

Personal Assistant (PA) Programme Board – 25 November 2021

Chair	Donald Macleod Ian Turner
Date	25 November 2021
Time	10:00 - 11:30
Location	MS Teams
Attendees	Organisation
Peter Scott	Independent Living Fund Scotland
Les Watson	PA Network
Donna Murray	Social Work Scotland, PA, PA Employer
Simon Bradstreet	Mater of Focus
Ali Upton	SSSC
Ann Marie Penman	Independent Living Movement
Agnes	SDSS (Take Control)
Joanne McGee	SDSS (Take Control)
Hannah Ross	COSLA
Michael Pillans	SDSS
Jim Elder-Woodward	PA Employer
Julia Smith	PA Employer
Linda Riley	PA Employer
Dr Caroline Gould	PA Employer
Pauline Nolan	Inclusion Scotland
Heather Frail	Support Choices
Eilidh MacDonald	Carr Gomm
Jill Davies	Self-employed PA
Catherine	PA
Emma	PA
Jan MacLugash and Tina	Independent Living Movement
Lyn Pornaro	Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living
Sharon Mcleod	Ayrshire Inclusive Living Network
Marianne Scobie	Glasgow Disability Alliance
Ian Thomson	NHS Highland
Susan Woods	Cornerstone SDS
Elspeth Critchley	SDS Forum Scottish Borders
Margaret Petherbridge	Falkirk Council
Kimberley Mroz	North Ayrshire HSCP
Niccy Kershaw	Encompass Borders
Toria Fraser	Scottish Government (SG)
Don Morrison	SG
Emily Russell	SG
Linda Beath	SG

Iain Ramsay	SG
Jack Blaik	SG
Karen Young	SG
Nicola Forrest	SG

Welcome

The Chairs welcomed new and existing group members to the third meeting of the Programme Board for PA's. The Programme Board will make recommendations to the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care, Kevin Stewart on how PA's can be fully recognised as part of the social care workforce.

The Board is co-chaired by Donald MacLeod (SDSS) and Ian Turner (SG). Donald provided an overview of the work of the Programme Board to date. A steering group has been established to take forward our work plan and there will be further consultation with PA's.

Matter of Focus workshops update

Simon Bradstreet provided an update on the Matter of Focus workshops. A [report from the workshops](#) is available online and was circulated in advance of the meeting.

The purpose of the workshops was to understand the context of the work, what success looks like and to co-produce outcome maps that communicate how change happens and will be used to inform the work of the Programme Board. The presentation explained: how Matter of Focus used the contributions from the workshops to develop pathways and outcome maps, the main findings from the workshops, observations from the process, analysis of the outcome maps and conclusions.

Simon thanked everyone who attended the workshops for their contributions and high levels of engagement. Matter of Focus were commissioned to produce the outcome maps and it will be up to Scottish Government and the Programme Board to decide on the next steps.

The PowerPoint slides were circulated to attendees on the 29 November 2021.

Plenary discussion and Q&A

Group members were invited to comment on the Matter of Focus Report and identify any gaps, and raise any other points for general discussion.

The following points were raised: It was noted that social care and self-directed support (SDS) is underfunded and that not all Support in the Right Direction (SiRD) funded organisations provide the same level of support in all areas. With regards to pay, training and development activities for PA's, it was noted that without increased funding the current challenges will persist.

Remote Living

Provision of SDS should be equal across Scotland but in rural areas where people often have more than one job, this is true of PAs as well. They may be more difficult to recruit, have multiple jobs and are more likely to be self-employed.

The issue of confidentiality in rural areas was raised. Members had experienced healthcare staff revealing confidential information and expecting PAs to disclose information regarding care and circumstances. Also supported individuals are not always included in conversations about their care with PA's and agencies.

Some Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCP's) do not allow direct payment recipients to use self-employed PA's. This is a complex issue of employment law and is currently out with the remit of the Scottish Government. This area requires further consideration.

Social Work Scotland Survey

Social Work Scotland is surveying the 32 Local Authorities to request further details on direct payments.

The results will support greater understanding of the variation in service provision across Scotland. The survey requests information on terms and conditions of employment, what resources PA's and employers need, and what Local Authorities are doing to support recruitment. The results are expected by the end of the year and will be shared with Programme Board members.

Registration of PA's

The advantages of registering the workforce were acknowledged. Registration would support PA's access training and events, but the meeting heard that it should be a personal choice and that the purpose of registration and what it aims to achieve needs to be clear.

Concern was expressed that registering PA's would not solve all the issues, or guarantee that the workforce would be recognised and valued. There are other ways that PA's and employers can be supported at a local level. Social care workers are registered with the SSSC. This profession is undervalued and more needs to be done to increase the public's understanding of this workforce.

In terms of recognition, a banding pay system was suggested and could be based on qualifications. Just Work have published research which recommends 5 wage bandings for PA roles depending on skill level. The paper can be accessed using this link:[Individual Employer Pay Scale Report Survey Interview Findings Abridged .pdf \(mcusercontent.com\)](https://www.justwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Individual-Employer-Pay-Scale-Report-Survey-Interview-Findings-Abridged.pdf)

Accessing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The meeting heard that all PA Employers should be able to access PPE at their local Hub or by delivery to their home. Members raised that there was variation in

accessing PPE in different Local Authority areas. In some areas accessing PPE was difficult and several key themes were noted:

- Information on how to access PPE was poor, leading to some PA's and employers having to purchase their own. Often there was a lack of communication to employers on how to access PPE. Where there was communication, this was often by email which was challenging for those without internet, and for those with connection issues in rural settings.
- In rural areas, the location of PPE Hubs were often inaccessible, with restrictive slots available for collecting PPE.
- PA's had to request letters from social work to prove they were entitled to PPE, the role of PA's was not recognised in the same way as social care workers or NHS staff.

However the meeting heard that in other areas the provision of PPE was very good. Organisations such as Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living (GCIL) and Cornerstone SDS were able to support PA employers access PPE from the Hubs, including accessing Hubs on behalf of employers and arranging deliveries to those in remote areas. Several Local Authorities allowed PA employers to purchase PPE using their SDS budget. Some Local Authorities provided organisations with PPE and Lateral Flow Tests to distribute to employed and self-employed PA's.

Vaccination Centres

Access to vaccination centres was difficult for members in rural areas. Employers and PA's had to travel long distances to receive their vaccinations, often with limited public transport, and the centres were not always accessible for disabled people.

The PA Network

The PA network can provide support to PA's by email or through their helpline. The Network also offer free training for PA's.

The PA Network are going to produce ID badges for PA's which will provide evidence of their role when accessing PPE from the Hubs. The ID badges will also allow the PA to access various activities for free when accompanying their employer. When available, the secretariat will inform all PA Programme Board members and ID badges will be promoted on the [PA network website](#).

Examples of support for PAs and their employers

It was acknowledged that there is variation in social care provision across Scotland. In some areas support is available from community based organisations rather than through the Local Authorities. Members were asked to share examples of good practice.

In Aberdeenshire, [Cornerstone SDS](#) have specialist advisors who support employers to set up their self-directed support option 1. Employers can access a wide range of

support, including assistance with recruitment processes and training. Cornerstone SDS accessed PPE hubs on behalf of PA employers and arranged deliveries to rural areas.

Throughout the pandemic, North Ayrshire HSCP reached out to employers and staff to promote the wellbeing resources available to help with anxiety, sleeping problems and stress. This helped ensure everyone felt valued and created a sense of togetherness.

Ayrshire Inclusive Living Network (AILN) provide support to PA employers with the recruitment process. AILN also have SDS peers, who all employ PA's and are happy to speak with anyone who is considering employing a PA. In addition, PA mentors are available to engage with prospective PA's at recruitment events and colleges.

SDSS have produced an [employer handbook](#) and are now in the process of producing a PA handbook. When complete this will be shared with group members.

Dundee Carers Centre have been working with local colleges to discuss the role of PA's and SDS, and have received positive feedback for their work.

Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living run monthly peer support sessions, a PA employer forum for legislation updates, and sessions on being a PA employer.

Perthshire [Care and Wellbeing CIC](#) is a support service with care and wellbeing practitioners. A similar service for PA's in every area may be helpful, this could provide a network for local people, and promote training and wellbeing resources.

Several HSCP's have good relationships with local independent care and support organisations. In these areas the HSCP's allow PA's to access mainstream social care learning and development resources. These HSCP's also provide support to employers, assist with recruitment processes and provide SDS training.

The [Care to Care Adult Social Care marketing campaign](#) is promoting the PA role, and My World of Work is highlighting PA roles to school pupils. There is a PA page on the My Job Scotland vacancy website, which provides links to all available PA vacancies.

GCIL provide a range of support including:

- Working closely with Local Authorities to raise awareness of the resources available.
- Providing pre-assessment sessions on SDS options
- Providing support for employers through the recruitment process. This includes support drafting job adverts, advertising vacancies, assisting with sifts and interviews, through to support with payroll and auditing.
- Training for PA's is discussed early on in the recruitment process, and training required to support the employer is identified.
- Promote online training from Independent Living groups, Open Badges and My Learning app. GCIL work collaboratively with other organisations to highlight the support available.

Action: Members of Programme Board are asked to share examples of good practice

Training

It was suggested that a nationwide platform to showcase what training and development opportunities are available would be helpful. This would ensure employers and their PA can access appropriate training. A lack of funding for training was highlighted by several members as an ongoing issue that needs to be resolved.

Currently employers are expected to arrange training for PA's. Some concern was noted that on occasions PA's have been reluctant to attend formal training such as moving and assisting. These types of training are often too general, support is required to personalise training to meet the needs of the PA employer. Peer support is essential to promote participation in training.

Members agreed that we need to achieve consistency in terms of resources and support available across Scotland. It was noted that HSCP's would like to be more consistent but that they would require further guidance. The Steering group will establish what training is currently available and consider what PA's and employers need.

Action: Steering Group to set out what training is currently available and consider what PAs and employers need.

Concluding comments

The Chairs thanked Matter of Focus and all members for attending, and for their contributions.

Following today's meeting we will need to understand why services are better in some areas and why there is variation across Scotland. This will help us to understand how we can facilitate improvement in areas where there are concerns.

Our next step will be to consult further with PA's. We will then collate all of the information we have collected to date, and through the Steering Group we will create a work plan and discuss the routes available to implement any recommendations.

The Steering Group will share the work plan with Programme Board members at the next meeting, and members will have the opportunity to input.

Action: SG secretariat to share the draft work plan

AOB

The next meeting of the Programme Board will take place on the 27 January 2022, at 10.30am. An agenda will be circulated in due course.

Please direct any feedback to don.morrison@gov.scot