

# FACULTY OF FORENSIC & LEGAL MEDICINE

of the Royal College of Physicians of London



Registered Charity No 1119599

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Professor Gillian Leng CBE  
Leng Review of the Physician Associate and Anaesthesia Associate Professions  
Department of Health and Social Care  
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19 February 2025

Dear Professor Leng,

We write with regard to the independent review you are chairing into the role of physician associate (PA) and anaesthesia associate (AA) professions. We would like to confirm, and expand on, the [position statement](#) we produced in October 2024 highlighting our concerns over the use of PAs in the examination of children who disclose, or may be at risk of, abuse.

We believe our statement regarding the role of PAs in this specific high-risk area is clear and unambiguous in that there is no role for a PA in the examination of children who have disclosed abuse, or when there are concerns children are at risk of abuse.

This is, however, only a small fraction of the range practice for our membership.

Members of the Faculty of Forensic & Legal Medicine (FFLM) work with suspects and complainants at a time when they may be at their most vulnerable. We work with patients across the criminal justice system, from police custody suites, through courts, prisons and immigration removal centres as well as within sexual assault referral centres. It is essential those who undertake forensic medical practice can withstand the rigorous scrutiny of any judicial process in any Court, criminal, civil (including family) and Coronial.

Additionally, within many areas of our practice, clinicians may have limited access to wider clinical governance structures and supervision necessitating a high level of autonomy which would make supervision of a dependent profession unworkable.

The FFLM has developed a series of [Quality Standards](#) which outline an appropriate time post-graduation, at which time recruitment into forensic medical practice should take place and ensure these 'novices', have robust induction and supervision. Yet the FFLM is aware some providers recruit at a much earlier stage and even suggest just 'Three shifts of shadowing an experienced forensic clinician' results in the novice becoming an 'expert'. The FFLM is concerned this may be the case if PAs are recruited to such work.

There are already concerns raised by the judiciary over the quality of evidence provided in forensic medical practice. Whilst some of this will be addressed, at least in the criminal courts, via version 2

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of the Forensic Science Regulator's Statutory Code of Practice, once ratified by Parliament, it is not appropriate for any PA to be put in the position where they might be required to work at that level.

It is not appropriate for a PA to be working, for example, at the level described in the FFLM's position statement, of an ST4 in Paediatrics, who is by then, 6 years post graduation.

The feedback from our membership is clear, they support the FFLM's opposition to PAs working in any area of forensic & legal medicine.

Yours sincerely

Dr Bernadette Butler  
President

Dr Alex Gorton  
President Elect