Department of Health & Social Care

[redacted]
Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care)

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

HM Coroner Dr Karen Henderson
HM Coroner's Court
Station Approach
Woking
GU22 7AP
[redacted]

[redacted]

21 September 2026

Dear Dr Henderson,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 11th May 2026 sent to the Secretary of State / the Department of Health and Social Care about the death of Jaxon Vasco Oliveira. I recognise the importance of the concerns raised in your report and have considered them with great care. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for Secondary Care.

Firstly, I would like to say how deeply saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Jaxon's death and I offer my sincere condolences to his family and loved ones. I recognise that no response can lessen their loss. The circumstances your report describes are concerning and I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention.

The report raises several patient safety concerns: whether healthcare professionals (who are not doctors) deployed to assess undifferentiated paediatric patients are sufficiently skilled and appropriately trained to do so independently, without medical supervision; the adequacy of the abdominal examination undertaken by a general practitioner who had no postgraduate paediatric qualifications, which failed to identify hepatomegaly; and whether it is appropriate for an FY2 doctor with limited paediatric experience to assess and discharge undifferentiated paediatric patients, without direct supervision by a more experienced clinician.

In preparing this response, my officials have made enquiries within the department, to ensure we adequately address your concerns.

I recognise the distress that the circumstances described in your report will have caused Jaxon's family and loved ones and I have carefully considered the situation. As you will be aware, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) sets the standards that nursing, midwifery and nursing associate registrants must meet to demonstrate that they are capable of practising safely and effectively. Once registered, nurses can move into and practise in different fields, including paediatrics, subject to the completion of the required qualifications and any additional training requirements.

It is a nurse's responsibility to make sure they practice in line with the NMC's Code, including working within their scope of knowledge, skills and competency. Staff should complete the necessary training before carrying out any care to ensure safe and effective care is provided. In addition, anyone on the NMC's register must also have suitable indemnity insurance, in line with their scope of practice.

I note that Jaxon was reviewed by an advanced nurse practitioner. I understand that the NMC is currently undertaking a programme of work to consider the additional regulation of advanced nursing and midwifery practice. In June 2025, NMC published principles for advanced practice which are designed to set the foundation for the development of standards and for organisations to use to prepare for additional regulation in the future. The NMC intends to develop advanced practice standards of proficiency and associated programme standards during 2027-28.

The General Medical Council (GMC) is the regulator of all medical doctors, physician assistants (PAs) and physician assistants in anaesthesia (PAAs) (still legally known as physician associates and anaesthesia associates) practising in the United Kingdom. It sets and enforces the standards all doctors, PAs and PAAs must adhere to.

The GMC is responsible for ensuring that doctors, PAs and PAAs have the necessary skills and knowledge to join its UK registers. All doctors, PAs and PAAs must register with the GMC, and meet the expected standards set out in the GMC's *Good medical practice* to work in the UK: www.gmc-uk.org/professional-standards/professional-standards-for-doctors/good-medical-practice. Doctors must also hold a licence to practise. *Good medical practice* states that doctors, PAs and PAAs must recognise and work within the limits of their competence and must only practise under the level of supervision appropriate to their role, knowledge, skills and training, and the task they are carrying out. Failure to uphold and adhere to the principles within *Good medical practice* and related guidance will put a doctors', PAs' or PAAs' registration with the GMC at risk.

Registration with a regulatory body alone does not guarantee that the registrant has the clinical or language skills to perform a particular role. Employers remain responsible for assuring that the individual applying for the post has the necessary skills and relevant qualifications to undertake the type of role they are appointing to.

Regarding the concern you have raised about the adequacy of the abdominal examination, General Practitioners are responsible for ensuring their own clinical knowledge remains up-to-date and for identifying learning needs as part of their continuing professional development. This activity should include taking account of new research and developments in guidance, such as that produced by NICE, to ensure that they can continue to provide high-quality care to all patients.

All UK registered doctors are expected to meet the professional standards set out in the GMC's Good Medical Practice. In 2012 the GMC introduced revalidation which supports doctors in regularly reflecting on how they can develop or improve their practice, gives patients confidence doctors are up to date with their practice and promotes improved quality of care by driving improvements in clinical governance. The training curriculum for postgraduate trainee doctors is set by the Royal College of General Practitioners, and has to meet the standards set by the General Medical Council. The RCGP provides a number of resources on cancer prevention, diagnosis and care for GPs, relevant for the primary care setting.

I hope this response is helpful. Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted]

MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH