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## Personalisation briefing



October 2009

### Implications for personal assistants (PAs)

#### Key messages

Personalisation for personal assistants (PAs) means:

- Tailoring support to people's individual needs so they can live a full and independent life. PAs are already delivering personalised support, but some may need to work differently, and not be so focused on task-based care and support.
- Ensuring that people have access to the information and advice to make good decisions about their care and support.
- Being enabled to work in new, creative and person-centred ways. PAs may be much more involved in care and support planning work with people who use services, to resolve issues that may once have been passed on to someone else to decide.
- The opportunity to learn a range of new skills and remain flexible and adaptable as the ways in which people are supported change.
- Terms and conditions of employment may be different – and working hours more flexible – with people working on their own directly employed by the personal budget or direct payment holder.
- Learning and development are vital to help PAs adapt to the changes.
- The Seven Core Principles for Self Care which were developed in partnership with people who use services and carers can help guide people when they think about developing practical solutions to working as a PA.

This At a glance briefing examines the implications of the personalisation agenda for personal assistants.

Personalisation means thinking about care and support services in an entirely different way. This means starting with the person as an individual with strengths, preferences and aspirations and putting them at the centre of the process of identifying their needs and making choices about how and when they are supported to live their lives. It requires a significant transformation of adult social care so that all systems, processes, staff and services are geared up to put people first.

The traditional service-led approach has often meant that people have not received the right help at the right time and have been unable to shape the kind of support they need. Personalisation is about giving people much more choice and control over their lives and goes well beyond simply giving personal budgets to people eligible for council funding. Personalisation means addressing the needs and aspirations of whole communities to ensure everyone has access to the right information, advice and advocacy to make good decisions about the support they need. It means ensuring that people have wider choice in how their needs are met and are able to access universal services such as transport, leisure and education, housing, health and opportunities for employment regardless of age or disability.

### What are the implications for personal assistants?

Personalisation will require cultural change and new ways of working that not only impact on personal assistants but also on a wide range of individuals and services that support people to live independent lives.

The implications for personal assistants are that they will need to learn a wide range of new skills and remain flexible and adaptable as the ways in which people are supported change. Terms and conditions of employment may be



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different and working hours more flexible, with people working on their own more often without the clear support of a team.

Personal assistants are likely to be employed directly by the person they support, by an agency/organisation, or be self-employed. Each model of employment has strengths and weaknesses and personal assistants will need to work closely with the person they support to decide which model of employment is best for everyone.

For people new to social care this new way of working and terms of employment will seem straightforward. For people who have worked in social care for a while these new models of employment could seem quite challenging – people will need help and support to adapt and have confidence in what they are doing, and in their terms of employment.

### What are the practicalities?

Learning and development will be key to helping personal assistants to adapt. People working as personal assistants are likely to want access to learning and training that fits around their working life and is specifically focused on the individual they are supporting. Why, for example, would you want to do training about challenging behaviour if the person you are supporting doesn't need that kind of support?

One of the ways in which the Seven Common Core Principles for Self Care can be used is to help people develop practical solutions to working as a personal assistant.

#### The principles are:

- 1 ensure individuals are able to make informed choices to manage their self-care needs
- 2 communicate effectively to enable individuals to assess their needs, and develop and gain confidence to self-care

- 3 support and enable individuals to access appropriate information to manage their self-care needs
- 4 support and enable individuals to develop skills in self-care
- 5 support and enable individuals to use technology to support self-care
- 6 advise individuals how to access support networks and participate in the planning, development and evaluation of services
- 7 support and enable risk management and risk taking to maximise independence and choice.

The principles were developed in partnership with people who use services and carers. As a personal assistant you can use the principles to work with the person you are supporting, develop your job description and agree your individual learning plan.

For example, when looking at your learning and development needs you might want to ask questions around principle five that help you work out what sort of training you need to make best use of technology as part of the support you provide to someone. When looking at principle seven you might want to think about legislation and regulation that may be important for you to understand when thinking about risks that you and the person you support might take in the way you work with each other.

### Background to case examples

In 2008 Skills for Care published research on the employment and workforce implications of direct payments. Some of the things the research found included that most people who use services are satisfied with the support they get from their personal assistants and are generally confident about taking on the role of employer. Most people working as personal assistants like and value the flexibility of the role. Only a small number of personal assistants currently have access to funding for training. Most employers would offer more training if funding



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was available. Most employers said the idea of an official register was a good one – however they were evenly divided about whether or not registration should be compulsory.

The examples set out here help expand on the findings of the personal assistant research and the common core principles for self care. They come from the New Types of Worker programme, which has been exploring how social care is

changing and how changes in the way in which people are supported has affected workforce planning, training and education since 2003.

A lot of this work has meaning for personal assistants in terms of how they can develop their skills, knowledge and expertise. The programme also provides lots of information for service user and family carer employers on how they can do the same.

### Example 1

Home care providers supporting older people in the northwest have been working with a local authority to test the common core principles for self-care in action. By re-training workers to think differently and deliver outcome based care instead of 'tasks' based care, they have found that people who use services become increasingly empowered and feel more able to take control of their own care plan and subsequently feel much more satisfied with the support they receive.

For the personal assistant this model of support and employment results in greater job satisfaction and a range of new skills around enabling people who use services to better manage their care needs - putting people who use services in control. Subsequently, personal assistants are much more involved in care planning and work with people who use services to resolve issues, which normally would have been passed on to other workers in the commissioning organisation. Absence levels have decreased due to the new type of working and there is a feeling of enhanced teamwork that was not there before.

### Example 2

A small organisation in Leeds highlighted that fewer people with learning disabilities were using direct payments than other groups of people. It also found that people who use services and their families were finding it hard to find and keep staff. In order to address this, the organisation set up a team of people with learning disabilities that choose and train people to be personal assistants. People who pass the training course are placed on a list. People in charge of their own support can use the list to find personal assistants to support them. This way people who use services and their families can confidently know that the people they are employing have already been through a service user-led training programme and are more likely to have the kinds of skills and knowledge they are looking for.

### Example 3

Picking your Pathway looks at the needs of people commissioning their own service and employing workers. There are a growing number of personal assistants in the social care workforce and their new employers (using direct payments or a personal budget), don't always know what training they need, where to find it, and if it is any good. Personal assistants can be difficult to reach and have very few support or information networks. A number of them have never worked in social care before and are also unaware of the training needed or available to them. The project is developing a matrix to support people employing personal assistants to identify training needs and opportunities for their personal assistants.



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### Further information

People working as personal assistants can get practical advice and support from websites such as [www.panet.org.uk](http://www.panet.org.uk) – a project supported by Skills for Care to help personal assistants and their employers access information about responsibilities, rights, standards, legislation and training.

Skills for Care publishes all of its work around new types of worker at [www.newtypesofworker.co.uk](http://www.newtypesofworker.co.uk). Here you will find national and regional reports on completed projects and projects currently being supported, downloadable videos about particular projects and other useful information. There is more detailed information about each examples shared in this briefing on the new types of worker website.

Skills for Care's report on direct payments *Employment Aspects and Workforce Implications of Direct Payments* can be found online at [www.skillsforcare.org.uk](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk).

### Acknowledgements

Written by SCIE, in conjunction with Skills for Care.

In its report *Personalisation: a rough guide*, the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) tells the personalisation story so far – exploring what it is, where the idea came from and where it sits within wider public service reform. It is freely available online at [www.scie.org.uk](http://www.scie.org.uk)

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