



27th July 2025

### ***ASiT's response to the Leng Review findings and recommendations***

The Association of Surgeons in Training (ASiT) thanks Professor Leng and her team for the recent publication of *The Leng Review*, an independent examination of the Physician Associate (PA) and Anaesthesia Associate (AA) professions. We welcome several of the review's positive and constructive recommendations, including:

1. The proposed renaming of the role to *Physician Assistant (PA)*, aligning with international nomenclature;
2. A commitment to prioritising the training needs of resident doctors;
3. Clear guidance that PAs should not assess undifferentiated patients outside nationally defined scopes of practice;
4. The recommendation for formalised training for doctors who supervise PAs.

However, we remain concerned that key issues raised during the consultation period have not been adequately addressed. In particular:

1. There remains a significant lack of high-quality evidence regarding the safety, effectiveness, and long-term outcomes of Physician Assistants within clinical teams. This raises questions about the robustness of the evidence base that initially informed the implementation and proliferation of these roles;
2. The review does not propose a clearly defined national scope of practice, instead leaving interpretation and implementation to local discretion. This perpetuates variability and risks further confusion. Despite formal evidence submitted from ASiT highlighting significant concern about Physician Assistants undertaking operative procedures, the review makes no explicit reference to their involvement in operative settings.
3. There is little specific focus given to surgical disciplines in the review. Surgical training, as a craft-based specialty, poses distinct challenges (including the need for hands-on experience, protected operative time, and early, sustained operative exposure) all of which warrant dedicated consideration.

Notwithstanding these omissions, the Leng Review provides an important opportunity for the surgical profession to demonstrate leadership in shaping the safe, evidence-based integration of extended team roles. ASiT is committed to working collaboratively with the Royal Surgical Colleges to:

1. Develop validated, sustainable training and credentialing frameworks for PAs that prioritise patient safety and protect training opportunities for surgical trainees;
2. Apply lessons from the implementation of PA and PAA roles to guide future development of the extended surgical team, ensuring that scope of practice and responsibilities are clearly defined to applicants, post-holders, and most importantly to patients;

ASiT maintains its position that *"Physician Assistants should not participate in operative interventions"*. We reaffirm the importance of collective responsibility among trainees, consultants, and system leaders to ensure the review's recommendations are implemented in a way that protects both patient safety and surgical training. This is not a time to abdicate responsibility; it is a time for action, accountability, and principled leadership.

Association of Surgeons in Training (ASiT)