



## Personalisation briefing

# Implications for personal assistants

### Key messages

- Many personal assistants (PAs) are already delivering personalised support, but some may need to work differently, and not be so focused on task-based care.
- PAs are enabled to work in new, creative and person-centred ways.
- PAs have the opportunity to learn a range of new skills and be flexible and adaptable as the ways in which people are supported change.
- Terms and conditions of employment may be different with people working on their own, directly employed by the personal budget (PB) or direct payment holder.
- Learning and development are vital to help PAs adapt to changes and need to be flexible to meet employers' needs.
- Learning and development should also recognise the benefits of core modules of learning as well as having built-in flexibility to meet PAs' individual needs.
- The seven common core principles to support self care (DH 2008) which were developed in partnership with service users and carers can act as a guide for developing practical solutions when working as a PA.
- *Working for personalised care: a framework for supporting personal assistants working in adult social care* (DH 2011) aims to support future growth within the PA workforce.

### Introduction

This At a glance briefing examines the implications of the personalisation agenda for personal assistants.

### What are the implications for personal assistants?

Personal budgets, in particular direct payments, have created a demand for an increasing number of PAs from a range of backgrounds and with a broad range of skills. Personalisation will require cultural change and new ways of working that not only impact on PAs but also on a wide range of individuals and services that support people to live independent lives.

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The implications for PAs are that they will need to learn a wide range of skills and remain flexible, versatile and adaptable to provide care and support in a way that enables the person to remain independent. Terms and conditions of employment may be different and working hours more flexible, with people working on their own more often, without the clear support of a team.

PAs are likely to be employed directly by the person they support, by an agency/organisation, or to be self-employed.

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Each kind of employment has strengths and weaknesses and PAs will need to work closely with the person they support to decide which kind is best for everyone.

It is important that people are clear what their employment status is, both for legal and tax reasons. If a PA works for several people, it is possible to be self-employed in one situation and employed in another, where the working relationship is slightly different. This means a PA will have different responsibilities and entitlements in different circumstances.

Find advice on self-employed or employed status at HM Revenue & Customs. Employment status also determines a person’s rights at work. If you are unsure about your employment status, you can find out more information and example situations at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

### What are the practicalities?

As with any job, finding work as a PA in your local area involves knowing where to look. Individual employers will consider a number of ways to recruit a PA. For example, by word of mouth, via the local paper or online classifieds, through the local college/university or the job centre. In some areas there are local PA registers which provide secure online recruitment processes. For example, the North West Personal Assistant Register (NWPAs), Age UK and the Cheshire Centre for Independent Living (CCIL) provide easy access, secure online recruitment tools, which enable individual employers and PAs to search for the right person, or the right job, in one place. The online register of PAs provides greater choice for employers and enables a more personalised recruitment provision, while generating a more

responsive market that attracts a growing number of people to join the social care sector as a PA.

Skills for Care’s Personal assistant toolkit guides small employers through the basics of employing a PA.

Learning and development will be key to helping PAs to adapt. People working as PAs are likely to want access to learning and training that fits around their working life and is specifically focused on the individual they are supporting. Why, for example, would you want to do training on positive behaviour support if the person you are supporting doesn’t need such assistance?

One of the ways in which the common core principles to support self care (DH 2008) can be used is to help people develop practical solutions to working as a PA.

The principles are:

1. Ensure individuals are able to make informed choices to manage their self-care needs.
2. Communicate effectively to enable individuals to assess their needs, and develop and gain confidence to self-care.
3. Support and enable individuals to access appropriate information to manage their self-care needs.
4. Support and enable individuals to develop skills in self-care.
5. Support and enable individuals to use technology to support self-care.

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6. Advise individuals how to access support networks and participate in the planning, development and evaluation of services.
7. Support and enable risk management and risk-taking to maximise independence and choice.

The principles were developed in partnership with people who use services and carers. As a PA you can use the principles to work with the person you are supporting, develop your job description and agree your individual learning plan.

For example, when looking at your learning and development needs you might want to ask questions linked to principle five that help you work out what sort of training you need to make the best use of technology as part of the support you provide. When looking at principle seven you might want to think about legislation and regulation that may be important for you to understand when considering any risks that you and the person you support might take in the way you work with each other.

In 2009–2010 Skills for Care commissioned two disabled employers of PAs to explore what makes a successful and effective relationship. This research project (Skills for Care 2011) examined how people who employ their own PAs, support workers or carers maintain a successful, dynamic relationship with them. The aim of the research was to find out what contributes to a successful and effective working relationship from the disabled employer’s perspective and to look at the factors that could hinder it. A further aim was to identify the training needs of PAs and the skills required in order to maintain the working relationship on a one-to-one basis.

The research provided many useful recommendations which included:

- more needs to be done to support direct employers to understand how to manage the PAs they employ
- it is very important that people are given good support as soon as they want to employ a new PA
- people should always be offered support quickly if they have problems with their PA
- if people get the right support early this can be a good way of saving time and money later
- difficulties with a PA can have a bad effect on a person’s health and feelings
- if something happens that makes people decide they can’t work together this can mean both parties lose money.

### Case study 1: Retraining in the North West

Home care providers supporting older people in the North West have been working with a local authority/health and social care trust in Northern Ireland to test the principles for self-care in action. By retraining workers to think differently and deliver outcome-based care instead of task-based care, they have found that service users have become increasingly empowered and feel more able to take control of their own care plan. Subsequently they feel much more satisfied with the support they receive.

For the PA this model of support and employment results in greater job satisfaction and a range of new skills to help people who use services better manage their care needs and put them in control. Subsequently, PAs are much more involved in care planning and are able to resolve issues which normally would have been passed to other workers in the commissioning organisation. Absence levels have decreased and there is a new feeling of enhanced teamwork.

### Case study 2: An approved list of PAs

A small organisation in Leeds highlighted the fact that fewer people with learning disabilities were using direct payments than other groups. It also found that people who use services and their families were finding it hard to locate and retain staff. In order to address this, the organisation set up a team of people with learning disabilities that chose and trained people to be PAs. After successfully completing a training course, the new PAs are placed on a list. People in charge of their own support use the list to find PAs to support them and can be confident that any PA on the list will be properly trained and possess the required skills and knowledge.

### Case study 3: Support for employers

Picking Your Pathway looks at the needs of people commissioning their own services and employing a PA. There are a growing number of PAs in the social care workforce and their employers (using direct payments or a PB) don't always know what training they need, where to find it and if it is any good. PAs can be difficult to reach and have very few support or information networks. A number of them have never worked in social care before and are also unaware of the training needed or available to them. Picking Your Pathway is developing a matrix to support people employing PAs to identify training needs and opportunities.

### Background to case studies

Skills for Care has published research on the employment and workforce implications of direct payments (IFF Research 2008). The research found that most people who use services are satisfied with the support they receive from their PAs and are generally confident about taking on the role of employer. Most people working as a PA like and value the flexibility of the role. Only a small number of PAs currently have access to funding for training. Most employers would offer more

### Case study 4: The CCIL apprenticeship scheme

A case study is available on the Skills for Care website concerning the CCIL's apprenticeship scheme for PAs: 'Accessing the apprenticeship programme means that PAs get a recognised qualification giving their employers some kind of assurance that they have been trained to a certain standard to provide the care that they want to receive. For PAs it provides an opportunity to gain a portfolio of qualifications that are recognition of their importance in the wider social care workforce.'

training if funding was available and most said that the idea of an official register was a good one – however, they were evenly divided about whether or not registration should be compulsory.

The examples set out here help expand on the findings of the PA research and the common core principles to support self care (DH 2008). They come from the Workforce Innovation Programme, which explores how social care is changing and how changes in the way in which people are supported affect workforce planning, training and education.

A lot of this work has relevance for PAs in terms of how they can develop their skills, knowledge and expertise. The Programme also provides information for service user and family carer employers on how they can do the same.

### Further information

People working as PAs can get practical advice and support from websites such as the Personal Assistants Network – a project supported by Skills for Care to help PAs and their employers access information about responsibilities, rights, standards, legislation and training.

You can find out more about Picking Your Pathway, which is an initiative from the Association for Real Change (ARC) and Independent Living Alternatives (ILA).

Skills for Care publishes all of its work on workforce innovation, including its report on direct payments. Here you will find national and regional reports on completed projects and projects currently being supported, downloadable videos about particular projects and other useful information. There is more detailed information about each example shared in this briefing on the new types of worker website.

Skills for Care's work on the effectiveness of the relationship between the PA and their employer can also be found on the website, along with more information on the PA framework.

You can find out more about Skills for Care's CCIL apprenticeship scheme.

Find Me Good Care helps people to make choices about care and support for themselves or other adults in England.

[www.findmegoodcare.co.uk](http://www.findmegoodcare.co.uk)

## References

Department of Health (DH) (2008) *Common core principles to support self care*. London: DH.

DH (2011) *Working for personalised care: a framework for supporting personal assistants working in adult social care*. London: DH.

IFF Research (2008) *Employment aspects and workforce implications of direct payments*. Leeds: Skills for Care.

Skills for Care (2011) *Personalisation and partnership*. Leeds: Skills for Care.

## Acknowledgements

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## What is personalisation?

Personalisation means recognising people as individuals who have strengths and preferences and putting them at the centre of their own care and support. The traditional service-led approach has often meant that people have not been able to shape the kind of support they need, or received the right help. Personalised approaches like self directed support and personal budgets involve enabling people to identify their own needs and make choices about how and when they are supported to live their lives. People need access to information, advocacy and advice so they can make informed decisions.

Personalisation is also about making sure there is an integrated, community-based approach for everyone. This involves building community capacity and local strategic commissioning so that people have a good choice of support, including that provided by user-led organisations. It means ensuring people can access universal services such as transport, leisure, education, housing, health and employment opportunities. All systems, processes, staff and services need to put people at the centre.

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