

# SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

2023 - 2035



# INTRODUCTION

I am delighted to introduce the Royal College of Music's first comprehensive sustainability strategy. We have well-established programmes in place to reduce our environmental impact and support good social practices, but this is the first time these themes have been brought together into a single, focussed strategy.

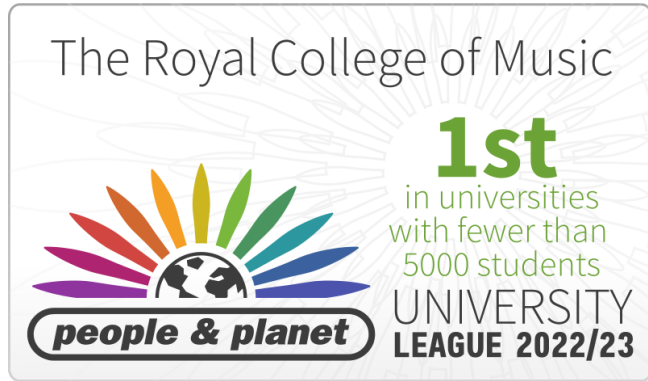
The Royal College of Music is well placed as a sustainability leader. Values such as stewardship and 'preserving for the future' are a core part of what our conservatoire is about. Our success in living these values, ensuring a sustainable future for music and music education is why the College is the world's leading higher education provider for the performing arts. It is also why the College has world-leading community engagement programmes and enviable library and museum collections.

At the heart of this strategy is the ambition to contribute to a better world for our students, staff and audiences; everyone who is involved in our activities as an organisation and beyond. The College will champion the power of music and the Arts to move, educate and inspire positive change.

**Professor Colin Lawson CBE**  
Director of the RCM



# OUR CERTIFICATIONS



The RCM has achieved 1st place for universities with fewer than 5000 students in the 2022/23 People & Planet University League table. People & Planet assess higher education establishments based on carbon emissions performance, resource usage, staff engagement and policy documentation.



The People & Planet league also confirms that the RCM met and surpassed the higher education sector emission reduction targets set in 2005. Since 2005 we have reduced our carbon emissions by 60%.



Since 2014 the RCM has maintained its ISO14001 certification, considered the gold standard in demonstrating a commitment to environmental management.

# UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth, all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

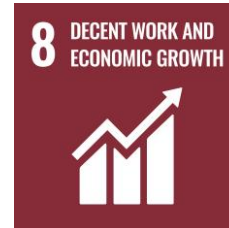


# UN SDGs – OUR FOCUS AREAS

Protecting the planet, human health and the health of the natural world is necessary in order to ensure strong institutions and strong culture. All organisations have a part to play in limiting their environmental impacts and in being ambassadors for the planet.

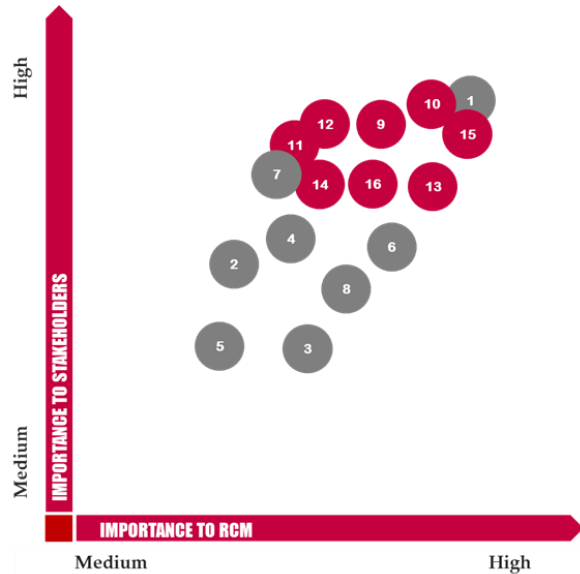
Through our work, projects and partners, the RCM actively supports all 17 of the UN sustainable development goals and our strategy focuses on the following seven:

- Good Health and Well-being
- Quality Education
- Gender Equality
- Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Reduced Inequalities
- Responsible Consumption and Production
- Climate Action



# OUR PRIORITY IMPACTS

We identified the most important environmental and social themes for the college using a materiality process. We considered the issues we had the largest impact upon as well as those that could impact us:



## Environmental

1. Carbon Emissions
2. Biodiversity
3. Construction and Refurbishment
4. Staff and Student Awareness
5. Travel and Transport
6. Sustainable Procurement
7. Responsible Neighbour
8. Sustainability in the Curriculum

## Social

9. Health and Safety
10. Diversity and Social Inclusion
11. Support and Wellbeing
12. Growth and Opportunity
13. Accountability and Communication
14. Community Engagement
15. Fair Access and Equity
16. Cultural Contribution

# STRATEGIC DRIVERS

## Values

The Royal College of Music was founded on the principle of widening participation and access to classical music

Staff, students and visitors expect excellence from the RCM in all areas, including social and environmental practices

## Revenue

Sustainability is an increasingly important factor for prospective students in choosing a place of study.

There are potential opportunities for new revenue and funding streams from tackling important issues such as access to music or supporting our net zero strategy.

## Obligations

Teaching and Research quality assessments now include ESD components.

There is growing legislation mandating far-reaching action on environmental and social issues.

Stakeholder pressure – it's important to be seen to be tackling diversity, equity and climate change.

## Costs

Greater efficiency will reduce operating costs, particularly in relation to energy, utilities and procurement. We currently spend over £450k annually on utilities.

Better sustainability and wellbeing practices help attract and retain staff, reducing churn and associated costs.

## Reputation

Universities' sustainability credentials are publicly assessed and reported through the People & Planet University League and The Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

Success in tackling environmental and social challenges enhances the College's reputation.

# OUR STRATEGY

“We will be the UK’s most sustainable conservatoire, embedding leading environmental and social practices in everything we do.”

Sustainability in teaching  
and research

As a higher education provider, integrating sustainability into the mission of the RCM means to educate new generations of musicians and sustainability stewards to carry on the institution’s core values.

Support music, culture  
and diversity

The long-term success of the RCM’s mission is underpinned by the ability to continue to foster talent, ensure equitable access to opportunity and inspire sustained enthusiasm for classical music.

Sustainable operations

In adopting a sustainability strategy, the RCM must take responsibility for the College’s environmental and social impacts and place sustainability at the centre of all operations.

Sustainable partners and  
suppliers

Tying sustainability into the terms and conditions for collaborating with others signals the RCM’s commitment to environmental and social responsibility and helps promote good practices elsewhere.

Health and wellbeing

Caring for the safety and ongoing wellbeing of students, staff and alumni is fundamental to sustaining a resilient, passionate and supportive environment in which no-one is left behind.



A woman in a historical-style dress is performing on a stage. She is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved dress with a dark, patterned bodice and a full, light-colored skirt. Her arms are outstretched, and she appears to be singing or speaking. The background is a large, dark blue floral pattern. The text "SUSTAINABILITY IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# SUSTAINABILITY IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH

# SUSTAINABILITY IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH

## Strategy theme lead: Director of Programmes

As a conservatoire we provide specialist music teaching and research, predominantly focussed on performance and composition. Sustainability is still relevant to formal and informal learning opportunities for students; we have a duty to make sure that students graduate with an understanding of global themes such as climate change, diversity and inclusion, and how they are relevant to their lives and careers.

We will incorporate sustainability into our curriculum and provide extra-curricular learning opportunities including student initiatives and societies. We will provide staff training on sustainability issues to help them incorporate sustainability into their teaching.

### Key areas:

The main areas of focus for this part of the strategy are:

- Incorporate sustainability themes into teaching, performance programme and research, including Creative Careers;
- Support student sustainability initiatives and societies;

- Staff training on sustainability themes.

### Vision

In the next 2 years we will:

- Review how sustainability issues can be formally embedded in both curricular and extra-curricular activities and incorporate those factors into course designs.

In the next 5 years we will:

- Have a comprehensive programme in place that encourages our students to see themselves as artist-citizens of the future, providing opportunities for them to use their musical skills to connect with global sustainability issues.

### Key supporting strategies:

- Royal College of Music Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Strategy

# SUSTAINABILITY IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH

## Sustainability within the curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities

### *Curriculum*

Whilst the RCM specialises in musical performance, we recognise that we have a wider duty to prepare our students as 21st century citizens which includes awareness and knowledge of global issues. This is delivered through our Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) strategy, embedded into:

- Core and Elective Modules
- Artistic Projects and Faculty Activities
- Student Projects
- Living Lab Projects

Our teaching currently includes a wide range of ESG themes, including:

- Understanding the environmental impacts of music making;
- Examining the use of natural resources in the manufacture and maintenance of musical instruments;
- Examining the cultural and social impacts of music making, including social justice; inclusive practices (SEND); diversity,

equality and inclusion; music therapy; and performance health and wellbeing;

- Creating and sharing music that engages with representations of society and the natural world and the role of music in commentary, communication and activism;
- Research and study of music and sound and its meaning within cultures.

There is scope of further enhanced ESD in formal teaching in line with the QAA and Advance HE Education for Sustainable Development Guidance, and we will establish and implement a clear plan as part of our annual and periodic programme monitoring.

# SUSTAINABILITY IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH

## *Extra-curricular Opportunities*

Our students are also able to engage with sustainability themes through a range of informal routes. This includes:

- Creative careers: our world-leading careers support and talent agency provide students with advice, workshops and presentations to help develop our students and recent graduates develop their professional skills and provide performance experience. We will include sustainability within the annual support programme, running at least one event per year focussed on sustainability in the music profession;
- Green week and other student events: The college and Students Union run a comprehensive green week annually, running events and presentations on key environmental and social themes. These events act as platforms for student engagement with sustainability themes in both musical and everyday-life contexts;
- Clubs and societies: Our students are able to join RCM clubs and societies as well as those from our neighbour, Imperial College. These offer a wide range of opportunities to learn and engage with key environmental and social topics;
- Awareness-raising initiatives from the College and Student Union:

The college and SU run communication campaigns over the course of the year which showcase important sustainability issues for the college.

# SUSTAINABILITY IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH

## Targets

Target 1	By the end of year 2022/23, include sustainability as a parameter in all periodic programme reviews, commencing with the Masters Review 2022
Target 2	Deliver at least one Creative Careers event every year with a focus on sustainability
Target 3	Provide regular opportunities for student-led projects that engage creatively with sustainability issues
Target 4	Provide teaching staff with training on Education for Sustainable Development

# SUPPORT MUSIC, CULTURE AND DIVERSITY



# SUPPORT MUSIC, CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

## Strategy theme lead: Director of Programmes

The long-term success of the RCM's mission is underpinned by the ability to continually foster talent, ensure equitable access to opportunity and inspire sustained enthusiasm for classical music. We will take action to support talent regardless of a musician's background, support cultural contributions at the local, national and global level, and expand access to classical music.

Through our comprehensive access and participation strategy, we will take action to increase participation of young people in music and remove barriers for talented students for studying, including through implementing best-in-class practices in admissions and recruitment, as well as providing scholarships and financial aid.

We will advocate for classical music, supporting initiatives that support music making for young people and that contribute to our culture at local, national and global levels.

### Key areas:

The main areas of focus for this part of the strategy are:

- Support music making for young people;

- Support musical talent, regardless of background or circumstances;
- Fairness and equity in recruitment and admissions;
- Provide scholarships and financial aid;
- Cultural contributions and collaborations across local, national and global scales.

### Vision

In the next 5 years we will:

- Continue to provide young people with access to clear progression routes in music, with a view to improving the diversity of our student recruitment to better reflect wider society;
- Build our bursary and scholarship capacity to ensure that financial circumstances are not a barrier for students from underrepresented groups.

### Key supporting strategies:

- Royal College of Music Access and Participation Plan (2020-21 to 2024-25)
- Royal College of Music Equality and Diversity Strategy
- Royal College of Music Artistic Strategy (with update June 2021)

# SUPPORT MUSIC, CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

## Supporting music making for young people, supporting diversity and increasing access

### *Pre-tertiary programmes*

The access trajectory for music conservatoire students begins at a very young age, typically starting between the ages of four and nine. Credible applicants for the BMus will have had access to, and been engaged with, music making throughout their school lives and will usually have reached a high level of attainment by the time they are in their mid-teens. Access to good quality music education for children is not equally distributed, with underserved groups linked to family income, cultural/ethnic background, and disabilities.

Supporting music education and opportunities for young people is therefore a vital component of supporting diversity in our student body and addressing in some part the general decline of music education in schools.

We support music making for young people through a number of key initiatives:

- RCM Sparks, Sparks Juniors and Sparks Mini;

- RCM Junior Department;
- Community programmes including Family Create, Ignite, Explorers and Springboard;
- School outreach programme with collaborative partners.

We also offer bursaries and financial support to minimise the barriers to participation in our programmes.

These schemes are designed to support young people from underrepresented backgrounds and provide structured, high-quality music and instrumental tuition with a progression pathway from age 0 through to 18.

The RCM has set a long-term target of 50% of children in the final year of the Sparks Juniors programme (age 4–8) progressing to a fully auditioned place at RCMJD (age 8+) by 2024–25, which in turn provides a pathway to higher music education. This target takes into account the likelihood that a proportion of Sparks Juniors may wish to continue their musical education elsewhere (at another conservatoire's junior department or through the Tri-borough Music Hub) or decide that they wish to pursue other interests.



# SUPPORT MUSIC, CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

## *Tertiary programmes*

We are committed to operating a fair and transparent admissions process, a stated aim of identifying students with the skills and potential to achieve the highest standards of musical and academic excellence, regardless of background.

We offer an admissions fee waiver scheme for applicants from families with low household income. We also provide a comprehensive disability support programme both during the application process and across a student's time at the College.

In 2021 we completed a £40m development project, More Music. A key element of the project was to make our historic buildings more welcoming and accessible to applicants, students and the wider community.

## **Cultural contribution**

The College will continue to make an extensive cultural contribution

through its performance programme, events and festivals, as well as its museum and library collections.

In the last years, there has also been a welcome and positive cultural shift, with the long-overdue reassessment of the artistic mainstream, and a rapid and invigorating rebalancing of approaches to inclusivity and diversity in repertoire and performers. There have also been notable changes in the way that music is performed and presented, particularly through technology, and a new strategy will need to reflect these.

The College's aspirations continue to widen, and its responsibilities for fostering open access to all sectors of society become ever more vital. There are many gaps to fill, and the College can only address a part of these. Strategic partnerships, advocacy and leadership become essential, and there need to be access points and significant points of contact beyond enrolled students.

# SUPPORT MUSIC, CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

## Targets

Target 5	Continue to support music making for young people
Target 6	Increase the percentage of students who identify as coming from non-white backgrounds from 10% to 14% by 2024-25
Target 7	By 2024-25, reduce the gap in participation between the most and least represented socio-economic groups (POLAR4 quintiles 5 and 1) by a third (ratio of 8:1) and double the new entrants from POLAR 1 backgrounds compared to our 2017-18 baseline
Target 8	Continue to deliver a programme to engage children in the local community through partnerships with local boroughs as well as running a series of public events at the Royal College of Music
Target 9	Continue to make a positive cultural contribution at a local, national and global level



SUSTAINABLE  
OPERATIONS

# SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

Strategy theme leads: Director of Estates;  
Head of Performance, Programming and Facilities;  
Head of Events and Corporate Partnerships

The RCM has a long-standing commitment to the environment and we are proud to say that we exceeded the emissions targets set for the higher education sector in 2005. We will continue to embed sustainability across all our operations, and how we run events and performances.

We have a direct impact on the environment through our campus operations, events and performances and are committed to embedding best practice in the way we operate. Taking action to tackle the climate crisis and mitigate climate risks are a key focus, alongside campus waste, water and energy use. Through our ISO 14001 environmental management system, we will embed good practice environmental management across all campus activities.

The main areas of focus for this part of the strategy are:

- Carbon emissions and climate change

- Energy, water and waste
- Construction and refurbishment
- Resource use (including paper)
- Digital
- Catering
- Facilities management
- Biodiversity
- Business travel & commuting
- Sustainable events
- Sustainable performances (tickets, programmes, lighting, catering, travel, suppliers)

**In the next 5 years we will:**

- Make progress towards our net zero carbon, achieving a 33% reduction from our 2018/19 baseline across scopes 1, 2 and 3;
- Reduce total waste and increase recycling rates;
- Develop our sustainable events offer;
- Improve the sustainability credentials of performances.

# SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

## Supporting strategies

- RCM Environmental Policy
- Royal College of Music Carbon Management Plan
- ISO 14001 Environmental management system – environmental action plan
- Sustainable food policy
- RCM Estates Strategy
- Sustainable Events Framework – to be developed
- South Ken ZEN+

## Estates and campus operations

The Royal College of Music sits in the heart of the cultural quarter of South Kensington. Our vibrant and diverse campus includes both old and new, from the magnificent grade II listed Blomfield building which dates from 1883, to the modern courtyard development completed in 2020. Combined with our site at RCM Jay Mews and purpose-built student accommodation Prince Consort Village, our estates and on-site operations both affect and are affected by the environment.

Carbon emissions and climate change are our major priority and we have set the ambitious objective to be carbon net zero by 2035. We have also set objectives to reduce our energy and water use, as well as reduce our total waste whilst improving recycling rates. We recognise the environmental impact from food choices and we have set our clear objectives to deliver more sustainable catering. Administrative impacts including paper use are also an area of focus for us.

Construction and major refurbishment projects have both a large direct impact and offer an important opportunity to make decisions to improve our environmental performance in the long-term.

We also have a range of indirect impacts, including our offsite and cloud-based IT infrastructure, business travel and employee commuting, all of which form a pivotal part of our efforts to make our operations more sustainable.

# SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

## **Sustainable events**

The College offers a unique and inspiring events venue and we are committed to ensuring our events are sustainable.

We will work closely with our events customers to embed sustainability into the planning process, and will use a sustainability scorecard to measure and incentivise good practice. This will help to address key issues such as single-use plastics, energy use and event carbon emissions.

We will extend our sustainability commitment to our event suppliers, and we will select partners who both demonstrate excellent sustainability management and performance, as well as offer innovative and sustainable goods and services.

## **Sustainable performances**

We aim to minimise the environmental impact of performances and measure our impacts better. Performances in the college range from large orchestra concerts or opera performances to less formal chamber music concerts. Our performances also include national and international

tours.

There are practical changes to reduce paper use for parts and programmes, such as the adoption of digital scores and performance notes. We can also aim to reduce single-use plastic by encouraging performers and conductors to use refillable water bottles and liaison with catering providers for audience refreshments.

# SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

## Targets

Target 10	Achieve carbon net zero by 2035
Target 11	Reduce carbon emissions from scopes 1 and 2 by 73% by 2026/27 from a 2005 baseline
Target 12	Reduce scope 3 carbon emissions by 40% by 2026/27 from a 2019/20 baseline
Target 13	Maintain total water consumption under 0.25m <sup>3</sup> per square metre of gross internal area
Target 14	Maintain total waste arising from campus under 15 tonnes per year
Target 15	Achieve recycling rate of more than 75% for the year ending 2026/27

# SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

## Targets

Target 16	Establish a comprehensive and robust sustainable events framework by 2022/2023
Target 17	Reduce the environmental impact from performances
Target 18	The Estates Projects team will follow the RCM's Project Management Framework, including Environmental Management Guide, for all construction and refurbishment projects
Target 19	Foster biodiversity by installing planters in the Royal College of Music's courtyards and engage with local green spaces such as Kensington Gardens during Green Week
Target 20	Travel – Most journeys by students and staff to the Royal College of Music are made by public transport or active travel. Maintain carbon emissions from staff and student commuting at under 2,250t CO <sub>2</sub> e per year





# SUSTAINABLE PARTNERS AND SUPPLIERS

**Strategy theme leads: Director of Estates; Director of Finance**

We will collaborate with suppliers, other institutions and investment managers to embed sustainability practices where we have influence.

The College is able to support and influence the sustainability performance of a number of key stakeholder groups, supporting collaboration and shared purpose. This includes our suppliers, investment managers, neighbouring and peer institutions, and staff. We are also able to support awareness of key sustainability themes through performance and alumni engagement.

## **Key areas**

The main areas of focus for this part of the strategy are:

- Sustainable procurement;
- Sustainable investment;
- Engagement with partner institutions;
- Supporting wider awareness of environmental themes through performance and alumni engagement;
- Supporting sustainable practices for staff and students at home.

## **Vision**

In the next 2 years we will:

- Embed sustainability into procurement decisions;
- For priority suppliers, review sustainability credentials and engage on an ongoing basis.

In the next 5 years we will:

- Engage with all suppliers on sustainability issues based on size and significance, and request key performance metrics.

## **Key supporting strategies**

- Sustainable procurement policy;
- Sustainable investment strategy;
- HR benefits.

# SUSTAINABLE PARTNERS AND SUPPLIERS

## **Sustainable procurement**

The RCM purchases a wide range of goods and services and we are committed to embedding the highest standards of environmental and social practice across our supply chain. Many procurement decisions are made by individuals within the functions and departments across the college, and we manage more significant procurement decisions with our purchasing partners, Ensemble Purchasing – a procurement partnership with other conservatoires. We are a member of the London Universities Purchasing Consortium.

In 2022 we established a new Sustainable Procurement Policy which sets out our approach to including environmental and social considerations in our decision making.

Over the next 5 years, we aim to expand how we engage with suppliers on sustainability issues, initially focussing on reviewing the sustainability performance of key suppliers, especially those with a significant on-campus presence, and establishing ongoing engagement.

Our secondary focus will be to collect sustainability performance data related to the goods and services provided to the RCM, especially in

relation to carbon emissions, climate change, the circular economy, working conditions and the London living wage. We calculate our supply chain emissions based on industry emissions factors and spend data, but we have set an objective to increase the supplier-specific performance data used.

Within 5 years we aim to engage with suppliers regularly to understand their sustainability approach and performance, as well as explore opportunities to collaborate to improve sustainability outcomes. We want all our buyers to consider relevant sustainability factors in all procurement decisions and to have embedded sustainability principles so clearly in our key supply chain partnerships that suppliers proactively engage with us to implement improvements.

# SUSTAINABLE PARTNERS AND SUPPLIERS

## Targets

Target 21	40% of supplier spend to be accounted for using actual emissions data provided to the RCM by suppliers (as opposed to estimates calculated by the RCM) by 2024/25
Target 22	Implement the Sustainable Procurement Policy and Supplier Code of Conduct across all departments
Target 23	Engage with suppliers to understand and encourage efforts to improve their sustainability credentials

# HEALTH AND WELLBEING



# HEALTH AND WELLBEING

## **Strategy theme lead: Director of Estates, Health and Safety Manager**

We are committed to making the RCM a great place to work and study, providing the highest standard of support to all members of staff and students. This means that we attract and retain talent representative of our entire community, safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students, and provide them with structured support to develop academically and professionally.

The College has a wealth of expertise in music-specific and general health and wellbeing, including leading research capability in highly specialist performance and musician health. Internally, responsibility for health, safety and wellbeing sits across a number of different departments and this part of the Sustainability Strategy will harness and coordinate our collective expertise to deliver greater benefit for all.

## **Key areas:**

The main areas of focus for this part of the strategy are:

- Social wellbeing - a sense of belonging to a community and making a contribution to society;
- Physical and mental health and wellbeing;

- Financial wellbeing;
- Artistic wellbeing.

## **Vision**

In the next 2 years we will:

- Formally integrate student and staff health and wellbeing into the RCM governance structure by adapting the existing Health and Safety committee;
- Develop a health and wellbeing programme by pooling expertise across professional services and teaching staff, and working together to identify change projects that will generate the biggest impact for students and staff.

In the next 5 years we will:

- Deliver the RCM health and wellbeing programme.

# HEALTH AND WELLBEING

## Targets

Target 24

Adapt the existing Health and Safety governance structure to include Health and Wellbeing by the end of 2022/23 (including revised terms of reference)

Target 25

Develop a coordinated RCM Health and Wellbeing Programme by the end of 2023/24