

Individual Employer Pay Scale Report: Survey & Interview Findings

February 2021



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Personal Assistants Pay Scale Research Project

What is a Personal Assistant?

A Personal Assistant is someone who is employed directly by a person who needs support. They can also be employed by a family member or representative when the person they are supporting does not have the capacity to be the employer. A Personal Assistant works directly with the individual they are supporting in a person-centred way, to enable them to live their life according to their wishes and interests (Skills for Care 2021).

What is an Individual Employer?

An Individual Employer is someone who needs care and support and who directly employs one or more Personal Assistant to meet their needs.

All pay scales are accurate for January 2021.

What we did

JuST Works Ltd were asked by Sheffield City Council to develop a pay scale to inform the decisions Individual Employers made about what they paid their Personal Assistants. JuST Works Ltd completed a research project to understand what individual employers were paying their Personal Assistants, what skills they needed to do their job and whether the skills & requirements of the role matched what they are paid. In addition, we looked at how these salaries compare to both care related and non-care related roles. The results from this research were informed by desk top analysis of jobs available across the country, individual interviews (21) and an online survey for Individual Employers (116) and for Personal Assistants (13).

Key Findings

Personal Assistants are critical to health, care and prevention outcomes.

- Personal Assistants are critically important to their individual employers.
- Individuals' outcomes are improved.
- Personal Assistants support health improvement, health maintenance and prevention approaches.

Pay and reward

- Pay rates across the Personal Assistant market are inconsistent.
- Personal Assistant roles are seen as part of the low pay/low skill economy.
- Personal Assistant rates have fallen behind similar roles in the care sector.
- The pay gap with other sectors is increasing, e.g., retail.
- Some jobs requiring less skill and responsibility are better paid. e.g., delivery drivers, supermarket staff.
- There is inconsistency in pay rates within local authorities with some roles requiring lower skill levels being paid at a higher rate than personal assistants e.g., school crossing staff, cleaners (£10.00ph).
- Keyworker rates of pay are lower than non-keyworker rates of pay.
- 70% of respondents stated that the local authority imposed the rates of pay for Personal Assistants.

- There is little guidance to support Individual Employers in making decisions about what to pay their staff. What they pay is often not based on skills, responsibilities or knowledge required.

Skills, roles and responsibilities

- Many Personal Assistants find themselves working in highly skilled and complex roles whilst being paid £8.72ph. (January 2021).
- Many Personal Assistants use their initiative on a daily basis and make decisions that have significant consequences. These can be life or death, safety of the general public or related to the wellbeing of their employer.
- Personal Assistants use complex skills to help the individual employer to make decisions, when they need support.
- Personal Assistants use a wide range of skills at a high level, including delegated health tasks and complex communication
- Personal Assistants are required to use high levels of initiative and autonomy when supporting their Individual Employer.

Working environment

- Some Personal Assistants work with people with highly complex needs often in complex environments e.g., work settings, meetings, lone working, people opting not to communicate intentionally.
- Support structures around Personal Assistants are limited and typically linked directly to their employer.

Workforce Data

There are an estimated 230,000 people receiving a direct payment in England, within this, 70,000 people employ their own staff. Each individual employer employs on average 1.85 Personal Assistants, creating approximately 130,000 jobs. Turnover rate amongst Personal Assistants is 18.2% compared to 38.1% for care workers, with family/friend Personal Assistants even less likely to leave their role (14.3%). The average vacancy rate for Personal Assistants is 8.3%, which is the same as other care workers. Skills for Care data shows;



Around 20% of Personal Assistants are on zero hours contracts, average experience is 4.3 years compared to 3.1 in the care worker role and 8.6 years in the sector compared to 6.5yrs. Personal Assistants also take less sick leave, 1.9 days compared to 4.8 (2021) for care workers and 8.8 days for local authority staff (2017/18) (Skills for Care 2021).

As can be seen the Personal Assistant workforce has many positives, making this group a key opportunity for local authorities to improve the quality of support available to people.

This would require commissioners and others to have a clearer focus on this group and the support required in the employer role as well as developing appropriate pay rates.

Personal Assistants are critical to prevention & wellbeing.

"I employ two PA's. It's not so much the kind of tasks they can do, but more the way in which they do the tasks, i.e., they are experts in personalisation, in not taking over my life, in leaving me in control, in not doing things in the way that they want to do them (or in the way they think they should be done) regardless of what I want. They are also experts in anticipating my needs, my moods, and when my physical and mental health is likely to deteriorate. They are tactful and diplomatic when they need to be, especially when I am stubbornly trying to do something that I really shouldn't be doing (i.e., because it will exhaust me). They are incredibly compassionate and loyal. They fit in really well with other family members in my household, but they never forget what their primary purpose is. Also, I can rely on them to keep details of my personal life confidential. These Personal Assistants are honest, reliable, hardworking and conscientious. They will always go the extra mile. I feel that they work with me, rather than for me. In addition to keeping me clean and tidy and well fed they also keep my home clean and tidy and organised so that I can still do a lot of tasks independently. They enable me to enjoy a wide range of hobbies and activities both at home and away from home. They also enable me to have as much social interaction with family and friends as I want to have, and their support enables me to carry on doing some voluntary work as this is really important to me. In short, they give me a life that is so much better than just being washed, fed and put to bed every day. It feels embarrassing, frustrating and ridiculous that I am only allowed to pay them the minimum wage, and not even the Living Wage that is about £1 an hour higher, and I even have to fight and nag to get the LA to pay any increases that are due each April. My PA's have never earned enough to be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay, or to be able to contribute or be included in any Pension Scheme. They have no job security, and minimal career progression. They have nobody to turn to if they find themselves employed by someone who treats them unfairly, even if it is unintentional. If I have to go into Hospital for a month, or if I die, their income will immediately stop, and they will be out of work. They would not object to paying National Insurance or Income Tax if it gave them the safety net of at least being able to claim Statutory Sick Pay. They are not eligible for any of the newer Benefits and Grants associated with Covid. They are an invisible workforce, given no credit at all (other than by an Individual Employer) for the work they do, and not even paid any more than a totally inexperienced 25-year-old new to the job. This is not the way to treat really good employees. It isn't even the way to treat a decent human being."

All Individual Employers were clear about the importance of their Personal Assistants in supporting them to live their life well. They described the need to feel comfortable with the people supporting them, their role in speaking out for them and keeping them from harm. They acknowledged how highly skilled their Personal Assistants were, how easy and unobtrusive they often made the support they provided look, and the challenging situations they often work in.

"The relationship they have with me is critical, I have to have a rapport with them, and they need to be a suitable character. That is more important, they can learn about mental health etc, they can't learn to be the right fit."

"I have to trust the person and they have to fit. They speak for me and I have to be comfortable that they can represent me in all aspects of my life."

"They have to know what I would do in all situations and how I am feeling and then act on that."

“I wasn’t aware how personal having someone living and sleeping in my house would be, I need to be comfortable with the person that is doing that, my first team didn’t work, I have learnt that I need to ask myself would I have this person as a house mate.”

“My PA’s support me in a way that makes me feel in control, they do not make me feel like they are going out of their way for me but just naturally fit into my life and support me discretely.”

These statements indicate the critical importance of the right relationship with the person providing support, a situation that is rarely addressed in other parts of the care and health economy. Individual Employers also described how critical to their survival and quality of life their Personal Assistants were.

“They keep me alive.”

“They keep me safe when I can’t keep myself safe.”

Many Individual Employers talked about their improved quality of life, how their Personal Assistants supported their health and wellbeing and how they would be less independent without their support. For people with a learning disability the importance of developing the person and including them within their local communities was recognised. Personal Assistants were seen to readily support this approach, their contribution to safeguarding was also noted, with many people being kept safe both in their home environment and out in the community. Effectively Personal Assistants were seen as supporting health improvement, health maintenance and prevention approaches. A useful outcome from both the persons perspective but also the local authority and the NHS.

“They have made such a difference to my quality of life; I would not be as well as this without them.”

“They are a crucial part of ensuring my independence.”

Pay and Reward

Despite the contribution that Personal Assistants make in ensuring that their employer is both safe, able to maintain their independence and prevent or delay deterioration, pay and reward for this group of workers is typically minimum wage. Other issues include:

- Inconsistent pay rates across the Personal Assistant market,
- The perception this workforce is part of the low skill/low pay economy,
- Reducing differences between care worker salaries and other parts of the economy e.g., retail,
- The lack of control Individual Employers have over the salary they pay their employees.

Inconsistency in Personal Assistant pay rates

It is clear in the current environment that there is little or no consistency between the pay rates for Personal Assistants in different sectors, or within organisations. Nor are these rates of pay consistently linked to the Personal Assistants roles and responsibilities. The Individual Employer survey responses indicate an hourly pay range of £8.10 - £18.92 for daytime support, the higher rate was a significant outlier. Data regarding rates of pay fell within the following parameters;

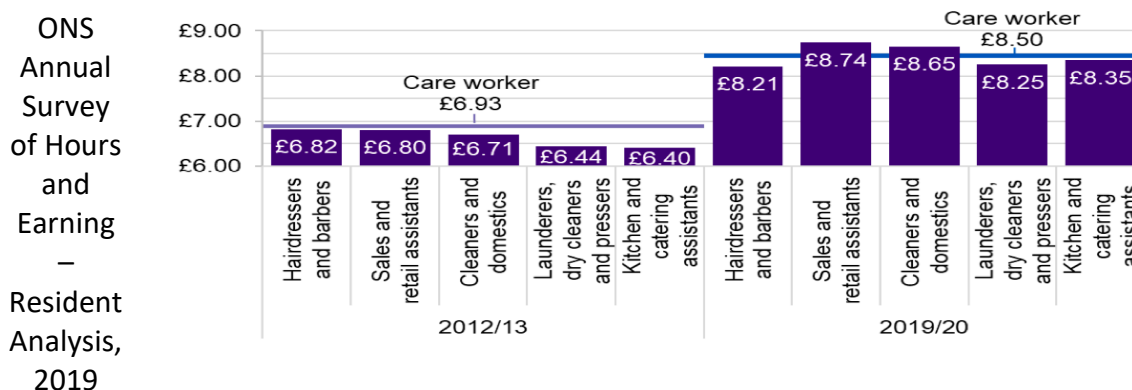
Time frame	Minimum rate of pay (ph.)	Maximum rate recorded (ph.)	Flat rates
Day time	£8.10	£13.00	
Evening	£8.20	£13.00	
Weekend	£8.10	£12.85	
Bank Holiday	£8.21	£22.00	
Sleeping night	£8.21	£12.85	£50, £70.57, £87.20
Waking night	£8.72	£12.50	£150, £188.64

Personal Assistant roles as part of the low pay economy

Personal Assistants are often seen as requiring little skill to undertake their role and are therefore equated with the low skill/low pay economy. Not only is this a misrepresentation of the skills required but is part of the dynamic that allows this group of people to continue to be underpaid for the crucial role they play in keeping key groups of people safe and supporting their ongoing independence and wellbeing.

Pay differences

Pay differences between social care and other low paying occupations have been decreasing. Historically, care worker median hourly pay was higher than other selected job roles. By 2019/20, this gap had narrowed. For example, sales and retail assistants earned 13 pence per hour less than care workers in 2012/13 but in 2019/20, they earned 24 pence per hour more on average than care workers. This equates to an 8% decrease in care worker salaries.



This gap between key and non-key employees has been growing over time. When taking into account the differences in the characteristics of key and non-key employees, the average wage for key workers is 9% lower than for similar non-key employees (2020 data). This is an increase in the difference in 2010 which was 5%. Currently, the bigger difference is

between key workers in the different parts of the public sector. Key workers in:

- Transport; earn close to the key worker average wage,
- Education; earn close to the average wage across non-key workers,
- Health; earn £14.67 per hour on average, 13% more than the average employee,
- Social care; are paid significantly less than the average employee at £9.13 an hour (<https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14818>).

An analysis of national social care job adverts (January 2021) re-affirmed this pay gap, demonstrates the inconsistency and lack of connectivity with Personal Assistant roles and responsibilities. This can be seen in the table below:

Area	Pay rates	Job Roles
1	£10.00 - £15.00	£10.00, 3 x30 min calls at weekends. £11.00, for meal preparation £11.00, sitting/dog walking support for older gentleman as a respite option. £13.00 personal care,1hr per day x 5. (Self Employed rate) £15.00, personal care and meal prep. Covid-19 positive person isolating at home.
2	£8.72- £15.00	£8.72, support young boy accessing activities, personal care, PECS communication £11.74, young lady, blind, autism, learning disability and septo-optic dysplasia. Behaviour can be challenging as she has no intentional verbal communication, uses limited sign language. £15.00 Support man with Autism and profound deafness who is very active and can be at risk due to his disabilities. Level 2 BSL and PECS communication required.
3	£9.00- £15.00	£9.00, personal care, mobility, activities, meal preparation, domestic duties, social support, medication administration, needs support for volunteering. £10.00, cooking and meal preparation, household chores, support with appointments, shopping, community activities. £13.00, person with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, learning difficulties, complex epilepsy which has affected the speed he can process information (£15.00 night rate).
4	£8.97 - £19.80	£8.97, disabled lady with a muscular condition and a young family. Support with daily household activities, meal preparation, driving support (social activities, school run) £10.50, man with mild learning disability, glaucoma, physical disability that affects his speech. Support with domestic duties, encourage personal care, support in the community and for social and leisure activities. £15.00, (rising to £19.80 after completion of probationary period). 19yr old female. Personal care at home and within educational setting, complex continence care, transport to and from school etc.

The difference between sectors was further highlighted through the analysis of National Care Jobs that do not require qualifications and those that require level 2/3 qualifications.

Jobs not requiring any qualifications

Role	Remuneration	Hourly rate
Teaching Assistant	£14,650 - £16,080.	£7.51- £8.24
Learning and Support Assistant	£17,610 – £23,872	£9.03 - £12.24
Community payback placement co-ordinator	£22,924 – £28,200.	£11.75 - £14.46
Cleaners	£20,163 @ £10.34ph.	£8.00 - £15.00
Activity coordinators	£16,087 – £21,450	£8.25- £11.00
Prison Operational Support Grade	£24,662	£12.64

Prison Officer	£23,529 (39-hour week)	£11.60
Lidl Customer Assistant	£18,135 - £22,815.	£9.30 - £11.70
Lidl Shift Manager	£20,085 - £24,765	£10.30 - £12.70
Asda Petrol Assistant	£17,901	£9.18
Aldi Store Assistant	£18,330	£9.40
Lunch time supervisor		£10.34
School Caretaker	£16,500 - £19,500/annum	£8.46 - £10.00
Telephone Fundraiser	£23,000 - £27,000 £17,550 – 19,500	£11.79 - £13.84 £9.00 - £10.00
Sainsburys home delivery driver	£19,597	£10.05
Track and Trace Call Handler	£26,793	£13.74
Environmental Support Officer	£26,793	£13.74
School Crossing Patrol Warden	£18,562 - £18,933 pro rata	£9.51-£9.70

Calculated from Annual Salary/hourly rate based on 37.5hr week

Job roles requiring level 2/3 qualifications

Role	Remuneration	Hourly rate
Youth Support Worker (L2)	£23,250-£37,500 (National Careers Service)	£11.92 - £18.98
Work Placement Coordinator (L3)	£22,000 -£24,000 (Glassdoor)	£11.28 - £12.30
Executive PA (L3)	£21,892- £24,157	£11.22 – £12.38
Probation Services Officer (L3)	£22,039 - £27,373	£11.30 - £14.03
MOT Tester (L3)	£25,350 - £27,300	£13.00 -£14.00
Labourer (L2)	£21,450 - £23,400	£11.00 - £12.00
Health and Safety Advisor (L3)	£27,300 - £33,415	£14.00-£18.00

Calculated from Annual Salary/hourly rate based on 37.5hr week

This table reference entry level requirements beyond Level 2 Maths and English not qualifications expected during the role.

Funding organisations influence

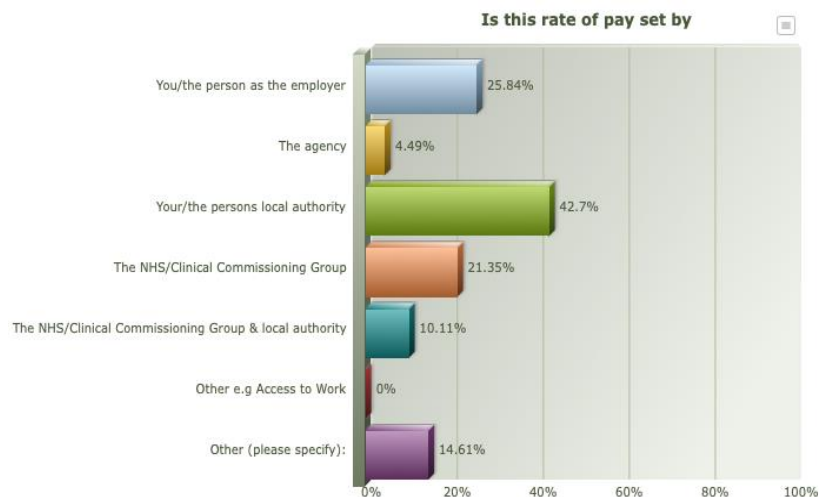
Some local authorities prescribe the rates that individual employers can pay their staff. Some authorities make this information publicly available on the internet, others provide this through the direct payment support team and social work staff. In this situation rates of pay form part of the unwritten rules of the organisation which are then passed on to those people who have a direct payment. Some examples of payment rates are provided in the table below:

Local Authority	Basic rate paid by LA	PA rate of pay	PA complex rate paid by LA	PA rate of pay	Sleep in rate	Agency rate
1	£10.70	£8.72	£12.00	£9.72	£8.28 (£66.24 max)	£16.46
2	£12.68				Night rate case by case basis	£15.41
3	£11.36	£9.30			£8.02 (max £72.21)	£18.54 (Home Care) £18.01 (Supported)

						Lifestyles Agency)
4	£12.00	£9.25				£15.60
5	Informed by payroll rates	£9.72	Agreed by Social Worker			£16,86

(Date Jan 2021)

The majority (70%) of Individual Employers stated that their Personal Assistant pay rates were determined by the funding organisation as can be seen below:



“£9.00ph, no choice I was told the hours I had and the amount of money I could pay my PA’s.”

“Was £10ph, we put it up in April to £10.50. We were told it is not up to us to put the PA’s wages up.”

“I pay £10.00 per hour. I want to pay a decent wage to keep people. The local authority didn’t know what I paid at first, when they did (after a review) they said I shouldn’t be paying that much.”

“I am paying £9.00 the local authority won’t pay any more, we had to fight to get that.”

“I pay them £8.72ph, the council won’t let you pay any more.”

“£9.30ph, health won’t pay anymore so means there is no point paying more from local authority, it would make it too complicated.”

Some Individual Employers found the amount they were able to pay their employees challenging in relation to the skills, roles and responsibilities of their Personal Assistants. One person had spent years wanting to increase their Personal Assistants pay rate but believed they were not able to. They then heard someone was paying a different rate and rang the local authority to check, to be told yes, she could pay more than she was paying. This left the Individual Employer feeling she had treated her employee badly. At the time the local authority paid staff working for them the ‘Real’ Living Wage, so the Individual Employer increased their staff wages to a similar rate. At a subsequent review this was

challenged as it was seen as more than the local authority were prepared to pay Personal Assistants, despite it not being more than the 'Real' Living Wage (defined as £9.50 ph. UK, £10.85ph. London: Jan 2021). This situation was referred to a manager who said the wages needed to be reduced to the level agreed by the local authority. The Individual Employer challenged this successfully but was told to maintain the same level of pay until such a time as the local authority rate caught up with it. Other Individual Employers described similar situations, despite being the employer, with all the responsibilities of that role.

"I requested from the council what I wanted to pay the PAs, but can only do so, if their approval is granted, during 2020 the local authority did not approve any uplift to the PAs, during 2020 they did not get a pay rise."

"We can only pay minimum wage as the local authority, 6 years on, still have not upped the rate to make it more appealing."

Despite this, it is apparent some people do pay more than the national minimum wage, leaving other Individual Employers confused. Individual Employers gave a number of reasons for paying more, these included:

"The skills required are those personal and professional skills I see in Band 6+ nurses who care for the employer. They would be paid £35k pa although I recognise the NHS wouldn't pay this much to a PA it is the calibre of PA needed."

"She uses her own car, and home to support my child and her work always involves weekend or evening time. She is intelligent and very capable. I worry every day that she might leave for a much higher paid job."

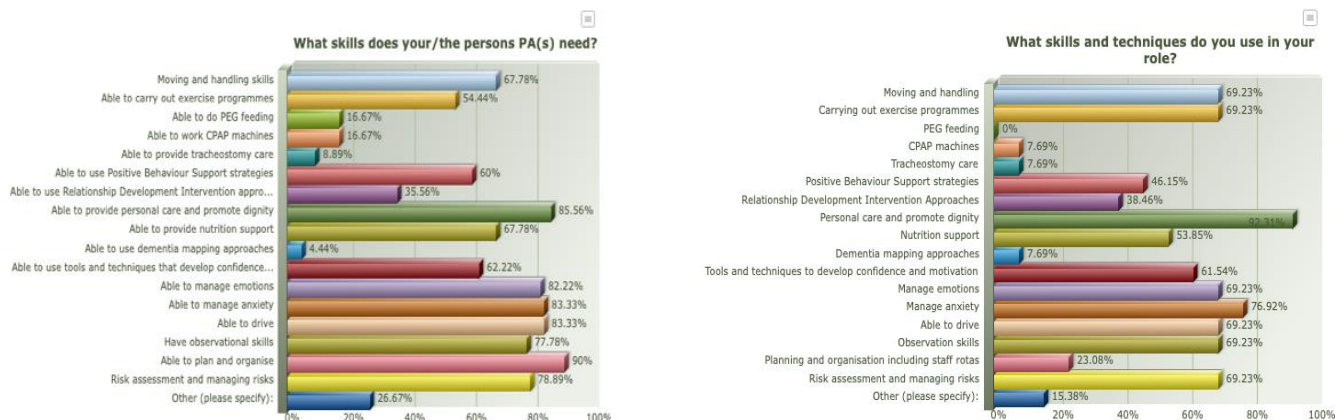
"We pay more because there is no progression in this work or ability to extend income without doing more hours."

"Agency rate is £18, the council pay this, I don't understand why this amount can't be allocated to employed or self-employed PA's as it's the same money. My experience of agency is a lower standard of care, different carers each day so consistency of care plus speaking to around 3 people in the office. With regular carers they get to know a person's needs and can naturally speed up if of the right calibre once they know the routine. Disabled people needing care don't have the energy for training every day and speaking to multiple people in an office. We would better benefit from this rate being paid to good quality high calibre personal care assistants who can meet their needs rather than the extra cost being absorbed by agency and managers salaries and the actual carers being paid less."

Skills, Roles and Responsibilities

The complexity of care delivery is poorly understood by the public. Any depiction of care work usually focuses on the more tangible aspects of skill, such as certified knowledge, training and accredited qualifications, this misses the interpersonal features and decision-making responsibilities of the job that are essential to good care. The challenges of decision-making are most evident with Personal Assistants, where they often work alone and have to negotiate with the person how support is delivered, including both routine and ad hoc tasks. In addition, they are sometimes expected to negotiate and manage boundaries between their roles & responsibilities and the persons/family expectations (Rubery & Urwin 2010).

Personal Assistants and Individual Employers identified the range of skills required in the role as can be seen in the tables below:



Other skills identified by survey respondents include:

“Sensory processing, Autism, Diabetes, Managing self-injurious behaviour. Able to record. Advocacy IT specialists!! Ability to stay calm in stressful situations.”

“PEG drainage care (not for feeding). Palliative and end of life care knowledge. Monitoring and observations Nebulisers Chest physiotherapy and lung volume recruitment. Stoma care.”

“Ability and understanding to support her effectively with creative projects (filmmaking, animation, art, crafts), both helping her to plan projects and hand over hand support with some activities.”

“Able to administer meds via NG. Able to administer nebuliser via tracheostomy. Able to use respiratory equipment (Cough Assist, Chest Vest). Able to provide respiratory support with Ambu Bag in event of respiratory emergency or seizure.”

“To manage and develop electronic speech aid and use key word signing. Manage the staff team, paperwork and prepare rotas (team leader). Support use of IT. To advocate on his behalf”.

“Advanced life support skills- resuscitation. Trained to give medicines including buccal midazolam. Understanding of epilepsy and seizures. Uses suction, nebulisers, does chest physio, gives oxygen.”

“Be adaptable to change in any circumstances. Be aware of my mental and physical being as both can and do decline rapidly. Be motivated as often working on their own. Be aware of the family dynamics. Be discreet and aware of confidentiality for the client and their family.”

The application and the context in which these skills were applied was seen as critical. There were many examples of Personal Assistants supporting people to undertake complex tasks whilst making them appear simple, which in reality requires a high level of skill. Individual Employers also identified the need for highly detailed and accurate levels of assessment, observation, analysis and problem-solving skills to underpin effective decision making. These skills are fundamental to ensuring the person being supported are safe and, in some contexts, the public also remain safe.

One young man was described as being vulnerable both at home and in his community. His Personal Assistants needed to be able to assess his mood and situations as well as his

proximity to triggers that could escalate his behaviour. A lack of focus could result in risks both to him and the public. The team supporting him had to know when to engage, withdraw or be quiet and when to remove arousing stimuli. They need to be able to assess when to begin any interactions to illicit the best response, as well as the timing for introducing any additional environmental stimuli. Ensuring they are able to deliver the right intervention depends on them understanding responses as miniscule as the movement of his eyebrows or the angle he is holding his head. Further examples included:

‘For those with extreme challenging behaviour to have some quality of life supporting them out in the community, constantly facilitating, negotiating, explaining, shielding, enabling, stretching, empowering, reigning in, putting in and managing boundaries between the public and the person is EXTREMELY SKILLED work.’

“My PA’s might need to cook my meals, it’s not that I don’t know how to cook, its whether that fits with everything else that is happening around me and how I am coping with this. My PA’s need to know whether asking me to cook is a good idea, if the timing is wrong, I may get very distressed and leave the house. I may also try and avoid cooking when I am well enough to do this and there is no reason not to do it. My PA’s need to work all this out and make the right decision each day, if they get it wrong and push at the wrong time it can become dangerous as I get overly distressed and may then put myself in physical danger.”

“Every day my mum’s PA’s come into situation where they have no idea of how mum will be and what will face them. Mum’s dementia means she can be very different between visits never mind day by day. It is important they can understand these different situations and don’t just go through the motions. They need to understand each different situation, assess it as it happens and respond appropriately and in a way that doesn’t make the situation worse.”

The graph below clearly demonstrates the need for Personal Assistants to use their initiative. Individual Employers identified that half of their Personal Assistants use their initiative most of the time, with the other half using it occasionally. 55% of Personal Assistants also find themselves regularly dealing with unusual situations. As Personal Assistants often work alone this means when something unusual happens, or other circumstances arise, the only person often able to assess the situation and make decisions are themselves.

“The weight that if we make a wrong choice in our role then this could impact the person like no other, they could be taken out of society and away from their family if for instance something occurred that put the general public in danger”

The ability to completely understand what he is trying to say when verbal communication is limited. The risk of the unpredictability of his behaviour and the ability for the danger levels to accelerate as quickly as they can”.

When analysing the impact of knowledge and skills on salary, knowledge of relevant health conditions was seen as the most significant area followed by physical wellbeing and equality & diversity. Searching for information (5.9%) and moving & handling (6.3%) were rated lowest. When exploring the knowledge and skills required by Personal Assistants against proposed pay rates only 1% of Individual Employers felt £8.72 - £8.99 was an appropriate

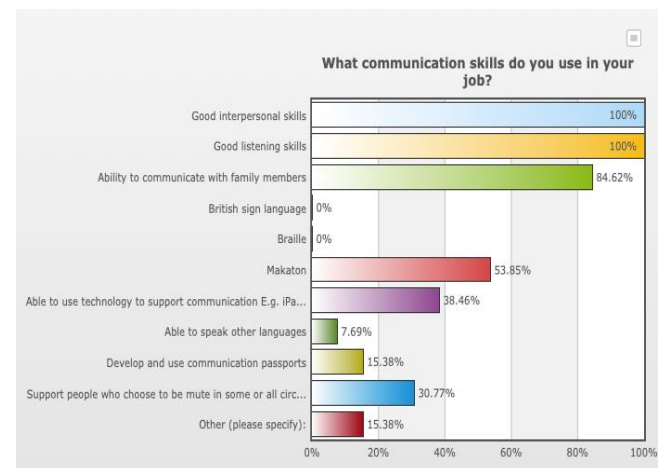
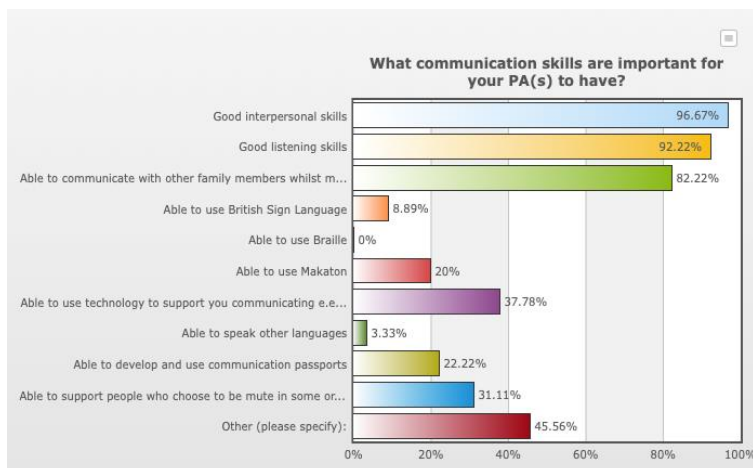
pay scale. All Personal Assistants felt they should not be paid less than £9.00ph. 19% of Individual Employers felt the skills used by their Personal Assistants warranted £12.00 - £12.99 as the rate of pay. 14% specified £10.00 - £10.99 and a similar number 13.7% stated £15.00 - £15.99.

Communication skills

Communications was seen as an important skill for Personal Assistants. Respondents identified varying and wide-ranging skill sets such as good communication and listening skills through to being able to use complex communication tools, techniques and approaches, e.g., augmented communication, British Sign Language, letter boards.

One person who relied completely on a letter board to communicate felt it was easy for people to learn how to use it, though not necessarily emotionally easy to use. Their Personal Assistants agreed that understanding the responses to closed questions was easy, but to master understanding of full sentences had taken a much longer period of time. After 4 ½ years they said on occasions it was still difficult to understand what their employer was saying. Another respondent who had a daughter with autism and a learning disability described how complex it was to understand her communication, as the same response can mean different things dependent on how she feels and the mood she is in.

The surveys further demonstrated the need for Personal Assistants to use highly complex communication skills. Interviewees talked about the wide range of skills and characteristics required by their Personal Assistants. Individual Employers and Personal Assistants identified the following communication skills as necessary:



Respondents also stated:

"I struggle to get PAs, social workers and doctors to meet my communications needs. I have one good PA who understands me and can communicate for me, yet my social worker doesn't understand."

"Being able to use visual/symbol support, understanding my daughter's communication and her behaviours, interpreting this effectively and communicating back to her. Helping her communicate her feelings without hurting herself, low arousal communications, simple clear, knowing what trigger words to avoid. Empowering my daughter to speak for herself without talking for her."

“Able to advocate for me when I can’t voice my own view due to illness.”

“De-escalation for behaviour that challenges. Able to communicate well with the public in challenging situations.”

“Able to work with indistinct speech and use strategies to overcome this, such as keyboard, NATO alphabet, manual alphabet, etc. Able to support person with indistinct speech in a social or study setting, in a positive way.”

“I get very stressed and anxious, and my PA stays calm in those situations. She remains unfazed about other people around us who may start side glancing if I’m panicking, she concentrates on me.”

“My sister communicates by eye pointing, smiling and, occasionally she will point but not always at the item she wants. Our PA’s have to observe her closely and interpret her needs - they offer simple choices like 'do you want chicken or fish for dinner' by holding up the Wiltshire Farm Foods meals and watching how my sister responds to each - if she smiles or looks longer at the fish dish (for example) they will ask her if she wants fish and if she smiles, they will know she wants fish for tea.”

“Ability to communicate with other PAs despite not physically working together at the same time.”

“Able to use my computer to write emails, letters, reports, etc that I will dictate when I am increasingly unable to use my keyboard (because of a degenerative condition). Able to compose and produce an email or letter when I have just verbally given them the gist of what I want to say. Able to find any information that I might need, E.g., books and Reports on specific topics, downloadable resources, etc”

The analysis of communication skills in the context of pay scales was similar to the picture in knowledge and skills. 21.7% stated £12.00 - £12.99, 14.1% indicated £10.00 - £10.99, 13.3% suggested £18.00 or over and 12.3% preferred £15.00 - £15.99. This indicated the importance of communication skills, particularly those that require more advanced skills such as BSL. Again, none of the Personal Assistants felt they should be paid less than £9.00ph.

Additional roles

Some Personal Assistants also had financial responsibilities, supporting the person to use money or manage their money was not unusual. For some financial roles included paying staff wages. Managing staff was a role that was also required, with more Individual Employers reporting this as a function they needed.



Financial and staff management responsibilities command a higher rate of pay in most job roles, particularly public services. Within the Personal Assistant market there is no evidence that this is the case though some people described paying their staff more for taking on these responsibilities. This was inevitably after extensive discussions and providing significant evidence to the funding organisation to justify such payments.

Individual Employers felt that staff managing a team of Personal Assistants and carrying out managerial roles such as managing & supervising other staff, organising & co-ordinating rotas, organising training & development, managing staffing emergencies, writing policies & procedures, organising & running team meetings and attending other meetings should be paid £18.00ph. or over. Though some respondents felt anything between 10.00-13.99 was also acceptable.

Personal Assistants with financial responsibilities the most popular pay rates identified by Individual Employers was £12.00 - £12.99. Within this, Personal Assistants were responsible for managing all the persons money, assisting with household finances, paying for shopping and for activities. For those respondents whose Personal Assistant was responsible for paying wages they identified a pay rates of £16.00- £16.99. For those who had both management and financial roles the salary recommended by Individual Employers was over £18.00.

Working environment and conditions

A large number of respondents commented on the impact of the different working conditions Personal Assistant operate in. This results in a range of issues, challenges and complexities which are outlined below:

"I am putting a lot of trust in the people that are coming into my home, especially when I am not there. I need them to be 100 % trustworthy."

"Our PA's need to understand they are working in our home and work with that in mind. They need to be able to take on board what is required and what this means, whatever is happening in the home takes priority."

"My PA's support me in a way that makes me feel in control, they do not make me feel like they are going out of their way for me but just naturally fit into my life and support me discretely."

In addition to the level of skill required to undertake many Personal Assistant roles, they also often work a highly varied shift pattern that can include unsociable and, in some instances, unpredictable hours. Examples include split shifts or long shifts approximately 12-15hours long or live-in rotations.

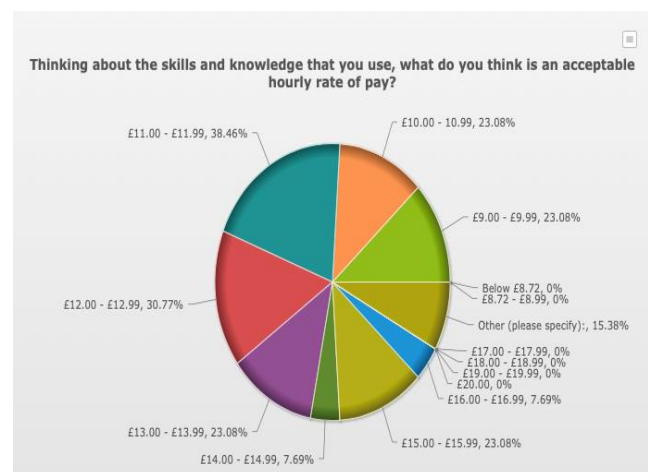
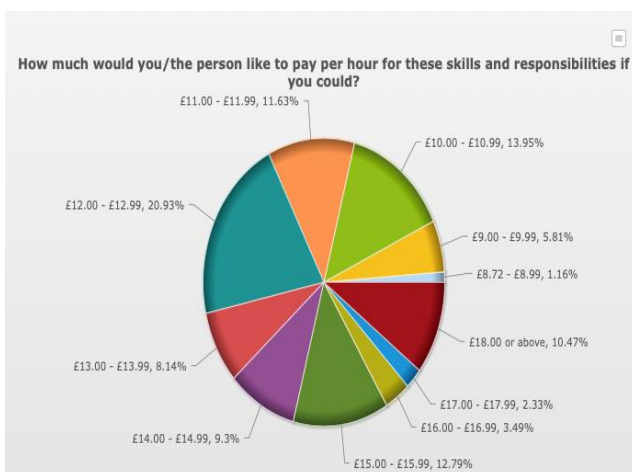
"PA's work anything from a couple of hours during the day to a whole weekend. Generally, shifts involve arriving at 6pm and doing a sleeping night and leaving at 8am but I do sometimes have day shifts as well. It is really useful that my funding wasn't specified for particular shifts/days/nights and we can be flexible with how I use my hours."

"My PA's live in for 2 weeks. They are paid £9.00ph 24 hours a day for every hour they are at work. They come out with a good wage despite being on £9.00 ph. but only because they are doing so many hours."

“The PA’s make 4 visits per day which they get paid for but because they only look after one service user, they have to go home in between but don’t get paid for travelling time, so are literally on call for 10hrs per day but get paid for 4 ½ hours. Personally, I don’t see this as being a fair wage.”

What people want to pay

90% of Individual Employers stated that they wished to pay their Personal Assistants more, they were also skilled at identifying pay rates that reflected the roles and skills that their Personal Assistants used to meet their needs. Personal Assistants also felt their skills should be valued and that they should be paid in accordance with these. Neither of these groups appear to over inflate the salary scales they felt were appropriate. When asked how much more Personal Assistants should be paid, the responses were varied. The proposed rates can be seen below.



The following were the reasons provided for wanting to pay more:

“They resuscitate my son using a bag and mask. I believe that means they deserve more. They manage other medical needs too – epilepsy, medication, tube feeding etc. I don’t believe that they should be paid the same rate as a PA who takes a cognitively able, physically able teenager to the cinema. My sons PA’s have nursing skills and should be paid appropriately.”

“Need a wide range of skills to support an employer with complex needs: Autism, hence need a high level of communication skills and specialised ability to support in social interactions and create a calm environment. Supporting to reduce emotional regulation difficulties (with risks of self-harm and suicidal thoughts). Providing connection for daily nutrition which needs to be done to a very high standard. Physical health problems that occasionally result in emergency hospital admissions within 30 mins of symptoms- interfacing with a large range of services.”

“Sometimes they can have some very stressful tasks to complete (such as when I go missing in the middle of the night and they have to contact the police) – this is all done as a lone worker and can be very isolating and stressful.”

“Our PA’s work 1-2-1 with a severely mentally and physically disabled person who also suffers from uncontrolled epilepsy. The PA’s are responsible for every aspect of her life – personal care, medication, feeding, transfers, driving adapted vehicle, keeping her active and entertained, monitoring and reporting daily on health and wellbeing (MAR charts, bowel movements, food and fluid intake, seizure records, body plans, physio and sleep

system etc), general housekeeping, accompanying to medical appointments, neurologists etc. She is physically and mentally incapable of doing anything for herself and is totally reliant on her PA's for every aspect of her life – that's an horrendous amount of responsibility for a PA lone working."

"Her two PA's are qualified art therapists, who support my daughter with a lot of creative work (art, animation, craft activities), both conceptually and hand over hand. Both have learned a reasonable amount of BSL to communicate better with her, she is profoundly deaf. They have learned to support her to use her electronic communication aid. Feeding and personal care are complex, she is quadriplegic and experiences a lot of spasm and some choking and reflux. We have trained them to feed her safely, to hoist, dress etc. Her combination of disabilities and needs makes her care complex. They have also learned to understand her frame of reference and her largely unintelligible speaking voice. This work requires a lot of skill and fantastic personal qualities.

For all this they are paid roughly the same as a check out operator or shelf stacker and less than I pay the cleaner (who is funded through a carer's support payment from the LA – they accept that cleaners cost more!)."

"I'd like to pay more as they are awake nights, and it can be hard to recruit. They also have to get involved with emptying and changing my stomas, doing nebulisers, doing my lung volume recruitment to help with coughing. I also know my needs will increase and once we come out of lockdown my PA's along with my nurses will be getting bespoke palliative and end of life care training and they'll need to learn more tasks over time, including very likely non-invasive ventilation. They are always being up skilled to meet my progressive condition. It is also a great responsibility for them meeting my needs. They have to have good understanding of my needs and conditions in order to support the nurses and to be here without a nurse overnight."

"They do delegated healthcare tasks – bowel management, bladder washes and management of autonomic dysreflexia. £9.00 ph. is the rate set by my CCG for PA's doing health care tasks!"

"Our staff are highly skilled in tracheostomy, ventilator, ileostomy, gastrostomy, also chest physio, when you look around carers can get jobs supporting maybe an adult who has had a stroke, helping them with personal care and cooking, I have seen some get £11 or more then I look at all that ours do and think – no wonder staff leave."

"My PA provides the following: **Personal Development**; coaching on taking personal responsibility and dealing with issues myself, coping learning to deal with loneliness and the suicide of a close family member, encouraging taking on new challenges, pushing boundaries, expanding my comfort zone, stretching myself. **Comforting**: providing a shoulder to lean on when things get too much, listening when I get overly anxious. **Medical**: accompanying me to medical appointments, dentist, A&E. **Guidance**: explaining things I don't properly understand. **Temper**: teaching me coping mechanisms to deal with situations that cause me to overreact. **Physical Wellbeing**: advice on diet and supporting me in sporting activities such as swimming and hiking. **Travel**: accompanying me on public transport to increase my comfort zone and improve my quality of life, including trips to the seaside and countryside. **Finances**: Teaching me the principles of budgeting and savings and helping me get the best prices. Reviewing bank statements and general cashflow. **Correspondence**: writing letters on my behalf, reading letters to me, applying for disability passes, SCC & DWP correspondence. **Phone**: Acts as my representative when I need to speak, due to my speech problems. **House**: helping me get the best price for utilities and insurance, measuring up for jobs e.g., painting and decorating, curtains, blinds, furniture. Support when contractors visit for quotes. **DIY**: assisting me with jobs on and around the house to build confidence and save money on hiring in help. **Cooking**: teaching me to prepare a range of food to improve my diet. **Personal**: shopping for clothes and personal items, getting the best price and quality. **Internet**: researching best prices, shopping on-line (I don't have internet access)."

"Qualified teacher, Post Grad in Autism PBS Functional Assessment, trained keyworker, trained independent supporter for EHCP's trained qualified counsellor. Me and my and family have needed all these skills at points."

One Personal Assistant echoed these sentiments by stating:

"I'm not being greedy but there is an expectation that because it is social care related and so many social care roles are minimum wage that you should be grateful for anything above £10.00ph. As a graduate I have had various professional roles over the years and have been lucky enough to acquire many professional skills throughout my career. I use most of these skills in my PA work. I have much professional autonomy and responsibility in this role and continuously risk assess, prepare, plan and document what I do. In terms of levels of responsibility, it equates to job roles I have done previously where I was paid upwards of £16.00 - £18.00 in employed roles which include sick pay, holiday pay and pension/redundancy. I work really hard, never have a break on my shifts other than the toilet. I have kept going throughout lockdown as if I don't work, I don't get paid. I am very lucky that I am able to do daytime shifts but compared to lots of other jobs I have done I feel that I really earn my money and feel short-changed because I do many extra hours unpaid and don't feel I can invoice for what I have actually done. I see that it is my shortcoming that I can't be assertive or boundaried enough to get away on time".

Developing a Pay Scale

There is little guidance to support Individual Employers in making decisions about what to pay their staff. Analysis of job roles to date demonstrate a wide variation in responsibilities with some Personal Assistants providing companionship and support for people able to direct the work and tasks and with no additional communication requirements. Whilst other Personal Assistants provide support to some people with extremely complex needs, where safeguarding of the person and those around them is critical. Some of these Personal Assistants also support people who also have complex health needs, significant behaviours, complex autism and a range of comorbidities that impact on their day-to-day life. Personal Assistants working for these Individual Employers also need highly specialised communication skills, some are likely to work as part of a team therefore need to co-ordinate their actions with those of others and may have supervisory & financial responsibilities or some managerial roles. They also have to use high levels of initiative alongside their assessment skills in order to ensure effective delivery of support in what can be challenging and unpredictable circumstances. It is not uncommon for both of these groups of Personal Assistants to be paid the same rate.

When considering the data on remuneration it is clear that first and foremost there is no real consistency either across England or between Individual Employers with salary rarely being matched to skills and responsibilities. Within this many Personal Assistants are paid £9.00ph. or less, specifically £8.72ph. as this is the lowest amount someone over 25 should be paid (minimum wage Jan 2021). It appears that salaries that have gone before determines decisions about new Personal Assistant pay rates. This approach does not consider the skills required and the value of the work undertaken by this group of workers. Instead, it perpetuates the belief that this role is a low skill/low qualification/entry level job. The inconsistency and inappropriateness of this situation is made more apparent by the examples of jobs with less responsibility (e.g., Delivery Driver, Cleaner, Road Crossing Operative) that are being paid at a higher rate than Personal Assistants.

This highlights the challenges faced by Individual Employers when funding organisations determine the pay rates of Personal Assistants. This inconsistency becomes more confusing when for example a local authority provides a Carers Direct Payment to employ a cleaner,

and the Individual Employer is able to pay their cleaner at a higher rate than they are able to pay the Personal Assistants that support their son.

In order to create a structure that supports a consistent and equitable approach to Individual Employers making decisions about pay, JuST Works Ltd developed the following salary bandings for Personal Assistants. These bandings acknowledge the different roles and the changing complexity of the skills and responsibilities required in different contexts.

Banding	Descriptor	Pay Rate
A	The Personal Assistant provides support that helps the Individual Employer to live their life and to be an active member of their community.	£9.00 - £9.99
B	The Personal Assistant helps the person to cope with the challenges they experience with their daily living, relationships & to be an active member of their community.	£10.00 - £10.99
C	The Personal Assistant uses a wide range of skills to keep the person at the centre of their life and to keep them safe.	£11.00 - £12.99
D	The Personal Assistant is regularly faced with a wide range of unpredictable situations and challenges that can cause harm to the person.	£13.00 - £14.99
E	The Personal Assistant is required to be constantly vigilant and to manage high risk situations and challenges to keep the person and the public safe.	£15.00 - £18.00

The table above is a high-level description of each of the bandings. These descriptors have further detail relating to skills knowledge, communication and financial responsibilities. The use of initiative, team roles and working conditions to support the Individual Employer when making a decision about what to pay their staff are also included. Introducing bandings like this across the Personal Assistant market would increase the attractiveness of the role and provide local authorities with an opportunity to increase quality and maximise prevention opportunities.