



# Physician Associates Working in General Practice.

Patient leaflet

# Physician Associates in Primary Care

This document is intended to be used as guidance. Adapt as appropriate for your GP Practice. As the role of a Physician Associate working in primary care is relatively new, the intention is to provide Sutton PCN Practices with information to help them through the initial year of PA recruitment and induction.



Physician Associates (PAs) can perform a valuable role as part of the extended primary care team. There is scope for them to take some pressure off GPs by performing some defined clinical tasks. Physician Associates are healthcare professionals with a generalist medical education, who work alongside doctors providing medical care as an integral part of the multidisciplinary team. Physician Associates are dependent practitioners who can work autonomously, **but always under the supervision of a fully trained and experienced doctor.**

There is currently a drive to recruit more Physician Associates to roles in primary care. Physician Associates bring new talent add to the skill mix within primary care teams, providing a stable, generalist section of the workforce which can help ease the workforce pressures that the NHS currently faces. They have the potential to address GP shortages and help deliver the five-year plan for primary care.

Physician Associates are not, however, a substitute for a doctor who undergoes years of medical training that enables them to provide complex, highly skilled care to their patients. Prior to deciding whetherto employ a PA, it is important to ensure the role and remit of a PA are what is needed by your Practice / PCN. There must always be a GP supervisor available to discuss cases, give advice, and attend to patientsif necessary.



# Day to day working life as a Physician Associate [PA]

**A Physician Associate works under the supervision of a doctor.** Newly qualified PAs can see the range of patients that present to GP Practices but initially they may need more supervision and support. As well as seeing patients presenting with acute/same-day problems and offer rebooked appointments.

As part of day-to day tasks, PAs are able to:

- Triage patients
- Carry out telephone consultations
- Taking medical histories from patients
- Make referrals, review and act on laboratory results
- Carry out home visits or visit nursing and residential homes
- Carry out physical examinations
- Developing and delivering appropriate treatment and management plans
- Seeing patients with undifferentiated diagnoses
- Seeing patients with long-term chronic conditions
- Formulating differential diagnoses and management plans
- Analysing test results
- Performing diagnostic and therapeutic procedures
- Provide health promotion and disease prevention advice for patients.
- PAs can do a 2 day course post graduate to qualify as smear takers

Currently, physician associates are not able to:

- Prescribe
- Request ionising radiation (e.g. chest x-ray or CT scan).
- Sign off sick notes
- Death certificates



# Do Physician Associate Specialise?

Some PAs offer specialised clinics following appropriate training, including (but not exclusively):

- family planning
- baby checks
- COPD, asthma, diabetes and anticoagulation.

While Physician Associates can work in specialties and sub-specialties, and may become very established in a specific specialty, they need to maintain general medical knowledge and to demonstrate this by passing a recertification exam every 6 years.

It is a versatile role that can cover mental health, general practice and a large number of hospital specialties. All PAs are trained to be aware of the level of their clinical competence and to work within their limits accordingly.

# Our Practices

## CHEAM AND SOUTH SUTTON PCN

**Benhill & Belmont**

**Cheam Family Practice**

**Cheam GP Centre**

**James O’Riordan Medical Centre**

## CENTRAL SUTTON PCN

**Grove Road Practice**

**Mulgrave Road Surgery**

**The Old Court House Surgery**

**Robin Hood Lane**

## WALLINGTON PCN

**Beeches Surgery**

**Carshalton Fields Surgery**

**Maldon Road Surgery**

**Manor Practice**

**Park Road Medical Centre**

**Shotfield Medical Practice**

**Wallington Family Practice**

**Wallington Medical Centre**

## CARSHALTON PCN

**Bishopsford Road Medical Centre**

**Chesser Surgery**

**Faccini House Surgery**

**Green Wrythe Surgery**

**Hackbridge Medical Centre**

**Sutton Medical Centre**

**Wrythe Green Surgery**