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Personal Assistant Newsletter

March 2022

Editor's welcome

Donald Macleod, Chief Executive, SDSS

This is the first of a series of newsletters to let you know about some exciting work that is going on in relation to your roles as Personal Assistants. This work is being led by a Scottish Government board, the PA Programme Board, and is being co-chaired by me with Scottish Government and a wide range of partners involved in Self-Directed Support.

The newsletter will update on all the work being done to ensure PAs are fully recognised as members of the social care workforce. The newsletter will support PAs, encourage joint working and celebrate all that has been achieved. A web page has been set up where we will post all related news and documents: [PA Programme Board - Self Directed Support Scotland | Self Directed Support Scotland \(sdsscotland.org.uk\)](https://sdsscotland.org.uk)

Some of the recent news items you will see there include [a letter of thanks to PAs from the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care 29/3/22](#), our [Annual PA Survey 2022](#) (open to 30 April – please share widely), the [free photo ID card for PAs from the Personal Assistant Network Scotland](#) and the [PA handbook](#) which will be available here shortly.

The Programme Board meets every two months and has developed a work plan that a series of sub groups are taking forward. This newsletter is comprised of reports from the chairs of these groups and other stakeholders.

I hope you enjoy and find this newsletter useful. If you are a PA and would like to be involved in this work, please contact me on donald@sdsscotland.org.uk

Training for PAs

The first meeting of the training sub-group took place on 18th March. It was a useful orientation meeting where the participants reflected on the context of the sub-group activity and the relationship to the PA Programme Board. The action plan gives the training sub-group a clear focus for its work.

The engagement for this training sub-group work was recognised and agreed as a collaboration between the Scottish Government and the participants of the sub-group.

It was agreed PA employers were well represented on the group and additional PA representation would be beneficial. It was however recognised the group could not represent the diverse scope of the independent living movement, but participants committed to sharing the activity of the group through their own groups, connections, and networks to ensure the broadest and most inclusive approach possible to this work.

Throughout the discussion the unique nature of the PA and PA employer relationship was consistently highlighted, and the group committed to ensuring this was not compromised in any way because of the training sub-group activity.

In concluding it was agreed the group would meet in April, after the PA Programme Board had met to sign off the workplan on 31st March.

PA Survey

[The Annual PA Survey](#) will provide a confidential opportunity for PAs to tell us about the experiences and challenges faced in their roles. The survey is now open and is due to close on 30 April 2022.

PA Handbook

SDSS has developed [an online PA handbook](#) that will be launching shortly. Content including videos and case studies is being compiled in collaboration with a working group of PAs and the PA Network. The agreed approach is to use lived experience involving PAs, employers and funders.

While the guide will be published soon with essential content, it will be updated regularly and expanded by key experts, including review by an employment lawyer and to address feedback from users. When published, you will be able to access the PA handbook on the SDSS website (<https://www.sdsscotland.org.uk/resources/>). The handbook will support PAs in a similar way to the PA Employer Handbook (<https://paemployer.handbook.scot/>) which SDSS developed last year.

PA Recruitment

The recruitment subgroup has developed [a page on MyjobScotland](#) to provide a comprehensive overview of the role of PAs in Scotland and advice on how to find work with links to regional PA vacancy pages. Further links to advertisements can be added by contacting the chair, Donald Macleod (donald@sdsscotland.org.uk).

Personal Assistants Network Scotland (PANS)

PANS, the membership organisation for PAs is working with the Scottish Government for PA Network Scotland to explore ways that PAs can benefit from becoming a member. It is [free to join](#).

Local Peer Support Groups – We are looking to create many more local PA peer support groups over the next few years that will be supported by PA Network Scotland.

PA Learning – We offer free online training courses to PAs throughout Scotland via Social Care TV. There are twelve different social care courses on offer and these courses are accredited, certificated and recognised as continued personal development for all social care staff. Please contact palearning@wea.org.uk for full details of the courses on offer. Since launching our PA Learning offer in June 2020 almost 700 courses have been completed and certificates issued.

PA ID Badges – from Monday 28th March PA Network Scotland will offer ID badges to all registered PAs. Not having a recognisable form of ID has been an issue for a long time and the recent Covid pandemic served to highlight the problems that a lot of PAs faced by not having a similar form of ID to that of the wider social care workforce. PAs will be able to order their badge via our website www.panetworkscotland.org.uk and as a special offer the badges will be issued free of charge until further notice.

Peer support in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire

The Cornerstone SDS service is acutely aware of the difficulties in engaging and supporting personal assistants employed through the self-directed support structure. It is about to launch a 12-month pilot project across the two local authority areas of Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen city. The pilot will enable Cornerstone SDS to employ a dedicated PA support worker as a single point of contact for PA's in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City for confidential support, advice and as necessary signposting to other organisations. The pilot will work with PA's within local community clusters to establish and support the development of peer to peer support groups. It will provide a link between local community clusters of PA's and the PA Network Scotland.

Consistency within Direct Payments

Social Work Scotland (SWS) are working alongside local authorities and partnerships to improve the offer around direct payments for PA Employers to employ PAs and ensure consistency across Scotland. They are keen to learn where local systems are working well for PA Employers, PAs and support organisations, where bureaucracy is reduced and where Social Workers are confident in administering option 1 flexible and in a relationship-based way.

Other news - quick snapshot

- Example of a successful PA is promoted here: <https://learn.sssc.uk.com/careers/children-and-young-people/donna-murray/index.html>
- the Programme board co-chair Donald Macleod will attend the Stakeholder Engagement Group set up to support the implementation programme for the [Disclosure \(Scotland\) Act 2020](#) and will attend the Parent Oversight of the Social Care Wellbeing Sub Group.
- [Case studies of PAs from the Ayrshire Independent Living website](#) (ailn.org)
- What is adult social care and what is a personal assistant [Types of jobs in adult social care - Adult Social Care](#) (caretocare.scot)
- Moray HSCP have employed a PA Worker to assist with recruitment in rural communities and help connect PAs with Employers.
- Have a look at the Hub SDS Library <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/resources/self-directed-support-library/>
- the Induction Framework for Social Care workers <https://learn.sssc.uk.com/induction-framework/>