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Personal Assistant Newsletter

June 2022

Editor's welcome

Donald Macleod, Chief Executive, SDSS

This is the second of a series of newsletters to let you know about the 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. Work that will support PAs, encourage joint working and celebrate all that has been achieved will be showcased regularly and 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 an update on the [Annual PA Survey 2022](#), the [free photo ID card for PAs from the Personal Assistant Network Scotland](#) and the [PA handbook](#) which will be available very soon.

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. Next time, we will also report on the PA Wellbeing subgroup which is being established.

I hope you enjoy and find this newsletter useful. If you are a PA and would like to be involved in this work, including attending PA Programme Board meetings, please contact me on donald@sdsscotland.org.uk. (Non-salaried PAs can claim an expense for attendance at the meeting).

Communicating with PAs

A communications and information group has been set up as part of the PA Programme Board work to ensure that we reach PAs effectively and address all the elements of communication related to the PA work plan. Some of the critical things focused on in the first meeting of the group was the definition the PA role as general use of the term PA in Scotland has become broader than its foundation within the context of the Independent Living Movement. The group will have an extensive remit, providing guidance on public facing communication generated by the programme board, as well as communications with the PA and PA Employer audiences, including social media and website information. The initial priority for the group is the publication of the PA Handbook, which will be the hub for communications generally, along with the wider campaign “Make an imPAct” being purposed currently for recruitment. As such the group requested, and is now reviewing, a draft checklist for ensuring the handbook content is of a uniform quality. This will enable SDSS to review existing content and publish the Handbook with confidence more rapidly and have a structure for submission of new updates. The “Make an Impact” campaign logo is back with designers with the group’s feedback and a new iteration is due.

SDS Forum

SDSS extends an open invitation to explore a free SDS Forum that exists online to enable discussions <https://forum.sdsscotland.org.uk/latest>. This is a forum for any SDS related discussion and has a category for Personal Assistants for example. It’s easy to “follow” and get updates on people’s issues of interest or to raise your own, so sign up and familiarise yourself with the space and its content. Help is available accessing and using the forum, for tech shy people- please email jeremy@sdsscotland.org.uk

The Annual PA Survey

Many thanks to all of you who submitted responses to this survey. Some initial quantitative results and some thematic ideas from the 917 survey respondents have been shared now with the PA Programme Board, Scottish Government, SSSC stakeholders and the National SDS Collaboration. A preliminary report is due next week which will be shared with SG data experts, to input on the significance of the findings, and the PA Programme Board for input on how the board and subgroups can utilise the data and if there is any need for further analysis. A discussion thread is open now on the SDS Forum for the purpose of steering our researchers here <https://forum.sdsscotland.org.uk/latest> Input from PAs and wider stakeholders is welcome also. You can read more about this stage of the process here [Annual PA Workforce Survey - Analysis Underway - Self Directed Support Scotland | Self Directed Support Scotland \(sdsscotland.org.uk\)](#)

PA Programme Board Website

There's new content on the website [PA Programme Board Website](#), for example resources that are influencing current work, articles providing more detail on this newsletter content plus other updates, please take a look.

Training for PAs

The training sub-group has now met twice and is getting to grips with its work plan. The initial task will include a gap analysis to review existing training resources and identify potential need. This has included a review of the new Social Care Induction Framework, to consider how this may be accessible and beneficial to Personal Assistants.

PA Handbook

As we announced last time, SDSS has developed [an online PA handbook](#) that is currently being reviewed by the Communications and Information subgroup. The handbook will sit along side an updated PA Employer Handbook and four case study videos are being finalised in collaboration with a working group of PAs and the PA Network. Clipouts of these videos will be used to support handbook material and longer videos will underpin recruitment work.

You can sign up to be notified on launch here: <https://pa.handbook.scot/>

PA Recruitment

The recruitment subgroup continues to develop [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). PA case study videos will form part of case studies of workforce for the National Care Service aiming give a sense of the breadth of social care opportunities. Case study videos will also enable the promotion of PA role through the Communications and Information subgroup. The recruitment group has met with COSLA and they have worked with Skills Development Scotland to get some data from the myjobscotland webpage. Work is also continuing to sense check job advertisements that are added to this webpage ensuring that advertisements appropriately show the job vacancy as a "Personal Assistant" which will help to raise awareness of the role.

Personal Assistants Network Scotland (PANS).

As the recognised membership organisation for Personal Assistants PANS are now able to issue PAs with ID badges. PANS are currently working to improve the benefits of having a member's ID card similar to the benefits available to NHS and other social care workers. You can order your badge by going to the home page of our website Home - Personal Assistant

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Network Scotland (panetworkscotland.org.uk) and clicking on the yellow 'Order Your Badge' button which you will find near the bottom of the page. Les Watson of PANS says, “Having an ID badge shows that you are a key worker and should also save a repeat of the problems that some PAs faced during the pandemic.”

Support is available to make make your application - email info@panetworkscotland.org.uk

Personal Assistants Network Pathfinder Project

The aim of this project is to develop PA networks and bring people together to support each other. There will be an analysis of groups already set up in Scotland to check for duplication with the aim of growing a network of support for PAs and growing a collective voice of PAs. The group will consider issues around confidentiality and language.

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. Social Work Scotland are currently recruiting for a team member to assist with their work with local authorities on direct payments, learn more from their website <https://socialworkscotland.org>

Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020 implications

There is a move towards a mandatory Protection of Vulnerable Groups or PVG system which will have an impact on safeguarding by making sure that employers of people in regulated roles will be required to do appropriate checks. The new legislation makes provision to include Personal Assistant and PA Employers within the PVG scheme where previously there were limitations on the checks that could be done in this area. PVG scheme membership will be mandatory for those carrying out regulated roles with children and protected adults although there are some exceptions where the activity is carried out in the course of a family or personal relationship. “Regulated roles” will replace “regulated work” as the eligibility criteria for PVG scheme membership. Work to implement this change from regulated work to a regulated role for the PA workforce will be part of the transition to the new legislation which will be fully implemented by 2024.

At the Steering Group in May, Disclosure Scotland (DS) gave an overview of the changes that are coming in regard to the PVG scheme and it was felt that this information should be shared with PAs and PA Employers as soon as possible. Rather than encumber Personal Assistants with the administrative responsibilities involved, umbrella bodies will be responsible for carrying out pre-employment PVG checks for PA Employers. These umbrella bodies will be legally responsible for holding personal data and will give employers advice on any individuals who have applied to work for them as PAs. This will remove the bureaucracy from the PA employer and give them a degree of choice and assurance. The introduction of

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these changes will mean that PA Employers will benefit from the same protections as other users of social care but they will not be criminalised if they choose not to perform the check or if they choose to employ someone they have been advised against employing. Personal Assistants will be held responsible if they engage in a regulated role and have not joined the scheme. There will be cost implications with the new scheme which could disproportionately affect those on lower incomes. Umbrella bodies already exist but we would expect that there will be organisations who specialise in this area who will choose to become umbrella bodies to assist personal employers in making safe recruitment decisions. It is not yet clear who the umbrella bodies will be.

In the steering group there was unease that introducing an umbrella body could potentially damage the agency or unique relationship that exists between an employer and their Personal Assistant. There is also concern amongst the group regarding a potential issue relating to the way that personal information will be shared.

The Disclosure Act is still in the process of being implemented and it is being introduced on a phase by phase basis in order to avoid unintended consequences. DS is to attend the next Programme Board meeting and we will stay close to this work and share updates from DS here.

Other news - quick snapshot

- On 16 May a Ministerial meeting was held by the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care with people with lived experience, including representatives from the Independent Living Movement. This was to inform the ongoing development of the proposed National Care Service. The Minister agreed to hold a subsequent meeting following the publication of the Bill in June 2022.
- An awareness raising campaign is underway in relation to the role of the Personal Assistant. Discussion about the definition of a PA is being useful in raising the profile of the profession.
- Central to the promotion of the PA workforce is the relationship with the PA Employer. Employer and PA Programme Board member Dr Jim Elder Woodward recently met with [Community Contacts](#) in June to share insights into the considerations to make locally when considering training for PAs. This included a focus on Employer training, to ensure they are in a position to manage the learning needs of their PAs.
- NHS Highland are unique in having developed a local SDS strategy which is currently in the implementation phase. SDSS are engaged in supporting this initiative and how PAs will feature within it.
- The chairs of the PA Programme Board will present to the SDS Practice Network on 16 June. This is a Social Work Scotland network of local SDS leads across Scotland, who grapple with the practicalities of SDS implementation on a daily basis.
- Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020 implications. The PVG scheme will be mandatory for those carrying out regulated roles with children and protected adults although there are some exceptions where the activity is carried out in the course of a family

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- A further pay uplift for adult social care workers delivering direct care – including PAs – which will mean a minimum rate of pay of £10.50 per hour was provided from 1st April. A window of opportunity was created for members of PA Programme Board with Fair Work colleagues in SG Adult Social Care workforce & Fair Work Division to advise them of the need for specific guidance for PA employers so that they also know what is happening and can be informed, for example, for any discussions with payroll companies and/or social work teams.
- IRISS podcasts. Here is a podcast about a PA Employer who describes how employing a PA removes barriers and enables independence. <https://www.iriss.org.uk/irissfm-podcast>
- Considering self-employment? [Here is some critical information recently updated by the Low Income Tax Reform Group.](#)
- The National Care Service (NCS) is the most ambitious reform of public services since the creation of the NHS and Scottish Government is committed to the establishment of a functioning NCS by the end of the current parliamentary term. Work is continuing on schedule and SG has pledged to bring forward the legislation, to enable the creation of the NCS, by the end of June 2022. Included is a commitment to ensuring that the design and delivery of the NCS has human rights embedded throughout. “It will continue to engage with the real experts – people with lived experience of the service whether they are people accessing care and support, their families, care workers or providers – to improve future services and make things better for everyone. It will not rush this process and will build and co-design the detail through continued engagement with people with experience of using these services, to develop the final scope of a National Care Service for everyone.”
Scottish Ministers are still considering the wealth of information provided through the recent National Care Service consultation and will continue to engage on the reforms with the people who access and deliver these services to refine the proposals in the consultation. SG will then be in a position to bring forward the detailed plans for improvement to be undertaken over the course of this Parliament, “to end the postcode lottery of care provision ensuring quality, fairness and consistency of provision that meets individuals’ needs, regardless of where they live in Scotland.”