

- To:
- NHS trusts:
    - chief people officers
    - medical directors
    - physician associates
    - anaesthesia associates

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- cc.
- integrated care boards:
    - chief executives

12 December 2024

Dear colleagues

## **Update on physician associates and anaesthesia associates ahead of GMC regulation**

We are writing to update you following the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care's announcement of an [independent review](#) of physician associates (PAs) and anaesthesia associates (AAs) and alongside General Medical Council (GMC) regulation of these roles from 13 December 2024.

### **Support for colleagues working as PAs and AAs**

We know that, as PAs and AAs, you come to work every day wanting to do your best for patients, just like any other staff member. You are valued members of the NHS team who deserve support, care and respect.

We also want to acknowledge that many colleagues carrying out these roles are facing a difficult time, and in particular have been distressed at some of the commentary on social media.

We want to make sure that you have the support you need to carry out your role as a PA or AA to the best of your ability for your patients, just like any other member of staff working in the NHS.

We expect employers to continue to support their PA and AA workforce and to adhere to NHS England's [existing guidance on the deployment of medical associate professions in NHS healthcare settings](#).

If you have any concerns or are worried in any way, we encourage you to speak with your supervisor/ line manager. NHS England has also introduced a confidential text support service for all NHS staff that can be accessed by texting SHOUT to 85258. This service is available 24/7, alongside a range of additional support offers to suit a range of different health and wellbeing needs. More information can be found our [Supporting our NHS people web pages](#).

### **Regulation by the GMC**

We have also been clear that regulation of healthcare professionals is fundamental to a safe and effective workforce. We welcome the progress that will see the General Medical Council (GMC) begin to regulate AA and PA roles from 13 December this year, which will strengthen patient safety, professional standards and accountability.

While PAs and AAs aren't legally required to register until December 2026, we strongly encourage those currently practising or those who have newly qualified in England to apply as soon as they are invited to by the GMC. This will underpin continued safe and effective practice. This 2-year transition period, specified in legislation, is designed to allow PAs and AAs to complete the necessary steps for registration while continuing to work.

### **Scope of the government's evidence review**

Our priorities are patient safety, better care, and improved access and, while the NHS has always been clear that PAs and AAs are not replacements for doctors, we need to provide more assurance and listen to concerns.

It's important that we learn from all the available evidence to ensure patient safety and staff welfare, as well as to maintain public and professional confidence. We therefore welcome the announcement of an independent review.

The review will be chaired by Professor Gillian Leng and will report by next spring. Further information will be available over the coming weeks on the approach that the independent review will be taking. There will be several opportunities to engage, and you should feel confident that your views will be taken into account.

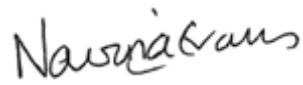
NHS England will collaborate fully with Professor Leng as she carries out this important work, and we look forward to its conclusions.

Thank you for your continued hard work and commitment to caring for our patients. We will update on next steps once Professor Leng's report has been published in the spring.

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Sir Stephen Powis**  
National Medical Director  
NHS England



**Dr Navina Evans CBE**  
Chief Workforce, Training and Education  
Officer  
NHS England