

10 September 2026

Dear

ATISN 27324 – Physician Associate

Thank you for your request to Welsh Government for information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) received on 11 August 2026, relating to Physician Associate training, workforce planning, streamlining and employment in Wales.

You provided clarification on 29 August 2026 and confirmed you were requesting the following:

1. Streamlining and workforce-planning decision trail

Copies of the final versions of any submissions, briefings, decision records, minutes, risk assessments or workforce-planning papers held by the Welsh Government between 01 December 2024 and 31 August 2025 concerning any decision or proposal to suspend, cancel, reduce or otherwise amend the Physician Associate streamlining or ring-fenced matching process in Wales.

This should include any recorded explanation of changes in expected employment demand between the December 2024 position and the 2025 streamlining position.

2. Commissioning numbers and the 2026-27 pause

The number of Physician Associate training places commissioned in Wales in each academic year from 2021-22 to 2025-26, broken down by university.

In relation to the decision to pause commissioning for 2026-27, approved by the then Cabinet Secretary and communicated by HEIW to Swansea University and Bangor University on 28 August 2025, please also provide:

- a) any final advice or submission provided to the Cabinet Secretary before that approval; and*
- b) the formal record of the Cabinet Secretary's approval.*

*For identification purposes, HEIW records this matter under reference **DLIB/FOI/25-09-25**.*

3. Graduate numbers and employment outcomes

Any aggregate information held by the Welsh Government showing, for the Physician Associate cohort graduating in Wales in 2025:

- a) the number expected to graduate;*
- b) the number who graduated;*
- c) the number of NHS Wales Physician Associate posts forecast or expected to be available;*
- d) the number who secured Physician Associate employment within NHS Wales; and*
- e) the number known to remain without Physician Associate employment.*

If equivalent information is held for the 2026 graduating cohort, please provide that separately.

4. Information provided to students

Copies of any final Welsh Government guidance, agreed communications or instructions issued or agreed since 1 December 2024 concerning what students already enrolled on

Physician Associate programmes at Swansea University or Bangor University should be told about:

- a) employment prospects;*
- b) streamlining or matching arrangements;*
- c) the pause in future commissioning; and*
- d) support available where a graduate could not secure Physician Associate employment.*

You are not seeking every individual email on these subjects; you are seeking final guidance, agreed lines, formal communications or decision-level records.

5. Alternative and transition pathways

Copies of any final assessment, options paper, submission or decision record held since 1 December 2024 considering support or alternative pathways for Welsh-trained Physician Associate graduates unable to secure Physician Associate posts, including consideration of:

- a) alternative NHS Wales employment;*
- b) continuing professional development intended to maintain clinical skills;*
- c) transition or conversion routes into other healthcare professions; and*
- d) any dedicated or accelerated route into medicine.*

Where no such assessment or option has been considered, please confirm that no recorded information is held.

Our Response

1–5. Documents retrieved are either linked below or attached. 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. An explanation of our application of this exemption is set out at Annex 1

Please see a link to the 2025 Decision Reports [Decision Reports: 2025 | GOV.WALES](#)

We suggest that you contact the NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (NWSSP) for further information. Contact details are below.

[Making a Freedom of Information Request - NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership](#)

Education and Training Plans published by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)

2021-22 We are able to source this we suggest contacting HEIW directly via the following link

[Home - HEIW](#)

2022-23 heiw.nhs.wales/files/education-and-training-plan-2022-23/

2023-24 heiw.nhs.wales/files/heiw-etp-2023-24/

2024-25 heiw.nhs.wales/files/education-and-training-plan-2024-25/

2025-26 heiw.nhs.wales/files/et-2025-26/

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 documents 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 documents

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 documents 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.