mental health services, and support the prevention of mental ill health To support psychiatrists to achieve their professional potential To allow service delivery through a sustainable financial model
Explore opportunities to develop tiered qualifications for mental health workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support the professional development of frontline mental health workforce in under-resourced settings To share evidence-based knowledge and skills To allow service delivery through a sustainable financial model
Expand the RCPsych train the trainer courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create a sustainable model for improving skills and knowledge in psychiatry and mental health care To share evidence-based knowledge and skills To allow service delivery through a sustainable financial model

Priority services



What we will do	Why we will do it
Expand the delivery of our skills based training courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve standards and quality across psychiatry and wider mental health services, and support the prevention of mental ill health To support psychiatrists to achieve their professional potential To allow service delivery through a sustainable financial model
Promote recruitment to psychiatry around the world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure psychiatry is seen as an attractive and rewarding career To improving standards and quality across psychiatry and wider mental health services, and support the prevention of mental ill health
Continue to deliver the MTI scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support international trainees to further their psychiatric training in the UK To support UK NHS services To Facilitate learning between UK and other countries To engage with international psychiatrists and develop a network of ambassadors
Continue to give guidance to patients on various conditions via our mental health information materials (many translated in other languages) which are promoted via our website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To give patients, carers, psychiatrists and other mental health staff access to high-quality evidence- based information To maintain the reputation of the RCPsych as a world leader in mental health information and advocacy To deliver base line funded evidence-based mental health information.

What we will do	Why we will do it
Expand our international membership to include medical students and increase access for international medical students to our resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote recruitment to psychiatry on a global scale To showcase psychiatry as a rewarding career To improving standards and quality across psychiatry and wider mental health services, and support the prevention of mental ill health
Continue to support the advocacy of parity of esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain the reputation of the RCPsych as a world leader in mental health information and advocacy on behalf of patients with mental illness
Continue to support our International Divisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To engage with psychiatrists locally To support psychiatrists to achieve their professional potential, by providing an excellent member experience
Promote academic psychiatry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving standards and quality across psychiatry and wider mental health services, and support the prevention of mental ill health



Objectives and KPIs

Strategic Objective 1: Fairness for all

- We will continue to advocate for parity of esteem for mental health patients.
- We will ensure that any UK focussed College initiatives follow the World Health Organisation's standards on the international recruitment of health personnel.

Strategic Objective 2: Nurturing and supporting psychiatrists

MRCPsych Exam:

- We will continue to run our MRCPsych written papers online.
- We will establish two or more CASC centres outside the UK to maintain and improve access to international exam candidates.

Education and Training

- We will deliver an international diploma in old age psychiatry and agree on sub-specialties for future diplomas.
- We will expand our training courses for psychiatric trainees outside the UK, including making CASC skills training available to MRCPsych exam candidates outside the UK.
- We will explore opportunities to develop training packages for mental health workers in low- and middle-income countries.
- We will expand the delivery of our skills-based training courses for members and non-members outside the UK.
- We will continue to deliver the Medical Training Initiative (MTI) to support international trainees to further their medical education in the UK whilst also supporting UK NHS services. The scheme will facilitate learning within UK services from ideas generated in other nations and will engage with international psychiatrists and develop a network of ambassadors.



Strategic Objective 3: Addressing the treatment gap

- We will increase promotion of quality networks, offering standards-based quality assurance and review to international partners.
- We will develop evidence-based mental health clinical guidelines and mental health care pathways.
- We will seek out partners to further develop our train the trainer programmes, with a particular focus on countries in Africa and South Asia.
- We will continue to give guidance to patients on various conditions via our mental health information materials. We will translate these materials where possible.

Strategic Objective 4: Promoting research in mental health

- We will promote our RCPsych journals during all our international work and will encourage submissions of suitable research to our journals and in particular *BJPsych International*.
- We will ensure services offered under the international strategy are evidence led and all new international work is appropriately evaluated. We will share key learning, lessons and experiences with all stakeholders and wider audiences.
- We will seek out opportunities to encourage global research in psychiatry.
- We will refer to the Academic Strategy of the RCPsych and apply its principles to our international activities.



Strategic Objective 5: Advancing international psychiatry and wider mental health services

- We will share learning from UK initiatives with our international partners and will, if asked, support them to promote psychiatry.
- We will make our materials for medical students and foundation doctors available to medical students and early career doctors outside the UK.
- We will enact the RCPsych Emergency Response Plan following international disasters.
- We will continue to publicise the international work of the RCPsych internally and externally.

Strategic Objective 6: Ensuring excellent membership experience and engagement

- We will deliver an increased number of events for our international members, with a focus on online webinars and conferences.
- We will continue to support our six International Divisions and will increase opportunities for participation of international members in College activities.
- We will continue to produce dedicated materials for our international members, including the international newsletter.
- We will promote membership of the RCPsych to international psychiatrists to extend our reach around the world.
- We will work with the RCPsych Volunteer and International Psychiatry Special Interest Group to create useful guidance on volunteering, including promoting internationally recognised standards for volunteering.

Core Objective 1: Being the voice of psychiatry

- We will work with our international partners to highlight the global shortage of psychiatrists to governments and senior stakeholders, and we will promote a career in psychiatry in all the countries we are working in. We will share evidence to show the benefits to communities and populations of having strong and well-resourced mental health services.
- We will work with our international partners to evidence the importance of strong mental health services and for the health of populations to governments and senior stakeholders.

Core Objective 2: Delivering effective management of resources to deliver agreed priorities

- We will ensure that we are working virtually wherever possible to help support the College's commitment to reducing CO2 emissions.
- We will work as leanly as possible only allowing staff and members to travel when it is necessary for the success of an identified objective.
- We will ensure staffing resources are used to best effect to ensure the delivery of the international strategy, and we will ensure the international strategy is adequately supported with a dedicated senior membership role.
- We will closely track the roll out of our expanded international strategy, to ensure that the income generated by the sustainably funded workstreams generate enough income to fund our projects, and that external funding is sourced to ensure sustainable development. Reports on how effectively we are using our resources will be shared and discussed at the RCPsych International Advisory Committee and at the Trustee Board at appropriate intervals.



Conclusion

The RCPsych has demonstrated that by having a dedicated international strategy that it can use its voice and expertise on the global stage. By embedding our international work into the work of the College, by using the experience and skills of our members, and by working closely with our international partners, we have taken significant steps to meeting our vision of being a strong and progressive College that supports psychiatrists and health professionals to deliver patient centred care all over the world.

This second strategy sets out bold and ambitious targets and recommits the RCPsych to being an effective force in improving global mental health outcomes.

Collectively, through the combined efforts of our members, staff, and partners, we can actively contribute and play a significant role in finding solutions.

A three-year ambitious plan to support our members to deliver high-quality, person-centred care across the globe.

 @rcpsych

 RCPsych

 linkedin.com

 thercpsych

 @RCofPsychiatrists