

## **PA Programme Board Subgroup Updates**

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024

The **Programme Board** meets four times per year and has developed a work plan that a series of **subgroups** are taking forward.

### **Training subgroup**

**This group is focused on the opportunities for Personal Assistants and PA Employers to access training.**

- Delivering co-produced National PA Training resource and developing two new modules related to the PA role for access by all PAs and PA employers as they choose ready by the end of April 2024.
- Framework guided by a PA Employer reference group chaired by AMM.
- Framework name agreed (that acknowledges both PAs and employers):
  - “PA National Training Framework – A resource for PA Employers and PAs”.
- Final edits to the Framework are underway, including:
  - Reviewing standard 13 and inputting wording around training.
  - Exploring options for a suitable e-learning platform – e.g. technicalities, costs, accessibility considerations, timescales for completion.
- PA Training Framework recommends development of a central fund that PAEs apply to which could address the gaps in provision e.g. moving and assisting.
- A training directory has been started, but full work on it as a project that will result in a training locator will require additional funding.
- The next step is to secure additional funding to implement recommendations into practice.

### **Direct Payment National Agreement Subgroup**

**This group is working with local authorities to improve the offer around Direct Payments for PA Employers to employ PAs and to ensure consistency across Scotland.**

- DP Subgroup and LA Expert group have agreed to the approach of developing an additional SDS Standard on direct payments for employing PAs. The Standard will describe good practice and identify the core components needed and the ‘how to’. Our learning about

developing and reviewing the Standards is based on collaboration, supportive relationships with HSCP/LAs, an understanding of active implementation, evidence-based and guided by the experience of people using direct payments to employ PAs.

- The Standard is at draft stage and out for comments by both groups.
  - An independent researcher, Jane Scott who assisted with the review of Standards will assist with the writing of the Standard.
  - A beta version of the Standard will be tested with LAs, employers and independent support organisations throughout April.
  - A facilitated workshop at the [SDSS National Voice conference](#) on 28th March, to get the views of PA employers, PAs and ISOs around the Standard.
- The draft Standard also includes a core component from the recommendations of the PA National Framework for Employers to ensure training for PA and Employers is recognised as good practice and included in a direct payment.
  - Discrete work has been carried out around learning about the different responses to redundancy in local authorities.
  - Research has been commissioned to identify the common elements of 20 direct payment agreements that support people to be employers. Dr Danielle Farrel is carrying out this research which will be completed by March and will inform the new SDS Standards.

### ***Recruitment subgroup***

**This subgroup is focused on improving awareness of the PA role, and improving the infrastructure for advertising PA vacancies to maximise recruitment opportunities for Employers.**

- Main focus recently is on developing the My Job Scotland (MJS) [website](#), the main recruitment site for social care jobs in Scotland.
- Dedicated webpage set up on MJS to post live PA vacancies
  - Currently in testing phase with around 15 organisations that advertise PA roles on behalf of employers to upload their vacancies to the dedicated page.
  - Organisations need to register to post on the site and provide their logo but there is clear text to state the individual will be the employer and not the organisation.
  - PAs can search for roles by keyword and location.

- Promotion and launch of website to the public will take place on 18 March with a promotion campaign over the following two weeks.
- Page will give employers and organisations that support them another tool to support PA recruitment, reaching an untapped audience, and an opportunity to gather useful data about the rate of PA vacancies across the country as this is currently not available centrally.

## **Wellbeing subgroup**

**The aim of the Wellbeing subgroup is to develop a strategy to promote the wellbeing of the isolated PA workforce and support access to the wellbeing resources of the wider health and social care workforce.**

- Working with the [National Wellbeing Hub](#), to ensure the PA role is visible within the online resources for health and social care workers in Scotland:
  - Website rotating banner on homepage will highlight information for PAs.
  - PA Network Scotland (PANS) and Self Directed Support Scotland (SDSS) contact details added to: Professional Groups>Organisations for Personal Assistants
  - Plan to add new video(s) content on PA/PA Employer relationship
- The National Wellbeing Hub is facilitating a workshop with the IMPACT Team (the UK Centre for national evidence gathering around social care) on PA Wellbeing at the [SDSS National Voice conference](#) on 28th March.
- IMPACT Team has a [new webpage](#) to update on their work including:
  - Learning from the 30 PAs who took part in a Test of Change trying out a discount card for social care workers - [Blue Sky Card](#).
  - Co-produced evidence review of materials, training and guidance to support PA Wellbeing.
- PA Network Scotland (PANS) has been working with other stakeholders like ILGPA to secure Blue Light Cards for Personal Assistants.
- The requirement for Wellbeing support to be included in a direct payment for both PA and PA employer has been included in the draft Standard for DPs to employ PAs which is currently being developed.

- Use of the PA Wellbeing fund is being considered following the findings of IMPACTs work, the PA Workforce Survey, feedback from the SDSS workshop and learning from how Inspiring Scotland used their wellbeing fund.

## **Data subgroup**

**This subgroup focuses on data around Personal Assistants and developing ways to collect data where there are gaps.**

- [The Personal Assistant Workforce Survey: 2023 Report](#) is now published. This is the second survey of the workforce, with the first survey carried out in 2022. This gives us, for the first time, comparative data from one year to the next:
  - A small decline in number of PAs who responded from 912 in 2022 to 798 PAs responded in 2023 to the survey
  - PA workforce who responded to the survey remains largely white, female and over the age of 45.
  - There was almost a two-fold increase in the number of self-employed PA respondents this year.
  - Our respondents this year are working more hours and working for more employers than before, as well as doing more unpaid care to support friends and family in addition to their PA role.
  - Awareness of initiatives to recognise and support the PA workforce in Scotland is low among PAs themselves.
  - PAs clearly value the rewarding aspects of their role and the relationships they build with employers.
  - The survey will now be undertaken biennially (every 2 years) with the next survey due in early 2025 to avoid survey fatigue.
- Scottish Government (SG) are finalising their report, 'Personal Assistants current data sources and future work':
  - This will describe how SG plan to calculate the PA workforce in Scotland following the Skills for Care calculation in England.
  - It will be necessary to have robust data on the number of PA employers in Scotland, the number of filled posts in Scotland and the number of PAs. A variety of sources will be tested including an SDSS survey of payroll providers, to fill these gaps.
- Lisa Paul, the funded PhD candidate based at the University of Glasgow, attended the meeting and will remain involved with the group during her studies:
  - Lisa is currently undertaking a Master's in research methods with her Dissertation looking at learning disability and Personal

Assistance. Her PhD will begin in Autumn 2024 with a qualitative focus on what PAs and their employers need.

### ***PA Networks subgroup***

**This subgroup focuses on promoting peer support and developing PA networks on a local and national level.**

- Generating and supporting networks of PAs through:
  - Supporting the PA Network Scotland in creating 12 new roles for regional PA Network representatives across Scotland.
  - Exploring support of local networks – such as rural place-based work in Ardnamurchan – reaching out to an organisation called Urrum to learn about what they are doing to promote the PA role.
  - Evidence from Moray and Aberdeenshire suggests online networking and mutual peer support for PAs are preferred versus face-to-face.

### ***Communications and Information subgroup***

**This subgroup focuses on information for, and communication with Personal Assistants, including the Handbook, newsletter, and communicating the work of the PA Programme Board.**

- The subgroup has developed a content review process to keep the PA and PA Employer Handbook up to date:
  - Around 30 different people with specialist knowledge including Employment law specialists, PA Employers and Independent Support Organisation members are involved in checking the accuracy and quality of the information.