



ATISN 23327

27 February 2025

Dear ,

ATISN 23327 – Physician Associates

Thank you for your request to the Welsh Government for information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) received on 1 February. You requested the following:

- 1. Any materials relevant to or correspondence had either within the Welsh government or between the Welsh government and HEIW since September 2024 in relation to job openings put forward for “streamlining” for physician associate students expected to graduate in 2025 from Bangor and Swansea Universities.*

Our Response

The Welsh Government holds information of this description. However, we have concluded that some of the information requested is exempt from disclosure under the following sections of the Freedom of Information Act:

- Section 40(2) – Personal Information of the Freedom of Information Act.

An explanation of our application of this exemption is set out at Annex 1 to this letter.

Next Steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government’s handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government’s Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely,

Annex 1

Freedom of Information Act 2000: Section 40(2) Personal information about others

Section 40(2) together with the conditions in section 40(3)(a)(i) or 40(3)(b) provides an absolute exemption if disclosure of the personal data would breach any of the data protection principles.

'Personal data' is defined in sections 3(2) and (3) of the Data Protection Act 1998 ('the DPA 2018') and means any information relating to an identified or identifiable living individual. An identifiable living individual is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of the individual.

We have concluded that, in this instance, the information caught by your request contains third party personal data.

Under Section 40(2) of the FOIA, personal data is exempt from release if disclosure would breach one of the data protection principles set out in Article 5 of the GDPR. We consider the principle being most relevant in this instance as being the first. This states that personal data must be:

"processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to the data subject"

The lawful basis that is most relevant in relation to a request for information under the FOIA is Article 6(1)(f). This states:

"processing is necessary for the purposes of the legitimate interests pursued by the controller or by a third party except where such interests are overridden by the interests or fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject which require protection of personal data, in particular where the data subject is a child".

In considering the application of Article 6(1)(f) in the context of a request for information under FOIA it is necessary to consider the following three-part test:

- **The Legitimate interest test:** Whether a legitimate interest is being pursued in the request for information.
- **The Necessity test:** Whether disclosure of the information/confirmation or denial that it is held is necessary to meet the legitimate interest in question.
- **The Balancing test:** Whether the above interests override the interests, fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject.

Our consideration of these tests is set out below:

1. Legitimate interests

Your request includes some emails which were caught by your request. I have not identified any legitimate interest that you may have in knowing the identities of those individuals named within the emails.

2. Is disclosure necessary?

We do not believe disclosure of the identities of those involved would allow any greater understanding of the content of the emails.

3. The balance between legitimate interests and the data subject's interests or fundamental rights and freedoms

As we do not believe disclosure of this personal data is necessary, there is no requirement on us to undertake a test to balance the legitimate interests against the right of individuals, as the fundamental rights and freedoms provided by the DPA are not being challenged.

I have concluded that there is a reasonable expectation that the identity of the living individuals named in the correspondence would not be made public. It is my view, therefore, that disclosure of the redacted information would breach the first data protection principle, and thus is exempt from release under section 40 of the FOI Act.

Information to be released – ATISN 23327

1. Covering Email

From: (HEIW)

Sent: 02 December 2024 09:34

To: (HSCEY - NHS Workforce & Operations - Workforce & Corp. Business Directorate); (HSCEY - Quality & Nursing - Nursing Directorate)

Cc: (HEIW)

Subject: In confidence - Physician Associates

Dear both

As you are aware issues regarding PAs continue. We have been raising this through various peer groups, and doing our best to resolve but we are unable to take this much further without some collective decisions and direction. We have put together the attached briefing, we have marked it in confidence because we would welcome your views on the recommendations before sharing them any further. Ideally we thought this may be a necessary discussion to have at NHS leadership board this month given the changes that are happening at pace on this issue now.

Would welcome your thoughts and maybe a conversation to see how best we can take this forward.

Best wishes

Addysg a Gwellfa Iechyd Cymru (AaGIC) / Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)

e-bost: / email:

aagic.gig.cymru / heiw.nhs.wales

1a. Attachment

Anaesthesia Associate (AA) and Physician Associate (PA)

Current Position in NHS Wales

The 2025 graduating cohort is projected to be 55 students. Given that regulation will be in place, and the independent review will have been completed we recommend that the usual streamlining process take place, with organisations actively preparing through their workforce planning to accept the numbers based on their IMTP requirements.