



Príomhoifigeach Daoine

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhísí
Sláinte Ospidéal Dr. Steevens',
Baile Átha Cliath 8, D08 W2A8

Chief People Officer

Health Service Executive,
Dr Steevens' Hospital,
Dublin 8, D08 W2A8

www.hse.ie
@hselive

t 01 635 2319
e nationalhr@hse.ie

Mr. Johnny Guirke, TD

13 May 2025

PQ 24253/25 (Health): To ask the Minister for Health if she will consider lifting the recruitment embargo to allow for the employment of physician assistants already in training or in clinical placements in hospitals here, at a time when skilled healthcare staff are required to be retained in the country; and if she will make a statement on the matter.
- Johnny Guirke

Dear Deputy,

I refer to your recent Parliamentary Question which was sent to the HSE for response.

Physician Associates (PAs) are health professionals whose education and training follows the medical model across all specialties. They work as part of a multidisciplinary team with supervision from a named senior doctor (an Irish Medical Council registered consultant or general practitioner), providing care to patients in primary, secondary and community care environments.

The initial evaluation of the Physician Associate pilot, commissioned by the Department of Health, conducted in December 2017 and January 2018 was limited in scope of the evaluation and recommended further significant research. Since this initial pilot and evaluation, the number of Physician Associates currently employed in the HSE has expanded.

Since July 2024 the HSE has paused the recruitment for physician associate grade pending the outcome of an independent review. This review will examine the role of Physician Associates and make recommendations regarding the governance of the role, scope of practice and appropriate deployment within Ireland.

The 2025 HSE National Service Plan committed to identifying an independent expert on behalf of the HSE to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the physician associate role internationally and to make recommendations for standardisation, scope of practice, and appropriate deployment in Ireland.

It will consider the benefits and values in the HSE Healthcare system of the role as well as potential risks. The reviewer will give due cognisance to the matters raised and lessons learned in other jurisdictions where this role was introduced.

The terms of reference for this review are nearing completion. The process of identification of the independent expert commenced in March 2025. The review is expected to be completed by the end of 2025.

I trust this response is of some assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Mairéad Ryan
National HR