

## Leng Review

### NHS England FAQs on Actions for NHS Organisations

#### General

**1. How and when will all the Leng Review recommendations be implemented?**

The Leng Review recommendations are far reaching and require cross-system partnership working to consider, plan and deliver these effectively. Moving forward, we will work with the Department of Health and Social Care, Royal Colleges, unions and other relevant organisations to consider implementation of the recommendations.

**2. Is the adoption of NHS England's actions set out in its letter of 16 July mandatory or can employers have discretion in how it is implemented?**

NHS England's (NHSE) letter sought to provide guidance to employers on what implementing some of the key recommendations from the Leng Review would mean to ensure safe and effective management of PAs and AAs as part of multi-disciplinary teams. We expect employers to review these in line with clinical guidance and protocols and their own organisational policies, and to consult with local trade unions on how any changes can be applied, with regard for employment law and in line with clinical governance processes.

#### Nomenclature

**3. Does NHS England expect PA and AA job titles to be changed by employers immediately?**

The scope of the Leng Review was to consider if PAs and AAs are safe and effective as part of multidisciplinary teams. In relation to this, it found that patients were unclear about who they were being treated by, and some were not aware that they hadn't been seen by a doctor.

The immediate action for organisations is to make changes to the way in which roles are referred to in the workplace, to ensure that patients are not under the misapprehension that they have seen a doctor.

Any changes to official job titles should be done in accordance with the organisation's local change management policy, with proper regard to employment law and involve affected members of staff and local trade unions.

#### Entry Requirements

**4. Does the recommended primary care entry requirement for all PAs to have completed 2 years of employment in secondary care apply to PAs currently employed in primary care?**

No, this applies to newly qualified PAs and not PAs currently employed in primary care.

**5. Will the PA preceptorship in primary care continue to be funded for current PA students and prospective ones?**

We are reviewing the PA preceptorship in primary care arrangements in light of the Leng Review recommendation and will consult local, regional partners and primary care employers to inform our policy position. The preceptorship in primary care will be honoured and continue for those employers and PAs currently participating in the programme this financial year.

## **Changes to Deployment**

### **6. NHS England's response to the Leng Review states organisations must ensure Physician Associates do not see undifferentiated patients. How should this be applied by organisations employing PAs?**

The Leng Review found safety concerns raised in relation to PAs were almost always about making a diagnosis and deciding the initial treatment, particularly in primary care or the emergency department, where patients first present with new symptoms. It therefore recommends PAs should not see undifferentiated patients, unless triaged into adult patients with minor ailments and within clearly defined clinical protocols as agreed by the Royal College of Emergency Medicine (RCEM) and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP).

In the immediate term and while clinical protocols are developed, further information on the applicable conditions in general practice can be found in the RCGP guidance for general practice for first contact presentations. More experienced PAs in both primary and secondary care should have their roles reviewed by their named supervisor to confirm they have the appropriate skills and training, and to modify the roles if necessary. Where it is determined that any changes are required, these should be implemented following appropriate employment law considerations as well as the organisation's local change policy.

In the medium term, an expert clinical group comprising of members of the medical Royal Colleges and experienced leaders covering medicine and healthcare professions will look at revised clinical protocols. The recommendation for PAs not to see undifferentiated patients has similarities with previous guidance from the relevant royal colleges including the RCGP guidance, published in September 2024.

### **7. In its letter to the system, NHS England asked explicitly that PAs do not see undifferentiated patients. This is a much stronger position than the Leng Review has taken. Why is NHS England's position different?**

NHS England has not taken a different approach to the Leng Review. The Leng Review recommendations in relation to PAs not seeing undifferentiated patients except those already triaged into minor ailments as aligned with existing clinical guidance issued by the RCGP.

An expert clinical group comprising of members of the relevant medical Royal Colleges and experienced leaders covering medicine and healthcare professions will be established to look at developing further clinical protocols. In future and if agreed with the royal colleges, PAs may - for example - be able to see wider groups of patients under these protocols. It is established practice for patients to see a different kind of healthcare professional depending on their problem, and PAs should be considered as part of this.

### **8. When will the national clinical protocols be developed and shared with employers?**

We are currently working with the DHSC to convene an expert clinical group comprising of members from the medical Royal Colleges and experienced leaders covering medicine and healthcare professions to produce evidence-based information that provides a description of specific steps to follow once a clinical management decision has been made. These clinical protocols will cover primary and secondary care and will be shared in due course.

## **Continued Employment**

### **9. Is the adoption of the template job descriptions described in the Leng Review mandatory?**

NHS England will consider the development of new model job descriptions for the PA role in primary care and PA/AA roles in secondary care in consultation with key partners as part of any wider implementation plan. Whilst such model job descriptions would not be mandatory, they

would provide guidance on the general duties of newly qualified PAs and AAs for employers when recruiting.

Any changes to existing job descriptions for employed PAs and AAs are a matter for employers to determine as part of their local change management policies and with proper regard to employment law considerations.

Prior to implementing new job descriptions, these should be evaluated either through local primary care approaches or the NHS job evaluation scheme for secondary care providers.

**10. How does this affect PA and AA job descriptions of those that are currently in post?**

Employers of PAs and AAs employed in primary or secondary care should ensure their competencies and job activities are assessed to ensure they are appropriate, reflect the required work activities within the service and clinical governance and oversight of the roles is clearly documented.

**11. Pay and banding were excluded from the scope of the Leng Review but the template Job Descriptions will now create confusion on what banding should be on job adverts for PA and AA roles. What guidance is there for employers?**

Local employers should consider adapting model job descriptions based on their local circumstances. For primary care providers, local processes and policies should be used to attribute appropriate pay to any revised job description.

For secondary care providers, the NHS job evaluation scheme is used by employers to determine the pay bands for newly created posts as well as for when existing posts are substantially changed or reviewed since they were last evaluated. It is therefore essential that the job evaluation scheme continues to be used for determining the banding of posts and consequently staff pay rates.

**12. Will the change of the job title for PAs and AAs impact an individual's terms and conditions of service?**

NHS England cannot comment on the circumstances of any individual's employment. As with any change, employers should ensure that they have regard to applicable employment law and follow their local change management policies. Where there is a substantial change to an individual's job description and duties, these should be assessed in partnership with unions and employees engaged with the process in a sensitive and constructive manner. Employers should follow best practice and strive to maintain good working relationships when following local change processes in partnership with local unions.

**13. Has the PCN Contract DES specification for 2025/26 and the guidance on ARRS been updated following the Leng Review recommendations?**

The Network Contract DES specification was published on 31 July and the ARRS minimum role requirements for Physician Associate and Apprentice Physician Associate remains unchanged in that specification. NHS England will continue to work with the government and the wider health service to consider the report's recommendations.