

Primary Care Committee – 20th February 2024

Responses to questions from members of the public – Physicians Associates

Question

How many Physician Associates are working in NCL GP practices and health centres?

Response

Approximately 150 but this does fluctuate month by month with staff movement.

Question

Does the ISB maintain a register of PAs?

Response

PAs, as with other staff employed in primary care, are employed directly by the GP practice. A national voluntary register for Physician Associates - the Physician Associate Managed Voluntary Register - is held by the Faculty of Physician Associates (FPA).

GPs in NCL are encouraged to employ PAs who are on this register. The NCL Training Hub has a list of PAs, and the GP practices that employ PAs, and is in regular contact with them.

ICBs do not hold local registers, separate from the national MVR. This would not be appropriate since the ICB is not a regulatory body.

Question

Do you know which GPs employ them and how many there are per practice?

Response

The Training Hub maintains a list of PAs working in primary care within North Central London and their employing practices. The Training Hub is in regular contact with these Practices and PAs to cascade training and information and education opportunities.

NCL ICB has only partial information as it processes practice claims under the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS). Practices employ PA's through the ARRS scheme and independently.

Question

Please give the number in each NCL practice. If this is not possible, please tell us why and list them by partial postcode.

Response

NCL Training Hub holds this information. We would need to work with them to collate and review this. It would only reflect the point in time at which the information was collated.

Question

Please share any PCCC published guidelines for supervision/employment of PAs working in GP practices?

Response

Guidelines for supervision and employment of primary care teams are produced at a national level. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/supervision-guidance-for-primary-care-network-multidisciplinary-teams/> At a local level in North Central London the Training Hub hosts a [Faculty of Educators](#) which is a resource and network for clinical educators and supervisors who are guiding learners in practice, across all primary care roles.

Question

Has there been any communications with NHS England about increasing the number of PAs in general practices?

Response

Not specifically. However as part of the ICS model, the ICB Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) are jointly accountable for clinical & professional standards across NCL.

With primary care, Training Hubs and other teams, they are responding to implementation of the NHSE Additional Roles Scheme. This includes the training, regulation and supervision of PAs to ensure those workers are supported to succeed and our patients receive appropriate, safe and effective care.

Question

Following the avoidable death at the Vale N8, will there be any review of PAs working in NCL GP practices?

Response

There has been a thorough SUI investigation to draw out the learning from the tragic death at The Vale. The practice has cooperated with the ICB and others. There is a paper on Part 1 Primary Care Committee meeting of February 2024 outlining how learning from this and our wider work around Additional Roles is being progressed.

Question

Please indicate any reported serious incidents involving PAs over the past three years.

Response

Just one from The Vale, Haringey, referred to above.

Question

Has the ICB been in correspondence with the RCP about proposed legislation to regulate PA's?

Response

Not directly, however our Chief People Officer and leads from our ICS People Board engage leaders and professional groups and bodies regionally and nationally.

Question

Has the ICB written to the DoHSC/NHS England about the proposed statutory regulation of PAs?

Response

Not directly, however our Chief People Officer and leads from our ICS People Board engage leaders and professional groups and bodies regionally and nationally.

NHSE have been made aware of the incident at The Vale and the response from the practice and the ICB.

Question

Is there a voluntary/mandatory reporting system to notify PA related incidents to the ICB/PCCC?

Response

There is a framework and reporting system for primary care incidents and a *Learn from Patient Safety Events* database which practices are encouraged to use. This is not specific to incidents that may involve PAs and is in line with National quality and incident reporting frameworks.

Question

If so, please disclose the scope of the protocol.

Response

Detail can be found at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/patient-safety/report-patient-safety-incident/> and <https://www.england.nhs.uk/patient-safety/patient-safety-insight/learning-from-patient-safety-events/using-patient-safety-events-data-to-keep-patients-safe/>

Question

If so, how many have been notified so far this year and in the previous two years?

Response

One as above. We are working with practices to ensure they are reporting against this framework.