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Research on the Employment of Personal Assistants in Social Care

Final Report

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Research on the Employment of Personal Assistants in Social Care

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Glossary

Acronym/Key word	Definition
Basic hourly rate	Refers to the amount of pay a worker receives before being enhanced by the value of additional benefits, such as reimbursements of certain costs, or allowances for additional factors such as shift working or working with complex cases.
Contract	Refers to the legal agreement between employer and employee that lays out the terms and conditions of employment.
Direct Payments (DPs)	Direct Payments enable individuals and/or their carers assessed as having eligible social care needs to source care that is tailored to their needs, rather than provided or arranged by their local authority. They are intended to provide greater flexibility, independence, and choice and control over the support people receive.
Pay	Refers to the total amount of remuneration a worker receives
Personal Assistant(s) (PA)	A Personal Assistant (PA) provides person-centred care and support for individuals, so they can achieve personal well-being outcomes where the individual lives.
Real Living Wage	A rate of pay calculated by the Living Wage Foundation according to an assessment of what employees and their families need to live on. The real living wage is paid voluntarily by employers.
Recruitment	Refers to the process undertaken by employers to attract staff to become employed.
Retention	Refers to the ability of employers to retain staff in their employ.
Social Care Fair Work Forum	A social partnership of trade unions, employer representatives, and the WG to improve working conditions in social care https://gov.wales/social-care-fair-work-forum
Terms and conditions	Refers to the requirements associated with the job, e.g., working hours, and the allowances and benefits associated with undertaking the role.
WG	Welsh Government
WIHSC	Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 The Welsh Government (WG) commissioned the Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care (WIHSC), University of South Wales (USW), in partnership with Data Cymru, to deliver the study, *Research on the Employment of Personal Assistants in Social Care*.

1.2 Established in September 2020, the Social Care Fair Work Forum is a social partnership of trade unions, employer representatives, and the WG. The Forum will, over time, set out what good working practices should look like in social care.

1.3 The Forum has set up a number of Task and Finish Groups (T&F), including a Group focussing on Personal Assistants (PAs) – who are employed by recipients of a Direct Payment (DP) – in social care to consider issues relating to, and faced by the PA workforce in Wales.

1.4 Membership of the PA T&F Group includes GMB, Unison, a PA, local authorities (LAs) (Torfaen, Flintshire, and Powys), Social Care Wales, Care Forum Wales, and WG.

1.5 The T&F Group concluded there is an absence of evidence about PAs in Wales including data and information gaps. Subsequently, the Group agreed that research was required to better understand the challenges faced by the workforce, their employers and to inform the need to further develop effective and meaningful policy to support them.

Aims and objectives of the research

1.6 The specific aims and objectives of the research were:

Aim 1) Gather Wales level data on the PA workforce in Wales

1.7 Examples of data required included:

- numbers employed as PAs
- recruitment and retention
- support available
- employment status
- staff turnover and vacancy rates
- pay rates
- demographics (including but not limited to gender, race, age disability)

- qualifications and training
    - awareness of available resources including ‘Direct Payments: A Guide’’

Aim 2) Identify key issues facing the workforce and the scale of the problem

1.8 This included:

- what is currently working well and what is working less well for PAs
- what are the key issues for PAs and how can these be improved
- the impact of Covid-19

Aim 3) Identify best practice and recommend options for improvement

- Identify best practice from within Wales and across the UK
- Make recommendations for making improvements for the PA workforce and their employers

1.9 WIHSC worked in partnership with Data Cymru, developing and managing the Wales-wide online PA and employer surveys. Data Cymru is part of the Welsh LA statistical community and has significant experience in collecting and managing workforce data, including information on the social care workforce.

Study Reference Group

1.10 The research was supported and challenged by a Study Reference Group (SRG); the objectives of the SRG were to:

- ensure the voice of the stakeholder community is heard in the study at a strategic level
- enable the stakeholder community to inform the study and the team
- advise on tools and methodologies chosen by researchers in order to ensure they are relevant and accessible
- support the academic team in delivering the study timeline

1.11 The SRG comprised the study team, WG, the majority of the T&F group, DP recipients (employers), Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru, and DP support services/liability providers.

2. Study Methodology

2.1 The study used mixed methods. The pragmatic philosophy of mixed methods research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2007) focuses on "what works" best to answer the research problem and facilitates a more holistic understanding of the topic (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

2.2 The methods used included:

- a desk-based rapid review of academic and grey literature from Wales and the UK.
- two distinct Wales-wide online bilingual surveys – one of PAs and one of employers, led and managed by Data Cymru between 2nd November – 13th December 2021
- individual interviews (online and telephone) with PAs, employers, and key stakeholders; for example, DP support services/liability providers, LAs, third sector/social enterprises

Rapid literature review

2.3 The desk-based rapid review considered academic and grey literature to inform a comprehensive understanding of practice and research regarding the PA workforce across Wales and the UK.

2.4 Rapid reviews offer timely information for decision-making and are a means of providing an '*assessment of what is already known about a policy or practice issue, by using systematic review methods to search and critically appraise existing research*' (Government Social Research, 2008). The review was undertaken in a comprehensive way, and limitations from omitting or limiting stages of a rapid review (e.g., using a simple quality appraisal, extracting only key variables) were offset by documenting the methodology and approach used (Grant & Booth, 2009).

Search strategy

2.5 A search of academic and grey literature (Annex A for example) was undertaken using USW databases, complemented by internet search engines including Google and Google Scholar. In addition, a request was made of the SRG and T&F Group to share any relevant academic or grey literature with the study team. Abstracts were read and articles identified as potentially relevant were saved for further reading.

The reference pages of relevant publications were searched to identify literature not obtained through the USW search.

2.6 The total number of publications (academic and grey) saved to be included in the review was 35.

Wales-wide online bilingual surveys of PAs and employers

2.7 The surveys (Annex B) were designed with the SRG and T&F Group and contained 36 questions within the PA survey, and 31 questions within the employer survey. The following definition was provided with each of the surveys:

"A Personal Assistant is someone who works directly with one or more people to help them with various aspects of their daily life, to help them live as independently as possible. They will be employed directly by someone like you who is organising and paying for the support you receive through a Direct Payment which has been provided to you by a local authority. Personal Assistants will typically support people like you in their own homes or in their communities, and the role they play is defined by you, their employer – the person in receipt of the Direct Payment."

2.8 The surveys ran using an online survey tool (SmartSurvey) and were distributed via email links. The bilingual surveys were available in the following formats:

- standard (font and language) online version;
- easy read (standard font) online version;
- standard downloadable Word document;
- easy read downloadable Word document; and
- large print (standard language, 18pt font) downloadable Word document.

2.9 Respondents who chose to access the Word versions were still encouraged to submit their results using an online version but using the paper copy as an aid to online completion. Additional assistance was offered for to those who were unable to complete the survey online. One individual was provided with a telephone survey.

2.10 The survey link was sent to some PAs and employers directly. However, the main distribution of the survey was through a number of key gatekeeper organisations and networks. These included:

- Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru;
- All Wales Direct Payment Forum (AWDPF);

- DP support service providers;
- Insurance providers;
- Trade Unions;
- Social Care Wales;
- Care Inspectorate Wales; and
- Third sector bodies.

2.11 Partial responses (i.e., where the respondent had not completed the survey) have been included in the findings section of this report (Chapter 4). IP addresses were collected to help identify duplicate responses within the partial responses. Any duplicate responses or responses with no response to the first question were removed. The total number of partial responses received was 196 for the PA survey and 79 for the employer's survey. Table 1 shows the number of completed responses received from each survey and the number of partial responses that remained after checking.

Table 1: Number of respondents to each survey, by completion type

	Completed	Partial	Total
PA survey	192	29	221
Employer survey	138	23	161

Individual interviews – PAs, employers, and key stakeholders

2.12 The research used purposive key informant sampling (Patton, 2015) to identify individuals or groups of individuals who have in-depth knowledge and/or experience of the phenomenon of interest (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). When brought together these key informant groups can highlight characteristic and important patterns of data (Patton, 2015). Participants were recruited with the support of the SRG and T&F.

2.13 Interviews were completed via online (Microsoft Teams) or telephone and took place between January-February 2022. Interview schedules (Annex C) for each of the participant groups – PAs, employers, and key stakeholders – were developed and reviewed by the SRG.

2.14 Thirty interviews were completed in total: PAs (n=8); Employers (n=12); Key stakeholders (n=10)

Ethics

2.15 Prior to data collection commencing, ethical approval was secured from the Faculty of Life Science and Education at USW to undertake interviews with PAs, employers and key stakeholders. All potential participants received an information sheet providing details of the study and what their participation would entail (Silverman, 2017) and written or verbal consent was confirmed before interviews commenced. To access the online survey, participants were asked to confirm they understood that completion implied consent.

Data analysis

Wales-wide online bilingual surveys of PAs and employers

2.16 Before commencing analysis, the data was cleaned, and any outliers removed. Where outliers have been removed for a particular question, these are specified within the results chapter. For closed questions, tables were produced indicating the count of the results. Where a survey question required a number as a response, averages and counts have been produced and state the minimum and maximum responses.

Individual interviews

2.17 Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps to thematic analysis, which provided a useful framework to support consistency. Free text responses from both surveys were included within the thematic analysis.

Triangulating data capture

2.18 Findings from across the datasets (literature review, surveys, and interviews) were triangulated. The process of triangulation refers to the view that findings from multiple methods are combined to mutually corroborate one another (Creswell, 2014). Triangulation offers a variety of datasets to explain differing aspects of a phenomenon of interest (Noble & Heale, 2019). Data captured from all methods were considered to determine whether findings agreed, offered complimentary information on the same issue, or contradicted one another (O'Cathain *et al*, 2010).

Constraints and limitations

2.19 This report presents findings from the first study within Wales that is focussed on the PA workforce. As with any study, there are limitations to note.

Individual interviews

2.20 We had sought to recruit up to 40 PAs and employers across Wales to interview, but this proved challenging. The fact that the actual number of PAs and employers that we did speak to and hear from is less than our original goal is not a reflection on the efforts of the study team, nor in particular, the support of the SRG and the T&F group to raise awareness of the study and promote it amongst their networks, for which we are grateful.

2.21 It is important to note that the interviews undertaken with PAs and employers enabled us to gain a valuable insight into and understanding of their perspectives and experiences across Wales.

Wales-wide online bilingual surveys of PAs and employers

2.22 The limited existing research into PAs means that we do not know exactly how many PAs work in Wales, and there is no central repository of contact information for them. Therefore, the sampling method was chosen as the best available. However, since it relied heavily on public, independent and third sector colleagues passing on the survey links, sampling bias may have been introduced.

2.23 Surveys rely upon the respondent providing accurate information. We have attempted to highlight areas where it is clear that outliers (i.e., results extremely different from the majority) may exist and have indicated the steps taken to counteract them where appropriate. However, survey data should always be treated as opinion rather than fact.

2.24 It is understood that many individual employers have multiple PAs, and many PAs support multiple people. Due to this, double counting may be introduced if multiple PAs for the same employer respond or vice versa.

2.25 We are unable to confirm how many of the employers surveyed are the employers of the PAs surveyed. Therefore, the data produced from both surveys may relate to different circumstances. For this reason, comparison between the surveys should be handled with care.

3. Findings: Rapid Literature Review

3.1 The rapid review helped set the context for the study with the aim of:

- identifying the key issues for the PA workforce (including the impact of Covid-19)
- identifying best practice in support for PAs from within Wales and across the UK
- examining recommendations for improvement
- informing the online surveys and qualitative fieldwork

Background and context

3.2 DPs enable individuals and/or their carers assessed as having eligible social care needs to source care that is tailored to their needs, rather than using existing statutory providers (McGuigan et al, 2015; Social Care Wales, 2019a).

3.3 Within Wales, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014) underpins the use of DPs, and Part 4 of the Act states that LAs in Wales must consider a DP '*as an integral part of meeting people's needs through care and support planning*' (Welsh Government, 2015; Social Care Wales, 2019a). DPs are intended to provide greater flexibility, independence, and choice and control over the support individuals receive (McGuigan et al, 2015; Social Care Wales, 2019a).

3.4 Flexibility around care arrangements can improve outcomes for individuals (Davey, 2021) and carers or relatives of those receiving a DP also report positive outcomes from greater flexibility, choice, and control to manage their unpaid caring role with other commitments. For example, remaining in paid employment, and having a better work-life balance or family life (Larkin et al, 2015; McNeill & Wilson, 2016; Woolham et al, 2018; Turnpenny et al, 2020).

3.5 Latest available data via StatsWales (2020-21) showed 6,648 people (5,295 adults, and 1,353 children) were in receipt of a DP in Wales. Currently there are no official figures regarding the number of PAs employed by DP recipients in Wales.

3.6 In England, Skills for Care (2021) estimate that in 2020, there were 230,000 adults, older people, and carers receiving a DP with around 70,000 directly employing their own PAs. On average, individual employers employed 1.85 PAs each, creating a workforce of approximately 130,000. However, younger adults are more likely to receive a DP than older people (Idriss et al, 2020), and the uptake of DP payments

in England remains low overall relative to commissioned services (Adult Social Care Activity and Finance Report, England - 2018-19).

3.7 This data represents a slightly different pattern from the most recent Welsh published data which demonstrated that more people over the age of 85 are using a DP than people under the age of 25. Factors affecting the uptake of DPs include the complexity of paperwork, employment legislation and auditing processes, the need for the potential employer to have mental capacity or to have access to a suitable person to help them manage their payment, variable availability of information and guidance, and '*overly prescriptive approaches*' that restrict choice for the individual (Watson, 2020, p.3).

3.8 Those in receipt of a DP may directly employ a PA whilst others may purchase their support from a care agency (Rodrigues, 2019). In addition to purchasing individual support, employers can pool their DP by adding it to funding from one or more people to purchase a service, an item of equipment, or a contract with an agency or to employ a PA (Flintshire County Council, 2019; Social Care Wales, 2019b). Examples from Flintshire County Council (2019) include a mental health user-run sport and social group, a drama group and a community café. The individual's family member or representative can also employ a PA where the person requiring support does not have capacity to be an employer (Thompson & Pickering, 2021). This is reflected in Manthorpe et al (2020), where the majority of PAs in their study were directly employed by the person they were supporting, but there were also PAs who were employed by family members.

3.9 From their study with older people in receipt of a DP (60 years +), Rodrigues (2019, p.1476) developed a typology of three types of DP users: relational, employers, purchasers. The typology offers an opportunity to contrast DP recipient choices and perceived satisfaction and identify any underlying commonality (Rodrigues, 2019).

Table 2: Different ways of using DPs: implications for user choice

Type	Description
DP users who hired a PA previously known to them – relational users	Users from this group could circumnavigate some of the uncertainty regarding the identity of the carer by hiring someone with whom they already had a personal relationship of some kind. By hiring and managing their own carers these users could also have greater leeway in shaping the care tasks they receive
DP users who hired a previously unknown person as a PA – employers	Similarly, to users of the first group, these users are the employers of their own carers and could have greater scope to determine their care tasks. In this group, care tasks may be negotiated within an employer– employee relationship. Users from this group could be faced with uncertainty concerning the identity of the carer, but they are nonetheless able to choose their PAs and build a relationship with them
DP users who purchased services from a formal care provider (agency) – purchasers	As they purchase care from an agency, users from this group could have less scope for determining the identity of their carers or their continuity. They may or may not have more limited possibilities of determining how and when care is delivered. Negotiations over care tasks take place within a consumer–provider relationship, which could be less empowering for the user than the employer–employee relationship

PAs - role, skills, and importance/value

3.10 Social Care Wales (2021a) defines the role of a PA as providing '*person-centred care and support for individuals, so that they can achieve personal well-being outcomes where the individual lives*'. As a demographic, PAs are largely white, female and British (Skills for Care, 2021; Woolham et al, 2019a). PAs utilise numerous high-level skills (autonomy, communication, co-ordination, assessment and decision-making) (Thompson & Pickering, 2021) and undertake a variety of duties including support with personal care, mobility, particular health needs, household tasks such as cleaning and shopping, attending college/university, and socialising (Skills for Care, 2021). The most common support provided by PAs identified by Skills for Care (2021, p.15) was 'personal care' (68%), closely followed by 'household duties' (67%), 'mobility/moving and assisting' (65%), and 'socialising with friends and family' (61%). Support with 'attending college/university' and 'going to work' were the least common (6% and 5% respectively).

3.11 Having more than one employer is typical (Manthorpe et al, 2020); responses from 1,915 PAs Skills for Care survey showed that on average PAs had 1.29 jobs, with 21% having more than one job (2021). The average number of jobs held by PAs

was higher (3.1) in Woolham et al (2019a) study, where only 41 (39%) of 105 PAs who responded worked exclusively for one person. The same study also found that half of the 105 PAs had secondary employment including fostering and taxi driving.

3.12 In comparison to more traditional care roles, PAs offer more opportunities for relationship-based care that can lead to enhanced levels of person-centred support (Woolham et al, 2020), and can offer improved individual outcomes (Thompson & Pickering, 2021). The quality of care and support PAs provide can have a positive impact on individuals' lives (Skills for Care, 2016). To be effective in their role, PAs refer to the importance of being respectful, having appropriate background checks, a willingness to learn and to adapt to their employer's individual needs, family, social and cultural backgrounds (Woolham et al, 2019a).

3.13 Thompson & Pickering (2021) describe PAs as being '*critical to prevention and wellbeing*' (p.4) and refer to PAs as supporting health improvement, maintenance and prevention approaches, as well as being of '*critical*' importance as expressed by employers of their PAs '*supporting them to live their life well*' (p.4). Emphasising the importance of relationship-based care, Rodrigues (2019) found that many older employers placed intrinsic value on continuity of care and the development of close caring relationships, and these participants favoured employing PAs rather than a care agency.

3.14 Having an understanding of their employer's wishes, expectations, preferences and needs, and enabling a positive difference to their employer's life are aspects of job satisfaction described by PAs (Shakespeare et al, 2017). Furthermore, PAs with previous care work experience have reported their role provides greater job satisfaction when compared to working in other care settings (Manthorpe et al, 2020). Aspects cited to experiencing improved job satisfaction include the role being less task based and more relationship focussed, time to developing meaningful relationships with their employers, and the opportunity to be '*genuinely person-centred and relationship-based*' (Woolham et al, 2019a; Manthorpe et al, 2020, p.5). Other motivations for working as a PA cited by Woolham et al (2019a) include the role being rewarding and fulfilling, close by, with convenient and flexible hours that fit in with family and lifestyle.

Training and skills development

3.15 Whilst most PAs in their study had completed training relevant to their role, much of it had been undertaken prior to commencing their role (Woolham et al, 2019b). The

most frequent training completed by PAs in the Skills for Care survey (2021) was first aid (65%), health and safety (61%), and moving and handling (60%). Overall, 63% of PAs did not have a relevant social care qualification, which was a higher percentage compared to care workers (53%). Meanwhile, family members/friends' who are PAs are less likely to access training and hold care-related qualifications than PAs who are non-family/friends' (Woolham et al, 2019b; Manthorpe et al 2020). These findings were echoed by Skills for Care (2021) whereby PAs who were non-family/friends' reported undertaking more training and were more likely to have a relevant social care qualification.

3.16 Training opportunities for PAs are '*patchy*' and in some areas in England, there appeared to be no training available (Woolham et al, 2019a, p.137). Where training was provided, it was valued and appreciated and PAs were keen to expand their skills and improve within their role (Woolham et al, 2019b). '*Training not only supports PAs to do their job but also provides career progression and the opportunity to gain qualifications'* (Social Care Wales, 2019c). However, some employers' express concerns that training reinforces a task focussed and 'medical-model' approach rather than delivering the skills they feel PAs need to support them (Woolham et al 2019a).

Recruitment and retention

3.17 Local support for employers to recruit PAs is essential; previous issues reported, such as a lack of experience in recruitment and variable support, can make it difficult to recruit PAs. In Wales, Woolham et al (2020) notes recruitment support is highlighted as being available to both those in receipt of a DP and those self-funding their care. Routes to recruitment most frequently referred to by PAs include conversations with friends or colleagues, a direct approach from a potential employer, already knowing their employer (friend/family member), and 'word of mouth' (Woolham et al, 2019a; Skills for Care, 2021). Around 53% of PAs in England were a family member or friend to their employer, with 47% not knowing their employer before becoming their PA (Skills for Care, 2021).

3.18 Looking across the social care sector in England, the turnover rate of PAs (18.3%) is much lower than care workers employed in the independent sector (39.1%) (Skills for Care, 2021). Factors suggested for this difference refer to the closer relationship between employers and their PAs, different tasks undertaken, and better terms and conditions for PAs (e.g., a higher mean hourly rate, lower reliance on zero-hour

contracts – discussed later in this chapter). The same report highlights that turnover rates also differ within the PA workforce, 14.3% for those employed by family of friends compared to 22.9% who did not know their employer before commencing their role. These findings indicate that the turnover of PAs is less of an issue when the PA is already known to the employer. This reflects previous findings and may be '*influenced by the relationship between PAs and their employer*' (p.5). The most frequently cited recommendation from individual employers reporting no difficulties recruiting PAs is to employ '*someone already known to you, whether that be a family member, a friend, neighbour, someone you know through school, work or the local community or someone who has previously worked for you via an agency or other provider*' (Skills for Care, 2017, p.49).

3.19 Recommendations from individual employers reporting no issues in retaining their PAs (Skills for Care, 2017, p.54) included:

- the importance of getting the right recruitment process in place from the outset
- taking the time to '*get the right people in place*'
- ensuring clarity about your support needs; and
- employing individuals that you already know

3.20 Interestingly, whilst there are differences in retention and turnover rates between PAs and care workers in the independent sector, Skills for Care (2021) found that vacancy rates are the same (8.3%). On the face of it, this is difficult to explain, but unfortunately no further information is provided by Skills for Care. Recruitment and retention are ongoing challenges within the social care sector. Social care has an historical trend of being a low paid sector and low status sector, both of which have been cited as reasons for recruitment and retention issues (Hussein, 2017; Moriarty & Manthorpe, 2018, Wallace et al, 2020).

3.21 Referring to the social care workforce more broadly, Wallace et al (2020, p.92) highlight a number of 'pullers' (recruitment factors) and 'pushers' (retention factors), many of which may be applicable to PAs:

Table 3: Recruitment and retention factors for the social care workforce

Pullers (recruitment factors)	Pushers (retention factors)
Being allowed empowerment and autonomy	The challenges of the role (e.g., lone working, pay levels and level of support provided)
Having contact/relationships with users of service	The stress of appointments being too close together
The nature of the job	Lack of a full-time job
Opportunity for learning and advancement	Shift working
Flexible working and availability of jobs close to home	Lack of input into work schedules and last-minute changes
Feeling valued for the role performed	Seeing agency workers being paid more
Job satisfaction (including the diversity and challenge of their role)	Terms and conditions of employment (especially pay)
Having a positive impact on people's lives	Working time and staff shortages
Opportunities for personal and professional development	The low value status of social care, especially when compared to the NHS
Good working conditions (e.g., guaranteed working hours, fair wages)	Less stressful alternative jobs
Good pay	
Good employer/staff relationships	
A supportive work environment	

3.22 Skills for Care (2016) acknowledged *'there is no single solution to increasing the supply of PAs*', and offered several recommendations for the recruitment and retention of PAs reflecting their view that it is an issue that requires a holistic approach at national and local levels (p.2):

- **Make contact with existing PAs and support them -** consider how PAs can be supported and encourage PAs to look for additional roles. A first step for many sites is to collate details of existing PAs and establish a degree of regular contact, either via a monthly newsletter or other means

- **Develop PA registers which are used proactively -** Tools such as PA registers need to be used proactively; they have the potential to be more than just recruitment tools and may assist efforts to make the PA workforce more visible or even start to develop a 'community' of PAs at a local level.
- **Take a holistic approach to recruitment including using word-of-mouth -** Word-of-mouth, via peer networks, social media or other means should be identified and actively harnessed as a resource for the promotion of the PA role. Linked to this is the power of hearing from people already in the PA role and those employing PAs.
- **Maximise the strengths and potential of existing PAs –** Filling emerging gaps, including the need for more PAs who can perform complex tasks, is not just about growing the supply of new PAs. It also requires systems which enable existing PAs to develop their skills. LAs and NHS organisations should adopt joined up approaches to training which recognise the journey that PA employers may make between social care and health.
- **Consider variations in pay and conditions -** Where there are particular challenges in recruiting PAs, consideration needs to be given to how flexibility with regard to working arrangements, training, pay and support might incentivise take-up of the role.

Key issues for the PA workforce

3.23 The following section presents the key issues for the workforce as identified from the literature.

Lack of recognition and visibility of the role

3.24 As an occupation, care work is not only '*overwhelmingly*' female, but one that Shakespeare et al (2017) states is '*disproportionately provided by people with low levels of education, ethnic minorities or migrants*' (p1472). Citing Fine et al (2014), the authors suggest this '*social subordination*' may be particularly relevant in contexts where carers are unrecognised as a professional expert group with specialised knowledge.

3.25 The complexity of support provided by PAs is '*poorly understood by the public*' (Thompson & Pickering, p.10) and the role itself can be '*misunderstood or have insufficient value attached to it'* and *'a misplaced focus on tasks (e.g., personal care) rather than how PAs can enable those in need of care and support*' (Skills for

Care, 2016, p.4). Similarly, a lack of recognition and visibility of PAs was referred to by Woolham et al (2019a) who reported that respondents described ambiguity and poor understanding of the PA role amongst community professionals with some feeling an assumption that PAs were '*effectively unskilled care workers*' (p.12).

3.26 Yet, as highlighted earlier in this chapter, PAs perform a range of skilled tasks and their role can offer greater opportunities for relationship-based care, and person-centred support. Subsequently, over a duration of time, '*PAs are likely to know their employers better than other community-based professionals*' and can be '*valuable sources of information from which an employer might benefit'* (Woolham et al, 2019a, p.118). Echoing Thompson & Pickering (2021) referred to earlier, close working relationships with their employer has the potential to enable earlier intervention; PAs may be able to identify subtle changes in physical or mental well-being before other professionals (Woolham et al, 2019a). Hence, PAs '*should be recognised as a true example of an integrated (or potentially integrated) workforce*' (Skills for Care, 2016, p.3). Woolham et al (2019a) advised that to improve the visibility of PAs and nurture professional type identity requires '*co-ordinated national, regional and local activity*' (p.129).

Occupational isolation and lack of support networks

3.27 Woolham et al (2019b) describe the absence of support for PAs as '*striking*' (p.304). Occupational isolation amongst the PA workforce is common (Woolham et al, 2019a) and PAs are widely acknowledged as being largely unsupported with no professional association to represent their interests. Support is usually linked directly to their employer (Thompson & Pickering, 2021) and user-led organisations are not usually funded to provide support for PAs (Woolham et al, 2019a). In cases of reports of abusive behaviour, the absence of organisations for PAs to report such behaviour and get support can have a '*devastating impact on the PA*' (Woolham et al, 2019a, p.9).

3.28 Moreover, PAs are usually lone workers with limited opportunities to meet with other PAs for peer support or peer learning; contact with other PAs is most commonly for supporting their employer, e.g., when an employer has a team of PAs to meet their support needs, rather than as support for the PA (Woolham et al, 2019a). Whilst LAs in England were increasingly recognising the importance of peer support, evidence suggested that PAs initially struggle to engage with it and once they do, find it difficult to maintain (Skills for Care, 2016b). Subsequently, there is limited

support structures such as peer support networks and trade union representation specifically for PAs (Woolham et al, 2019a; Woolham et al, 2020).

Terms and conditions, and employment contracts

Pay

3.29 As of February 2021, the mean hourly pay rates for PAs in England was £9.95 (Skills for Care, 2021), which is higher than care workers employed in the independent sector (£9.20 as at December 2020). In addition, PAs who were family/friends' were paid on average 44p less than non-family/friend PAs, which the report suggests could be linked to employers having more complex needs requiring a PA greater experience or specialist skills.

3.30 In the UK, low pay remains endemic across the social care sector (Sion & Trickey, 2021). The low paid nature of this workforce can lead to care workers facing financial difficulties (Wallace et al, 2020) and fewer than half of the personal care workforce in Wales earn the Real Living Wage (Sion & Trickey, 2021). Exploring the scale of, and perceived factors of '*poverty* pay' for the long-term care workforce in adult social care in England, Hussein (2017) found over half of respondents received some form of welfare benefits and care workers indicated that managing their finances was difficult or very difficult. For PAs, poor pay has been attributed to feeling undervalued, stressed, difficulty balancing work with a social or family life, and thinking they will not continue to work indefinitely in the role (Woolham et al, 2019a).

3.31 Key findings from a study in England aiming to better understand what employers were paying their PAs, and whether the PAs skills and the role requirements matched their pay rates, (Thompson & Pickering, 2021) outlined that:

- despite the vital contribution of PAs, pay and reward is '*typically minimum wage*' (p.5)
- pay rates for the workforce are inconsistent, have fallen behind similar roles in the care sector, and there is a perception that PAs are part of the low skill/low pay economy
- rates of pay are not consistently linked to PAs roles and responsibilities '*many Personal Assistants find themselves working in highly skilled and complex roles whilst being paid £8.72ph*' (p.3). Responses from the employer survey showed a minimum rate of £8.10 per hour for daytime support

- there is limited guidance for employers to help them make decisions about what to pay their PA(s) and what is paid is frequently not based on skills or responsibilities. Further, the majority (70%) of the 116 employers who responded to the study's survey stated their LA set the rates of pay for PAs, whilst 90% wanted to pay their PAs more

3.32 Thompson & Pickering (2021) argue a lack of consistency of pay rates either across England or between individual employers does not consider the skills required nor the value of the work undertaken by PAs and '*perpetuates the belief that this role is a low skill/low qualification/entry level job*' (p.18). In response, the following salary bandings were developed to '*acknowledge the different roles and the changing complexity of the skills and responsibilities required in different contexts*' (p.19). The authors posit that introducing such bandings across the PA workforce would help '*increase the attractiveness of the role provide local authorities with an opportunity to increase quality and maximise prevention opportunities*' (p.19).

Table 4: High-level description of salary banding for PAs (Thompson & Pickering, 2021)

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

Employment contracts, conditions, rights and support

3.33 Skills for Care (2021) highlight the '*better terms and conditions*' (p.11) for PAs in comparison to care workers in the independent sector e.g., higher pay and lower reliance on zero-hour contracts as factors that could result in better retention rates amongst PAs. Focussing on zero-hour contracts, approximately 20% of PAs reported they were employed via these types of contracts, compared to 35% of care

workers. Whilst zero- or non-guaranteed working hour contracts have been associated with multiple unpaid gaps of time in an employees' working day (Dromey & Hochlaf, 2018), advantages have also been referred to e.g., choice and flexibility (Wallace et al, 2020).

3.34 Beyond the work of Woolham et al (2019a; 2019b), limited other published or grey literature was sourced that concentrated on the employment contracts, conditions, rights, and support for PAs. Key findings from PAs and key informants included a lack of access to information for PAs about their rights as employees, limited understanding of their employment rights (which was attributed in part to the isolated nature of their role), and few PAs mentioning having either professional insurance or union membership. Moreover, '*though many PAs worked part-time, most were not contributing to a pension; holidays and sick pay entitlements were not clear, and neither were arrangements for sick pay'* (Woolham et al, 2019a, p.134). Key informants discussed ongoing challenges for unions to recruit PAs as members '*since they were employed by individual employers rather than local authorities or care agencies'* and joining a union was often seen as a last resort for PAs (Woolham et al, 2019a, p.85). The absence of support for PAs was widely acknowledged amongst participants and that equivalent levels of support should be offered to PAs as to their employers and a national association to represent PAs might be helpful: '*the absence of such a body was a huge omission*' (p.84).

3.35 The absence of written contracts, or vague contracts that are not reflective of PAs roles and responsibilities, for example, use of phrases such as '*and other duties required*' are further issues for PAs (Woolham et al, 2019a; Manthorpe et al, 2020). Ambiguous contracts may create '*opportunities for unreasonable requests to be made by an employer and difficulties should the employee challenge a request they considered unreasonable* (Woolham et al, 2019a, p.85).

3.36 As well as not being paid, examples of disputes between PAs and their employers referred to working hours and managing employers' expectations around them. PAs can often work varied shift patterns including unsociable and, in some instances, unpredictable hours comprising split shifts or long shifts (approximately 12-15 hours) or live-in rotations (Thompson & Pickering, 2021). However, PAs may not receive paid overtime for working evenings, weekends or statutory holidays and work unpaid overtime (Woolham et al, 2019b). All of the above emphasises the need for PAs to have better information around their working conditions including

the impact of their lack of contracts, pensions, holiday and sick pay (Woolham et al, 2019a). Doing so would aide PAs to establish suitable terms and conditions from the outset, whilst making the most of the opportunities that the work may give for fulfilling and meaningful relationships (Manthorpe, 2020).

3.37 Rather than being deliberate, poor employment conditions for PAs may be related to a DP recipient's lack of knowledge and inexperience before employing their PA (Woolham et al 2019a; 2019b). Therefore, the provision of support services, information, training and accessible guidance for employers is essential and cannot be considered in isolation of PAs poor working conditions. Effective support for employers is also intrinsically linked to recruiting PAs; clear job descriptions, person specifications, information about pay rates, and clear information about other aspects of the role are enablers to recruitment (Skills for Care, 2017; Woolham et al, 2019a; Wallace et al, 2020). Common sources of information and support for employers are LAs or DP/user led/voluntary organisations (Skills for Care, 2021). Yet, in terms of training to support them in their role as an employer, 90% had not accessed such training. Potential barriers to attending training should be explored and solutions identified; '*it is possible that some employers may have found it difficult to attend due to illness or disability, but also possible that some employers may not have seen training as their priority* (Woolham et al, 2019a, p.15).

3.38 Linked to the above, carers supporting those in receipt of a DP report experiencing higher levels of stress compared to those whose DP is managed by an agency, which Woolham et al (2018) suggest may be linked to their responsibilities in administering the DP. Several studies evidence a lack of support for carers to manage the DP (McNeil & Wilson, 2017; Woolham et al, 2018; Turnpenny et al, 2020). Aspects include:

- limited amount and quality of information for carers and problems with insufficient or inadequate guidance
- difficulties accessing administrative support
- poor information sharing throughout the assessment and support planning processes
- poor communication between different support organisations and the LA, or within the authority itself
- the need to understand and keep abreast of administration or paperwork

- obtaining care packages and adjusting support packages
- resolving confusion about how, and on what the DP could be spent
- managing a DP and the challenges associated with the dual role of the carer (managing finances, 'commissioning services', recruitment, risk management and employer responsibilities)

3.39 In spite of these challenges, Woolham et al (2018) found that many carers were content to accept the responsibility of managing a DP as 'a price worth paying for improving the quality of care and support for someone they loved' (p.19). Nonetheless, the authors noted that carers were 'often inadequately supported to fully take on such responsibilities'. Carers would benefit from training and bespoke support for carers in the early stages of managing a DP alongside targeted assistance for carers with more complex or greater needs (Turnpenny et al, 2020).

Impact of Covid-19

3.40 From interviews with 41 PAs in England, Woolham et al (2020) highlighted the impact of Covid-19 on the workforce:

- **PAs stopping work and changes to the role**. Some PAs had decided to stop working or had been asked to stop by their employer. Reasons for the latter were attributed to employers shielding or where PAs were predominantly employed to support their employer to engage with activities in the community. For those PAs still working but no longer being able to take their employer out, new tasks included shopping, staying/working longer shifts to help protect their employer from risk of contracting the virus with multiple care workers, and regular phone calls to provide emotional/social support
- **The precariousness of PA contracts and limited employment protections.** Some PAs were not eligible for furlough, only one PA had insurance against sickness, and there was variation amongst LAs in their level of support for PAs. '*Some had told employers to use their Direct Payments to continue to pay PAs even if the PA had been asked not to work; but others had made no contact with the employer*' (p.6)
- **Sources of information and equipment**. PAs referred to a lack of reliable sources of information about the virus itself, '*when and where to get tested, to obtain Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and to learn safe practices'* (p.6).

Difficulty in obtaining PPE was noted, and regional PPE hubs were not generally used because PAs '*did not have the appropriate registration*' (p.6). In the absence of information, some PAs had relied on advice from third sector brokerage agencies; however, as referred to earlier in this chapter, these agencies are largely funded to offer guidance to employers rather than PAs

- **Key worker status and role visibility**. PAs expressed confusion about whether or not they were keyworkers and when compared to the support and acknowledgement for NHS and frontline healthcare workers, felt that the contributions of care workers had been overlooked

3.41 Suggestions from PAs about what would be most helpful for them to respond and adapt to the pandemic included:

- ready access to sufficient quantities of good quality PPE
- the implementation of easily accessible, reliable testing – both for the presence of the virus, and antibodies; and a recognition that tests would need to be done repeatedly
- effective mechanisms for contact tracing to help prevent the spread of the virus
- a single source of contact for support and reliable and accurate advice
- better pay, contracts and less precarious working conditions
- financial support to people who were unable to work, but were not being paid by the employer, and did not qualify for the government's furlough scheme

3.42 The Care Worker Card aims to help identify key workers in the pandemic and to '*recognise the key role care workers have in supporting individuals in every community in Wales*' (Social Care Wales, 2021b). PAs are eligible for the digital card, which includes access to benefits including a 'cashback card' and a well-being support line. In addition, guidance for the '*flexible use of Direct Payments during the pandemic*' is available via the Social Care Wales website (2021c), which includes information such as continuation of DPs, PPE, employment issues for PAs, and keeping safe. In May 2020 in England, The Care Workforce app, '*a dedicated app for social care workers*' was launched '*to support staff through the coronavirus pandemic*' (Department of Health and Social Care, 2020). However, the app was discontinued on 31 March 2021 and care workers are instead advised to sign up to the Adult Social Care Update newsletter to '*continue receiving information, advice,*

and health and wellbeing resources from the Department of Health and Social Care'[1].

3.43 In terms of financial support for PAs unable to work due to Covid-19, the WG (2021a; 2021b) introduced two schemes, available to PAs:

- Covid-19 statutory sick pay enhancement scheme – financial support for PAs who need to self-isolate or stay off work and support. The scheme ran until March 2022
- self-isolation support scheme – a one off payment of £500 for PAs asked to self-isolate by the NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect service

3.44 Furthermore, in 2020, the WG announced a £500 keyworker bonus payment for care staff, which the First Minister, Mark Drakeford, stated was in recognition for an often '*under-valued and overlooked workforce*' (WG, 2020). This was later followed up in 2021 with the '*NHS and social care financial recognition scheme*' which provided a one-off payment of £735 (WG, 2021c). PAs were eligible to apply for both schemes.

3.45 For employers, the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE, 2021) reports that in relation to Covid-19, support was variable. Challenges referred to PAs being off work, contractual issues, and access to, and the inflated costs of, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). However, the same report highlights positive examples of pro-active support, guidance and practical support by LAs and DP support services, and areas with strong co-production had better understanding of what was working and enabled employers to shape their response to the pandemic.

3.46 Actions (and examples) highlighted as being helpful referred to by SCIE (2021 p.3&4):

- early and regular supportive communication and advice e.g., information about employment, sick pay and contractual issues, and help to recruit new workers safely
- peer support e.g., quickly setting up online, phone or social media group for employers to stay in touch and share solutions, webinars to share ideas and advice such as rights and legal issues

[1]

- flexibility in the use of DPs and support to enable this to happen e.g., exploring ways to meet their outcomes in the absence of PAs or when activities have stopped, using DPs to stay in touch through purchase of dongles
- funding e.g., contingency funding with quick decision-making/authorisations, support to continue paying PAs to sustain contracts (if furlough not possible) or funding alternative support if PAs were unable to work
- practical support e.g., quickly arranging regular PPE supplies, mutual aid support with food, medicines and regular phone calls

Interesting and notable practice from within Wales and across the UK

3.47 The final section presents initiatives and interesting practice examples identified from the literature that may support some of the issues for PAs referred to in this review, namely:

- PA recruitment
- promotion and awareness raising of the PA role
- occupational isolation/PA networks

PA registers & PA toolkit

3.48 In February 2019, the Department of Health and Social Care launched its '*When you care, every day makes a difference*' campaign with the aim of recruiting new people, '*with the right values*' to social care and provide advice to recruit and retain the '*right people*'[2]. In February 2021, the next phase of the national adult social care recruitment campaign was launched and is designed to inspire people with the right values and attitude to consider a career in care (Skills for Care 2021). The everyday is different website includes a section on the role of PAs and current PA vacancies. In Wales, the national campaign for social care and early years and childcare We Care Wales, is part of an initial four-year project on attraction and recruitment into the sector with the aim of attracting more people in Wales into roles in care (Social Care Wales, 2019d). The website includes roles in the sector such as home care services, domiciliary care, social services and supported living, yet it is unclear whether the site includes information about the PA role and current vacancies.

[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-campaign-to-recruit-thousands-more-adult-social-care-staff

3.49 An example from Wales for supporting recruitment, promoting the role of PAs, and supporting PAs and employers is the Flintshire County Council PA Portal (2021). The interactive portal provides a register of PAs available for employment for DP recipients in the LA and has an employer and a PA home page. Employers can search for PAs and access a host of information such as 'employing PAs', 'insurance', 'annual leave', and 'employee training'. For PAs, in addition to adding their details to the register if they are available for employment, information includes a PA handbook, PA Code of Conduct, and access to the LAs Employee Assistance Programme. A separate training link takes PAs to eLearning (via Grey Matter Learning) offering a range of accredited courses. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Assurance Check (2021) noted the work of the Flintshire DP team in addressing the challenges of recruitment and retention of the PA workforce via the re-design of the DP webpage and the creation of the PA portal and that it '*provides the information and advice people need to enable them to make an informed choice*' (p.2).

3.50 Developed by key professionals from partnership organisations including Unison Cymru Wales, Torfaen County Borough Council, and Social Care Wales, The Personal Assistants Online Guidebook is an online bilingual resource aimed at those already working as a PA and those considering joining the profession to learn more about the role.

Recruitment initiatives in England

3.51 Woolham et al (2019a) noted that examples to recruit students as PAs as part of their placement had been '*very successful in meeting the needs of the employer and the student*' (p.84). Acknowledging this was usually for a short period due to the time limited nature of their placement, some examples were given where after acquiring their professional qualification, some students had choose to remain working as a PA. Linked to this is the work of the Disability Sheffield Centre for Independent Living, who in response to experiencing ongoing issues to recruit PAs, worked with local education providers to increase awareness of the PA role and vacancies amongst their students (Skills for Care, no date). Whilst previous work with universities had found this as a successful way to recruit PAs, it had been identified that '*some students lacked understanding about the variation of the PA role and were unaware of the opportunities for development and career progression*' (p.2). With the aim of addressing this issue, six taught sessions were delivered by individual employers and PAs to students studying relevant courses at Sheffield

Hallam University. Additional careers fairs and drop-in sessions were also held with the careers and employment service at the university. At the time of the report, outcomes included an increase of visits to the Disability Sheffield website, 21 people fully registered to become a PA, and a further 19 partially completed applications. In addition, the university's employment service had a permanent live advert promoting the PA register and vacancies, and sessions were being delivered to students as part of study skills days across the Faculty for Health and Wellbeing.

3.52 Other pilots funded by Skills for Care to test innovative approaches to recruiting PAs included:

- My Life - Pathways to employment – recruiting potential PAs from the community, inviting them to five sessions to learn more about the role and develop their skills. Includes assessing potential candidates through a 'positive attitude' application process to ensure they have the right values and behaviours.
- SHIP Transforming Care Partnership – Promoting the PA role to local students - work with University of Portsmouth and University of Southampton to develop promotional materials, such as videos and leaflets, to promote the PA role to students and work with local schools and colleges to raise awareness of the PA role.
- Nottinghamshire County Council – promoting the PA role to rural and hard to reach communities - targeted promotional activities in rural communities and with hard-to-reach groups to increase the number of PAs on their directory. They also worked with the National Deaf Society to make their online information and induction training accessible to the deaf community. They exceeded their target of 24 people going through the programme, with 66 applicants throughout the project.

Sector-based work academy (SBWA)

3.53 The sector-based work academy programme '*helps prepare those receiving unemployment benefits to apply for jobs in a different area of work*' (Department for Work and Pensions, 2020). SBWA offers a flexible approach and placements are open to all jobseekers aged 18 upwards. Skills for Care (2019) funded four organisations to pilot a sector-based work academy (SBWA) approach to recruiting PAs to work with individual employers. Pilot organisations were encouraged to

recruit and support people in under-represented groups in the adult social care workforce including men, those from deprived areas, and long-term unemployed.

3.54 Skills for Care (2019) acknowledged that '*whilst there was limited evidence of positive outcomes for participants in terms of jobs secured, there was evidence that participants had gained other 'softer' benefits relating to increased self-confidence and motivation, which may impact upon their chances of securing employment in the future*' (p.6). Success factors observed highlighted increased skills and confidence for PAs and employers, enhanced profile and reputation for the pilot organisations, and more widely, increased awareness of the role of PAs and the SBWA approach to recruiting PAs. However, challenges were recruiting and retaining PAs and employers into and throughout the programmes, and effective multi-agency working. Useful learning referred to:

- **the programme design and delivery** - the need to involve PAs and individual employers, develop in-house expertise and effective partnership working, wide promotion of SBWA opportunities, avoiding peak holiday times to run the programmes, and offering a part-time option where possible.
- **recruitment of PAs and employers** – investing time and resources upfront, adopting a values-based recruitment approach, ongoing communication

PA networks

3.55 With one exception, the literature search did not identify examples of peer support networks for PAs in Wales. The Wales Cooperative Centre (no date) refer to PA Cooperatives described as '*an alternative to care agencies that puts staff and the cared for first*'. The accompanying fact sheet '*Personal Assistants Come Togethe*r' invites PAs to get in touch for support to '*link up with other PAs*'. No further information pertaining to numbers or examples of PA Cooperatives in Wales was sourced. One example of peer support networks for PAs is via the Personal Assistants Network Scotland website (no date), which as well as information and advice, learning courses, and PA vacancies, offers networking events for PAs, and opportunities '*for PAs to discuss their needs and share their experiences*'.

3.56 A joint initiative of the Scottish Government, Workers Education Association (WEA), and UNISON, the PA network Scotland invites PAs to sign up to access a '*supportive network of other care workers, have your voice heard, meet and work with other PAs, and share experiences'*. In addition, WEA (no date) advise the

project provides telephone and email support offering guidance, support and signposting, independent advice and support including legal advice, advocacy and mediation services, and online support via website and social media. No further information i.e., numbers of PAs registered with the network or details of networking events/forums, or feedback from PAs was identified in the search.

Alternative models of care

3.57 In a discussion paper for the Institute of Public Care, Watson (2020, p.4) refers to alternative models of care, describing below a 'sandbox project' undertaken by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) via the Regulators' Pioneer Fund to explore the development of regulatory standards for PAs, micro enterprises and umbrella organisations (or bodies). In particular, the project focusses on 'if and how' to regulate umbrella organisations that:

- recruit people who want to work as paid carers
- assess applicants' knowledge, skills and suitability
- match care and support workers with people who want care at home
- support these workers to gain new skills and knowledge as needed
- support workers to develop agreements on how care and support will be provided with the people they care for
- monitor the quality and safety of the service being provided

3.58 Such organisations create a new type of self-employed workforce that is rooted in local community connections and that is based upon long-term relationships between the person and their supporters. They also tend to use self-managed teams' principles and methods and have a strong interest in community networking, and asset and strengths-based approaches to support.

3.59 The Sandbox proposal – round 3: Community care at home teams (CQC, no date) is '*an approach to work collaboratively with providers that are delivering new and potentially impactful service models'* (p.1). Recognising the emergence of organisations that support PAs and other micro-providers, CQC acknowledge this is a relatively new way of enabling care delivery with numerous benefits. The sandbox aims to '*articulate more clearly what this model of care looks like and co-produce a definition of good with the sector*' (p.3). Anticipated benefits of the sandbox for PAs and employers (p.4) include:

- more highly personalised care at home, which is more likely to improve wellbeing and reduce hospital and care home admissions
- a way for people to enjoy a PA-like service without necessarily having to directly employ and manage their paid carers
- a PA-style option for people that includes regulatory oversight
- PAs have the option of working with or through an umbrella organisation that can provide them with business and professional support, sickness and leave cover, quality monitoring, and protection from inappropriate or excessive expectations

3.60 Round 3 of the regulatory sandbox was placed on hold during Covid-19 (CCQ, 2020). However, Watson (2020, p.4) suggests that to date, work undertaken via the project has been positive and is '*likely to yield a formal status for these organisations that will involve the adoption of a set of inspection standards becoming a validated part of the regulatory framework*'.

Summary of the literature

3.61 Beyond the key academic papers referred to in this review, there was limited academic publications that focused specifically on the key issues for the PA workforce from the views and perspectives of PAs themselves. Publications that specifically considered how variables such as age, ethnicity, gender impact on the lives, work and experiences of the PA workforce were not identified.

3.62 Nevertheless, academic literature that was sourced, along with a number of 'grey' literature publications has helped set the context for the study and contributed towards addressing aims 2 and 3 of the study by:

- identifying the key issues for the PA workforce (including the impact of Covid-19). These included:
    - Lack of recognition and visibility of the role
    - Occupational isolation and lack of support networks
    - Terms and conditions, and employment contracts
- identifying interesting and notable practice from within Wales and across the UK. Examples referred to:
    - PA recruitment

    - Promotion and awareness raising of the PA role
    - PA networks
- examining areas for improvement
- informing the online surveys and qualitative fieldwork

3.63 Some of the more significant findings from the review relate to the need to consider PAs as an important component of the wider health and social care system, and to ensure they are involved in shaping changes that affect their employment. The review has confirmed the importance of including consideration of PAs when developing strategic responses aimed at achieving a strong and sustainable social care workforce. Encouragingly, the review has revealed a number of initiatives designed to offer peer support for PAs, to raise awareness of the role, and support the recruitment and retention of PAs, which could be considered for application across Wales.

4. Findings: Wales-wide online surveys with PAs and employers

4.1 This chapter of the report presents the findings from the Wales-wide bilingual surveys of PAs and those employing PAs. The aim of the PA survey was to better understand the role they play, the skills they have, and the challenges they face[3]. The aim of the employer survey was to better understand their perspectives on employing PAs, and the issues associated with their employment.

4.2 Findings are organised into five areas:

- **employment relationship** – findings on how employers recruit PAs and how long PAs have worked for their employers.
- **funding and support** – findings on the funding and support received by PAs and their relationship with their employers.
- **terms and conditions** – findings on contractual arrangements, contracted hours, salary, and benefits.
- **training, development, and support** – findings on training, development and support offered by employers to PAs and qualifications held by PAs.
- **demographics** – findings on the demographics of survey respondents.

4.3 Each of the five areas includes an introduction with further detail. For each of these, we first present the findings from the employers' survey, then the PA survey. Rather than the findings being presented survey by survey, the results are presented by theme. This allows the reader to compare more easily.

4.4 The findings are presented on an all-Wales basis since some areas only had a very small number of responses. The response rate by LA area is provided in the demographics section (para. 4.62). Some questions were not answered by all respondents. The number of responses received per question is stated within the findings.

[3] Some of the PA survey questions were designed to obtain information about up to three people supported by each PA. Where we refer to the number of people who completed the survey, we will state the number of respondents instead of the number of responses. For example, one respondent may have given three responses to one question. Therefore, the number of responses may be higher than the number of respondents.

Employment relationships

4.5 An aim of the research was to understand the number of PAs employed by individuals, how employers find and recruit PAs, and how long PAs have been with their employer(s).

Employer survey

4.6 The first question in the employer survey was asked to better understand the employer's funding status. If respondents indicated that they did not employ a PA, then they were asked basic demographic questions only. **Table 5** shows that 75% of respondents used only their DP to employ a PA, while 24% used a combination of their DP and their own money.

Table 5: Which of the following describes your funding?

	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents (%)
I employ a Personal Assistant(s) using the Direct Payment from my local authority	120	75
I employ a Personal Assistant(s) using a combination of the Direct Payment from my local authority and my own money	39	24
I do not employ a Personal Assistant(s), but I do receive a Direct Payment from my local authority	2	1
Total number of responses	**161**	**100**

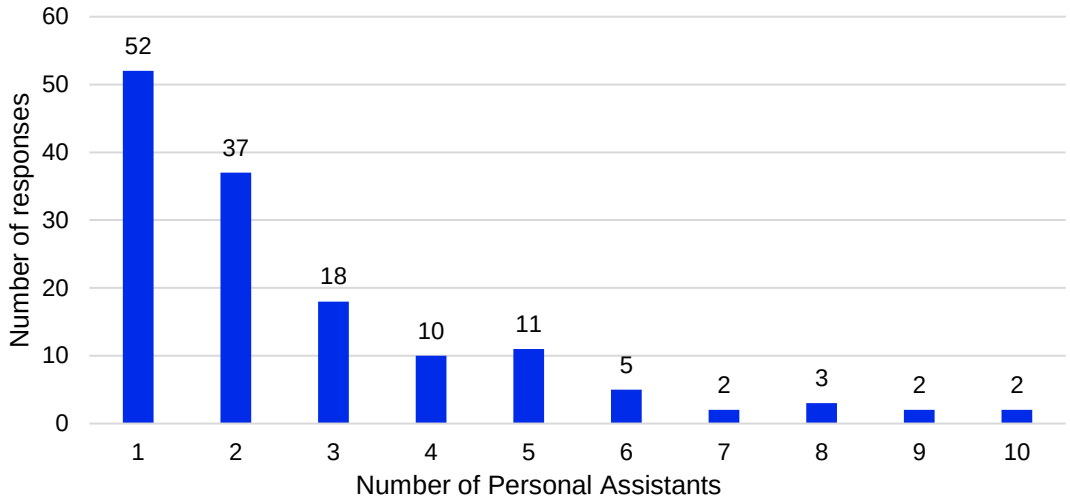
4.7 By establishing how an employer funds their PAs, it is also important to understand how many PAs each employer has. 52 (37%) respondents stated that they employed 1 PA, and 37 (26%) employed 2. However, the mean[4] (average) number[5]

[4] The mean is a type of average. It is calculated by summing all values and dividing by the number of values. It shows the arithmetic midpoint of a set of numbers.

[5] Information about the number of Personal Assistants each individual employs were collected over three subsequent questions. These questions asked the respondents to state how many Personal Assistants they employ by different categories. The totals for these questions should have been the same. However, in some cases, this number differed slightly, perhaps due to error (who's error?) or due to the employer not knowing the answer to a question. When this was the case, we took the total number of Personal Assistants employed to be the median of the totals calculated from each question.

of PAs employed is 2.68, and the median[6] number of PAs is 2. These numbers are based on 142[7] responses.

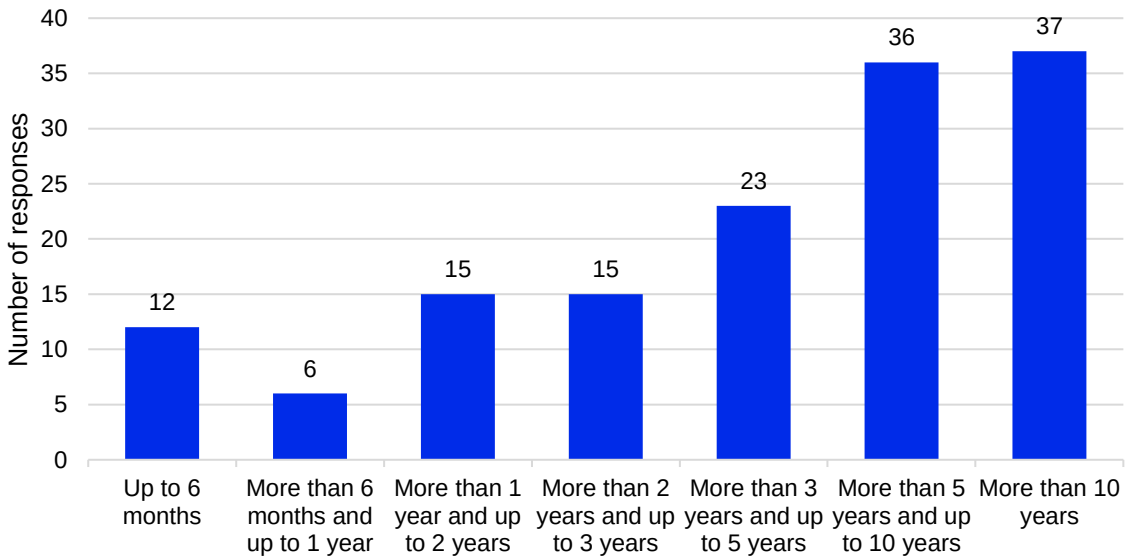
Figure 1: Number of Personal Assistants each employer has



4.8 The survey asked how long each employer had been employing **any** PAs. **Figure 2** shows that of the 144 responses received, people employing PAs for a period of more than 3 years account for 67% of the total responses. Each employer was also asked how long they had been employing their **current** PAs (shown in

4.9 **Figure** 9).

Figure 2: How long employers have been employing any Personal Assistants for support

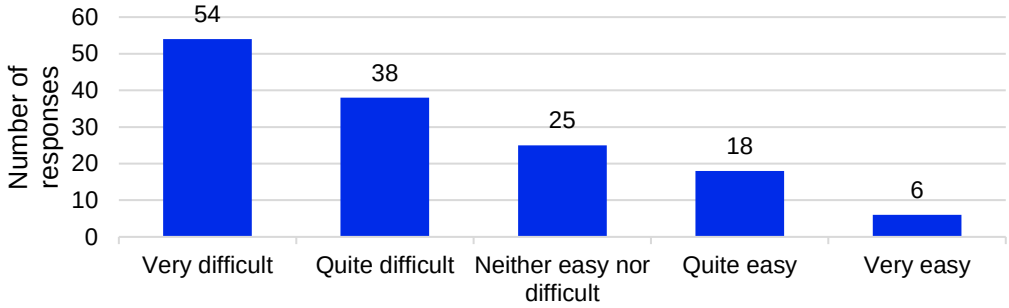


[6] The median is also a type of average. It is the middle value when all values are ranked from smallest to largest.

[7] There were 143 responses to the number of Personal Assistant questions, but one response was identified as an outlier and removed.

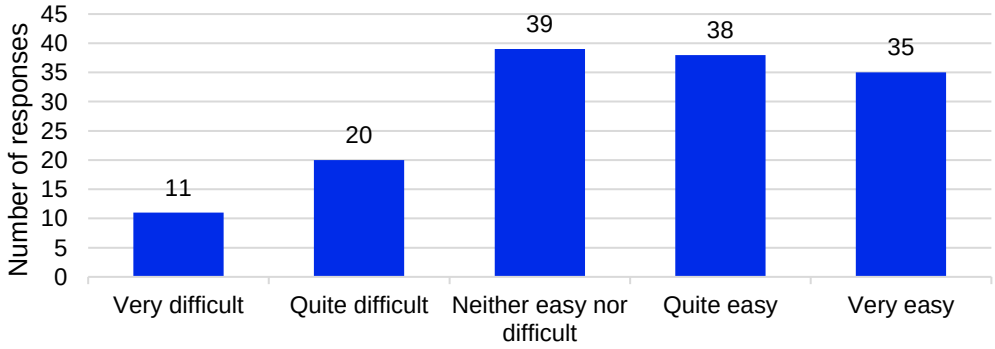
4.10 The research also aimed to understand how difficult employers found recruiting and retaining PAs. **Figure 3** shows that of the 141 responses received, 92 (65%) employers stated that they found it quite or very difficult to recruit PAs.

Figure 3: How difficult do you find recruiting Personal Assistants?



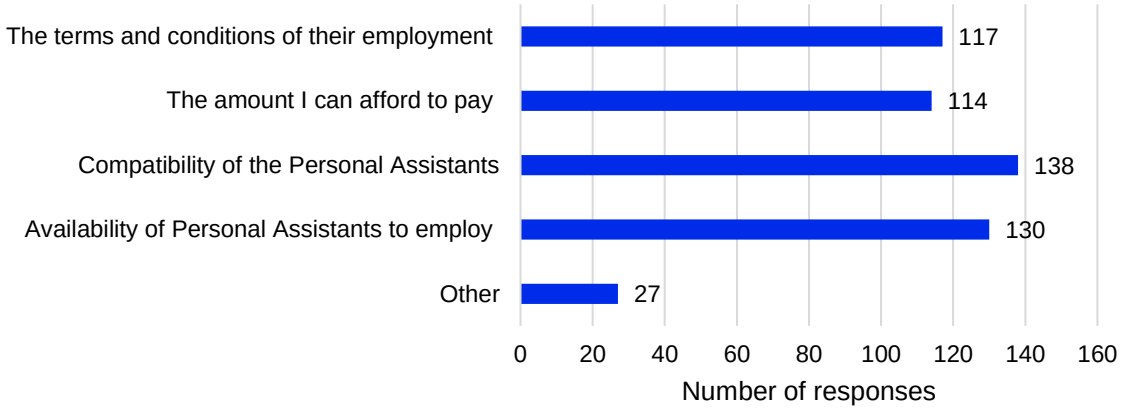
4.11 However, **Figure 4** shows that once PAs are recruited, over 50% of employers find retaining staff very or quite easy. Respondents were also asked how many PAs had left their employment in the last 12 months. Of the 144 employers who answered this question, 87 PAs were reported to have left their employment in the last 12 months. Therefore, the mean (average) number of PAs that left their employment in the last 12 months was 0.6. This can be interpreted as: for every 5 individual employers, 3 PAs left their employment in the last 12 months. The data also shows that over 50% of individual employers didn't lose any PAs in this period.

Figure 4: How difficult do you find retaining Personal Assistants (i.e., keeping staff)?



4.12 To try to understand some of the barriers that employers are faced with when recruiting and retaining staff, respondents were asked which factors were most important to them when recruiting and retaining PAs. The employers that responded indicate that the compatibility of PAs was the most important factor. This was followed closely by the availability of PAs to employ, the terms and conditions of the employment, and financial considerations.

Figure 5: How important are the following factors when recruiting and retaining Personal Assistants?



PA survey

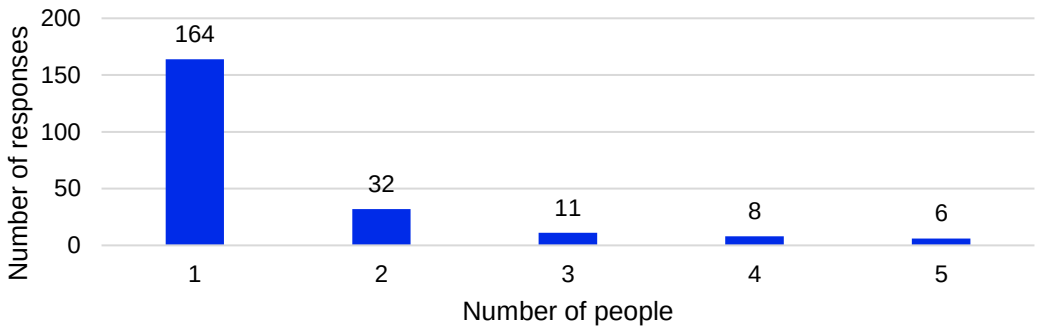
4.13 The first question in the PA survey was used to better understand the respondent's employment status. The majority of respondents stated that they were directly employed by the person they support.

Table 6: Which statement best describes your employment as a Personal Assistant?

	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents (%)
I am directly employed as a Personal Assistant to support at least one person. The person or people I support, or their immediate family, organises my pay, tax, and National Insurance.	202	91
I am self-employed to provide support to at least one person. I am registered for self-assessment with HMRC for the purposes of supporting people. The people I support pay me a wage, but I make arrangements for my own tax and NI contributions.	13	6
Both statements apply to me	6	3
Total number of responses	**221**	**100**

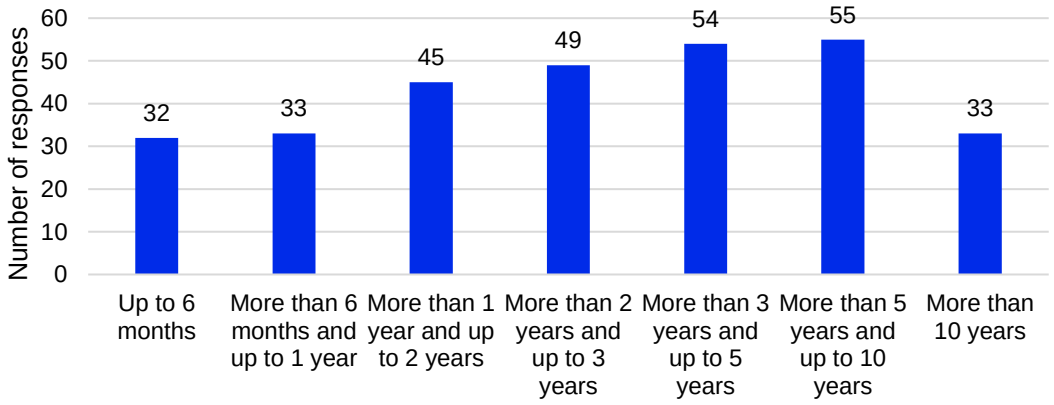
4.14 Respondents were asked how many people they supported in their role as a PA. Out of the 221 responses received, the mean (average) number of people that each PA support is **1.46**. 164 (74%) respondents stated that they only support **1** person (this statistic is also the median figure).

Figure 6: How many people do you support in your role as a Personal Assistant?



4.15 The survey asked how long each respondent has been working as a PA. 301 responses were received. Figure 7 shows that there was little variation between the number of responses for each option. This ranged from 32 (11%) responses to 55 (18%) responses. The most popular (modal) option was more than 5 years and up to 10 years, at 55 responses.

Figure 7: How long have you been a Personal Assistant for each person you currently support?



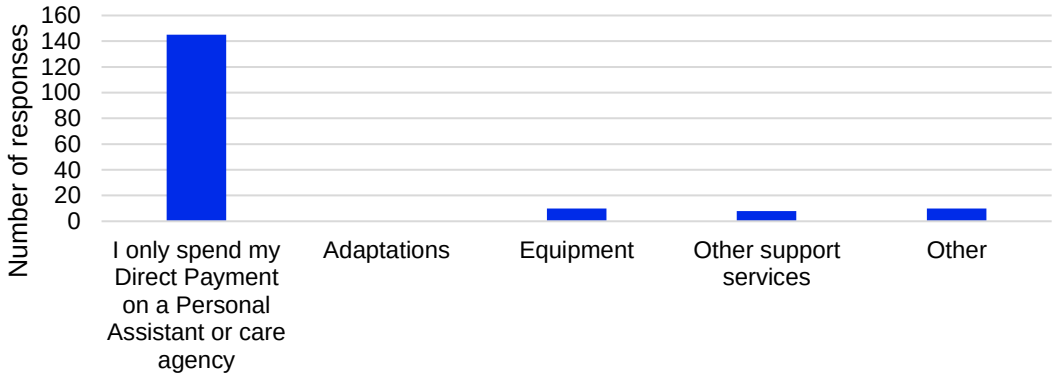
Funding and support

4.16 An important part of this research is to better understand the funding for PAs, the support they receive and the relationship they have with their employer. A large part of both surveys focused on this. Findings are provided below.

Employer survey

4.17 A DP is not only used for PA. Therefore, one question asked employers what they spent their DP on, other than hours of support from a PA(s) or care agency. The question was multiple choice and received 159 responses. 145 (91%) of respondents stated that they spent their DP on hours of support only. This was significantly higher than any other response.

Figure 8: What do you spend your Direct Payment on?



4.18 Employers were asked how many hours of support they received each week. **Table 7** shows that the majority of hours of care are provided by PAs. The data shows that the number of hours funded by DPS is higher than the number of hours funded by the employer's own money.

Table 7: How many hours of paid support do you have in a typical week?

		From Personal Assistants	From care agencies	From other arrangements
Funded by Direct Payment	Mean	27	10	25
	Median	14	4	4
Funded by own money	Mean	18	0	1
	Median	5	0	0
Both funding streams	Mean	29	1	2
	Median	12	0	0

4.19 The support required by individual employers can differ greatly from person to person. To better understand the support that the respondents receive, employers were asked what types of support they needed from their PA(s).

4.20

4.21

4.22 Table 8 shows that of the 158 respondents, 106 (67%) stated they needed support with their life as a disabled person, and the same number (67%) said they needed support with socialising. Other options with a high number of responses included support with personal hygiene, going to events, and getting dressed.

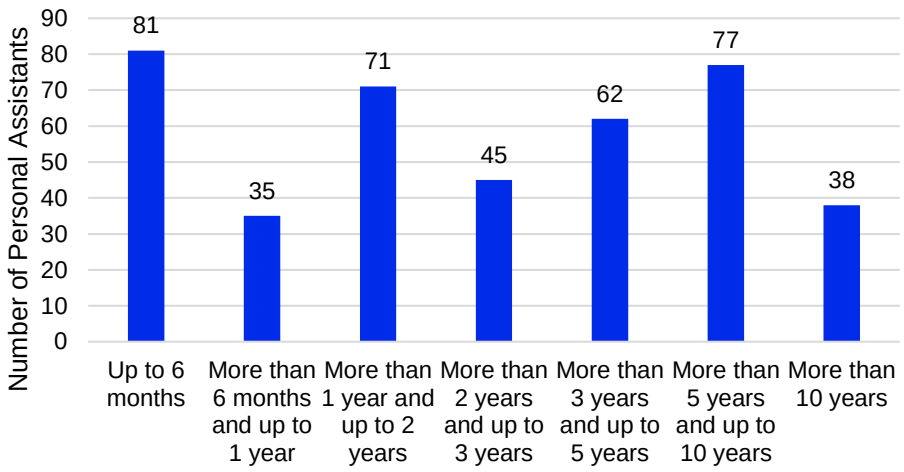
Table 8: Which of the following do your Personal Assistants support you with?

	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents (%)
Support with my life as a disabled person	106	67
Support with socialising	106	67
Support with personal hygiene, like washing and using the toilet	101	64
Support going to events	96	61
Support with getting dressed	90	57
Support with other health related tasks, like collecting prescriptions and GP appointments	85	54
Support with mobility and assisting me to move	82	52
Support to live an independent lifestyle	78	49
Support to take medicine	77	49
Support with eating and drinking	75	47
Support with communication	74	47
Support with household duties, like shopping, cleaning, and gardening	73	46
Support with my cognitive impairments or learning difficulties	63	40
Support with problems with my mental health, like anxiety and depression	62	39
Support emotionally through the relationship developed over time	55	35
Support to learn new skills	43	27
Support with sensory impairments like hearing and sight loss	27	17
Support with getting to and attending work including transport and travelling, and support in the workplace	15	9
Support to attend school, college or university	12	8
Support with getting into work including developing employment skills, job seeking / applications	10	6
Support for someone else	10	6
Other	9	6
Support to take up training opportunities	7	4

4.23 In order to understand retention of their PA(s), the survey asked employers how long they had been employing their current PA(s).

4.24 **Figure** 9 shows that 409 PAs were employed by the 142 employers that responded. Of these, there were 81 PAs that had been employed for up to 6 months and 77 that had been employed between 5 and 10 years.

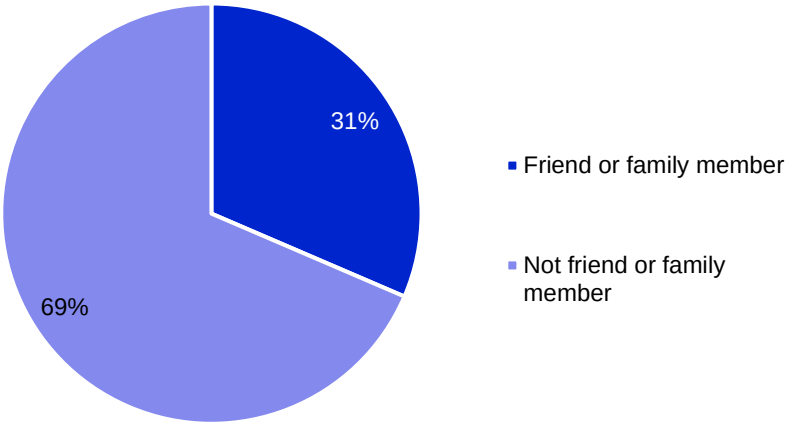
Figure 9: How many of your current Personal Assistants have you employed for each length of time?



4.25 In order to understand the relationship between the employer and their PA(s), employers were asked a series of questions.

4.26 Error! Reference source not found. shows that 337 PAs were employed by the 137 e mployers that responded when asked about their relationship with their PA(s). The data shows that 106 (31%) of these PAs were a friend or family member when employed.

Figure 10: When you hired them, how many of your current Personal Assistants were a friend or family member, or neither?



4.27

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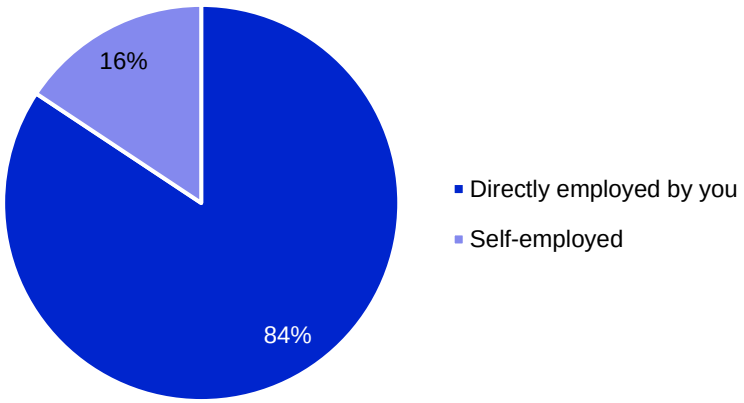
4.29

4.30 Figure 11 shows that 338 PAs were employed by the 135 employers that responded when asked about the employment status of their PA(s). The data shows that 285 (84%) of these PAs were directly employed by the respondent.

Figure 11: How many of your current Personal Assistants are employed by you or self-employed?



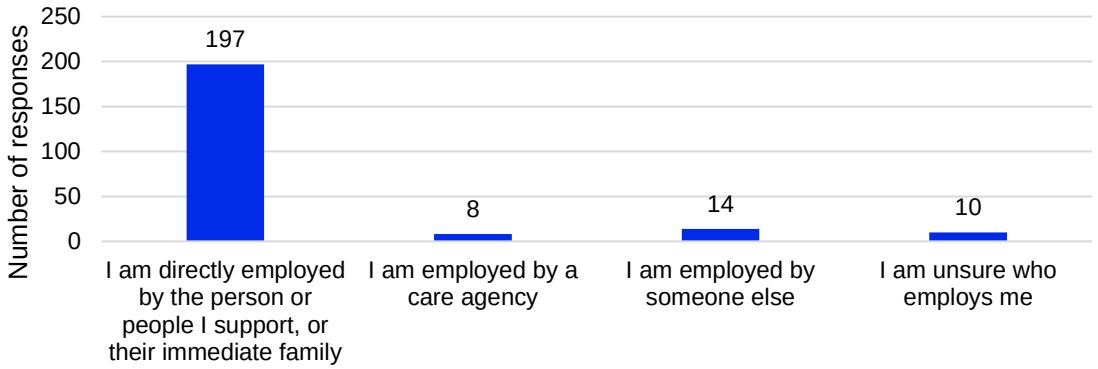
PA survey

4.31 PAs were also asked questions to help understand how the employers funded them. Out of 297 responses received, a total of 245 (82%) said the person they support uses DPs provided by the LA. A further 26 (9%) stated they used a combination of a DP and self-funding, while 13 (4%) stated they were self-funding only. 13 (4%) respondents were unsure how the support was funded.

4.32 Questions were also asked of PAs to better understand the relationship between the PAs and their employers. PAs were asked who they are employed by.

4.33 **Figure 12** shows that of the 229 responses received, 197 (86%) stated they are employed directly by the person or people they support.

Figure 12: Who employs you as a Personal Assistant?



4.34 14 (6%) stated they are employed by someone else, of which the majority specified that they are employed by the LA or DP provider.

4.35 PAs were also asked if they were a family member or friend of their employer at the time of hiring. Of the 305 responses received, 212 (70%) stated they were not a family member or friend when employed. Related responses from employers can be seen in Error! Reference source not found..

4.36 To understand the duties each PA was expected to perform within their role, they were asked what roles they fulfil for the person or people they supported. Error! R eference source not found. (overleaf) shows that of the 303 responses received, there were 218 (72%) employers supported with their life as a disabled person, 216 (71%) supported with socialising and 215 (71%) supported emotionally. Related responses from employers can be seen in

4.37

4.38

4.39 Table 8.

4.40 A further aim of the research was to understand if the respondents had any other roles other than as a PA. Two questions were included asking if respondents had any other jobs within social care or outside of social care.

4.41 There was a total of 195 responses to the question relating to other employment within social care (Figure 13). Of these, 151 (77%) said they have no other jobs in

social care, 14 (7%) stated they work as a domiciliary or home care worker, 3 (2%) stated they work in a care home and 30 (15%) stated other.

Figure 13: Other than as a Personal Assistant, do you have any other jobs that are part of the social care workforce?

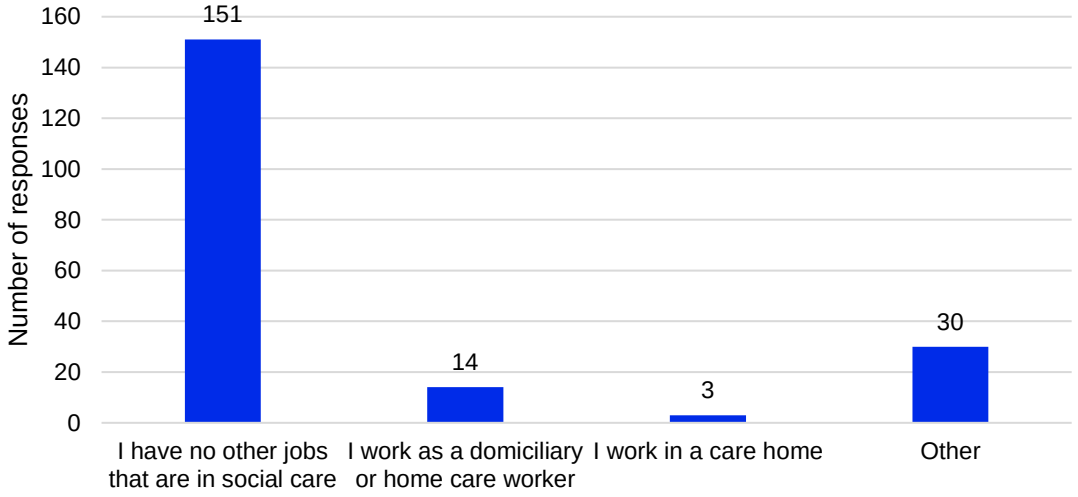
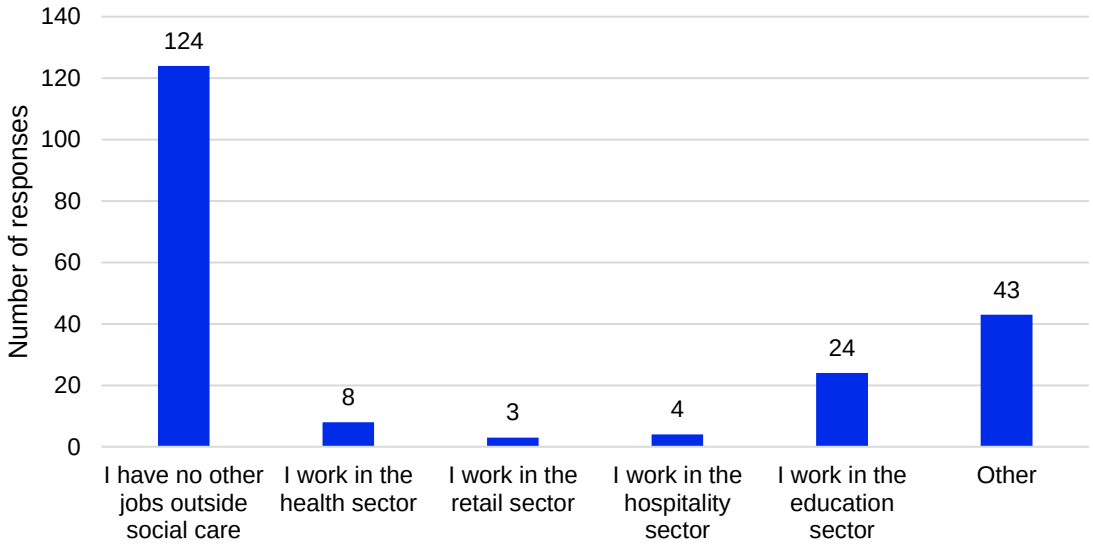


Table 9: Which of the following roles do you fulfil for the person or people you support as a Personal Assistant?

	Number of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Supporting them with their life as a disabled person	218	72
Supporting them with socialising	216	71
Supporting them emotionally through the relationship you develop over time	215	71
Supporting them going to events	201	66
Supporting them with household duties, like shopping, cleaning, and gardening	187	62
Supporting them to live an independent lifestyle	186	61
Supporting them with mobility and assisting them to move	179	59
Supporting them with personal hygiene, like washing and using the toilet	178	59
Supporting them with communication	178	59
Supporting them with other health related tasks, like collecting prescriptions and GP appointments	167	55
Supporting them with their cognitive impairments or learning difficulties	162	53
Supporting them with getting dressed	161	53
Supporting them with problems with their mental health, like anxiety and depression	144	48
Supporting them with eating and drinking	142	47
Supporting them to take medicines	134	44
Supporting them to learn new skills	130	43
Supporting them with sensory impairments like hearing and sight loss	107	35
Supporting them with getting to and attending work, including transport and travelling, and support in the workplace	33	11
Supporting them with getting into work including developing employment skills, job seeking / applications	30	10
Supporting them to take up training opportunities	29	10
Supporting them to attend school, college or university	28	9
Other	26	9

4.42 **Figure 14** shows that there were 201 responses about other employment outside of social care. Of these, 124 (62%) stated they have no other jobs outside social care and 24 (12%) stated they work in the education sector.

Figure 14: Do you have any other jobs that are not part of the social care workforce?



Terms and conditions

4.43 Although the PA workforce is unregulated, DP recipients are required to meet their statutory employment duties. It was therefore important to better understand the terms and conditions of the employment of PAs. This included their contract status, contracted hours, salary, and benefits.

Employer survey

4.44 Employers were asked if their PAs had an employment contract. Out of the 138 responses received, 109 (79%) respondents answered yes, 16 (12%) answered no and 13 (9%) were unsure. Related responses from PAs can be seen in **Figure 19**.

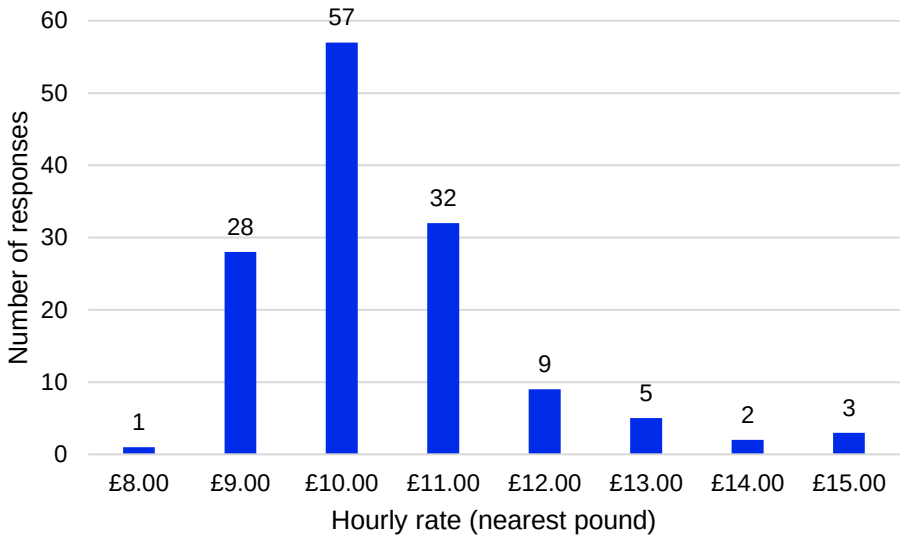
4.45 Employers were also asked to enter the basic hourly rate that they paid their PAs. Out of the 137 responses received, the mean (average) hourly salary paid to a PA was £10.30. The highest salary paid was £15.00, and the lowest was £8.00.

4.46

4.47

4.48 Figure 15 shows that the most common (modal) response was £10.00 (to the nearest pound), with over 85% of respondents stating that they paid their PAs between £8.50 and £11.50 per hour. Related responses from PAs can be seen in **Table 11**.

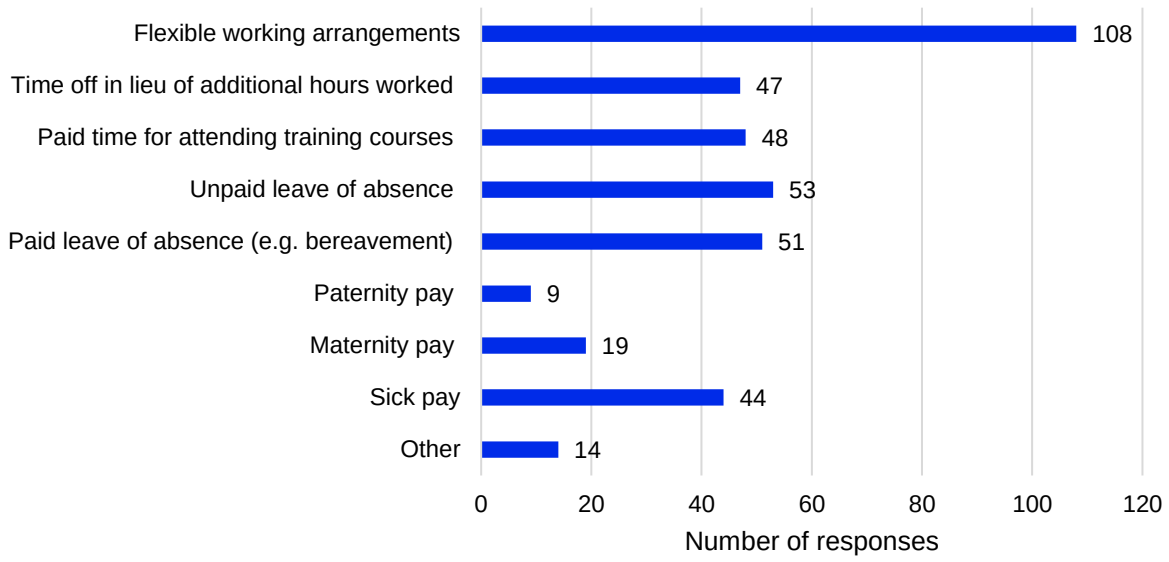
Figure 15: What is the basic hourly rate you pay your Personal Assistant(s)?



4.49 Employers were asked if they offered any other employment benefits to their PAs. 137 responses were received. Employers were able to select “I’m sure that I offer this”, “I’m not sure if I offer this or not”, or “I’m sure that I don’t offer this”, for each option. PAs were asked a similar question. Related responses from PAs can be seen in **Figure 23**.

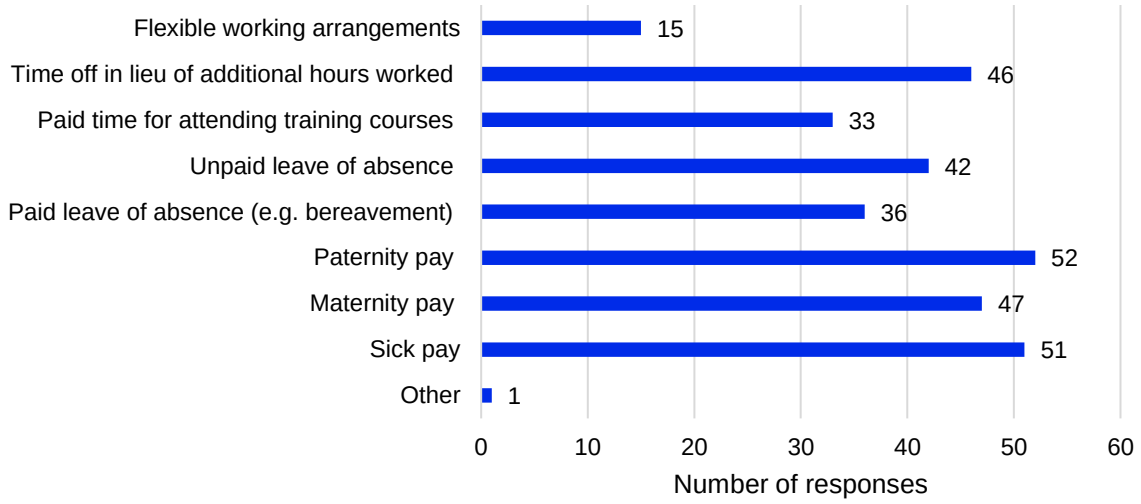
4.50 **Figure 16** shows that 108 (79%) respondents stated that they were sure they offered flexible working arrangements. Out of the 137 responses received, only 9 (7%) stated they were sure they offered paternity pay.

Figure 16: Benefits employers were sure they offer



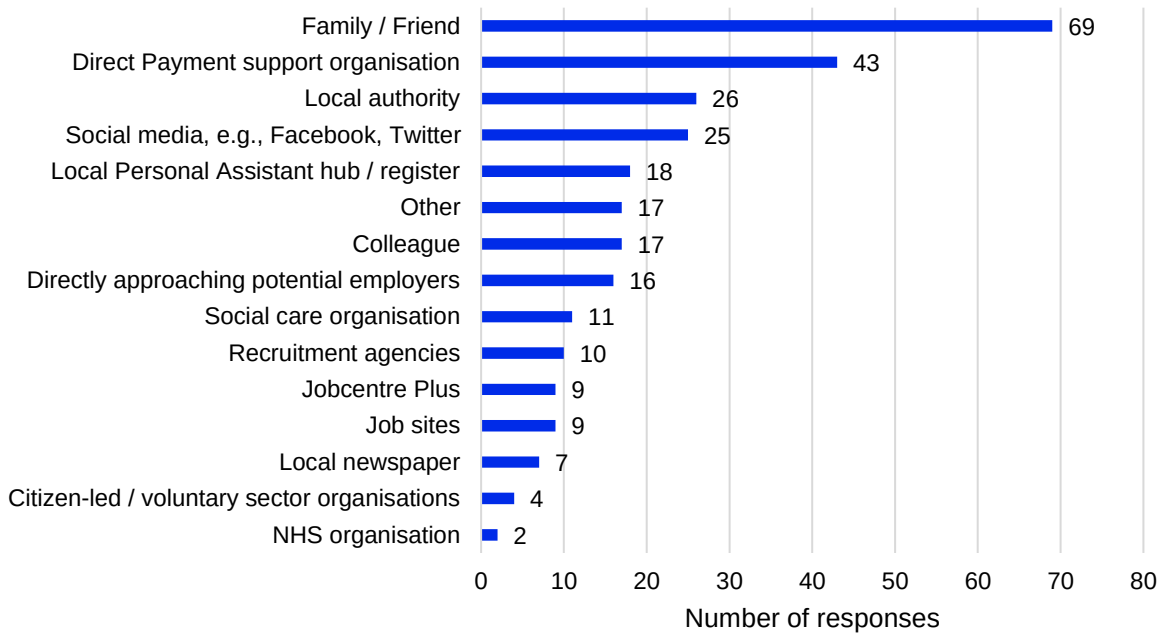
4.51 **Figure 17** shows the number of respondents who selected unsure when asked what benefits they offered their PAs. Only 15 (11%) respondents were unsure whether they offered flexible working to their PAs. Over 24% respondents were unsure whether they offered most of the benefits asked about.

Figure 17: Benefits employers were <u>unsure</u> whether they offer



4.52 Employers were asked where they find / advertise for new PA roles. **Figure 18** shows that there were 137 responses, 69 (50%) selected family / friend. This was followed by DP support organisations, with 43 (31%) responses.

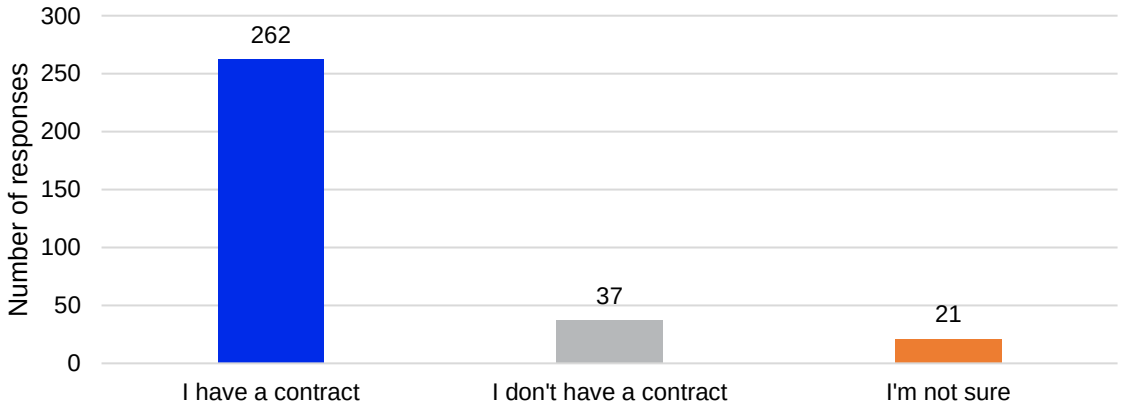
Figure 18: Where do you find / advertise for new Personal Assistant roles?



PA survey

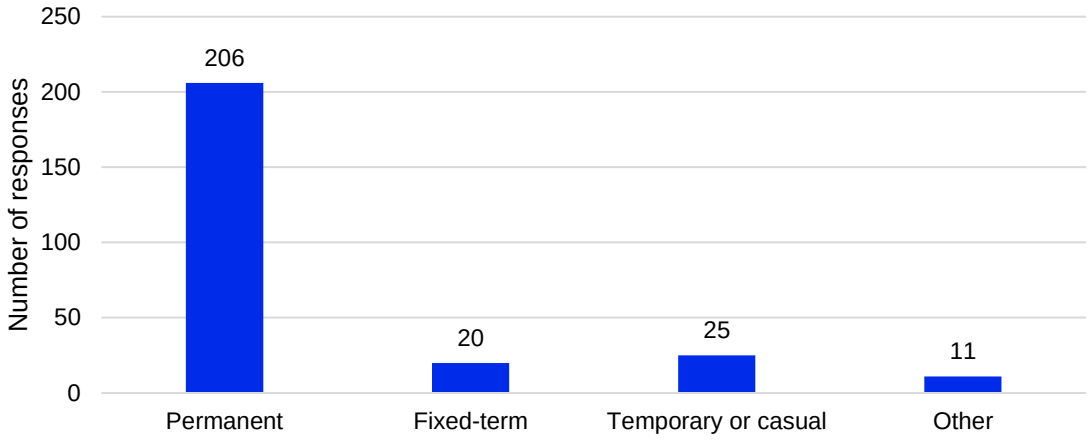
4.53 It was important to also obtain the perspective of PAs on the terms and conditions of their employment. The survey asked what type of contracts they had with the person or people they supported. As shown in **Figure 19**, of the 320 responses, 262 (82%) indicated they have a contract. We saw confusion about the terms of employment from the PAs as 21 (7%) responses were unclear whether they have a contract with the person they support.

Figure 19: Do you have a contract?



4.54 **Figure 20** shows that of the 262 that had a contract, 206 (79%) stated they had a permanent contract.

Figure 20: What contract type do you have?



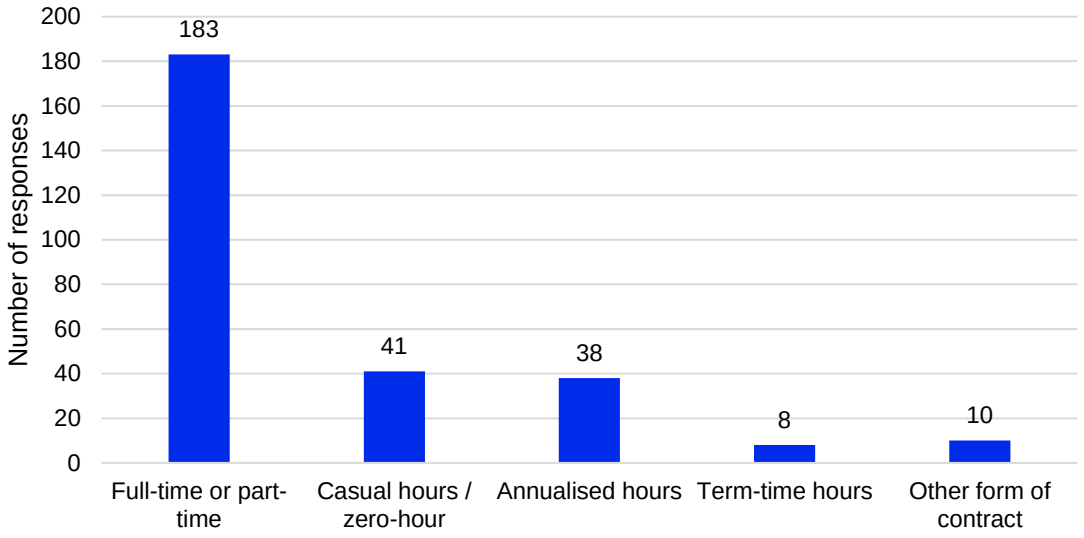
4.55 PAs were also asked what type of hours was stated in the contract(s) they have with the person or people they supported.

4.56

4.57

4.58 Figure 21 shows that of the 280 responses received, 183 (65%) stated their hours were full-time or part time.

Figure 21: What type of hours are stated in the contract(s) you have as a Personal Assistant with each person you support?



4.59 PAs were then asked about the number of contracted and uncontracted hours they worked in each of their roles.

4.60 **Table 10** shows that the maximum number of **contracted hours** each week for all relationship types (i.e., whether being a family member, friend or not) per job was 72[8], with the minimum per job being 0[9]. The mean (average) number of hours for all relationship types per job was 14.1. The results show some variation in contracted hours between different relationship types.

4.61 PAs were asked how many **hours of paid overtime** they worked each week for each person they supported. **Table 10** shows that the maximum number of overtime hours for all relationship types per job was 18 and the minimum number was 0. The mean (average) number of overtime hours for all relationship types per job was 1.5.

4.62 PAs were asked how many additional **hours of voluntary support** they provided each week in their role. **Table 10** shows that the maximum number of voluntary support hours for all relationship types per job was 120 and the minimum number of hours was 0. The mean (average) number of voluntary support hours for all relationship types per job was 5.

Table 10: Breakdown of hours by relationship type when they were employed

[8] Even though this number appears high it was not identified as an outlier as there were other responses with similar numbers.
[9] Zero-hour contract.

		I was a family member or friend	I was not a family member or friend	Any relationship types
Contracted hours	Mean	17.1	13.0	14.1
	Median	15	11	12
	Minimum	3	0	0
	Maximum	51	72	72
Paid overtime	Mean	1.3	1.7	1.5
	Median	0	0	0
	Minimum	0	0	0
	Maximum	18	16	18
Voluntary support	Mean	12.4	1.0	5.0
	Median	2	0	0
	Minimum	0	0	0
	Maximum	120	10	120

4.63 PAs were asked to indicate the basic hourly rate they received for their role. **Table 11** shows that the maximum hourly rate for all relationship types per job was £25.00 and the minimum was £7.00. The mean (average) hourly rate for all relationship types per job was £10.46.

Table 11: Breakdown of salary by relationship type when they were employed

	I was a family member or friend	I was not a family member or friend	Any relationship types
Mean	£10.30	£10.53	£10.46
Median	£10.00	£10.00	£10.00
Minimum	£7.00	£8.00	£7.00
Maximum	£25.00	£21.00	£25.00

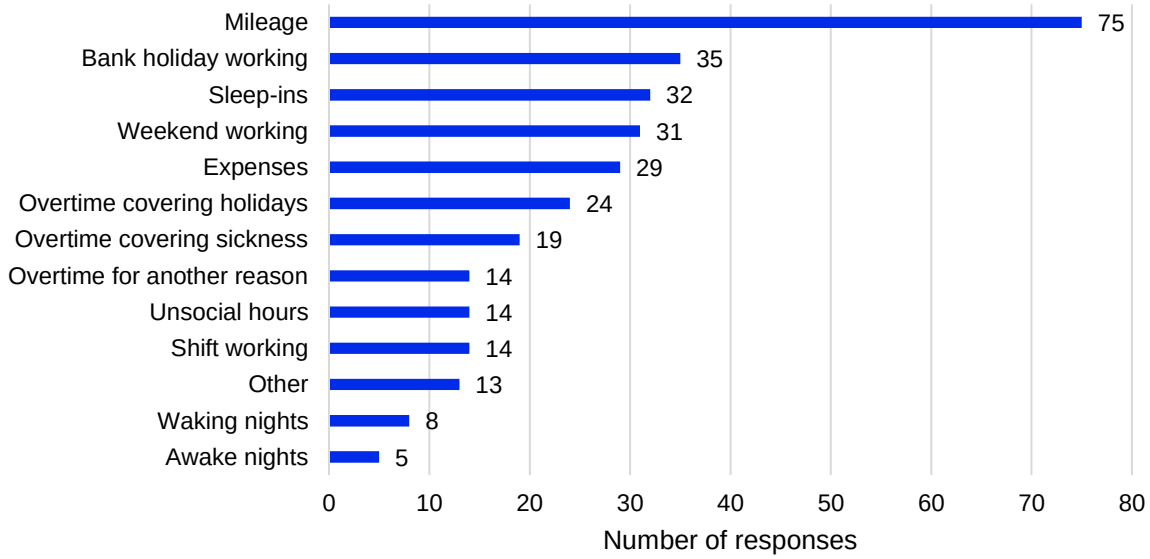
4.64 PAs were asked to select any aspect for which they received extra rates of pay in their role. Respondents were encouraged to select all aspects that apply. Therefore, the number of responses for each choice selected will not sum to the total number of responses.

4.65

4.66

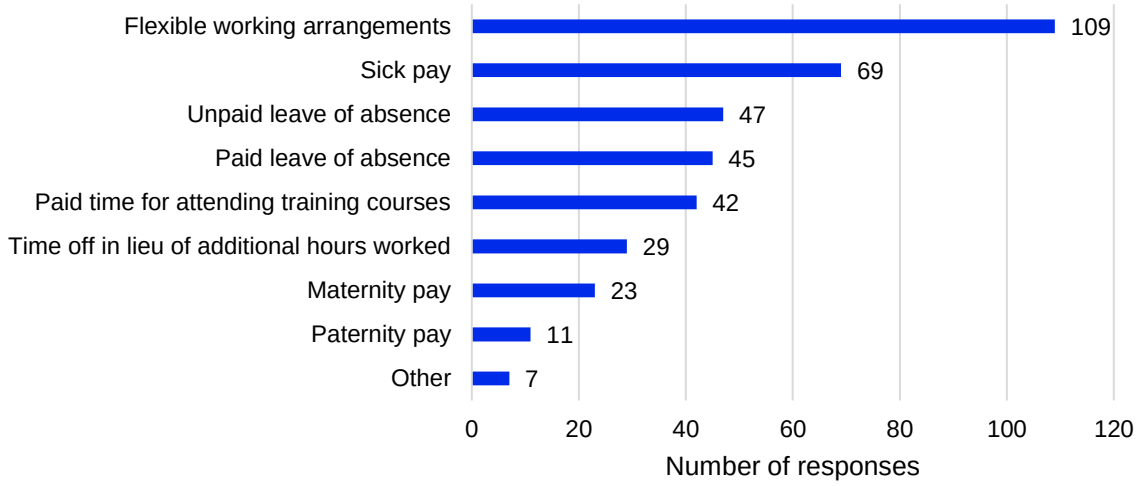
4.67 Figure 22 shows that of the 147 responses received, the most common was mileage at 75 (51%). This was followed by bank holiday working at 35 (24%).

Figure 22: Which aspects do you receive extra rates of pay in your role(s) as a Personal Assistant



4.68 PAs were asked if they are offered any additional benefits, for example, flexible working or sick pay. Respondents were able to choose whether they were "sure they were offered it", "unsure whether they were offered it" or "sure they were not offered it". **Figure 23** shows that of the 190 responses received, 109 (57%) stated they were offered flexible working arrangements as an additional benefit, which was the most common response.

Figure 23: Benefits Personal Assistants were sure they are offered

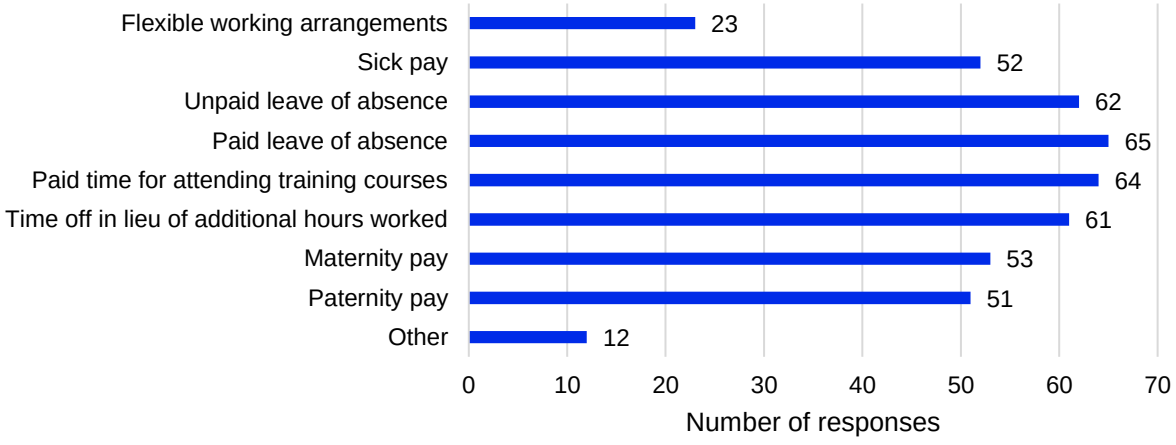


4.69

4.70

4.71 **Figure** 24 shows the number of respondents who selected unsure when asked what benefits they receive.

Figure 24: Benefits Personal Assistants were unsure whether they are offered

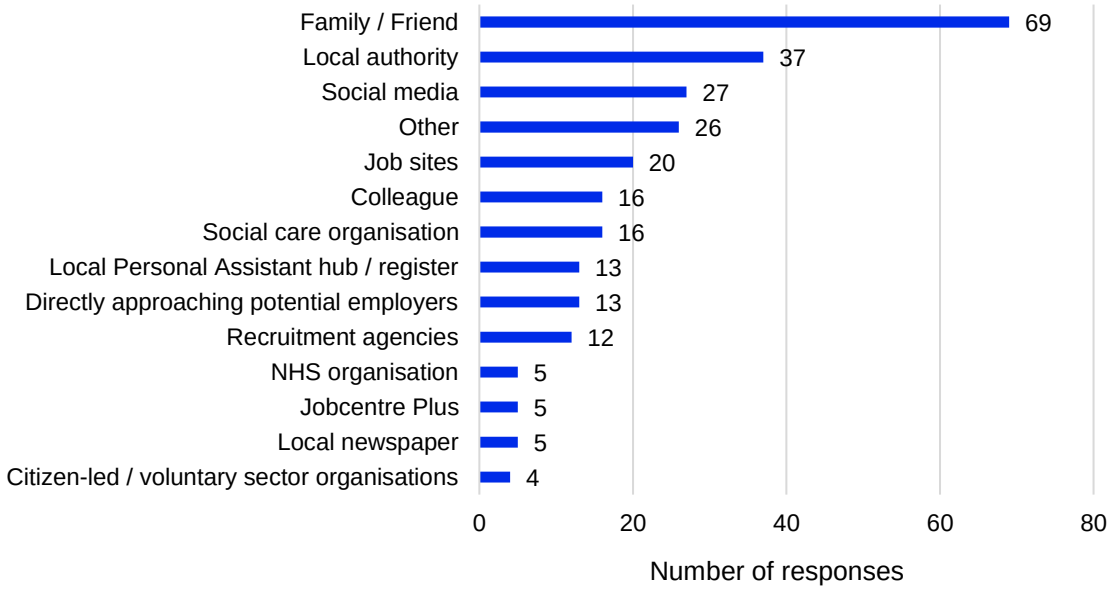


4.72 23 (12%) respondents were unsure whether they were offered flexible working which was much less than the number of people who were unsure about the other benefits listed in the question. Over 26% respondents were unsure whether they were offered the other benefits listed in the question.

4.73 PAs were asked how many days they had off work due to sickness in the past 12 months. There were 197 responses received, with the maximum number of days being 160 days off work due to sickness. The minimum was 0 days. The mean (average) number of days was 2.1.

4.74 PAs were also asked how they had heard about new PA roles (**Figure 25**).

Figure 26: How Personal Assistants hear about new roles



4.75 It shows that of the 176 responses received, 69 (39%) stated that they hear about new PA roles through a family / friend. This option was almost twice as high as any other choice selected.

Training, development and support

4.76 Appropriate training and development are vital to ensure the workforce has the necessary skills. This section helps paint a clearer picture of the level and type of training that PAs and their employers receive.

Employer survey

4.77 Employers were asked what types of organisations or services they used to access training and development opportunities for their PA(s). **Figure 27** shows that of the 137 responses received, 75 (38%) respondents had not tried to access training for their staff. Of those who had, LA-run courses were the most common way of accessing training and development for their PAs.

Figure 27: What types of organisations or services have you used to access training development opportunities for your Personal Assistant(s)?

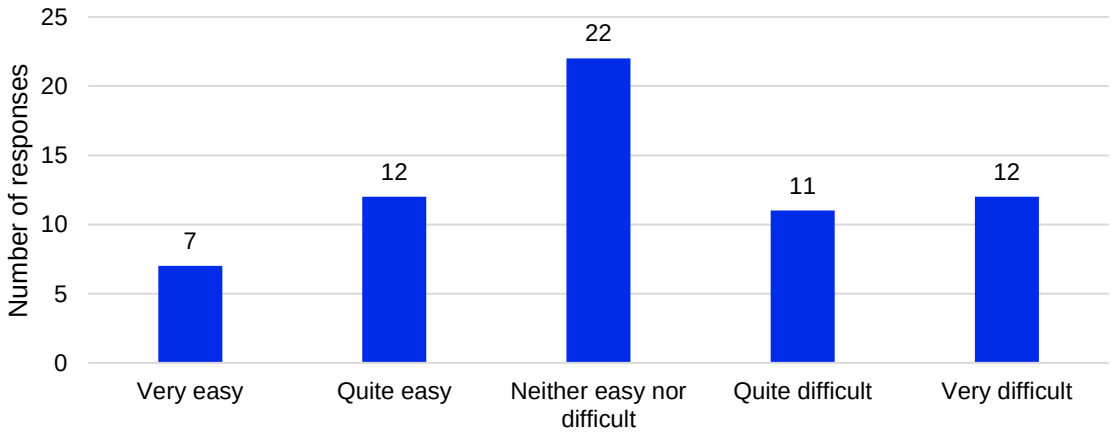
4.78 Employers were asked how easy they found it to arrange training and development opportunities for their PAs.

4.79

4.80

4.81 Figure 28 shows that of the 64 responses received, 22 (34%) said neither easy nor difficult. 23 (36%) said either quite difficult or very difficult, while 19 (30%) said either quite easy or very easy.

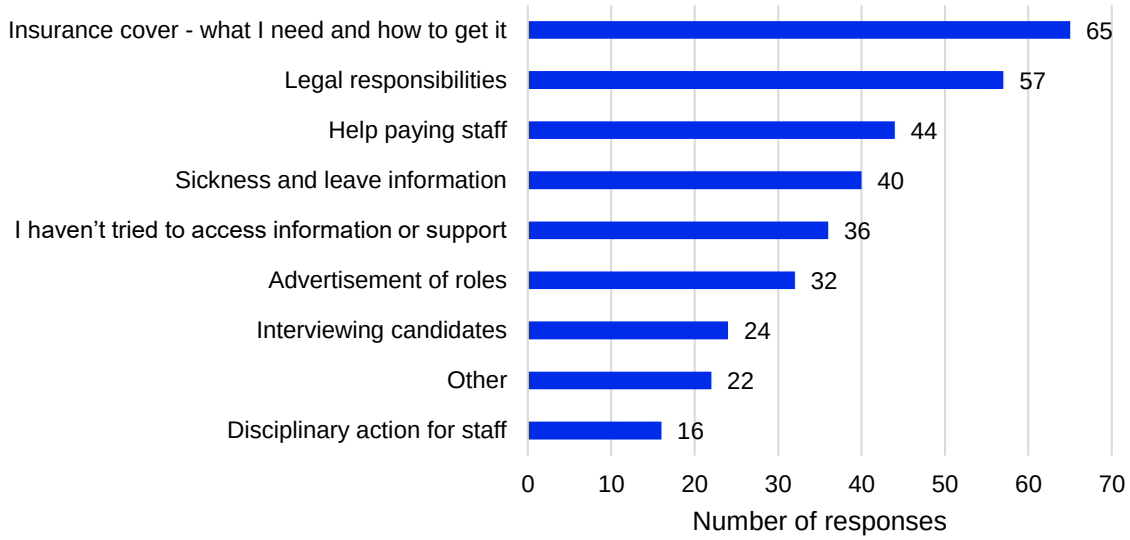
Figure 28: How easy do you find arranging training and development opportunities for your Personal Assistants?



4.82 Employers were asked what information and support they have accessed to help in their role as an employer. **Figure 29** shows that of the 138 responses received, 65

(47%) stated they have accessed help on insurance cover, which was the highest response, and 16 (12%) stated they have accessed help for disciplinary action for staff, which was the lowest response.

Figure 29: What information and support have you accessed to help you in your role as an employer?

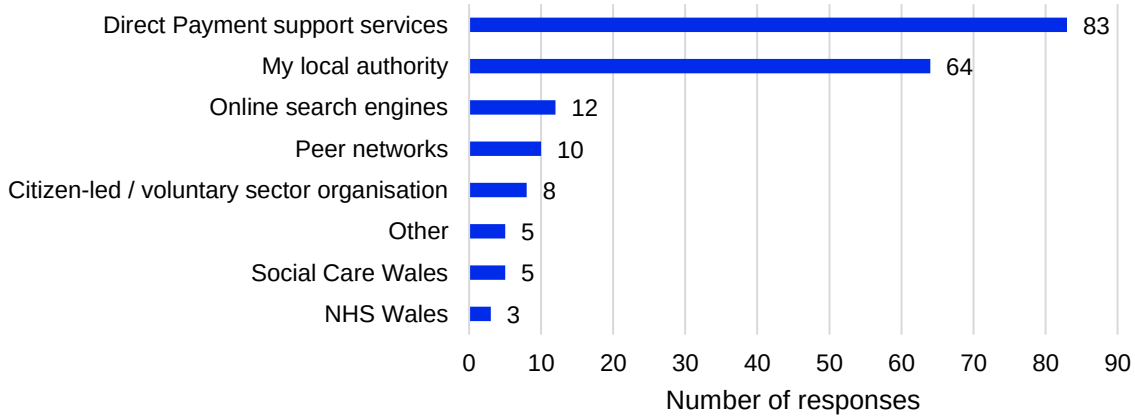


4.83 Employers were asked which organisations or services they have used to access information.

4.84

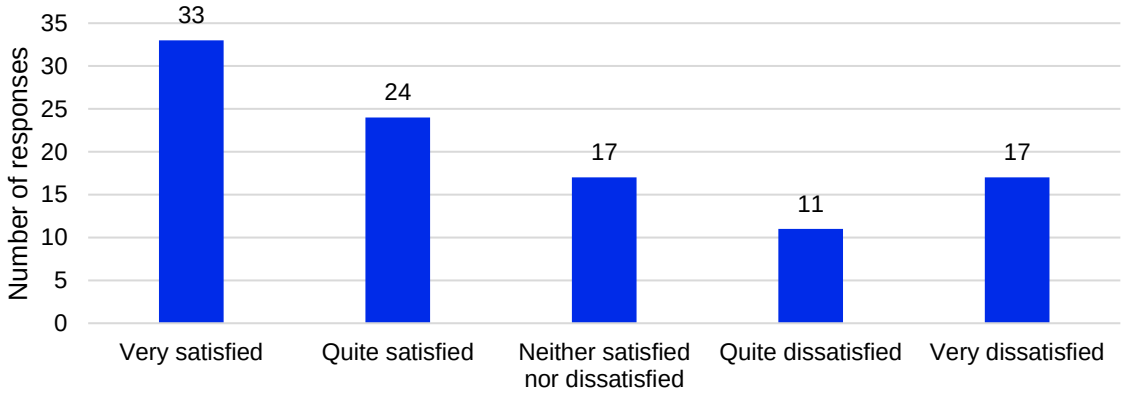
4.85 **Figure** 30 shows that of the 101 responses received, 83 (82%) stated that they have used DP support services and 64 (63%) stated they had used their LA to access information.

Figure 30: Which organisations or services have you used to access information and support to help you in your role as an employer?



4.86 Employers were asked how satisfied they were with the level of information and support they receive to help them in their role as an employer. **Figure 31** shows that of the 102 responses received, 17 (17%) respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. 57 (56%) were either quite satisfied or very satisfied and 28 (28%) were either quite dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Figure 31: How satisfied are you with the level of information and support you receive to help you in your role as an employer?



PA survey

4.87 PAs were asked whether they had received any training in their role. Of the 203 responses received, 67 (33%) said they had received training, while the remaining 136 (67%) said they had not. 64 PAs responded when asked what areas they had received training in that were relevant to their current role.

4.88

4.89 **Table** 12 shows that of the 64 respondents, 41 (64%) stated they have had training in moving and handling.

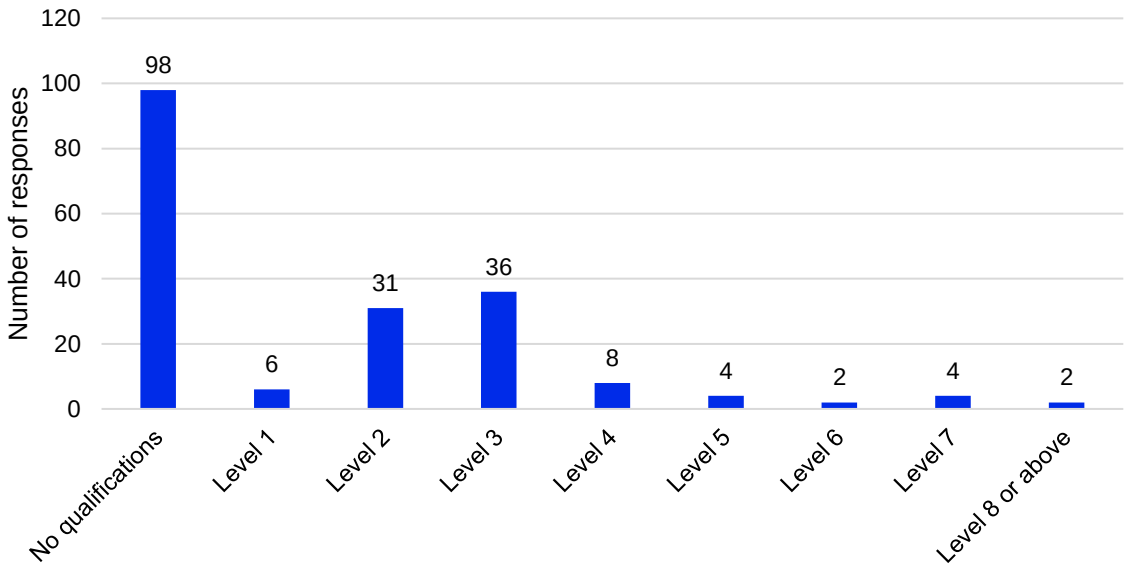
Table 12: Which areas have you received some training in that are relevant to your current role(s) as a Personal Assistant.

	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents (%)
Moving and Handling	41	64
First Aid	34	53
Health and Safety	34	53
Safeguarding	31	48
Food safety and catering	30	47
Emergency First Aid awareness	28	44

	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents (%)
Medication safe handling and awareness	25	39
Confidentiality / GDPR	24	38
Infection Control	24	38
Dignity, Respect, Person Centred care	23	36
Personal hygiene support	22	34
Duty of care	21	33
COSHH	20	31
Continence Care	19	30
Fire safety	19	30
Autism	18	28
Communication skills	17	27
Dementia	17	27
Positive behaviour and support	17	27
Activity provision / well-being	15	23
Equality, diversity and human rights training	15	23
Skin care and pressure sore prevention	15	23
Nutrition and hydration	13	20
Whistleblowing and raising concerns	13	20
Epilepsy	12	19
Mental Capacity and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards	12	19
Diabetes	11	17
Mental health / distress	11	17
Complaints handling / conflict resolution	10	16
Control and restraint	10	16
Learning impairment	8	13
Sensory impairment	8	13
Leadership and Management	7	11
Palliative support	6	9
Stroke	6	9
Supervision / performance management	6	9
Other	6	9
Children’s / young people’s related training	5	8
Physical impairment	5	8

4.90 PAs were asked about their highest level of social care qualifications. **Figure 32** shows that of the 191 responses received, 98 (51%) stated they had no social care qualifications. Of those with a qualification, Level 3 was the highest level of social care qualification referred to (19%).

Figure 32: What is the highest level of your social care qualification(s)?



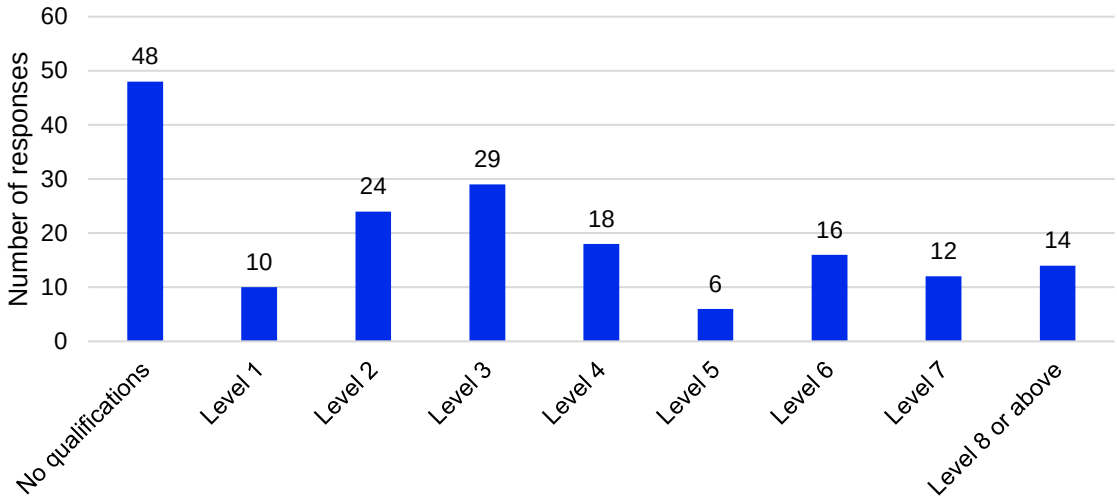
4.91 PAs were asked about their highest level of qualification in a non-social care related subject.

4.92

4.93

4.94 Figure 33 shows that of the 177 responses received, 48 (27%) PAs stated that they had no non-social care qualifications. 29 (16%) stated their highest non-social care qualification is Level 3.

Figure 33: What is the highest level of your non-social care qualification(s)?



4.95 Of the 194 PAs who responded when asked if they feel equipped to do their job, 174 (90%) agreed that they do feel equipped. 10 (5%) neither agreed nor disagreed and 10 (5%) disagreed.

4.96 Of the 195 PAs who responded when asked if they feel valued in their role, 164 (84%) agreed that they do feel valued. 13 (7%) neither agreed nor disagreed and 18 (9%) disagreed.

4.97 Of the 193 PAs who responded when asked if they enjoy being a PA, 182 (94%) agreed that they do enjoy their role. 7 (4%) neither agreed nor disagreed and 4 (2%) disagreed.

Demographics

4.98 Finally, the research aimed to better understand the demographics of the employers and their PAs. The demographics section on both surveys were optional10.

Employer survey

4.99

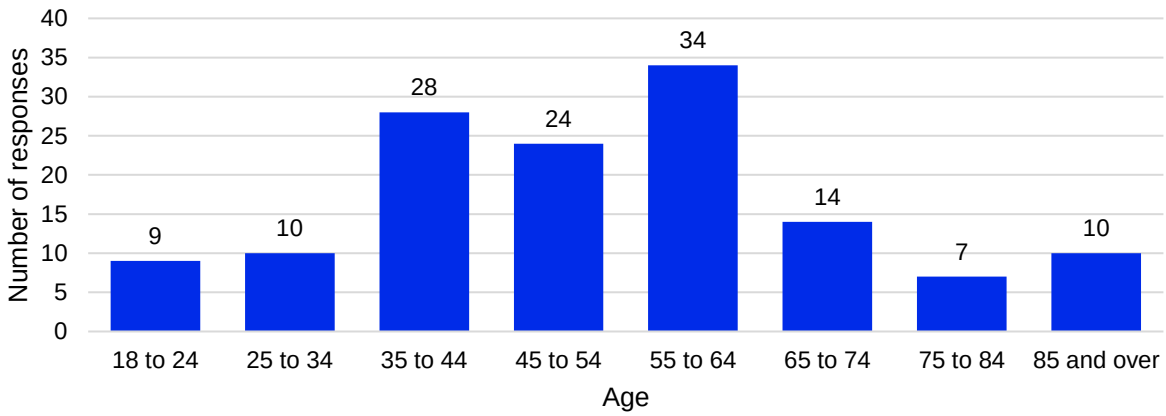
4.100

4.101

[10] The following statement was included.
"The following section will be used to better understand the demographics of Personal Assistants. These questions are anonymous and if you are not comfortable completing them then please select **'Finish survey'** at the bottom of the page".

4.102 Figure 34 shows that of the 135 responses received, 64% of respondents were aged between 35 and 64. The data shows that the number of respondents below 35 was similar to the number aged 75 and older.

Figure 34: Age of respondents of the employers survey

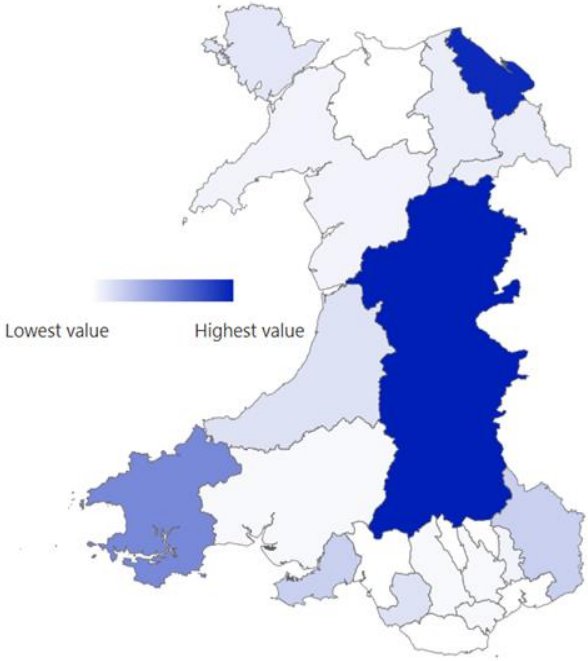


4.103 Employers of PAs were also given the option to provide their gender. Of the 136 responses received, 92 (68%) stated they were female and 41 (30%) were male. 3 respondents stated other or prefer not to say.

4.104 The LA each respondent lives in is shown in

4.105 **Figure** 35.

Figure 35: In which local authority do you live (Employers)?



	Number of respondents
Isle of Anglesey	4
Gwynedd	2
Conwy	0
Denbighshire	3
Flintshire	36
Wrexham	3
Powys	38
Ceredigion	5
Pembrokeshire	20
Carmarthenshire	1
Swansea	8
Neath Port Talbot	0
Bridgend	5
Vale of Glamorgan	0
Cardiff	1
Rhondda Cynon Taf	1
Merthyr Tydfil	0
Caerphilly	1
Blaenau Gwent	0
Torfaen	2
Monmouthshire	8
Newport	0

4.106 Employers who live in Flintshire, Powys, and Pembrokeshire provided the highest responses. This shows that the data is not representative of the DP and PA landscape in many LAs. No responses were provided from employers in Conwy, Neath Port Talbot, Vale of Glamorgan, Merthyr Tydfil, Blaenau Gwent, or Newport.

4.107 Respondents were asked to indicate whether their day-to-day activities were limited because of a health problem or impairment which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months. Of the 134 responses received, 104 (78%) stated they have a health problem or impairment which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months. Only 25 (19%) stated they did not and 5 (4%) preferred not to say.

4.108 Of the 136 respondents who answered the question about ethnicity, 130 (96%) stated they are white, 2 (1%) stated mixed / multiple ethnic group and 4 (3%) preferred not to say.

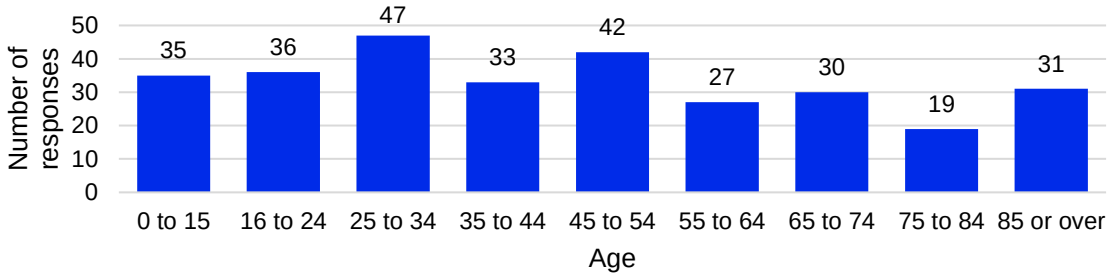
4.109 Of the 132 responses received when asked to state their main language, 123 (93%) stated their main language was English. 5 (4%) stated that their main language was Welsh, 3 (2%) stated other and 1 (1%) preferred not to say.

4.110 Of the 135 responses received, 129 (96%) stated **all** their PAs communicated with them in their main language. 3 (2%) stated that **some** of their PAs communicate with them in their main language, 1 (1%) stated that **none** of their PAs communicated with them in their main language and 2 (1%) stated other.

PA survey

4.111 PAs were asked the age[11] of the person or people they supported. **Figure 36**

Figure 36: Age of each person supported by Personal Assistants

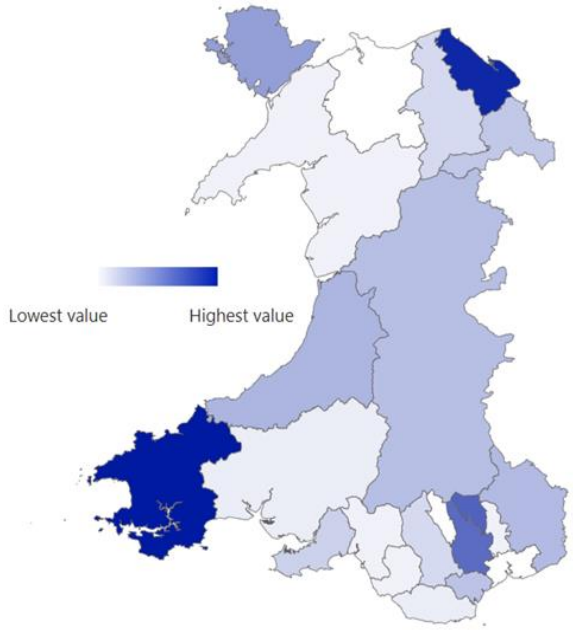


4.112 It shows that of the 300 responses received, the number of responses received by age gap was quite evenly spread. The most common was those aged 25 to 34 with 47 (16%) responses and the least common was those aged 75 to 84 with 19 (6%) responses.

PAs were asked in which LA each person or people they support live. **Figure 37** shows that of the 300 responses received, the highest response was Pembrokeshire with 50 (17%). PAs who responded to the survey reported no employers in Conwy, Merthyr Tydfil or Newport.

Figure 37: Which local authority does the person or people you support reside in?

[11] Direct Payments can only be paid to an individual who is 18 or higher. If the person requiring support is below this age, the payment is normally made to their legal guardian who will be the employer on their behalf. For this reason, the age range of the person supported can be lower than the age range of the employers.



	Number of respondents
Isle of Anglesey	4
Gwynedd	2
Conwy	0
Denbighshire	3
Flintshire	36
Wrexham	3
Powys	38
Ceredigion	5
Pembrokeshire	20
Carmarthenshire	1
Swansea	8
Neath Port Talbot	0
Bridgend	5
Vale of Glamorgan	0
Cardiff	1
Rhondda Cynon Taf	1
Merthyr Tydfil	0
Caerphilly	1
Blaenau Gwent	0
Torfaen	2
Monmouthshire	8
Newport	0

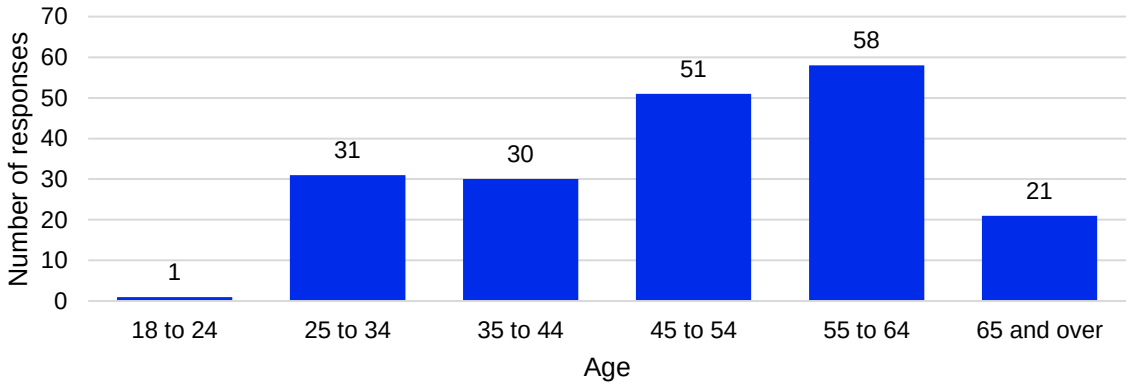
4.113

4.114

4.115

4.116 Figure 38 shows that of the 192 responses received, 58 (30%) were aged 55 to 64 and 51 (27%) were aged 45 to 54. Only 1 respondent stated they were between 18 and 24.

Figure 38: Age of Personal Assistants



4.117 PAs were given the option to provide their gender. Of the 193 that responded, 161 (83%) stated that they were female, 31 (16%) were male and 1 (1%) preferred not to say.

4.118 Of the 193 responses received, 161 (83%) stated their day-to-day activities **are not** limited because of a health problem or an impairment which has lasted or is expected to last 12 months. 23 (12%) stated they **are** limited and 9 (5%) preferred not to say.

4.119 Of the 192 PAs who responded when asked their ethnicity, 187 (97%) stated they are white, 1 (1%) stated they are Black / African / Caribbean / Black British and 4 (2%) preferred not to say.

4.120 Of the 190 PAs who responded when asked their nationality, 184 (97%) stated they were British citizens, 2 (1%) stated they were EU (non-British) citizens, 1 (1%) stated they were a non-EU citizen and 3 (2%) preferred not to say.

4.121 Of the 192 PAs who responded when asked to state their main language, 176 (92%) stated their main language was English. 13 (7%) stated Welsh, 1 (1%) stated other and 2 (1%) preferred not to say.

4.122 PAs were asked if they communicated in their main language with the person or people they supported. 191 PAs responded and were asked to select all the responses that were relevant to their situation. Therefore, the numbers may not sum to 191. 179 (94%) respondents stated that they communicated in their main language which was also the main language of the person they supported. 5 (26%) PAs stated that they communicated in their main language which differed from the person they supported, and 10 (5%) PAs communicated in a language which was not their main language.

Summary of findings

4.123 Below is a summary of findings from this research. The sample is not properly representative of each LA in Wales (shown in

4.124 **Figure** 35) and the inferences made within this section need to be treated as an estimate rather than true figures.

Number of PAs

4.125 In 2018/19 there were 6,262[12] people in receipt of a DP in Wales. For the purposes of this research the number of PAs in Wales has been calculated[13] using the survey data.

Table 13: Estimated number of Personal Assistants with lower and higher Confidence Intervals (CIs)

	Lower CI	Estimate	Higher CI

[12] https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Adult-Services/Service-Provision/adultsreceivingservices-by-localauthority-agegroup

[13] The number of Personal Assistants is equal to the number of people in receipt of a Direct Payment multiplied by the number of Personal Assistants each employer has and then divided by the number of people each Personal Assistant supports.

Number of Personal Assistants each employer has	2.33	2.68	3.03
Number of people each Personal Assistant supports	1.33	1.46	1.58
Number of Personal Assistants in Wales	9,234	11,495	14,266

Recruitment and retention

4.126 The employer survey showed that most employers found recruiting staff quite or very difficult, but most employers did not find retaining staff difficult. The small turnover rate also implies that employers do not struggle to retain their PAs.

4.127 The length of time that employers have employed their PAs was evenly spread between 6 months and 10 years. This finding was mirrored by the findings from the PA survey. The length of time that each PA stated they had been a PA for the person they support was also evenly spread between 6 months and 10 years.

4.128 Both surveys indicated that the most common method for advertising and finding new PA roles was through family / friend as well as through the LA.

Roles and responsibilities of PAs

4.129 Both the employer survey and the PA survey indicated that support with life as a disabled person and support with socialising are the most common support needs required by individual employers.

4.130 The employer survey stated that 31% of PAs were a friend or family member prior to becoming their PA. This number was similar to the number indicated in the PA survey, with 30% of PAs stating that the person they support was a friend or family member prior to starting their position.

Employment status

4.131 In the employer survey, 79% of respondents stated they were sure that they had an employment contract with their PA(s). The number of PAs that stated they had an employment contract with their employer was similar, with 82% stating they had a contract and 7% stating they were unsure.

4.132 The findings from the employer survey stated that 84% of the PAs described in the survey were employed directly by the person being supported, with the remainder being self-employed. The PA survey also suggested that the majority of PAs are

directly employed, with 91% of PAs stating they are directly employed by all the people they support.

5. Findings: Interviews and free text survey responses

5.1 This chapter presents findings from the qualitative phase of the research and includes interviews with PAs, employers and key stakeholders, and free-text responses from the Wales-wide online surveys of PAs and employers. Themes presented in this section are centred on the voices of PAs and employers. Stakeholders are included where they offer additional perspectives. The type of data and source accompanies all quotes. All other identifying information have not been included to ensure anonymity.

Roles and responsibilities of PAs

5.2 PAs undertook a range of skilled duties and responsibilities to fulfil their role and meet the support needs of their clients. Aspects included personal care, socialising, and practical support:

> *I organise all their medication, I order all their prescriptions, pick it up, sort it out, just even a lot of their day-to-day stuff that I deal with, hospital appointments, get them there, get them back, shopping, washing clothes, all that sort of stuff, it's a bit of everything really* (PA, interview)

> *It's not personal care, it is everything else you can imagine. You've got to be able to fix her Sky box, you've got to be able to fix her washing machine, show her how to do everything. You've got to make phone calls for her because she's profoundly deaf without speech and that means she cannot speak at all […] It is a huge job, a huge remit shall we say* (PA, interview)

5.3 The same PA in the latter excerpt above acknowledged they required '*high-level sign language skills*' to be able to effectively support and communicate with their employer. They noted that due to their employer's support needs they and another PA are: '*quite skilled at thinking of things to talk about, thinking of things to communicate with her about, things that she'll understand […]. So, thinking of things to talk about for hours and hours and hours when you are in her company constantly is very, very challenging […]. …it's only [other PA] or I that she can discuss that with because her family or her other friends don't have the skills*.

5.4 PAs also provided support to their employers to manage their DP and with recruiting and organising other PAs:

I remind my employer when the timesheet is due in, and I am the one who keeps track of hours so the other way round could potentially be helpful (PA, survey)

I'm the one that organises everybody and when we've needed the extra staff. I'm the one that's found them and brought them in and then it's me that organises them. It's me that they come to if there's a problem or a query or if they are taking holidays, I'm the organiser (PA, interview)

5.5 For the PA in the final extract above, taking on additional organisational duties had meant allowing: *the family to just enjoy the time with their mother or father rather than having to worry about all these things* (PA, interview)

5.6 Additional skills within the PA role included decision-making, being adaptable and responsive, and planning activities:

You have to watch for sort of markers depending on the person's behaviour […]. …you have to look for any markers that mean they are going off base or you know check that they are ok […]. Generally, you have to be able to drive, you have to be able to plan an event and you have to be able to make decisions very quickly on the best way if something is going to happen (PA, interview)

5.7 Despite the range of skilled roles and responsibilities highlighted above, there was a sense amongst some PAs of being undervalued, and unrecognised as professionals:

PA staff are undervalued, under-trained and not considered professional in any way, yet many need to understand and administer medications, they need to have effective communication skills on various levels. They need to be able to cook, clean, do laundry, partake in various activities (PA, survey)

Although I feel valued by my employers, I don't feel valued or taken seriously by social workers. When situations arise that need to be addressed, i.e., safeguarding, there is a lot of hot air and no results. It feels like things are swept under the carpet (PA, survey)

5.8 Through close working relationships built with their employers, PAs have in-depth knowledge of their employers/those they support, and PAs recognised the value they could add to multi-agency discussions.

> *I would probably like to be involved in one of the meetings with the social worker […]. …but we tend to be, 'oh she is just a PA' you know, 'don't bother with her'. […] I spend more time with her on a one-to-one basis than anyone else in her life. […] So yes, I would say I probably know her as well as any of them and yes, I would think I would probably have quite a valuable contribution* (PA, interview)

5.9 For two PAs, their experience of working with other professionals, in this case GPs and district nurses, had been positive and the extracts below demonstrate the mutual benefit of professionals including, recognising, and listening to PAs and the contribution and insight they can offer:

> *They [GPs] are quite happy because a lot of the patients can't always tell them things, or they can't hear because they've got hearing problems or it's dementia and they can't answer. So, most of the GP's have always found it a benefit to have me as the advocate of the client, they found it much easier to have somebody to talk to and knowing full well that whatever they've said has got to be done, I'm going to go and do it* (PA, interview)

5.10 In terms of raising awareness of the advantages of DPs and understanding amongst professionals, an employer gave an example of their previous experiences of sitting on a University panel recruiting social work students: …*there was quite a few students who didn't agree with it [DPs] and so when I told them that I was doing different things, at that stage I was going to aqua fit, I was doing lots of different things. My personal assistant she would join in and come with me* (Employer, interview)

What is working well for PAs

5.11 Reflecting on what is working well for them and their motivations for becoming a PA and continuing in their role, key aspects included:

Role autonomy

5.12 Having the independence to '*self-direct*' and draw upon their skills and experience was a positive feature:

The flexibility of the role

5.13 Being able to fit their role around other commitments such as family or other employment was important, so too was the flexibility of their employers. Being flexible and adaptable also enabled a greater degree of choice in supporting their employer to achieve their outcomes.

> *The flexibility of it makes if that you can achieve so much more for the person you are supporting. You haven't got to try and fit the life experiences in the 9 to 5, you can play around. So, if there's something going on that maybe on a Saturday evening, you can play with your hours so that everybody gets the best of everything […]. So that's really good having that flexibility* (PA, interview)

Building relationships with their employers and their families

5.14 Forming close working relationships based on trust and mutual respect was important and viewed as being central to fulfilling the PA's role.

> *…the couple I'm working for now, they are becoming friends as well and you just have a much closer working relationship, which means that you're able, well I believe you are able to help that person in a greater capacity than you would be otherwise* (PA, interview)

> *…we are really like part of the family and it's just a lovely environment. […] …you get to know them, you get to know their background, you get to know all about their lives, you know their families lives and it's just, it's wonderful I have to say. I wouldn't want to do anything else* (PA, interview)

5.15 Linked closely to the above was the benefits that PAs affords their employers such as continuity of care, and employer choice, and comparisons were drawn from PAs experiences in other sectors of the social care workforce, for example, domiciliary, day centres, and residential care:

> *…working in the domiciliary care and even though that was promised as a person-centred, that's not what actually was happening. […] …they would pull you out and say, 'look you know you're over your time, you've got to go just leave them get on with it' and that wasn't for me* (PA, interview)

5.16 Similarly, where employers had previous experience of receiving traditional forms of care, they too drew comparisons to their preference for care and support being provided by PAs. Key features referred to getting to know their PA, building a relationship with them, and familiarity:

> *We did have a spell with agency staff, and we didn't know who would come through the door. It could have been a complete stranger, and [name] was sometimes terrified cos she'd never met this person* (Employer, interview)

> *I think having Direct Payments is the best way, you know, you have the same girl or man coming in all the time and get to know them and actually become quite friendly, they sort of become part of the family in a way* (Employer, interview)

5.17 The opportunities that the PA role offered with regards social activities were also positively compared by employers to other forms of social care such as day centres.

Job satisfaction

5.18 A consistent characteristic amongst PAs was the extant job satisfaction they derived from their role. Central to their job satisfaction was its rewarding nature through the enabling support they provided to their employers:

> *[My role] is just so rewarding helping people, you get such good job satisfaction, it's really high, it's really good to do that. So that is a great thing […]. I just love doing that kind of role, I like giving people life options, so that is all brilliant* (PA, interview)

> *It makes me smile knowing I'm making someone else's life better and happier* (PA, survey)

Employee outcomes

5.19 PAs provided examples of outcomes they had supported their employer or the person they worked with to achieve.

> *Their social skills were non-existent […]. Like a lot of people, they felt very very isolated, and now we are able to go out and socialise […]. …it's like having a new person now, she has matured, and she is talking to people* (PA, interview)

…two of the people that I supported no longer need PAs because we developed the skills that they needed. They were able to access the community on their own, they were able to sort out their own money and pay for their own drinks and all the food at the bar and table service and go into shops unaided (PA, interview)

Quality of life and outcomes - employers

5.20 Equally, employers discussed the benefit of receiving a DP, and the important part PAs played in offering a greater degree of choice and control to achieve their outcomes, and an employer referred to their '*immense quality of life'*. Below, the employer referred to the independence a DP and employing a team of PAs had offered and the change they had seen in their daughter:

She was becoming very withdrawn, wasn't seeing friends or even just being able to be in the local community, now [name] lives in the centre of the town, she has access to her shopping, her social events and that is provided by the team of PAs (Employer, interview)

5.21 Other employers offered examples of the difference they felt they had witnessed/experienced though receipt of a DP and their PAs:

I just feel like it's [DP] really changed my life. […] I had a friend […] paid a visit to me recently and she said 'God [name], you are just different', 'you are so much happier, so much more together' even though my physical health has deteriorated, my mental is so much better (Employer, interview)

…she's much happier in terms of her needs and where she's at, she is so much happier having those PAs in place (Employer, interview)

5.22 DPs also enabled employers to have greater independence, and to be able to spend quality time with other children, care for other family members, and to remain in employment:

PAs for my daughter means that I can continue to work and care for other family members (Employer, survey*)*

Without my son's personal assistant, I wouldn't be able to go to work and we would face financial hardship, I would lose my job, income, and our home (Employer, survey)

Key areas of improvement for the PA workforce and their employers

5.23 In the following section are the key issues referred to by PAs, and their employers as not working as well and/or considerations for improvement. Key themes include Pay, terms and conditions; Training and skills development; Recruitment and retention; Support, information, and advice (for PAs, and employers); and Relationships - role remit and expectations.

Pay, terms and conditions

Pay

5.24 A recurring theme, PAs cited low pay as an issue, particularly in the context of the level of complexity and skills required, and comparisons were made by PAs to other roles outside the social care sector with less responsibility. Subsequently, for the PA in the second extract below, they viewed their role as a '*vocation*', rather than a '*job*':

> *Better pay for the responsibility we have. We deal with individuals with serious complexities and medication and most of us only get £8.91-£9.00 per hr* (PA, survey)

> *I don't think the pay is that great really, I don't do it for the money, if I did it for the money, I don't think I would be doing it to be totally honest […] it is a vocation it's definitely not a job, it's a vocation. […] …it's £10 an hour and I actually get more than that cleaning. I do cleaning on a self-employed basis and I get £12 an hour so it does make you question it a little bit really but again like I say, I don't do it for the money, I do it because it's what I absolutely adore doing* (PA, interview)

5.25 During the 10 years in their role, a PA noted they had received only one pay increase: *When I started this job 10 years ago my hourly rate was £8.95. I have only had one increase in that time. It is currently £9.50 per hour* (PA, survey)

5.26 Pay was also referred to in the context of a lack of clarity and information about the different rates. Below, the PA expressed confusion and uncertainty about the differing rates paid and rates with and without mileage allowance:

> *… the PA jobs that are available the pay scale is different. Some of them pay £9.20, some are £9.80 plus mileage, some of them are £12.00, and you think to yourself 'ok what have you got to do?',*

'What's the difference between me doing mine to somebody doing theirs and they get another £3 an hour'? So that's not made clear (PA, interview)

Unpaid time

5.27 PAs gave examples of unpaid additional duties. In the extract below, a PA describes being unaware that overtime was not paid in their role, highlighting a lack of information about the terms and conditions within their contract.

I don't get paid for the hours I do […] I didn't realise at first that I couldn't claim overtime as it hadn't been explained, so when I did, they took it all back off me. I've always been paid overtime everywhere else I've worked and I'm sure it must be illegal. What can I do? There is no one to ask (PA, survey)

5.28 A lack of choice to work overtime and bank holidays was also referred to and that: *We are not even offered days off in lieu or extra holidays* (PA, survey)

Additional expenditure

5.29 PAs provided examples of expenditure associated with undertaking their role such as resources for activities, public transport costs, and meals out. Additional mileage expenditure associated to supporting their employers was also raised: (para. 5.34).

…she is very much into arts and crafts so I've invested in paint, papers, you know, I've bought her journals so there has been quite an outlay shall we say in stock (PA, interview)

The one client could do with 1+1 bus pass to save on my own expenses (PA, survey)

…when she is with me it's teatime and I feed her and again I don't get any, that comes out of my hourly rate so that wasn't made clear (PA, interview)

5.30 The PA in the final excerpt above had also taken out an additional home insurance premium due to providing support in their own home:

I did end up having to pay a premium on my insurance just to cover me if anything happened to me, or if anything happened to her in my house. But if she done any damage when she was in my house I wouldn't be covered. So, I was a bit nervous about that (PA, interview)

5.31 In another example, a PA described having repeated discussions with their LA to justify and include their meal costs as expenses:

> *[My employer] loves going out, having a meal out, having a coffee and a cake out, going out for a walk, going shopping, that's what she really likes doing. When we have the meals out of her budget, there's always this argument because they [LA] say 'oh you can't have your meals on expenses' and I say, 'well I won't take her then, cos I'm not paying to take her out for a meal, I'm not paying for my meal cos I wouldn't choose to go for a meal'. So, we always have this difficulty where we have to sort of campaign to be allowed these expenses. […] It's always been allowed but we have to go through the same points and make the same sort of thing over and over again* (PA, interview)

Terms and conditions

5.32 Whilst low pay amongst PAs was referenced as being problematic, entitlements such as holiday pay, sick pay, and mileage allowance were regularly cited.

<u>Sick pay entitlement</u>

5.33 PAs with smaller/part-time contracted monthly hours were unable to qualify for statutory sick pay (SSP), as they did not meet the threshold for National Insurance contributions:

> *…because you are only part time, you are not entitled to sick pay because you are not paying enough and because also you don't earn enough to pay National Insurance, you can't even get SSP. So being sick for most PAs is not an option, even if they are sick, it's not something they can do because universal credit doesn't kick in for six weeks, it's difficult to claim, it's just not an option. So, all that whole issue around sickness pay needs to be addressed* (PA, interview*)*

<u>Mileage</u>

5.34 Variations were highlighted amongst PAs in terms of mileage rates paid for different roles, and examples were given of PAs paying their own mileage when supporting their employers.

> *I also was trying to find out whether I was entitled to any kind of mileage because I pick her up from school we go out and about in the*

summer and I was told no you don't get any mileage at all, so you know, my £9.20 an hour doesn't go very far (PA, interview)

Holiday pay and entitlement

5.35 Challenges included a lack of information about holiday entitlements, and PAs being unable to choose when to take their leave:

I also wasn't aware that I was entitled to any holidays. As a result, I found out last year when there was a changeover [of DP support provider] that I'd accumulated the equivalent to about 32 hours of holiday which luckily, they allowed me to carry forward. But I wasn't aware of that either, so it was a very, it was quite amateur to be honest, you think to yourself is this a proper job or not? (PA, interview)

… I've known that some employers want you to take your holidays around them, when they have holidays (PA, interview)

5.36 A PA who expressed overall satisfaction with their terms and conditions noted that a lack of cover of other available PAs had meant them being unable to take their leave:

…we do get sick pay entitlement and we do get holidays and everything, I'm happy with all those things […]. The only thing that happens sometimes with me because I work so many hours, is trying to get somebody to cover for me […]. …for me to try and take a holiday is quite a difficult thing to be honest […]. I was literally having long weekends and that's about all I was having. I think more recently I've had probably 1 week and that's the most I've had but that's purely because there's not always been able to stand in for me really (PA, interview)

5.37 The issue of a lack of holiday cover resulting in PAs forfeiting their leave was echoed amongst other PAs: *It is difficult to find someone to cover me for leave. As such I don't take leave and lose my entitlement to them* (PA, survey)

5.38 A PA proposed the provision of a relief pool of PAs, especially for short periods of absence such as holidays and sickness:

My suggestion was that we have a couple of like what me and you would call bank staff or relief staff you know, we'd be able to do that on

a basis where if it was just holidays or if it was just when somebody was sick, they would be on stand-in (PA, interview)

Retainer payments

5.39 One PA commented on the geographical variation between LAs in the context of *'retainers*' that are paid in the event where the PA is not needed, or the employer is hospitalised. They acknowledged that within their role where full pay was received for such events, this was due to their employer requesting it:

…with one local authority, we have a situation of if that employer doesn't need you or they go into hospital, they only pay you a retainer which is half your wage, and they can do that at any time […]. [in another LA] if we get paid a retainer on this particular one, we get our full pay cos that's what they've [employer] asked for. Now I have to be very choosy now, to try and find out what that employer is offering (PA, interview)

Training and skills development

5.40 A shortage of training and development opportunities for PAs were acknowledged as being problematic amongst PAs. This included the provision of, or requirement of '*standard mandatory*' training such as manual handling, and safeguarding:

…with a personal assistant all you require is DBS. So, there are, you know, no required qualifications in order be a PA (PA, interview)

You should automatically be provided with safeguarding training, that's a must but I'd been working with [LA] Direct Payments for quite a few years before I actually got my safeguarding training through them (PA, interview)

5.41 This sentiment extended to the availability of specialist training, for example, mental health, sensory training, and autism, which was viewed as particularly important by PAs for specific roles and client groups, and to meet the support needs of their employers.

…one client that does have severe mental health issues, I'm not even trained, haven't any training in mental health at all (PA, interview)

I have not received any training for my roles as PA. I would like sensory training or visual impairment training […]. …manual handling […] administrating medicines (PA, survey)

5.42 In some cases, in the absence of training being offered/provided, PAs referred to actively seeking out their own training or observing other professionals and '*making notes'*:

I am continuously researching and having a look to have to do my own professional development (PA, interview)

I didn't actually think about asking for any training because as I said you know, especially with my previous employer, there was so many medical people coming in, I used to ask questions and I used to watch what they were doing, and I used to make notes (PA, interview)

5.43 From an employer's perspectives, there was a shortage of available training for their PAs to attend:

I would be wanting to see a proper training scheme and qualification. [My PA] has done work for quite a while and she is very very good, and I haven't had to offer her training but there is no training to be had anyway (Employer, interview)

5.44 In an example where PA training had previously been provided by their DP support provider, aspects such as having to pay for PAs travel expenses, and PAs having time away from their role to attend training meant it was not '*feasible*':

[previous DP support provider] would put on training but it was down [another LA] somewhere […]. You'd have to pay your PA to travel there, full expenses, and they'd be away for a time. So, it just wasn't feasible, they scrapped it in the end, because they couldn't afford to run it (Employer, interview)

5.45 An employer referred to the content and type of training on offer and questioned its relevance to their PAs being able to meet their support needs. They noted the importance of offering individual training rather than a one-size fits all offer.

Understanding the PA role – new starters

5.46 Providing information about the PA role and what it entails for new PAs coming into the sector was seen to be important and a helpful means by which new PAs are

equipped with sufficient knowledge and understanding to fulfil their role. Proposals included the delivery of induction sessions and training assessments:

> *I would have thought that the very least that they [LA] would do is to run a one day, you know, all about being a PA that they could go to and explain exactly what the role was and answer any questions* (PA, interview)

5.47 Another PA re-iterated the importance of new PAs being provided with information and being supported. In the absence of an '*induction period'* being available, they had previously supported new PAs, but acknowledged this was unpaid time.

Professional role recognition

5.48 The subject of professional registration was referred to in the context of offering greater recognition of the role, of the role being more valued, and increased opportunities for training and professional development.

> *I would just like to see the role more professionalised shall we say and more valued. […] I think a PA is probably seen in the hierarchy of care pretty much near the bottom* (PA, interview)

> *…once I have achieved it [my QCF L2], I am going to press Social Care Wales to be registered as a Social Care Worker as a matter of purely professional interest. I already abide by the Code of Practice but am not happy about the "no requirement to register" response I received when I looked into this. I would like to be registered, even though there is a charge involved* (PA, survey)

5.49 One PA drew comparisons to the requirement for registration and training within the domiciliary care sector and proposed that registration would offer a better understanding of the remit of the PA role.

Recruitment and retention

Recruitment difficulties

5.50 Difficulties amongst employers ranged from being able to recruit a suitable PA for specific hours, to being able to find cover when their PAs were absent, for example, through illness or holiday leave.

5.51 Where employers were experiencing challenges to recruit PAs and vacant roles were unfilled, this had meant taking on more caring responsibilities for themselves:

Recruitment has been really difficult […]. I've had a whole year sometimes where I haven't had anybody in placement because it's taken me that long to find someone […]. … it falls back to me every single time, so I've had a whole year where I haven't had a PA in place and so for that year, that entirely falls on my shoulder (Employer, interview)

5.52 Similarly, where PA cover could not be found for short periods of PAs absence, an employer referred to having to rely on family members for unpaid care and support.

A lot of informal, unpaid support & care is provided by my ex-daughter in-law due to limited availability of agency cover when regular PA is off sick/annual leave (Employer, survey)

5.53 In another example, during a period of struggling to recruit a PA, an employer described having to pay agency staff at a higher rate:

I should be able to get a replacement from an agency, but that costs, I pay my PA £11 an hour but if I was to get an agency, I would be paying £19 an hour and I can't afford that I don't get enough Direct Payments to do that. I did resolve to that once when I was really quite ill and it just cost so much and social services wouldn't top it up, they said 'you've got to pay for that yourself' […]. I've done it once and I couldn't see how it was sustainable. It was during a period when I was trying to recruit someone, so I was desperate, absolutely desperate (Employer, interview)

Factors impacting recruitment and retention

5.54 Issues impacting recruitment and retention included low pay, enhancements, and the number of contracted hours awarded.

<u>Low pay</u>

5.55 Employers attributed the amount of pay they were able to offer as a challenge in recruiting people, with comparisons made to other roles within the social care sector offering more competitive rates:

…when you've got agencies and I've seen the adverts myself, local agencies that are advertising for carers at nearly £12 an hour and I'm only paying £9.79 because that's what my council tells me I've got to

pay my staff. What are you going to do 20 hours for me or for the agency up the road who is paying £2 an hour more (Employer, interview)

5.56 Building on this, one PA viewed low pay rates as affecting the quality of the prospective candidates, in terms of their skills, training, and experience:

The very low pay attracts employees that have no qualifications, and they aren't always the best candidate for a caring role. Higher pay and some qualifications would help to get better PAs (PA, survey)

5.57 Another PA associated an absence of incremental pay increases to recruitment and retention issues and noted their motivations for continuing in the role was centred on their commitment to their employer:

The authority knows they have not increased the rates of pay in over a decade […]. People in need have found it very challenging to recruit and retain quality staff as a result. All my other forms of employment have increased pay rates very significantly over the last 11 years. They have all well over-taken this line of work. I only do it because of the commitment I have to this particular client who would most likely experience extreme vulnerability otherwise (PA, survey)

5.58 Low pay was also cited by an employer as impacting their ability to retain their PAs:

The pay should be higher, because that's why they've always left, because they need more pay. […] It's human nature if you are offered like £5 an hour more than what you are getting now, most people would think 'yeah, I'll go for that'. Loyalty goes so far but money talks (Employer, interview)

5.59 The DP rate set by their LA was seen to impact employers' ability to offer good rates of pay and one employer commented that they had made the decision to pay their PA a higher rate, but this had implications on their supported hours.

I think the rate here is about £8.50 an hour, minimum wage, it could be £9, I pay more than that because I think it is such a valuable and complex job. […]. I think in some ways [paying PA £11 p/h] impacts on the amount of hours that I could have but I couldn't ethically myself pay her any less that what I could absolutely afford because I value her work so highly (Employer, interview)

5.60 Variation in PA pay rates was attributed to the different DP rates set by LAs across Wales, coupled with the number of supported hours awarded:

> *It [DP rate] is quite literally a postcode lottery, I'll give you an example, I live in [LA] where the rate is £12.40 and [in another LA] the rate is £11.36 […]. …you tend to up with a rate of somewhere between £9 so just over national living wage right up to £10.20 depending on where you are, £10.50 in some places. Then because of the changes within everybody's set up then everybody can offer a different rate of pay depending on how many hours they've got* (Employer, interview)

Enhancements

5.61 Being unable to offer their PAs benefits such as recognising length of service and entitlements above statutory requirements was a source of frustration and seen as another factor exacerbating recruitment and retention difficulties.

> *There's nothing I can offer my employees in terms of their enhancement. I can't say to somebody who's been with me 5 years 'hey, I know it's not much but here's an extra day's holiday', I can't offer them proper sick pay, it must be statutory sick pay. How do you pay your mortgage when you are receiving statutory sick pay, how do you pay your bills?* (Employer, interview)

Short working hours/DP award

5.62 The number of contracted hours available are dependent on the assessment/DP award and were raised as additional recruitment and retention challenges. For PAs seeking full time employment, this can require managing several smaller contracted roles, which can prove challenging:

> *If it's a part time situation, then people are doing maybe 4 different jobs and you are just another job, but to get that person you really want, it's very difficult to make it worth their while* (Employer, interview)

> *I think I had 6 employers, so I could do a 35-hour week. It's ridiculous but it was so I could get 35 hours of paid work. […] that's one of the reasons why you lose so many PAs, it's cos they just can't cope with all the running around trying to get the full-time hours* (PA, interview)

It's very rarely you get them [DP packages] over ten hours […]. So, when you are looking say for 37 hours a week, you find yourself working for multiple clients to make up them hours (PA, interview)

5.63 Further aspects related to holding multiple short-hour contracts referred to the differing rates paid by different employers' dependent on their budgets:

…say if you had four clients, not everyone would provide you the same rate, it would all be different […]. You've got to look obviously at the problems, you know, is it worth me getting this second job, is it worth me doing this, you've got to weigh up sort of what benefits more for you and what works well for you (PA, interview)

Routes to recruitment

5.64 Rather than being recruited through formal routes such as job centre adverts, PAs referred to gaining their employment through informal means, for example, already knowing their employer, or employers' family, word of mouth, and local advertisements.

5.65 Similarly, employers also referred to these types of informal recruitment routes as being more successful than traditional routes. Examples in addition to those offered above included Facebook:

I advertised on Facebook, I just put it out on Facebook and a man contacted me and then we did an interview, and he came and worked for me, and it was fine. Then I got [name] who was a friend of a friend and then [other PA] left and his wife came to work for me (Employer, interview)

I took it on myself to put it on my Facebook hub […]. I only put it up for I think it was up for 2 hours, I wanted someone to help me in the home with my husband for 10 hours at £10 an hour and four people got in touch with me (Employer, interview)

PA skills and attributes – employing the right person

5.66 Employers discussed some of the important features they look for when recruiting PAs. Key aspects included trust, flexibility, and previous experience. For the employer in the second extract below, these qualities were more important than formal qualifications.

I've got to get that right person […]. It's like you are putting her life in their hands […]. I've just got to have somebody that I've got total trust and I know inside out (Employer, interview)

they [my PAs] have to have a lot of flexibility, they have to be very, very flexible because my requirements are not 9 to 5 […]. I don't look for qualifications or anything like that, I look at the individual and their capabilities (Employer, interview)

I look at previous experience [when recruiting]. The PA I've got at the moment was a carer before through an agency and so her qualifications and DBS report was all up to date everything like that, so that's what I look for (Employer, interview)

Enablers for retaining staff

5.67 Employers gave their thoughts as to what was working for them in terms of retaining their staff. Characteristics referred to being a supportive employer, having mutual respect, cooperation, an initial trial period, and clear job descriptions.

…the fact that they've [PAs] been with us so long, I think because we provide a full support with regard to their employment, a safe and clean working environment, […] they are a member of staff at the end of the day and it's about mutual respect. I respect and [name] respects them and they respect that we provide that safe working environment for them (Employer, interview)

We have been lucky with all our staff over many years. There have been problems and disagreements and sometimes difficulties with those being cared for, but these have been dealt with and resolved through cooperation between us and our PA. The input of the other carers has also been taken into account (Employer, survey)

…we always recommended a six-month trial period […] It is really important to have a good job description (Employer, interview)

Support, information, and advice

Employer skills - being a good employer

5.68 Interviews and survey responses highlighted mixed experiences amongst PAs in terms of the support and guidance received from their employers.

5.69 Below, a PA communicated the importance of having clear information about their role, responsibilities, and entitlements within their employment contract:

> *[My contract] told me on the hours I was working, my rate of pay, how they'd work out the holiday entitlement […]. It was very straightforward what was my expectations within my contract were but also who to go to and who to seek advice to if I need information, things on annual leave or sickness or anything like that* (PA, interview)

5.70 For PAs with less positive experiences, issues referred to their employers' lack of knowledge of employment laws and employee rights, and having to independently source or request information about pay dates, and entitlements:

> *My employers are unaware of laws and legislation as an employer. Not enough information is relayed to both employer and employer (PA, survey)*

> *…for instance, finding out what your holiday hours are, so the other day for example my employer said to me 'oh, you've got X amount of hours to take before the end of March' now I thought 'oh, ok' cos I hadn't really thought about it cos there's been a lot going on outside of work as well. So, it's things like that, its things like pay dates […] it's more down to me to ask those questions* (PA, interview)

5.71 Within interviews, two PAs highlighted not having written employment contracts:

> *I haven't [got a contract], I think I signed a bit of paper but that was with the previous incumbents […]. I think I've got a sort of A4 typed piece of paper with a job description* (PA, interview)

> *I'd say no for that [employee rights information] on every single case, it's basically been a verbal contract that has meant absolutely nothing* (PA, interview)

5.72 A PA drew comparisons between their two different employers:

> *The lady I work for now is certainly very organised on putting my hours through, whereas before I'd have to set myself a reminder to remind my employer, so again I think that's down to individuals* (PA, interview)

5.73 As well as issues regarding employment rights, PAs commented on a lack of overall support from their employer such as supervision, direction in their role, and opportunities for professional development.

> *At the moment I don't feel appreciated. I feel it's hard when you don't have supervision or have no means of contact with anyone* (PA, survey)

> *…we have no support, we have no supervision, and we have no continuing professional development either cos there's nowhere to go with it, cos you are just left to get on with your things […]. If you want somebody that's coming in as a career, then how does that happen because none of that is being allowed to happen.* (PA, interview)

5.74 Despite these challenges, PAs expressed understanding of the complexity of being an employer, and a PA referred to the importance of ensuring that employers also receive and have access to information, guidance, and support to effectively fulfil their role.

> *…sometimes they've never been an employer before and they don't know the rules, they don't know the regulations, they don't know their rights, they don't know your rights, they don't know what to expect […]. There's huge gaps in the Direct Payment contracts and personally I don't think it should be up to parents to try and work it out, especially when parents are stressed, they don't know employment law, some of them don't have any qualifications themselves or can barely read and write* (PA, interview)

5.75 The same PA suggested that to help ensure employers are fully aware of their role and responsibility and feel fully equipped to be good employers that: *[DP support services] should be involved a lot more at the beginning, I think if you go to look and work for somebody and they like you obviously, they say 'yes, we'd like to give this a go'. I think the Direct Payments team should then be there and say 'right obviously you need to get two references, you need to do the DBS check, you need to get them on safeguarding training, if they are going out in the car you need to check the insurance on the car* (PA, interview)

5.76 In addition, the PA noted the importance of clear, accessible guidance for employers: *…other people they've just been giving badly photocopied or printed*

paper that's just full of legislation that means absolutely nothing to them. Now quite often the employer is actually somebody with a learning disability, everything should be in an accessible format for them (PA, interview)

Support and information – employers

5.77 Responses within both interviews and free-text survey responses highlighted that the availability and provision of consistent, good quality information and support for employers was variable.

5.78 Where support, information and guidance were working well, important features referred to prompt turnaround times to queries, reassurance of support being on hand if needed, support for recruiting new PAs, regular 'check-ins', and a key contact person:

> *I've got to say my social worker is absolutely brilliant, she does little checks now and then to make sure the Direct Payment is working and also my agency are working properly* (Employer interview)

> *The Direct Payment team are at the other end of the phone whenever I ring. If I don't get an answer immediately, they will always get back to me and help me with any difficulty or queries that I've got. There is always a member of the team there that you know if you take on a new member of staff, that they will help you to provide the necessary help to put that in place* (Employer, interview)

> *I have great support from my ILA [Independent Living Advisor]. She is very prompt at replying to my emails and supports me with my employer duties* (Employer, survey)

5.79 Other features of good quality support and information included the provision of managed accounts, removing the responsibility from employers and freeing up their time:

> *I try to run things as smoothly as possible also I use the services that are provided, so the payroll and all that side of it. I use the services of [DP support provider], so I don't take up too much of my time cos I'm very, very busy on so many different things, I wouldn't have time to do payroll and things like that. [those services] are essential, they are essential to me* (Employer, interview)

5.80 However, examples were given by employers of where the provision and access to good quality information and support was working less well, and in some cases was felt to be entirely absent. By contrast to the positive examples provided above, sources of frustration amongst employers were not receiving a timely response (or a response at all), feeling ignored and left to manage alone, and a lack of follow up or 'check-ins':

> *…just more support and more help around the role of being an employer and asking me questions about 'is [name] comfortable?' […] and helping me to make a decision and helping me to choose the right decisions. Like communication where they phone me every now and again, just to make sure I'm ok and everything is going alright* (Employer, interview)

> *Pretty much feel left to get on with things. Social service input on any level is non-existent, or at least very unhelpful and unreliable. Allocating Direct Payments then just leaving you to it is not acceptable* (Employer, survey)

5.81 For those managing a DP on behalf of another person, associated duties were burdensome and difficult to manage, especially when trying to balance them with their own caring responsibilities and other commitments:

> *Does anyone realise how hard it is to be an employer? Responsible for a number of staff, legal responsibilities for sickness holiday etc, on top of already being responsible for the person/s in your care that needs assistance* (Employer, survey)

> *I feel I have been dropped in it all with the guise of it being easier, but it isn't. I work and have other children and now I have become an employer having to deal with advertising, HR duties, time sheets, payroll, DBS checks, tax etc which I don't really have the time to do with my other commitments and looking after a disabled child* (Employer, survey)

5.82 Effective support and guidance, especially at the early stages of receiving a DP was of great benefit and for the employer below, once the DP was up and running less intensive support was required:

…in the beginning, I had a hell of a lot to learn […]. but I'm fine now, it's in the beginning of the journey isn't it, that's when you want somebody just to get you over the hurdles (Employer, interview)

The suitability of a DP

5.83 The suitability of a DP award was raised in the context of employers' suitability/ability to manage a DP, and where very small DP packages are awarded:

I shouldn't have to be an employer. I am learning disabled. My mum has to arrange my support and care as well as providing care herself. Having to also be an employer is too much (Employer, survey)

Someone could be getting two hours a week and by the time say for example, by the time you pick them up and drive somewhere, you know, that could take 20 minutes to half hour, so you are very limited when you've only got a certain amount of hours. Whereas like I said if you want to see a difference in someone's life, it takes more than two hours a week to promote that (PA, interview)

5.84 Stakeholders questioned the sustainability and affordability of a small number of DP hours split over short period of time, and the challenge to recruit PAs for these types of contracts: *…if you are looking at a job that's half an hour calls four times a day, it's highly unlikely that you are going to be able to find a PA for that* (Stakeholder, interview).

5.85 A shortage of traditional domiciliary care provision was attributed by another stakeholder as exacerbating these types of referrals and '*chocking up*' the DP service. They noted that: *I'm sending them [referrals] back […]. …you can't recruit a PA into those sorts of calls (Stakeholder, interview)*

5.86 Connected to the above was the importance of social workers ensuring that prospective employers are fully informed of the responsibilities, and have the '*skills and competencies*' to manage a DP: *…sometimes when social workers engage with those individuals, I don't generally think they understand the full reach of responsibilities of that vulnerable person and perhaps are referring them for a Direct Payment* (Stakeholder, interview)

External support for PAs

5.87 External support, information, and advice for PAs was described by one PA as being '*very, very poor*'. Difficulties were raised amongst other PAs about knowing where to go to access guidance and independent advice, receiving a reply, and being directed back to their employer. As the extracts below show, aspects centred on having the reassurance that support is available if needed, particularly if the reason that advice is being sought is linked to their employer, and better awareness of existing resources.

> *…it's about having that knowledge that there is somebody at the end of a phone that is not your employer, that if you don't want to discuss it with your employer, that you can happily and easily contact somebody else* (PA, interview)

> *I didn't even know there existed a toolkit for the PA that the Social Care Wales people had made up. […] … if there was a situation and we needed to find out any information, if we went to like [DP support provider] advisors, I could be waiting weeks for an answer if I get one at all* (PA, interview)

5.88 Variation in the quality of support provided was commented upon by one PA who compared different DP support providers in different LAs:

> *So, the payroll for [LA] you've got a person in there called [name] who is absolutely brilliant, they'll bend over backwards to help somebody and look things up […]. Other companies like [name] that's working in [LA] now, you might as well just hit your head up against a brick wall, you'd get more sense talking to a loaf of bread, that's if you can get through to them. So different providers provide different things* (PA, interview)

Isolating nature of the PA role

5.89 Several PAs drew attention to their experience of feeling isolated, with few opportunities to meet and connect with other PAs. Further, a lack of employer and wider support was felt to exacerbate their sense of isolation.

> *I find it a very lonely job with lack of support* (PA, survey)

> *It would be nice to talk to someone even on the phone at times when I feel unsure that a decision I made, is the right one or to ask advice about something concerning the lady I care for* (PA, survey)

5.90 Emphasising the value of peer support, a PA who was working with another PA commented that: *I wouldn't want to be doing it [on my own] […]. I find it good to have another person to share it with and help out and we work it well between us* (PA, interview)

5.91 However, another PA noted that working within a team of PAs did not necessarily mean that they would interact face-to-face very often. Instead, they had formed a 'WhatsApp' group to communicate with one another:

> *…we don't necessarily see each other as PAs because I finish a shift and somebody else comes on and that's how it goes so, we don't really interact much. But we still do work as a team, we have like a group chat on WhatsApp, everything goes through that so we kind of get to know each other that way* (PA, interview)

5.92 Providing an example of an informal PA network, an employer referred to the benefit of such a group, both for their own PA, other PAs, and their daughter:

> *They've [PA and supported individual] met up with a nice little group now of other PAs, so they meet up during the week, so it gives her company, gives [name] a bit of company as well, I think it's quite hard if you are trying to do stuff on your own all the time […]. They've got a nice little group now, there's four PAs and there's four Direct Payment users […]. it's support for my PA, its support for the other PAs and its company for my daughter* (Employer, interview)

PA and employer relationships – role remit and expectations

5.93 As highlighted earlier in this chapter, the opportunity for PAs to build close working relationships with their employers was a key motivation for being a PA. However, for some PAs there were also drawbacks to having close working relationships with their employer. Experiences highlighted by PAs included a blurring of boundaries, and increased role remit/expectations, which one PA in the first excerpt described as leaving them feeling '*overwhelmed*':

> *I feel overwhelmed at times. The health, emotionally and physically of the lady I care for, has deteriorated considerably in two years. Her husband too has become more dependent on me* (PA, survey)

Your made to feel as if you're indestructible. We are human, not robots. I feel as if your counted on too much, your asked to go a million miles (PA, survey)

I feel the boundary between myself and the person I care for husband has become blurred. He looks upon me as a daughter to whom he can talk to as such. This is difficult at times, and I struggle to let him understand that I am his employee. As time goes on, his expectations of my role have grown considerably (PA, survey)

5.94 PAs referred to experiences of working with challenging employers, issues which the PAs in the second and third extracts below attributed to them leaving their role:

…my boss her father is the most demanding and horrible man I have ever met. I feel more like a slave than a PA. And the other PAs feel the same! (PA, survey)

I enjoyed it but had no support and was isolated. Was taken advantage of and used so recently left […]. I spent so much time treading on eggshells that I couldn't fulfil my role to support his wife (PA, survey)

I was expected to extend my hours on a shift should my 'client' be waiting for a nurse to arrive for example, even if I was due to work in my main job. Communication about my employment was difficult with my 'client'. I was employed for 8 years before I had had enough and gave my notice (PA, survey)

5.95 For the two PAs below, their close relationships with their employers and the 'bond' and 'trust' built between them meant a felt sense of responsibility and not wanting to let them down, impact that relationship, or disrupt the continuity of care. This had meant decisions to take on additional duties not included within their job description, and not taking their holiday allowances:

…you do take things on that perhaps you never thought you wouldn't do but because you are in that situation and if you have bonded with the client, you just do it, you don't turn around and say, 'well that's not in my job description, I'm not going to do it' (PA, interview)

I'm basically the only PA and I've worked with her for 4 years. […]. I've never taken holidays at all. […] I've taken upon it myself not to have

holidays because it would throw her into crisis and that. She won't have any other PAs coming because we are talking about the relationship, the trust and everything else, which is a big thing for some clients. […]. I've taken it upon myself to deliver a service that I think you know the person should have (PA, interview)

5.96 Two other aspects raised by the same PA below included approaching the topic of a pay increase with their employer and taking their employer on holiday or days out:

…all this thing about the wage increase is very difficult because you are supposed to deal with them but when you are so close to them […]. …we are so close to her, she's like a friend as well, it's really, really hard (PA, interview)

I promised I'd take her on holiday because she was so depressed, was so down and so I ended up taking her to a hotel. […] She paid for her little mini break, it was only 3 days, you know, in this hotel, I paid for myself, and I think she gave me ten quid towards the petrol all the way up to [city in England]. […] …of course, now she wants to be doing that all the time, it's very tricky because you can't put a mini break down on the expenses as £300 so 3 nights in the hotel (PA, interview)

The impact of Covid-19

5.97 Positive experiences for employers in the context of the pandemic were underpinned by the reassurance provided by LAs and other support services, via regular information, check-ins, and offers of assistance such as collecting medication and shopping:

They rang from the day centre every week and they would have come and done shopping or get medication or done anything for me really (Employer, interview)

I was sent I don't know about three pages of information [from LA], so fair play they did send that through and the community mental health team they also rang and gave me a telephone number to contact in an emergency. So, I didn't feel isolated (Employer, interview)

5.98 However, experiences amongst employers varied. Difficulties discussed included being unable to source PPE from their LA and feeling unsupported with a lack of

follow-up. Subsequently, the employers below reverted to sourcing their own PPE for their PAs:

> *I was told to go and sort my own PPE at the start of the pandemic because the local authority couldn't get any PPE for me for at least several weeks. I sought it and it was there within 48 hours, so it couldn't have been that difficult then, could it?* (Employer, interview)

> *I just got on with it and I bought myself the PPE stuff and I actually just dealt with the situation every day as it came really. […] I would have liked to have seen more support from the team or from the social worker to say, 'do you need PPE, do you need anything?' to help you through the pandemic* (Employer, interview)

5.99 Similarly, support, access to equipment, and the vaccine varied for PAs: *My employer was very good with that, yeah, I had all the PPE I needed* (PA, interview)

5.100 The pandemic was further associated with exacerbating recruitment and retention issues and an employer referred to PAs leaving due to their fear of contracting the virus:

> *It's been difficult to find people to recruit and help throughout this Covid […]. I remember at the beginning of Covid, I lost four members of staff right away because of their own fears* (Employer, interview)

5.101 Another employer noted the reason their PA left was not wishing to receive the Covid-19 vaccination and concerns over being able to find alternative employment:

5.102 Unfilled PA vacancies and other PAs within the team required to isolate, meant PAs faced additional pressures such as taking on additional hours:

> *…a couple of the [other PAs] had Covid, a couple of the girls couldn't come in […]. So, it was quite hard, yeah, I was the one that was doing, I was doing nights and days for a while (PA, interview)*

> *I have worked with one individual for over two years and love working with him. The pressure put on me through the covid pandemic and subsequent reduction in services for my individual continues to be very difficult to manage as I am the only PA at the moment* (PA, survey)

5.103 Additional duties associated to keep themselves and their employers safe were also highlighted:

…there were lots of things to consider while she was in my care […]. I would say I spent at least another hour a day just sanitising everything, so I did more than my allotted hours, but I was happy to do that if it meant keeping everybody safe (PA, interview)

5.104 For employers who had previously been receiving a combination of DPs and other provision, such as day centres, the closing of that provision during lockdown had given them the experience of a '*different life*':

…with Covid [name] had a difference of life he'd never had before and he was home, well then when we eventually were able to send him back [to the day centre], he went a few weeks and he started having challenging behaviour because he didn't want to go because he's a different view of the world because of Covid and preferred to stay home than sit in a room in day centre on his own all day (Employer, interview)

5.105 An employer discussed the changes as a result of the pandemic, noting that LAs had become more flexible in terms of how DPs might be used. The example below refers to the use of DPs to fund equipment and the concept of being able to pool DPs becoming more realistic.

[pooled DPs] has not been a reality at all, there's been some talk about it since Covid because people weren't able to have their PAs in the house, so that money was gathering. So, some people have been successful in going back to the local authorities and saying, 'look can I spend this on this bit of equipment that will help instead' and there's now more of an idea that actually, some of these things are beneficial. So, there's some conversations that have just started because of Covid but otherwise that wasn't a realistic option and in terms of pooling Direct Payments (Employer, interview)

5.106 For employers and/or those managing the DP, coupled with their PAs not being able to work and the closure of existing services and support during lockdown had been difficult, and at times isolating. As highlighted by the final excerpt below, fears of contracting the virus had led some employers to decide to not use their PA.

In the first lockdown obviously, my PA couldn't work so everyone was home […]. That was quite hard but then we couldn't go anywhere either, so it was literally, we were home (Employer, interview)

…we used to have lovely Direct Payments get togethers/meetings, but of course Covid has stopped all of that and it's a shame (Employer, interview)

I made the decision not to have anybody for 8 weeks. I just felt hang on now, I've got to shut myself down here, for 8 weeks I shut myself down, it was hard (Employer, interview)

5.107 Linked to the extract above, a PA described how following their employer contracting Covid-19, they had become '*absolutely petrified of Covid'* and as a result no longer wanted their PAs to come to work. Consequently, this had impacted their earnings:

[Employer] didn't want anybody going there, she was so terrified of it and so she didn't want us to work. […] …and she didn't want to see me for weeks cos I'd had Covid, she said 'oh no don't come to work, I don't want to see you'. I didn't get any money for that but there we are (PA, interview)

5.108 Meanwhile for other employers, the potential mental health impact of being isolated from their PAs led to a decision to continue receiving support:

…we decided, as far as I was concerned, I would rather not suffer the mental health issues due to the isolation and so on and I would rather that she [PA] came in if she was comfortable about doing that and we agreed that she was (Employer, interview)

5.109 Stakeholders discussed the impact of Covid-19 and highlighted both positive and less positive experiences. For instance, the pandemic the move to increased online working was seen by one stakeholder as enhancing collaboration by bring people '*together quickly*'. For another stakeholder, moving to online support had accelerated set-up times for DPs from: *the point of referral, the initial contact and engagement, all the necessary paperwork, and the funding package* (Stakeholder, interview).

5.110 However, the time taken to recruit PAs had extended: *…we can probably now double if not triple that timeline [previous 4-6 weeks]* (Stakeholder, interview)

5.111 Whilst a DP provider expressed a preference for the continuation of online support methods, another expressed their view of the importance of providing face-to-face support, particularly for the first visit with a new employer. Recognising the advantages of face-to-face and online approaches, another stakeholder discussed adopting a 'blended approach' going forward: *…we do still need to go out and meet people, it's always better face to face. But there are going to be some processes and systems that actually will be streamlined because we can do them online now* (Stakeholder, interview)

5.112 Finally, Covid-19 was seen as increasing in the number of complex referrals being received, which affected the ability for DPs to be a preventative resource with '*people who aren't in crises not being looked at'* (Stakeholder, interview).

Welsh Government financial support during Covid-19

5.113 The financial support provided by Welsh Government for PAs unable to work due to Covid-19 included the statutory sick pay enhancement scheme, and the self-isolation support scheme. These were referred to as being of particular benefit by PAs and employers. For PAs these payments offered reassurance of avoiding financial hardship if they were required to self-isolate due to contracting Covid-19:

> *…if we go sick with Covid, obviously we would only be paid a statutory sick pay which is nothing. […] …if we go sick then we will be paid our full wages still because of Covid. […]. So yes, I mean there is some reassurance* (PA, Interview)

5.114 For employers, the scheme also provided reassurance and helped to avoid '*additional pressures*':

> *We only had the one member of staff that had to isolate, and she did the 10 days, and she was able to get the grant that was offered by the Welsh Government […]. [that was] hugely beneficial […]. …the money is set, you have nothing left over, its budgeted. So that would have put huge financial pressure on us, but it didn't because it didn't put pressure on the PA, and it didn't put pressure on us as an employer because she [PA] accessed the grant which was readily available and paid within a very short space of time* (Employer, interview)

5.115 Equally, a PA noted the benefit of the £500 key worker bonus payment, followed by the £735 '*NHS and social care financial recognition scheme*':

I am very fortunate that I've had 2 'thank yous' from the Government for working through the pandemic shall we say in the role and I'm more than happy with that, but I would think that had I not had that then it would have been a bit more difficult (PA, interview)

Chapter summary

5.116 This chapter has presented findings using data from interviews and free-text survey responses and as primarily focussed on the experiences of PAs and employers, using stakeholder perspectives to offer additional considerations. It is a summary of the qualitative data; it does not claim to be representative of all PAs, employers, and stakeholders in Wales. Its value is offering a rich and detailed insight that works towards addressing the aims of this study – to better understand what is working well, what is working less well, the key issues for the PA workforce in Wales, and the impact of Covid-19. Drawing upon this data and its findings, several aspects raised in this chapter highlight that the experiences of employers were at times innately associated with those of PAs.

What is working well for PAs

5.117 PAs undertake a wealth of highly skilled roles, that range from personal care, social activities, practical support, and skills such as organisation, planning, decision-making, being adaptive, and responsive are important. They have in-depth knowledge of their employer/person they are supporting and when included by other professionals, can offer valuable insight.

5.118 Aspects working well for PAs included:

- role autonomy
- the flexibility of the role
- building relationships with their employers, and their families
- job satisfaction
- enabling their employee to achieve their outcomes

5.119 Many of the features working well for PAs were linked to the intrinsic close relationships built with their employers, based on trust and mutual respect. PAs derived distinct job satisfaction from providing continuity of care, and enabling choice and control, and supporting their employer(s) to achieve their outcomes. These characteristics were of equal importance amongst employers who referred to

quality of life, independence, and having time for other commitments, for example, family and employment.

What is working less well – Key issues for PAs and employers

5.120 Aspects not working well for PAs and employers:

- pay, terms and conditions
- training and skills development
- recruitment and retention
- support, information, and advice
- PA employer relationship – role remit and expectations

5.121 Some of the features above are linked between PAs and employers and cannot be considered in isolation. For example, low pay and poor terms and conditions was a prominent issue amongst PAs and was referred to as contributor to recruitment and retention difficulties amongst employers. However, for PAs, the issue of low pay and terms and conditions was exacerbated by additional expenditure, unpaid time, and being unable to take their holiday entitlement due to a lack of cover. Another example is the impact of inconsistent support and information for employers to ensure they are equipped with the right skills and knowledge to fully support their PAs and uphold their employment rights. This is especially important given the absence of support specifically for PAs, and lack of peer support networks. Finally, whilst close working relationships were a key motivator for PAs, and highly valued by employers, they can also have drawbacks i.e., blurring of professional role boundaries, increased role remit/expectations, and a felt responsibility towards their employer.

The impact of Covid-19

5.122 PAs and employers' experiences of support during the Covid-19 pandemic were mixed with some feeling fully supported and reassured, with others feeling much less supported. Positive examples provided by employers included:

- receiving regular information/updates and 'check-ins' from their LA/DP support provider
- easy access to PPE
- additional support offered, e.g., collection of medication, shopping

5.123 The impact of Covid-19 for PAs, employers and stakeholders included:

- recruitment and retention issues were exacerbated e.g., PAs leaving their role due to fears of contracting the virus, or not wishing to be vaccinated.
- additional pressure for PAs e.g., taking on extra hours in cases where vacant posts were unfilled, or other PAs isolating
- isolation experienced by employers e.g., closure of existing support such as day centres and employer get togethers, decision by some not to use their PAs
- increased number of complex referrals

5.124 Positives viewed as a result of Covid-19 were:

- greater openness and flexibility amongst LAs of how DPs are spent e.g., to purchase equipment, pooling of DPs
- online working and provision of support increased collaboration and accelerated set-up times for DPs. However, value of face-to-face offer and adopting a blended delivery
- Welsh Government financial support

6. Interesting and notable practice – options for improvement

6.1 This chapter draws together areas of interesting and notable practice that have emerged through the study. It also identifies options for improvement as remarked upon and suggested by PAs, employers, and key stakeholders.

Areas of interesting and notable practice

6.2 Stakeholders and employers offered several examples of existing, previous, and future areas of interesting practice within Wales and England.

Flintshire County Council (FCC)

6.3 The work of Flintshire County Council was referred to as a place where much work has been done to support both PAs and their employers as effectively as possible. Elements of this included:

- **redesign of a new website:** providing a range of information such as fact sheets, short films, a quarterly newsletter, a PA handbook, and contact details: *it's sort of a one-stop-shop and it's been working quite well* (Stakeholder, interview)
- **a PA coordinator** whose role is to: *better support the personal assistants* (Stakeholder, interview)
- **a PA portal:** The portal provides information for PAs, a register for PAs who are seeking work, and access to online training and learning.
- **an Employers home page:** Provides information, employers can create a vacancy, and search for PAs
- **training and learning:** With around '*100 courses'* on the portal, PAs have the option to complete courses via Grey Matter Learning and/or a seven-module course comprising of: *equality and diversity, first aid, person centred care, safeguarding, health and safety and infection control* (Stakeholder, interview)

6.4 Upon completion, PAs receive the PA induction certificate (seven-module course), and separate certificates for courses completed via Grey Matter Learning. The recognition of PAs skills through the provision of certificates was a positive feature:

> *I think that's probably a positive as well, they are getting recognition for skills or the knowledge they've already got but haven't got recognition* (Stakeholder, interview)

6.5 PAs are also able to access the FCC's Care First Employee Assistant Programme, providing information and support such as counselling.

6.6 Further areas of interesting practice undertaken by FCC have included the promotion of DPs and the role of PAs through the production of a series of films, demonstrating the relationship between the LA and DP recipients; and the use of micro-enterprises in Flintshire to try a new way to connect DP recipients and PAs.

6.7 FCC stakeholders highlighted the importance of continually seeking feedback review and refine their practice: *We are looking for feedback at every step, what we are doing right, what we are doing wrong, how can we do things better. We want to work with people, and I think that's the key thing* (Stakeholder, interview).

6.8 Other stakeholders referred to discussions with FCC about their approach and using the films developed by FCC:

> *I did have a conversation with Flintshire, and they have a PA coordinator […]. ...they have a whole sort of like PA training package that's available to PAs online* (Stakeholder, interview)

> *I've actually put some video clips from Flintshire on [our website], so how Direct Payments worked, what Direct Payments look like, what being a PA is* (Stakeholder, interview)

Torfaen

6.9 In Torfaen, areas of interesting practice discussed included access for PAs and employers to relevant training provided to other LA staff, the provision of online resources, and the PA handbook in an e-learning format.

6.10 PAs completing the e-learning receive a certificate: …*what we are trying to do is get as many PAs as possible to do it in the first 12 weeks of employment* (Stakeholder, interview).

Smartphone App

6.11 One stakeholder described their plans to develop a smartphone App for employers and PAs to facilitate '*their own peer support groups through forums*' and offer an opportunity for PAs to connect with other PAs and share advice: *We are in the testing stage at the moment, but we are hoping that you know and perhaps Spring/early Summer, we'll be able to launch that* (Stakeholder, interview).

Using DPs to pay for alternative services

6.12 An employer highlighted an early pilot between a parent/carer forum and Welsh Government regarding '*packages of support for carers that will allow you to access, I don't know a handy person, a gardener, decorator, those kinds of day-to-day activities that carers don't necessarily get the luxury of having the time to do themselves*' (Employer, interview).

Previous pilot scheme between DEWIS and Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) assessors

6.13 In 2012, the first cohort of a pilot was launched to train PAs in what was then the QCF Level 3 in Health and Social Care. DEWIS and RCT LA assessors worked with Social Care Wales to develop the qualification and accompanying guidance. A Level 3 qualification was identified as being the most appropriate, especially as PAs are: *not supervised by another worker or a manager or anything so there's a lot of autonomy there, they need to be making decisions themselves* (Stakeholder, interview)

> *…this level descriptor [for the award] actually highlighted the role of a Level 2 worker […]. It was very clear that the Personal Assistants were working at Level* 3 (Stakeholder, interview).

6.14 The pilot ran four cohorts in total, with some sessions being delivered by employers: *…we had one or two employer who actually delivered some of our training sessions* (Stakeholder, interview).

From the perspective of PAs who had received the training, the benefits related to the value of being recognised as professionals, receiving group supervision, and opportunities for career progression. Additionally, training undertaken within a group setting had meant PAs connecting to one another: *…what that ended up then, is they ended up with peer support […]. So, one of the positives that came back from it was about that peer support and about the network that they then developed* (Stakeholder, interview).

Options for improvement

6.15 In addition to improving pay alongside terms and conditions, PAs, employers, and key stakeholder offered other options for improvement.

For PAs

Training and development opportunities

6.16 From the perspectives of PAs and employers, increased opportunities for training and professional development, and an induction period and training for new PAs on a consistent basis would be a very welcome addition.

6.17 In the context of training, stakeholders commented on the need/expectation that PAs should receive basic '*minimum training*' such as safeguarding and '*moving and positioning*' to ensure: '*they are safe for themselves and for the people they are supporting'* (Stakeholder, interview).

Support, information, and advice for PAs

6.18 One stakeholder commented on the need for PAs to benefit from a 'mirror' of the support offered to employers:

> *Good practice for me would also see reciprocating support service for those PAs […]. a separate service that's commissioned to look after the needs and welfare of those personal assistants* (Stakeholder, interview)

6.19 The provision of information at the time of commencing their role was suggested as being helpful by PAs, alongside receiving updates from the LA and/or DP support provider and having 'check-ins': *I think it would be really helpful to have contact details of anybody so that when you start you are told 'right we are here, and you can ring this number'. […] …to have an emailed a list of pay dates so you know when you are being paid and what your holidays are, just very basic things really (PA, interview).*

6.20 A stakeholder noted the importance of having consistent information/guidance that is focussed on increasing understanding amongst PAs of their employment rights: *I think that the local authority could provide a forum for personal assistants to train them in what their rights are […]. …there is certainly a role for the local authority in raising awareness shall we say of the rights of employees* (Stakeholder, interview).

6.21 Other ways in which PAs felt they could be better supported was to be consulted with and ensuring mechanisms are in place that allow them to be heard and listened to: *Being included or consulted on matters concerning our employment and other issues that may affect our working conditions* (PA, survey)

> *Being listened to - Thank you for carrying out this survey. I hope it benefits the personal assistants and therefore their clients* (PA, survey)

PA networks / connecting to one another

6.22 Suggestions related to PAs being better supported included opportunities for PAs to meet and connect with one another. For PAs, these ranged from get-togethers coordinated by the LA, community groups/meetings for PAs and their employers, and a regulated Facebook group:

> *…perhaps once every two months, the PAs in the area go down to County Hall and they have a chit chat, cup of tea, piece of cake and chat to each other about any issues they might have and any questions for the people from [LA]. That would probably be quite useful because it is quite isolated because you are a lone worker […].*

> *I believe some kind of community group or social group where PAs and their clients can meet up regular and socialise would be great* (PA, survey)

> *I think a Facebook group would be good, but […] it couldn't just be run by PAs, you couldn't just get a bunch of PAs together and run a PA support group because you could be giving each other wrong information […]. So, it would need to be run by the Direct Payments team in the local authorities to actually make sure that the facts were true and that the advice and the information you were given was correct* (PA, interview)

6.23 However, there are practicalities to be considered which would allow for PAs to meet one another which centred on costs: *…some PAs don't want that [to meet up], they won't get paid for their time in getting together* (PA, interview).

> *I think at one point they [LA] were trying to get PAs to meet up but they sort of forget that if they meet up regularly, it costs money to do that* (PA, interview)

6.24 In addition to peer networks, stakeholders proposed a PA community of practice as an area of improvement: *…whether something such as a community of practice might help PAs, obviously the confidentiality is really important in relation to what they do and the work that they do. But a community of practice where they could be identifying maybe as a group, topics they'd like to explore, and they can be a really powerful source of support for them but can be a development opportunity as well* (Stakeholder, interview).

For employers

Recruitment, retention, and cover

6.25 Employers' proposals to help ease the challenges experienced due to difficulties in recruiting or covering their PAs periods of absence centred on having a pool or bank of available PAs, and an organisation (perhaps a co-operative) that could enable employers to 'share' their PAs with other employers.

6.26 Other suggestions from employers included the provision of a budget to fund recruitment advertisements, uniform, and PA team building activities. Similarly, a PA highlighted the potential benefit of being provided work wear: *Is there a polo top or hoodie you could supply in bright colours? I do lots of messy play and craft activities. It would be great to not dirty my own nice clothes. We also do a lot of outside work and walking so a hoodie would be good* (PA, survey).

Support, information, and advice for employers

6.27 Several options were proposed by employers in terms of the types of support and information they considered would be helpful.

6.28 Expressing uncertainty about what they could use their DP to fund, employers felt improvements could be brought about through greater clarity and consistency of information:

> *It seems to me that social services who do assessments and so on don't have a clear idea of what a Direct Payment can do, and what it's for, and the possibilities that you can have that close relative living with you and supporting you* (Employer, interview)

> *I got sent a letter from the Welsh Government which says yeah, if you want to join a gym or you know taxi fees for community access or you know, you can do that with a Direct Payment, but the local authorities don't tell you that* (Employer, interview)

Provision of consistent practical and emotional support:

6.29 Recognising the isolation that can be part of the experience of being an employer, there was a call for some additional support to deal with these matters:

> *I guess from my point of view, emotional support would be good. It is a very lonely job - being totally responsible for my mother, employing five people, always being the one to sort any illness, holiday, family*

crisis out for the PAs, while trying to live my own life (Employer, survey)

6.30 For stakeholders, support and advice for employers centred on focusing on increasing their confidence to effectively manage their PAs to meet their own needs, without impacting their relationship with the PA:

[Giving somebody feedback on their performance] that's really important […]. …so, there's something about how can employers then develop the confidence to be able to give feedback in a way that's constructive and retains that relationship that they've got (Stakeholder, interview)

6.31 An employer echoed this sentiment by expressing the need for a '*middle manager*', to help them avoid difficult discussions with their PAs:

…you need this role of a middle manager […]. it is very difficult for me to reprimand my staff myself because then they are getting in a mood with me, and I'll get in a mood with them. What I need is a middle manager. […] …a middle manager could deal with all that awkward situation. When you build up close relationships it's a difficult situation (Employer, interview)

<u>A training offer for employers</u>

6.32 Reference was made by some employers of an offer of training, especially when commencing their role. This centred on having a clear understanding about their roles and responsibilities, and their employees' rights and entitlements.

I feel there should be local authority training courses available for employers of PAs to tell you how to be an employer. To date I feel it's a 'learn as you go' option. This can be hugely anxiety inducing (Employer, survey)

When I started with Direct Payments, I wasn't given any training on paying staff, working out holiday entitlement etc there needs to be better training as people don't want to apply for Direct Payments as they feel it's too difficult to manage (Employer, survey)

6.33 The development of specific training for employers was also proposed by a stakeholder. However, the importance of striking the '*right balance*' was

acknowledged and for employers not to have training imposed upon them, particularly when they are often managing competing commitments. A stakeholder who had previously developed a training package had experienced difficulties when attempting to encourage employers to attend, re-iterated this point:

> *…we couldn't get anybody to come in to do it. I think lots of our service users are so, their lives are so stressful with one thing and another, if you're a parent of a disabled child, the last thing you want to do is to come and have some training on being a good employer* (Stakeholder, interview)

6.34 Examples of existing training being offered to employers were provided: *I know that the liability insurers all provide training on their portals and pre-pandemic they actually set up physical training venues locally that people could go to about being a good employer, so we always promote those sessions* (Stakeholder, interview).

6.35 Similarly, when referring to the provision of training and support networks for employers, the same stakeholder noted: …*we've tried setting up support groups, peer groups, we've tried engaging via letter, email. Over the years we've tried to bring people together and they just don't want it, they just don't turn up and I think even the liability insurers have done a few meet and greet sessions with food and you are talking three or four people turn up* (Stakeholder, interview).

Summary

6.36 The purpose of this chapter is to provide a bridge between the findings and the conclusions that follow this chapter. Put simply, if all areas of Wales were consistently working to the level of some of the interesting and notable practice in this chapter, many of the issues identified in the preceding chapters would cease to be issues.

7. Conclusions

7.1 This concluding section draws together the findings of the three data sources of this study: the rapid literature review, the Wales-wide online surveys to PAs and employers, and the interviews and free-text survey responses.

7.2 In considering what is working well and what is working less well for PAs, alongside their employers, eight overarching areas have been developed from the analysis:

1. Pay
2. Terms and conditions
3. Training and skills development
4. Recruitment and retention
5. Support, information, and advice
6. Recognition and visibility - promotion and awareness raising of PA role
7. PA and employer relationships
8. The impact of Covid-19

7.3 In this concluding chapter, we triangulate the evidence from the report against each of those eight areas – whether the literature review [LR], PA and employer surveys [S], or qualitative data (Interviews and free-text responses) [Q] – to reflect the nuances within the evidence.

7.4 In each of the eight sub-sections, we then identify a series of implications that are borne out of this triangulation. It is important to note that whilst the evidence has been arranged in this way to provide some clarity, there is often some overlap between each of these and they and should be considered together rather than in isolation.

7.5 The chapter finishes with some reflections on three aims of the study, and on next steps for those stakeholders engaged in taking this work forward.

Pay

7.6 Pay is perhaps the most obvious and important area to reflect on given the evidence collected by the study. Following the analysis, there are two key aspects within pay which need consideration: the impact on PAs of low pay rates; and the inconsistency and lack of clarity of pay rates.

Low pay rates and their impact on PAs

7.7 Whilst the mean rate of pay received by PAs and paid by employers in Wales is above the Real Living Wage of £9.90[14] – based on the survey the mean basic hourly rate paid to PAs £10.30 [S]; and the mean basic hourly rate received by PAs £10.46 [S][15] – there are inevitable variations in this figure (see the issue around inconsistency below.

7.8 Additional expenditure cited by PAs throughout the study also has an effect of the amount of actual earnings that PAs 'take home'. Examples of additional expenditure provided in the study include public transport costs, mileage, meals with their employer, and resources for activities [Q].

7.9 Further, where there are low number of contracted hours for PAs, this means that these do not meet thresholds for NI contributions to receive Statutory Sick Pay and other associated benefits [Q].

7.10 Evidence also indicates that pay rates are not reflective of the level of skills and range of tasks PAs undertake, given the challenge of their role. Low pay is seen as problematic due to level of complexity of skills required [Q], especially when seen in comparisons to roles with similar or greater pay rates outside the social care sector which carry much less responsibility [Q].

7.11 The overall impact of this is that low pay rates are linked to PAs feeling undervalued [LR, S, Q].

Inconsistent pay rates lacking clarity

7.12 Evidence gathered from our study demonstrates that PAs in Wales are paid a range of hourly rates. These pay rates are inconsistent and not clearly linked to roles and responsibilities [LR].

7.13 Rates received by PAs in Wales ranged from £25 per hour to £7 per hour [S], and rates paid by employers ranged from £15 per hour to £8 per hour [S].

7.14 For PAs there is an absence of information to better understand the remit of what constitutes higher paid roles – in short, a lack of clarity and information about the different rates of pay [Q].

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[14] This will be the case for all social care workers, including PAs, from April 2022: https://gov.wales/social-care-staff-earn-real-living-wage

[15] These are also both higher than the mean hourly rate of pay for PAs in England of £9.95 (as of December 2020 [LR]

7.15 Variation in the pay rates is attributed to the fact that different rates are set by different LAs across Wales, and this is difficult to understand from the perspective of PAs [Q].

7.16 DP rates set by LAs also impact employers' ability to offer 'good' rates to prospective employees – some individual employers choose to pay more pro rata, but this has the impact of reducing the number of support hours they can receive through the budget within their DP [Q].

7.17 There are accordingly differing pay rates amongst multiple short-hour contracts that PAs may support [Q].

Concluding questions

7.18 We therefore conclude that the key stakeholders need to consider and address the following questions which are the implications drawn from the summary of findings above:

- to what extent will the WG commitment to a Real Living Wage act as a floor rather than a ceiling?
- what is the best solution to the issue of different pay rates across the LAs in Wales?
- how can the range of skills and complexity of tasks undertaken by PAs be better reflected in the hourly pay rate received?

Terms and conditions

7.19 The terms and conditions of employment are important elements of assessing the value of the overall remuneration package afforded to employees. Employment law and good practice dictates that these terms and conditions are contained in a contract between the employer and employees.

Provision and type of contract

7.20 The study reveals that PAs in Wales are more likely (around 80%) to have a contract than not, but not in every case (12%) and in some instances (around 8%) there was ambiguity as to whether a contract existed at all [S]. The absence of written contracts or vague contracts do not reflect roles/responsibilities [LR].

7.21 The type of contract varies with 64% having a permanent contract and 13% a casual hours/zero-hours contract [S], the latter being fewer than in England (20%) [LR].

7.22 It is not unusual for PAs to have more than one employer. PAs support an average of 1.46 employers [S] and in England on average have 1.29 jobs [LR]. Managing multiple small hour contracts presents challenges for PAs and has implications for recruitment and retention [Q].

Contract information

7.23 There is evidence that the terms and conditions contained within PA's contracts, i.e., employee's entitlements, are either absent or unclear [LR]. This has implications for PAs knowing what they were entitled to and not receiving payments for issues like sickness and holidays, weekend working and overtime [LR, Q].

7.24 The absence of clear information in contracts also relates to clarity around roles and responsibilities [Q].

7.25 Equally importantly, the study suggests a lack of awareness amongst employers and employees about whether they offered most of the benefits cited in the survey or not – 24% of employers and 26% of PAs being unsure [S].

Unpaid time

7.26 The lack of clarity relating to contracts may be reflected in the study's findings that PAs are not always receiving payment for all the work they undertake [LR, Q, S]. This has implications for recruitment and retention as well as achieving continuity of care when replacement PAs are needed to cover absences.

7.27 The amount of additional unpaid hours is reflected in the number of hours of voluntary support reported by PAs – 12.4 hours each week from PAs who were family members or friends and 1 hour for others [S].

7.28 We heard examples of PAs undertaking unpaid additional duties and/or not having a choice as to whether they worked overtime and on bank holidays [Q].

7.29 When additional rates of pay were made, these were most commonly for mileage (51%) and bank holiday working (24%) [S].

Concluding questions

7.30 We therefore conclude that the key stakeholders need to consider and address the following questions which are the implications drawn from the summary of findings above:

- what is the best way of ensuring employers comply with employment law and good employment practice in issuing contracts that fully reflect the roles, responsibilities, terms and conditions of employment?
- what should be the minimum expectation that PAs should have of being remunerated for additional and unsociable hours of work?

Training and skills development

7.31 Delivering good social care requires a range of skills and attributes, some of which are obtained via formal qualification training. The relevance of training to PAs is as great as to any other employee in the social care sector and employers have emphasised the importance of ensuring their PAs have the skills to support them rather than formal qualifications [LR].

Formal qualifications and skills training

7.32 The study reveals an absence of required or consistent availability of standard mandatory training [Q], inconsistent training opportunities for PAs [LR] and a majority of PAs (51%) in Wales with no formal social care qualification [S]. Even so, this compares favourably with England (63%) [LR].

7.33 Where training has been accessed, this most commonly relates to moving and handling, first aid, and health and safety [LR, S].

7.34 Evidence suggests a lack of professional development opportunities for PAs [Q] with only 33% reporting they had received any training but employers also wishing to emphasise the importance of personal qualities, including compatibility [S], alongside training and formal qualifications [Q].

Provision and access

7.35 Although training opportunities are inconsistent, they are valued and appreciated by PAs [LR]. Notwithstanding this and the variable access to specialist training, e.g., mental health, sensory impairment, the majority of PAs (90%) agreed they feel equipped to perform their role [S].

7.36 The study reveals the difficulties some employers have in accessing training, citing a shortage of available training [Q]. However, as many as 38% confirm that they have not tried to access training for their PAs [S]. Where training is provided, this is usually via LA-run courses.

7.37 There is evidence that PAs are sourcing their own training and there was acknowledgement of the challenges facing employers in facilitating training for their PAs, for example a lack of cover for absences [Q].

7.38 Any efforts to improve the availability must ensure its relevance to the individual circumstances of the PA role and employer's needs and not adopt a one size fits all approach [Q].

Concluding questions

7.39 We therefore conclude that the key stakeholders need to consider and address the following questions which are the implications drawn from the summary of findings above:

- how can training and development opportunities for PAs and employers be increased?
- what role should formal qualification training play in improving the skills of PAs?
- what is the best way of ensuring training opportunities do not follow a one size fits all approach?

Recruitment and retention

7.40 The uniqueness of the employment arrangements in the context of DPs has implications for the recruitment and retention of PAs. 65% of employers in Wales find it difficult or very difficult to recruit PAs [S] and these difficulties have numerous implications.

Factors affecting recruitment and retention

7.41 The study reveals a clear relationship between the remuneration package for PAs and the ability to recruit and retain them, with 85% of employers reporting the significance of terms and conditions in this regard as quite or very important [S].

7.42 As with other parts of the social care sector, low pay is seen as an attributable factor, impacting on the availability and quality of prospective candidates [LR, Q] as was being unable to offer PAs entitlements above statutory requirements [Q].

7.43 There is some evidence of variation of conditions amongst Welsh LAs, e.g., retainer payments being made in some cases [Q].

7.44 Perhaps inevitably, having to split a small number of DP hours over short periods of time was also reported as a barrier to recruitment [Q].

Recruitment and retention enablers

7.45 The study identified a range of experiences in supporting recruitment. Informal routes such as word of mouth are cited as being often used [LR] as well as social media [Q] rather than formal advertising [Q]. These informal routes most commonly involve advertising and finding new PAs via family and friends [S].

7.46 One consequence of employing family or friends is that turnover rates become less of an issue [LR] and in Wales about 30% of PAs were family or friends before becoming a PA [S].

7.47 It is important to get the right recruitment process in place from the outset and ensure clarity about support needs [LR] and a clear job description helps in this context [Q].

7.48 There is encouragement to be found in the survey reporting that over 50% of employers find retaining their PAs very or quite easy [S].

Impact of recruitment and retention difficulties

7.49 It is suggested that responsibilities for PAs and their employers increase when recruitment becomes difficult [Q].

7.50 From PAs we spoke with, a small number report they are unable to take holidays and have had to forfeit leave because of staff shortages [Q].

7.51 Similarly, employers report having to purchase care from agencies at increased cost and needing to rely more on unpaid family members in the absence of available cover [Q].

Concluding questions

7.52 We therefore conclude that the key stakeholders need to consider and address the following questions which are the implications drawn from the summary of findings above:

- how can learning from the notable practice on recruitment and retention techniques be more widely applied?
- what more can be done to enhance the remuneration package of PAs to improve recruitment?

Support, information, and advice

a) for PAs (incl. peer networks)

7.53 By definition, PAs work as individuals rather than in a team environment. They commonly work in occupational isolation and are largely unsupported [LR]. This does not mean, however, that they do not need or appreciate being part of a wider network whereby they can access support and advice.

Opportunities to network

7.54 The study suggests that equivalent levels of support should be offered to PAs as to their employers [LR, Q] and a national association to represent PAs might be helpful [LR].

7.55 The isolation that PAs feel is exacerbated by lack of wider support with opportunities to engage with other PAs being limited [LR, Q].

7.56 PAs initially struggle to engage with peer networks and once they do, find it difficult to maintain [LR]. Practical considerations feature here, such as the time and cost to attend [Q].

Access to support and information

7.57 PAs need better support through access to guidance and independent advice [Q] and have limited understanding of their employment rights [LR] or existing resources [Q].

7.58 The support needed by PAs can take different forms and can include supervision, opportunities for career progression, access to independent advice, and mechanisms to be heard and listened to [Q].

7.59 When employers are seen to support PAs, this serves as an enabler to retention [Q].

b) for employers

7.60 Employing a PA via the DP system may well be the first experience many people have of being an employer. The complexities involved are acknowledged by PAs who also recognise the importance of employers being supported and equipped with the skills needed to fulfil their role [Q].

Support for employers to uphold their responsibilities

7.61 The study suggests that poor employment conditions for PAs may be related to employers' lack of knowledge and inexperience, for example of employment law, employment rights and entitlements [LR]. Yet there is also evidence that employers in Wales access all types of support listed in the survey to help them in their role as an employer [S].

7.62 The study indicates that duties associated with managing a DP on behalf of someone can be burdensome and difficult to manage [Q] and individuals supporting those in receipt of a DP report experiencing higher levels of stress compared to those whose DP is managed by an agency [LR].

7.63 Our findings confirm the importance of prospective employers being informed of the responsibilities involved and have the 'skills and competencies' to manage a DP [Q].

7.64 The most common sources of support/information for employers are DP support providers and LAs [S].

Good quality, consistent and reliable support

7.65 There is evidence of good support for employers linked to recruitment, e.g., using clear job descriptions, person specifications and information on pay rates [LR]. Overall, however, the availability and provision of good quality information and support is variable [Q] with 56% of employers reporting they were quite satisfied or very satisfied with the support they received and 28% reporting they quite dissatisfied or very dissatisfied [S].

7.66 The study suggests that the type of support available needs to be timely, especially at the early stages of receiving a DP, and include regular "check-ins" advice and support with recruitment [Q]. Employers (including carers supporting those in receipt of a DP) would benefit from training and bespoke support in the early stages of managing a DP, alongside targeted assistance for carers with more complex or greater needs [LR].

7.67 Training is an important element of support for employers who highlight the lack of training on offer to better understand their roles and responsibilities [Q]. It is also acknowledged, however, that there can be low turnout at training and support networks for employers [Q].

7.68 Research in England suggests most employers have not received or accessed training [LR].

Concluding questions

7.69 We therefore conclude that the key stakeholders need to consider and address the following questions which are the implications drawn from the summary of findings above:

- how can support for PAs, employers and carers be made more consistently available and accessible?
- how best to ensure that the elements of support needed cover not only advice and information, but also other factors referred to in the findings of this study?
- who is best equipped to arrange and facilitate the provision of the range of support needed?

Recognition and visibility – promotion and awareness raising of PA role

7.70 The issue of the status, recognition and value placed on social care workers, including PAs, has perhaps never been more prominent. The current workforce crisis, and two years of additional pressures brought about by the pandemic, have meant that people being aware of the crucial work that PAs do has never been more important.

High level skilled duties of PAs

7.71 PAs utilise numerous high-level skills (autonomy, communication, co-ordination, assessment, and decision-making) in their work [LR].

7.72 A range of support is provided by PAs [S] and their duties range from personal care, social activities, and practical support to skills such as organisation, planning, decision-making, being adaptive, and responsive. These are important roles in the ongoing support of employers [Q].

Increasing recognition and contribution of the PA workforce

7.73 There is a need to increasingly consider PAs as an important component of the wider health and social care system [LR] as PAs can be a valuable source of information that can benefit other professionals [LR], but some PAs feel they are unrecognised and undervalued as professionals [Q].

7.74 PAs have in-depth knowledge of their employer/person they are supporting and when included by other professionals, can offer valuable insight [Q], although there is ambiguity and poor understanding of the PA role amongst professionals within the community [LR].

7.75 The complexity of care provided by PAs is also poorly understood by the public [LR].

7.76 Involving PAs to help shape changes that affect their employment is an important consideration for the future [LR], and professional registration may offer a means to create greater recognition, value and more opportunities for training and professional development [Q]

Concluding questions

7.77 We therefore conclude that the key stakeholders need to consider and address the following questions which are the implications drawn from the summary of findings above:

- what more could be done to ensure PAs are recognised and valued for the role that they do?
- how could working relationships with professionals working with the community be enhanced such that the knowledge and insight that PAs have is respected?
- how can the potential benefits for individuals of the autonomy offered by Direct Payments, be balanced with the potential benefits for workers offered by professional registration?

PA and employer relationship

7.78 Relational forms of care and support have always been at the heart of how PAs work at their best. Relationships between PAs and DP recipients often extend far beyond that of employer and employee to mutual benefit, but this can lead to challenging circumstances arising.

Intrinsic value of relationship-based care

7.79 Having a PA offers opportunities for relationship-based care that can lead to enhanced levels of person-centred support [LR], and employers place intrinsic value on the continuity of care and the development of close caring relationships with their PAs [LR].

7.80 84% of PAs agreed that they felt valued in their role [S], and 94% of PAs agreed that they enjoyed their role [S]. Aspects of job satisfaction for PAs relate to understanding their employer's wishes, expectations, preferences and needs, and making a positive difference to them [LR]. PAs also expressed that they derived job

satisfaction via the continuity of care they could offer, enabling choice and control, and supporting their employer(s) to achieve their outcomes [Q].

7.81 Forming close working relationships with their employers and their families a central aspect of the PA role [Q]. Features working well for PAs are linked to the intrinsically close relationships built with their employers [Q].

7.82 PAs can offer improved individual outcomes, and the quality of care and support PAs provide can have a positive impact on individuals' lives [LR]. These characteristics were of equal importance amongst employers who referred to quality of life, independence, and time to spend on other commitments [Q].

Managing boundaries and expectations

7.83 Examples of disputes around managing employers' expectations can occur on occasion [LR], which can be exacerbated when there are increased expectations of the role and its remit [Q].

7.84 A sense of responsibility and not wanting to impact the relationship or let their employer down are feelings expressed by PAs [Q], which can lead to some difficulties in raising certain subjects like increases in pay rates (from the PA perspective), and issues with how their PAs perform their role (from the employers' perspective) [Q].

Concluding questions

7.85 We therefore conclude that the key stakeholders need to consider and address the following questions which are the implications drawn from the summary of findings above:

- how might the positive feedback on job satisfaction and feeling valued be used to encourage service users to choose DPs, and help recruit and retain PAs?
- what additional support might help broker conversations between employers and PAs on sensitive and difficult topics?

Impact of Covid-19

7.86 Inevitably experiences of supporting people, and being supported, through the pandemic over the last two years featured strongly in the evidence provided during the study.

Variation of support for PAs and employers

7.87 The level of support for PAs and employers varied across LAs, with some very positive experiences and others less positive, such as having to source their own PPE [LR, Q]. This was coupled with the fact that during the onset of the pandemic, there were a lack of reliable sources of information about the virus, and how and where to obtain PPE for PAs [LR/Q].

7.88 For employers, helpful aspects included early and regular communication and support, and greater flexibility offered by LAs to use DPs for alternatives in the absence of PAs [LR, Q]. Positive examples amongst employers focused on receiving regular information, check-ins, and having assistance with collecting medication and shopping [Q].

7.89 Employers experienced additional isolation through the closure of existing support such as day centres and employer 'get togethers' [Q].

Impacts on recruitment and retention

7.90 Some PAs decided to stop working or were asked to stop by their employer [LR], which led to difficulties in covering for them, especially if they were isolating [LR]. Covid-19 led to some PAs leaving their role due to fears of contracting the virus and/or employers asking PAs not to come to work [Q]. PAs often worked additional hours to cover periods of absence [Q].

7.91 The Welsh Government Covid-19 payment schemes, key worker bonus payment, and 'NHS and social care financial recognition scheme' benefitted PAs and employers [LR]. These payments offered reassurance for PAs who were ill themselves or were required to self-isolate as a result of Covid-19 [Q].

7.92 The societal move to online working and engagement, and increased use of technology [Q] has led to increased collaboration, and accelerated DP set-up times [Q].

Concluding question

7.93 We therefore conclude that the key stakeholders need to consider and address the following questions which are the implications drawn from the summary of findings above:

- how will it be possible to capitalise on the innovation of the response to the pandemic, without losing the creativity and trust that characterised that period?

7.94 For ease of reading, the full list of 19 concluding questions from the sections above are summarised below:

1. Pay
   - to what extent will the WG commitment to a Real Living Wage act as a floor rather than a ceiling?
   - what is the best solution to the issue of different pay rates across the LAs?
   - how can the range of skills and complexity of tasks undertaken by PAs be better reflected in the hourly pay rate received?
2. Terms and conditions
   - what is the best way of ensuring employers comply with employment law and good employment practice in issuing contracts that fully reflect the roles, responsibilities, terms and conditions of employment?
   - what should be the minimum expectation that PAs should have of being remunerated for additional and unsociable hours of work?
3. Training and skills development
   - how can training and development opportunities for PAs and employers be increased?
   - what role should formal qualification training play in improving PA skills?
   - what is the best way of ensuring training opportunities do not follow a one size fits all approach?
4. Recruitment and retention
   - how can learning from the notable practice on recruitment and retention techniques be more widely applied?
   - what more can be done to enhance the remuneration package of PAs to improve recruitment?
5. Support, information, and advice
   - how can support for PAs, employers and carers be made more consistently available and accessible?
   - how best to ensure that the elements of support needed cover not only advice and information, but also other factors referred to in the findings of this study?

- who is best equipped to arrange and facilitate the provision of the range of support needed?

6. Recognition and visibility - promotion and awareness raising of PA role
   - what more could be done to ensure PAs are recognised and valued for the role that they do?
   - how could working relationships with professionals working with the community be enhanced such that the knowledge and insight that PAs have is respected?
   - how can the potential benefits for individuals of the autonomy offered by Direct Payments, be balanced with the potential benefits for workers offered by professional registration?
7. PA and employer relationships
   - how might the positive feedback on job satisfaction and feeling valued be used to encourage service users to choose DPs, and help recruit and retain PAs?
   - what additional support might help broker conversations between employers and PAs on sensitive and difficult topics?
8. The impact of Covid-19
   - how will it be possible to capitalise on the innovation of the response to the pandemic, without losing the creativity and trust that characterised that period?

Final reflections

7.95 There were three stated aims of this study. In this final section, we provide a concluding comment on each.

Aim 1) Gather Wales level data on the PA workforce in Wales

7.96 This aim has been delivered, and the evidence is presented in Chapter 4 of this report.

Aim 2) Identify key issues facing the workforce and the scale of the problem

7.97 This aim has been delivered, and the evidence is presented in Chapters 4 and 5 of this report, and summarised in this Chapter, alongside a series of concluding questions that hopefully will help to shape the direction of the work of key stakeholders following this report.

Aim 3) Identify best practice and recommend options for improvement

7.98 Chapter 6 provides a repository of interesting and notable practice, as well as providing a focus for a number of areas for improvement.

7.99 In addition, however, we wish to reflect on the nature of the options that now face stakeholders, in both the light of the evidence provided in this report, and specifically in respect of the 19 concluding questions we have drafted.

7.100 To this end it is important to reflect that providing people with the option of a DP to enable their care and support is an important mechanism in achieving a principle of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, namely that of giving people more voice and control over the outcomes that help them achieve well-being.

7.101 The primary use of DPs has been to employ PAs, thus creating an employer/employee relationship between care worker and care recipient. The merits of any options for change that impacts that relationship will also need to be considered in the context of achieving the principles of the Act, in essence, this involves assessing the impact on the degree of individual voice and control that may be affected by potentially greater standardisation of practice.

7.102 It is over-simplistic to view this as a simple choice between individual autonomy and standardised regulation. It is more appropriate to consider the options along a spectrum where, at one end, choice and control over the employer and employee relationship and its associated terms and conditions rests solely with the autonomy of those parties. At the other end, that relationship is prescribed and largely governed by statutory regulation and control.

7.103 In all cases, it is assumed that compliance with employment and other law is sacrosanct as is any probity issues associated with the use of public finances.

7.104 Clearly, numerous options are available along this ‘spectrum’ and the Social Care Fair Work Forum, and all other stakeholders will need to formulate an initial view on which best achieves the joint aims of meeting the principles of the Act and applying good employment practice. The following simple example is provided to illustrate the complexities involved in the practical application of the spectrum referred to and its implications:

Issue – payment of travel to work

- **‘Autonomy’ end of spectrum**: decisions on whether to pay travel to work expenses to a PA and, if so, the amount to be paid, is a matter for determination by the employer, if so desired in consultation with the employee.
- **‘Statutory control’ end of spectrum**: the decision on whether to pay travel to work expenses to PAs, and the rate of payment, is determined by Welsh Government and enshrined in regulations. All employers would be expected to comply or risk consequential action if failing to do so.

7.105 The implications of these two extremes are evident throughout this report. For example, paying travel to work expenses has been cited as having an impact on recruitment and retention, and on employee well-being and feeling of worth. This suggests some mandatory system would be beneficial. However, a standardised system has cost implications and enforcement would require monitoring and potentially sensitive discussions with the parties affected. Interim options could include setting an expected standard to encourage adoption but not enforcing it through any regulatory system, thus retaining individual choice but enhancing the likelihood of compliance with good practice.

7.106 The methodology of applying the spectrum approach, therefore, is to identify the autonomy and standardised options, consider their implications in achieving the right balance of meeting the principles of the Act and good employment practice, and determine how, in each instance, that balance is best achieved.

7.107 We recommend applying the use of the ‘spectrum’ approach to all the issues highlighted in Chapter 7 as an effective means by which stakeholders will be able to address the concluding questions and their implications.

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9. Annex

A: Search parameters and example of literature search string

Inclusion and limiter criteria applied:

- Title (TI) only (expanded to include 'abstract' if limited search results)
- Date: Last 5 years (2016-2021)
- Location: UK only
- Publication type: Peer reviewed, scholarly journals, grey literature (e.g., policy statements and issue papers, research reports, fact sheets, websites)
- Language: English

Record of search - CINAHL Plus 3.8.21

Limiters: after 1st January 2016, scholarly journals, article, reports, English, 'Title' only (expanded to include 'abstract' if limited search results), UK [despite limiting to 'UK only' search results returned worldwide publications]

	Combination	**No.**	**No. saved for further reading**
	Personal Assistants AND employer relationship	0	0 new/relevant
1	Personal Assistants OR personal care assistant OR personal assistant workers OR personal care worker OR personal support worker	17	1 saved - req sent to LSE librarian
2	Personal Assistants OR personal care assistant OR personal assistant workers OR personal care worker OR personal support worker AND training and skills development	249	0 new/relevant
3	Personal Assistants OR personal care assistant OR personal assistant workers OR personal care worker OR personal support worker AND training and development	149	0 new/relevant

4	Personal Assistants OR personal care assistant OR personal assistant workers OR personal care worker OR personal support worker AND terms and conditions – changed to 'workforce terms and conditions'	17	0 new/relevant
5	Personal Assistants OR personal care assistant OR personal assistant workers OR personal care worker OR personal support worker and employment rights	27	0 new/relevant
6	Personal Assistants OR personal care assistant OR personal assistant workers OR personal care worker OR personal support worker AND pay	878 picking up word 'pay' but not in relation to PAs	0 new/relevant
7	Personal Assistants OR personal care assistant OR personal assistant workers OR personal care worker OR personal support worker AND support	6,575 [as above re: support]	
8	Personal Assistants OR personal care assistant OR personal assistant workers OR personal care worker OR personal support worker AND challenges	4,583 [as above 'challenges'	
9	Personal Assistants OR personal care assistant OR personal assistant workers OR personal care worker OR personal support worker AND workforce challenges	51	0 new/relevant
10	Personal Assistants OR personal care assistant OR personal assistant workers OR personal care worker OR personal support worker AND best practice	413	0 new/relevant

Limited results relating to terms around PAs – remaining search abandoned and move to focus on DPs and recipients/employers

	Combination	**No.**	**No. saved for further reading**

1	Direct Payments OR personal budgets AND Personal Assistants	16	2
2	Direct payments	15	0 new/relevant
3	Direct payments OR personal budgets	57	3
4	Direct payment employers AND personal assistants	44	0 new/relevant
5	Direct payment employers	0	
6	Direct payment AND challenges	3	0 new/relevant
7	Direct payments AND challenges OR barriers OR difficulties	4	0 new/relevant
8	Direct payments AND resources	2	0 new/relevant
9	Direct payments AND support for employers	0	
10	Direct payments AND Covid-19	0	
11	Direct payments AND covid-19 AND impact	0	

B: Wales-wide online bilingual surveys of PAs and employers

PA survey

Personal Assistants in Wales – we want to hear from you

Introduction

Research is being conducted by the University of South Wales (USW) and Data Cymru on behalf of the Welsh Government (WG) to improve knowledge and understanding about Personal Assistants (PAs). All survey data will remain anonymous and individual responses will not be shared with Welsh Government. Any information you provide in this survey will impact all Personal Assistants and not only your current individual circumstances.

A Personal Assistant is someone who works directly with one or more people to help them with various aspects of their daily life, to help them live as independently as possible. They will be employed directly by a person who is organising and paying for the support they receive through a Direct Payment which has been provided to them by a local authority. Personal Assistants will typically support people in their own homes or in their communities, and the role they play is defined by their employer – the person in receipt of the Direct Payment.

Please only continue to fill out this survey if the role that you have matched the description above.

Completing the survey

You may have received the invitation to complete this survey in a number of different ways – either via your employer, or from a local authority, or via a key stakeholder organisation.

This questionnaire does not ask for any information that will identify you. However, IP addresses of those people who complete the survey online will be collected to identify potential duplicates which will not be shared outside of Data Cymru. Data Cymru's privacy policy can be found here. Any research reports published using information you have provided will be anonymised to ensure that none of the information you provide will be able to identify you as an individual.

When you click **'Next'** or **'Finish survey'** at the bottom of the page you are submitting all the information you have provided until that point. If you close the survey before the end, then the information on the page you were on will not be submitted. These submissions are called 'partial responses' and will be used according to the same guidelines as any full responses submitted.

Please complete the survey by 17:00 on Friday 26 November. If you would like any further information, or have any difficulty completing the online survey, please email surveys@data.cymru or call 029 2090 9500.

This survey should take up to 30 minutes to complete, if you leave the survey without completing then you will have to restart so, please be sure you have enough time before beginning. Please click **'Next'** to begin the survey.

Please visit our website if you need the survey in a more accessible format, different versions are available.

Section 1: Your employment

1. Please select the **one** statement that best describes your employment as a Personal Assistant.

   We recognise that these statements may not perfectly align with your circumstances but please select the one that best matches your circumstances.

   ☐ I am directly employed as a Personal Assistant to support at least one person. The person or people I support, or their immediate family, organises my pay, tax, and National Insurance.
   ☐ I am self-employed to provide support to at least one person. I am registered for self-assessment with HMRC for the purposes of supporting people. The people I support pay me a wage, but I make arrangements for my own tax and NI contributions.
   ☐ Both statements apply to me.

2. Please tell us who employs you as a Personal Assistant.

   ☐ I am unsure who employs me
   ☐ I am directly employed by the person or people I support, or their immediate family
   ☐ I am employed by a care agency
   ☐ I am employed by someone else (please specify):

3. How many people do you support in your role as a Personal Assistant?

4. What was your relationship to the person or people you support before you began supporting them?

   This question needs to be completed for each person you provide support for and will appear as a list of drop-downs.

Person 1 should be the person that is your 'main employment' as a Personal Assistant, defined by the number of hours you work per week.

- ☐ I was a family member or friend
- ☐ I was not a family member or friend

5. How does the person or people you provide support for fund the support you provide?

   This question needs to be completed for each person you provide support for and will appear as a list of drop-downs.

   - ☐ Using a Direct Payment provided by their local authority
   - ☐ Using their own money (self-funding)
   - ☐ Using a combination of a Direct Payment and self-funding
   - ☐ I'm unsure how the support is funded

6. How old is the person or people you support?

   This question needs to be completed for each person you provide support for and will appear as a list of drop-downs.

   - ☐ 0 to 15
   - ☐ 16 to 24
   - ☐ 25 to 34
   - ☐ 35 to 44
   - ☐ 45 to 54
   - ☐ 55 to 64
   - ☐ 65 to 74
   - ☐ 75 to 84
   - ☐ 85 or over

7. Which local authority does the person or people you support reside in?

   This question needs to be completed for each person you provide support for and will appear as a list of drop-downs.

   - ☐ Isle of Anglesey
   - ☐ Gwynedd
   - ☐ Conwy
   - ☐ Denbighshire
   - ☐ Flintshire
   - ☐ Wrexham
   - ☐ Powys
   - ☐ Ceredigion
   - ☐ Pembrokeshire
   - ☐ Carmarthenshire
   - ☐ Swansea
   - ☐ Neath Port Talbot
   - ☐ Bridgend
   - ☐ Vale of Glamorgan
   - ☐ Cardiff
   - ☐ Rhondda Cynon Taf
   - ☐ Merthyr Tydfil
   - ☐ Caerphilly
   - ☐ Blaenau Gwent
   - ☐ Torfaen
   - ☐ Monmouthshire
   - ☐ Newport

8. Which of the following roles do you fulfil, even if occasionally, for the person or people you support as a Personal Assistant?

   This question needs to be completed for each person you provide support for and will appear as table.

   Please select all that apply.

   - ☐ Supporting them with mobility and assisting them to move
   - ☐ Supporting them with personal hygiene, like washing and using the toilet
   - ☐ Supporting them with getting dressed
   - ☐ Supporting them with communication
   - ☐ Supporting them with eating and drinking
   - ☐ Supporting them to take medicines
   - ☐ Supporting them with other health related tasks, like collecting prescriptions and GP appointments
   - ☐ Supporting them with problems with their mental health, like anxiety and depression
   - ☐ Supporting them with their cognitive impairments or learning difficulties
   - ☐ Supporting them with sensory impairments like hearing and sight loss
   - ☐ Supporting them with their life as a disabled person
   - ☐ Supporting them with getting into work including developing employment skills, job seeking / applications
   - ☐ Supporting them with getting to and attending work, including transport and travelling, and support in the workplace
   - ☐ Supporting them to attend school, college or university
   - ☐ Supporting them to take up training opportunities
   - ☐ Supporting them with socialising
   - ☐ Supporting them with household duties, like shopping, cleaning, and gardening
   - ☐ Supporting them to learn new skills
   - ☐ Supporting them going to events
   - ☐ Supporting them to live an independent lifestyle
   - ☐ Supporting them emotionally through the relationship you develop over time
   - ☐ Other (please specify below)

   Comments:

9. How long have you been a Personal Assistant for the person or people you currently support?

   This question needs to be completed for each person you provide support for and will appear as a list of drop-downs.

   - ☐ Up to 6 months
   - ☐ More than 6 months and up to 1 year
   - ☐ More than 1 year and up to 2 years
   - ☐ More than 2 years and up to 3 years
   - ☐ More than 3 years and up to 5 years
   - ☐ More than 5 years and up to 10 years
   - ☐ More than 10 years

10. Other than as a Personal Assistant, do you have any other jobs that are part of the social care workforce?

    Please select all that apply.

    - ☐ I have no other jobs that are in social care
    - ☐ I work as a domiciliary or home care worker
    - ☐ I work in a care home
    - ☐ Other (please specify):

11. Do you have any other jobs that are not part of the social care workforce?

    Please select all that apply.

    - ☐ I have no other jobs outside social care
    - ☐ I work in the health sector
    - ☐ I work in the retail sector
    - ☐ I work in the hospitality sector
    - ☐ I work in the education sector
    - ☐ Other (please specify):

Section 2: Your terms and conditions as a Personal Assistant

12. What type of contract(s) do you have as a Personal Assistant with the person or people you support?

    This question needs to be completed for each person you provide support for and will appear as table.

    - ☐ I don't have a contract
    - ☐ Permanent contract
    - ☐ Fixed-term contract
    - ☐ Temporary or casual contract
    - ☐ I'm not sure whether I have a contract or not
    - ☐ Other form of contract

13. a) What type of hours are stated in the contract(s) you have as a Personal Assistant with the person or people you support?

    This question needs to be completed for each person you provide support for and will appear as table.

    - ☐ I don't have a contract
    - ☐ Full-time or part-time
    - ☐ Casual hours / zero-hour
    - ☐ Annualised hours (hours calculated annually)
    - ☐ Term-time hours
    - ☐ I'm not sure whether I have a contract or not
    - ☐ Other form of contract

13. b) How many hours are you contracted to work each week in your role(s) as a Personal Assistant?

    You will only be asked this question if you select "Full-time or part-time" for question 13a).

    _____ hours

13. c) Approximately, how many hours of paid overtime do you work each week in your role(s) as a Personal Assistant?

You will only be asked this question if you select "Full-time or part-time" for question 13a).

Please enter zero if you do not work overtime.

_____ hours

13. d) Approximately, how many additional hours of voluntary support do you provide each week in your role(s) as a Personal Assistant?

    You will only be asked this question if you select "Full-time or part-time" for question 13a).

    Please only include any hours you do above and beyond those included above. If you do not provide any voluntary hours, then please enter zero.

    _____ hours

14. Please enter the basic hourly rate that you receive for your role(s) as a Personal Assistant.

    This question needs to be completed for each person you provide support for and will appear as multiple text boxes.

    Please remember this survey is completely anonymous.

    £___ __ . ___ ___

15. Please select any aspects for which you receive extra rates of pay in your role(s) as a Personal Assistant.

    This question needs to be completed for each person you provide support for and will appear as a table.

    Please remember this survey is completely anonymous. Please select all that apply.

    ☐ Shift working
    ☐ Weekend working

- ☐ Bank holiday working
- ☐ Awake nights – working throughout the night
- ☐ Waking nights – work most of the night but may take rests when not needed
- ☐ Sleep-ins – sleep all night but will respond when needed
- ☐ Unsocial hours
- ☐ Overtime covering sickness
- ☐ Overtime covering holidays
- ☐ Overtime for another reason
- ☐ Mileage
- ☐ Expenses (including food you consume with the client)
- ☐ Other (please specify below)

Comments:

16. Which of the following are you offered as a Personal Assistant?

Please remember this survey is completely anonymous. Please select all that apply to all of the people you support.

	I am sure I am offered this	**I am sure that I am not offered this**	**I am not sure if I am offered this or not**
Sick pay (above and beyond statutory)	☐	☐	☐
Maternity pay (above and beyond statutory)	☐	☐	☐
Paternity pay (above and beyond statutory)	☐	☐	☐
Paid leave of absence (e.g., bereavement)	☐	☐	☐
Unpaid leave of absence	☐	☐	☐
Paid time for attending training courses	☐	☐	☐

Time off in lieu of additional hours worked	☐	☐	☐
Flexible working arrangements (e.g., flexible start / finish times, compressed hours, or which hours are worked in a day)	☐	☐	☐
Other (please specify below)	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

17. Approximately how many miles do you travel from your home to undertake your role(s) as a Personal Assistant?

_____ miles

18. How many days have you had off work due to sickness in the past 12 months in your role(s) as a Personal Assistant?

Please exclude any days that you were absent for COVID-19 related reasons. Please remember this survey is completely anonymous.

_____ days

Section 3: Your training and qualifications

19. a) Have you received any training in your current role(s) as a Personal Assistant?

☐ Yes
☐ No

19. b) Please select all of the areas that you have received some training in that are relevant to your current role(s) as a Personal Assistant.

You will only be asked this question if you select "Yes" for question 19a).

Please select all that apply.

☐ Activity provision / well-being ☐ Autism

- ☐ Children's / young people's related training
- ☐ Communication skills
- ☐ Complaints handling / conflict resolution
- ☐ Confidentiality / General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- ☐ Continence care
- ☐ Control and restraint
- ☐ Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)
- ☐ Dementia
- ☐ Diabetes
- ☐ Dignity, Respect, Person Centred care
- ☐ Duty of care
- ☐ Emergency First Aid awareness
- ☐ Epilepsy
- ☐ Equality, diversity and human rights training
- ☐ Fire safety
- ☐ First Aid
- ☐ Food safety and catering
- ☐ Health and Safety
- ☐ Infection Control
- ☐ Leadership and Management
- ☐ Learning impairment
- ☐ Medication safe handling and awareness
- ☐ Mental Capacity and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
- ☐ Mental health / distress
- ☐ Moving and handling
- ☐ Nutrition and hydration
- ☐ Palliative support
- ☐ Personal hygiene support
- ☐ Physical impairment
- ☐ Positive behaviour and support
- ☐ Safeguarding
- ☐ Sensory impairment
- ☐ Skin care and pressure sore prevention
- ☐ Stroke
- ☐ Supervision / performance management
- ☐ Whistleblowing and raising concerns
- ☐ Other (please specify):

20. What is the highest level of your social care qualification(s)?

Please refer to the "Qualification Levels" here.

- ☐ No qualifications
- ☐ Level 1
- ☐ Level 2
- ☐ Level 3
- ☐ Level 4
- ☐ Level 5
- ☐ Level 6
- ☐ Level 7
- ☐ Level 8 or above

21. What is the highest level of your non-social care qualification(s)?

Please refer to the "Qualification Levels" here.

- ☐ No qualifications
- ☐ Level 1
- ☐ Level 2
- ☐ Level 3
- ☐ Level 4
- ☐ Level 5
- ☐ Level 6
- ☐ Level 7
- ☐ Level 8 or above

22. How do you hear about new Personal Assistant roles?

Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Recruitment agencies
- ☐ Job sites
- ☐ Local newspaper
- ☐ Social media, e.g., Facebook, Twitter
- ☐ Citizen-led organisations / voluntary sector organisations
- ☐ Directly approaching potential employers
- ☐ Jobcentre Plus
- ☐ Local Personal Assistant hub / register
- ☐ NHS organisation
- ☐ Social care organisation
- ☐ Local authority
- ☐ Colleague
- ☐ Family / Friend
- ☐ Other (please specify):

Section 4: Your views as a Personal Assistant

23. To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel equipped to do the best job I can for the person or people I support	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel valued in my role(s) as a Personal Assistant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I enjoy being a Personal Assistant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

24. In your view, what could be done to better support you in your role as a Personal Assistant?

25. Is there anything else you want to tell us?

Section 5: About you

The following section will be used to better understand the demographics of Personal Assistants. These questions are anonymous, and we'd encourage you to complete them however, if you are not comfortable completing them then please select **'Finish survey'** at the bottom of the page.

26. What is your age?

- ☐ 16 to 17
- ☐ 18 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 54
- ☐ 55 to 64
- ☐ 65 and over

27. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

28. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or an impairment which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

29. What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black / African / Caribbean / Black British
- ☐ Mixed / multiple ethnic group
- ☐ Asian / Asian British
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

30. What is your nationality?

- ☐ British
- ☐ EU (non-British)
- ☐ Non-EU
- ☐ Prefer not to say

31. What is your main language?

- ☐ English
- ☐ Welsh
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other (please specify):

32. Do you communicate in your main language with the people you support?

Please select all that apply.

- ☐ I communicate in my main language which is also their main language
- ☐ I communicate in my main language, but it is not their main language
- ☐ I communicate in their main language which is not my main language

Thank you

Thank you for completing this survey.

If you have any questions, or queries about this survey then please contact surveys@data.cymru.

Employer survey

People who employ Personal Assistants – your experiences of support

Introduction

Research is being conducted by the University of South Wales (USW) and Data Cymru on behalf of the Welsh Government (WG) to improve knowledge and understanding about the employment relationship you have with Personal Assistants (PAs). All survey data will remain anonymous and individual responses will not be shared with Welsh Government. Any information you provide in this survey will have no impact on your current individual care and support entitlements.

A Personal Assistant is someone who works directly with one or more people to help them with various aspects of their daily life, to help them live as independently as possible. They will be employed directly by someone like you who is organising and paying for the support you receive through a Direct Payment which has been provided to you by a local authority. Personal Assistants will typically support people like you in their own homes or in their communities, and the role they play is defined by you, their employer – the person in receipt of the Direct Payment.

We would like to better understand your perspectives on employing Personal Assistants. Knowing more about you and the role your Personal Assistant(s) undertakes for you means that better support can be developed for the many Personal Assistants in Wales and the people like you for whom they provide care and support. A separate survey is being sent to Personal Assistants, but we would be grateful if you could help us in distributing the survey to them too.

For the purposes of this survey, anyone you pay directly for support are classed as Personal Assistants.

Completing the survey

You may have received the invitation to complete this survey in a number of different ways – either from a local authority, or via a key stakeholder organisation.

This questionnaire does not ask for any information that will identify you. However, IP addresses of those people who complete the survey online will be collected to identify potential duplicates which will not be shared outside of Data Cymru. Data Cymru's privacy policy can be found here. Any research reports published using information you have provided will be anonymised to ensure that none of the information you provide will be able to identify you as an individual.

When you click '**Next**' or '**Finish survey**' at the bottom of the page you are submitting all the information you have provided until that point. If you close the survey before the end, then the information on the page you were on will not be submitted. These submissions are

called ‘partial responses’ and will be used according to the same guidelines as any full responses received.

Please complete the survey by 17:00 on Friday 26 November. If you would like any further information, or have any difficulty completing the online survey, please email surveys@data.cymru or call 029 2090 9500.

This survey should take up to 30 minutes to complete, if you leave the survey without completing then you will have to restart so, please be sure you have enough time before beginning. Please click **'Next'** to begin the survey.

Note for respondents completing on behalf of someone else.

If you are completing this survey on behalf of an individual employer, please provide information that relates to the individual employing a Personal Assistant.

Please visit our website if you need the survey in a more accessible format, different versions are available.

Section 1: Your Personal Assistant and how this is paid for

1. Which of the following describes your funding?

*Please select the **one** statement that best applies to your situation. Please don’t include your assessed financial contribution when thinking about your answer.*

- ☐ I employ a Personal Assistant(s) using the Direct Payment from my local authority.
- ☐ I employ a Personal Assistant(s) using my own money.
- ☐ I employ a Personal Assistant(s) using a combination of the Direct Payment from my local authority **and** my own money.
- ☐ I do not employ a Personal Assistant(s) but I do receive a Direct Payment from my local authority.

2. How many hours of paid support do you have in a typical week?

*The **numbers** below should sum to the total number of hours you purchase in a typical week. Please remember this survey is completely anonymous.*

	From Personal Assistants	From care agencies	From other arrangements

Funded by Direct Payment

Funded by own money

3. In addition to paying for hours of support from a Personal Assistant(s) or care agency, what do you spend your Direct Payment on?

Please select all that apply.

- ☐ I only spend my Direct Payment on a Personal Assistant or care agency
- ☐ Adaptations
- ☐ Equipment
- ☐ Other support services
- ☐ Other (please specify):

Section 2: What you need support with

14. Which of the following do you need support with?

Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Support with mobility and assisting me to move
- ☐ Support with personal hygiene, like washing and using the toilet
- ☐ Support with getting dressed
- ☐ Support with communication
- ☐ Support with eating and drinking
- ☐ Support to take medicine
- ☐ Support with other health related tasks, like collecting prescriptions and GP appointments
- ☐ Support with problems with my mental health, like anxiety and depression
- ☐ Support with my cognitive impairments or learning difficulties
- ☐ Support with sensory impairments like hearing and sight loss
- ☐ Support with my life as a disabled person
- ☐ Support with getting into work including developing employment skills, job seeking / applications
- ☐ Support with getting to and attending work including transport and travelling, and support in the workplace
- ☐ Support to attend school, college or university
- ☐ Support to take up training opportunities
- ☐ Support with socialising
- ☐ Support with household duties, like shopping, cleaning, and gardening
- ☐ Support to learn new skills

- ☐ Support going to events
- ☐ Support to live an independent lifestyle
- ☐ Support emotionally through the relationship developed over time
- ☐ Other (please specify):

Section 3: Employing Personal Assistants to support you

Guidance for who to include when answering the questions on this page.
Please include any **Personal Assistants** you employ directly using the Direct Payments you receive from your local authority, or that you pay for using your own money.

15. How long have you been employing Personal Assistants to support you?

See the guidance above for who to include.

- ☐ Up to 6 months
- ☐ More than 6 months and up to 1 year
- ☐ More than 1 year and up to 2 years
- ☐ More than 2 years and up to 3 years
- ☐ More than 3 years and up to 5 years
- ☐ More than 5 years and up to 10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years

16. How many of your **current** Personal Assistants have you employed for each length of time?
*See the guidance above for who to include in this total. Please state the **number** of Personal Assistants you have by each length of time.*

Up to 6 months	.....
More than 6 months and up to 1 year	.....
More than 1 year and up to 2 years	.....
More than 2 years and up to 3 years	.....
More than 3 years and up to 5 years	.....
More than 5 years and up to 10 years	.....
More than 10 years	_____
Total:	_____

17. When you hired them, how many of your **current** Personal Assistant(s) were a friend or family member, or neither?

*The total should equal the total in the previous question. Please state the **number** of Personal Assistants you have by each relationship type.*

Friends or family members _____

Not friends or family members _____

Total: _____

18. How many of your **current** Personal Assistants are employed by you or self-employed?

*The total should equal the total in the previous questions. Any Personal Assistants that you arrange tax for is classed as directly employed by you. Any Personal Assistants which arranges tax themselves are classed as self-employed. Please state the **number** of Personal Assistants you have by each employment type.*

Directly employed by you _____

Self-employed _____

Total: _____

19. How difficult do you find **recruiting** Personal Assistants?

☐ Very easy ☐ Quite easy ☐ Neither easy nor difficult ☐ Quite difficult ☐ Very difficult

Comments:

20. How difficult do you find **retaining** Personal Assistants (i.e., keeping staff)?

☐ Very easy ☐ Quite easy ☐ Neither easy nor difficult ☐ Quite difficult ☐ Very difficult

Comments:

21. How many Personal Assistants have left employment with you in the past 12 months?

See the guidance above for who is included in this total.

22. How important are the following factors to you when **recruiting and retaining** Personal Assistants?

    Please rate each factor on a scale from 'very important to me' to 'very unimportant to me'.

	Very important to me	**Quite important to me**	**Neither important nor unimportant to me**	**Quite unimportant to me**	**Very unimportant to me**
The availability of Personal Assistants to employ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The compatibility of the Personal Assistants with me and / or the person they are supporting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The amount I can afford to pay my Personal Assistants	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The terms and conditions of their employment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (please specify below)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

23. Do all your Personal Assistants have an employment contract with you?

    This is any contract that outlines the terms of your working relationship.

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure
☐ Prefer not to say

24. Please enter the basic hourly rate that you pay your Personal Assistant(s).

Please remember this survey is completely anonymous.

£___ __ . ___ ___

25. Which of the following do you offer your Personal Assistant(s)?

Please remember this survey is completely anonymous. Please select all that apply.

	I'm sure that I offer this	**I'm sure that I don't offer this**	**I'm not sure if I offer this or not**
Sick pay (above and beyond statutory)	☐	☐	☐
Maternity pay (above and beyond statutory)	☐	☐	☐
Paternity pay (above and beyond statutory)	☐	☐	☐
Paid leave of absence (e.g., bereavement)	☐	☐	☐
Unpaid leave of absence	☐	☐	☐
Paid time for attending training courses	☐	☐	☐
Time off in lieu of additional hours worked	☐	☐	☐
Flexible working arrangements (e.g., flexible start / finish times, compressed hours, or which hours are worked in a day)	☐	☐	☐
Other (please specify below)	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

26. Where do you find / advertise for new Personal Assistant roles?

Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Recruitment agencies
- ☐ Job sites
- ☐ Local newspaper
- ☐ Social media, e.g., Facebook, Twitter

- ☐ Citizen-led organisations / voluntary sector organisations
- ☐ Directly approaching potential employers
- ☐ Jobcentre Plus
- ☐ Local Personal Assistant hub / register
- ☐ NHS organisation
- ☐ Social care organisation
- ☐ Local authority
- ☐ Colleague
- ☐ Direct Payment support organisations
- ☐ Family / Friend
- ☐ Other (please specify):

Section 4: Training, development and support

27. a) What types of organisations or services have you used to access training development opportunities for your Personal Assistant(s)?

Please select all that apply.

- ☐ I haven't tried to access training for my staff
- ☐ I provide my own training
- ☐ Local authority run courses
- ☐ Learning or training provider
- ☐ Direct Payment support services
- ☐ Citizen-led / voluntary sector organisation
- ☐ Organisations designed to support carers
- ☐ NHS run courses or training
- ☐ Courses run by Social Care Wales
- ☐ Training specific to my personal situation
- ☐ Other (please specify):

17. b) How easy do you find arranging training and development opportunities for your Personal Assistants?

You will only be asked this question if you don't select "I haven't tried to access training for my staff" for question 17a).

☐ Very easy ☐ Quite easy ☐ Neither easy nor difficult ☐ Quite difficult ☐ Very difficult

Comments:

18. a) What information and support have you accessed to help you in your role as an employer?

Please select all that apply.

- ☐ I haven't tried to access information or support
- ☐ Help paying staff
- ☐ Advertisement of roles
- ☐ Interviewing candidates
- ☐ Disciplinary action for staff
- ☐ Insurance cover - what I need and how to get it
- ☐ Sickness and leave information
- ☐ Legal responsibilities (e.g., contracts)
- ☐ Other (please specify):

18. b) Which organisations or services have you used to access information and support to help you in your role as an employer?

You will only be asked this question if you don't select "I haven't tried to access information or support" for question 18a).

Please select all that apply.

- ☐ My local authority
- ☐ NHS Wales
- ☐ Direct Payment support services
- ☐ Citizen-led / voluntary sector organisation
- ☐ Peer networks / others in receipt of direct payments
- ☐ Social Care Wales
- ☐ Online search engines
- ☐ Other (please specify):

18. c) How satisfied are you with the level of information and support you receive to help you in your role as an employer?

You will only be asked this question if you don't select "I haven't tried to access information or support" for question 18a).

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Quite satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Quite dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

Section 5: Your views

19. To what extent do you feel you are provided with effective support by the Personal Assistant(s) that work for you, or the care workers that you pay to support you?

20. What could be done to better support you as an employer, whether you are a Direct Payment recipient or a self-funder?

21. Is there anything else you want to tell us?

Section 6: About you

The following section will be used to better understand the demographics of the employers of Personal Assistants. These questions are anonymous and we'd encourage you to complete them however, if you are not comfortable completing them then please select '**Finish survey**' at the bottom of the page.

22. What is your age?

- ☐ 18 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 54
- ☐ 55 to 64
- ☐ 65 to 74
- ☐ 75 to 84
- ☐ 85 and over

23. Within which local authority area do you live?

Isle of Anglesey

- ☐ Gwynedd
- ☐ Conwy
- ☐ Denbighshire
- ☐ Flintshire
- ☐ Wrexham
- ☐ Powys
- ☐ Ceredigion

- ☐ Pembrokeshire
- ☐ Carmarthenshire
- ☐ Swansea
- ☐ Neath Port Talbot
- ☐ Bridgend
- ☐ Vale of Glamorgan
- ☐ Cardiff
- ☐ Rhondda Cynon Taf
- ☐ Merthyr Tydfil
- ☐ Caerphilly
- ☐ Blaenau Gwent
- ☐ Torfaen
- ☐ Monmouthshire
- ☐ Newport

24. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

25. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or impairment which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

26. What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black / African / Caribbean / Black British
- ☐ Mixed / multiple ethnic group
- ☐ Asian / Asian British
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

27. What is your main language?
- ☐ English
- ☐ Welsh
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other (please specify):

28. Do your **current** Personal Assistants speak your main language?

- ☐ All my Personal Assistants communicate with me in my main language
- ☐ Some of my Personal Assistants communicate with me in my main language
- ☐ None of my Personal Assistants communicate with me in my main language
- ☐ Other (please specify):

Thank you

Thank you for completing this survey.

If you have any questions, or queries about this survey then please contact surveys@data.cymru.

C: Interview schedules

PA interview schedule

BEING A PA

1. Can you tell be about when and how you became a PA?

   Prompts: what attracted you to your role as a PA? How much did you know about the role when you applied? What were/are your motivations for applying and continuing to work within the role? How long have you been a PA?

2. What does being a PA entail for you?

   Prompts: duties, responsibilities, what type of support do you provide?

3. What factors do you consider when you make decisions about who you work for?

   Prompts: location, pay, level/complexity of support/skills required, flexibility of role

EMPLOYMENT

4. To what extent do you feel your rights as an employee are respected?

   Prompts: Do you have a contract of employment? Have you read through your Terms and Conditions?

5. Does your employer provide you with any benefits above and beyond the statutory minimums?

   Prompts: Do you have an arrangement with your employer such that you have increments on top of the statutory minimum paid to you for thinks like sick leave, maternity pay etc?

6. How would you characterise the relationship you have with your employer?

   Prompts: Nature of working relationship, contracts, boundaries

SUPPORT FOR YOU

7. To what extent do you feel equipped with the skills and knowledge needed for your role?

   Prompts: How prepared did you feel when you first took on the role? What training have you completed? If so in what way? If not, why not?

8. How far do you feel supported in your role?

   Prompts: What support is available if you need it? What support (if any) did you receive/do you continue to receive? How readily is support available? Has this changed over time? peer support/trade union

9. What could be done differently to better support you with any challenges you have experienced?

   Prompts: what would it look like, and how could it be achieved?

ISSUES AROUND Covid-19

10. To what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the support you deliver?

11. To what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic impact your role as a PA?

12. Has there been any unintended consequences associated with COVID-19?

    Prompts: If so, what are they? What was the effect of them? Did anything change as a result?

OVERALL

13. Thinking about your own experience as a PA, what is working well?

    Prompts: what is it about it that makes it work well? Do you have any examples of good practice?

14. What challenges have you experienced as a PA?

    Prompts: think about your role as a PA overall

15. What would you say are the most important changes that would improve your experience as a PA?

    Prompts: What impact would these changes have? What would it look like?

16. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your experience as a PA?

Employer interview schedule

BEING AN EMPLOYER

1. Can you tell me about when and how you became an employer?

   Prompts: How much did you know about the role of an employer before you started? How readily available was this information? What were the circumstances around you receiving a Direct Payment? How long have a been an employer? How many PAs employed and for how long?

2. What does being an employer entail?

   Prompts: Duties, responsibilities.

3. What factors do you consider when you make decisions about who you want to employ?

   Prompts: How free are you to choose?

CONTROL

4. How far do you feel you have control over the support you receive?

   Prompts: Why / why not?

5. To what extent has your experience as an employer lived up to the promise of having greater control which is often associated with Direct Payments?

   Prompts: Why / why not? Can you give an example?

6. What outcomes have you been able to achieve as an employer of a PA or PAs?

   Prompts: Think about the differences between being in control via a DP rather than being supported by a care agency? How far might you have been able (or not able) to achieve these outcomes with other forms of support? How does it compare to other types of care that you may have received?

SUPPORT FOR YOU

7. To what extent do you feel equipped with the skills and knowledge needed for your role?

   Prompts: How prepared did you feel when you first took on the role? What training have you completed? If so in what way? If not, why not?

8. How far do you feel supported in your role?

   Prompts: What support is available if you need it? What support (if any) did you receive/do you continue to receive? What type of support do you receive for your support needs? How readily is support available? Has this changed over time?

9. What could be done differently to better support you with the challenges you have experienced?

   Prompts: what would it look like, and how could it be achieved?

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

10. How easy have you found it to recruit employees?

Prompts: What have been the barriers and enablers? Good practice examples

11. What have been the factors causing you challenges in respect of retaining employees?

    Prompts: What are the issues in your experience? Good practice examples

12. What do you do as an employer to ensure that the employment rights of your employees are upheld?

    Prompts: How do you see your role? What assessments (e.g., health and safety) have you made? What is the relationship between skills, training, recruitment and retention? Importance of 'template' contracts. Role of different forms of contract?

ISSUES AROUND COVID-19

13. To what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the support you receive?

14. To what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic impact your role as an employer?

15. Has there been any unintended consequences associated with COVID-19?

    Prompts: If so, what are they? What was the effect of them? Did anything change as a result?

OVERALL

16. Thinking about your own experience as an employer, what is working well?

    Prompts: What is it about it that makes it work well? Do you have any examples of good practice?

17. What challenges have you experienced as an employer?

    Prompts: Think about your role as an employer on the whole

18. What would you say are the most important changes that would improve your outcomes as an employer?

    Prompts: What impact would these changes have? What would it look like?

19. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your experience as an employer?

Key stakeholder interview schedule

1. Can you tell me about your role/responsibilities within your organisation?

   Prompts: what your role entails, how your role interacts with DP recipients/PAs

2. What type of support does your organisation provide to PAs/DP recipients?
3. What is working well/not so well about the support your organisation provides to PAs/DPs?

   Prompt: Why is it working well/not so well, Can you give an example?

4. To what extent has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted the support you provide to PAs/DP recipients?

   Prompt: if it has changed, what did it look like before and how does that compare to now?

5. What is working well for PAs/DP recipients?

   Prompt: why is it working well? Can you give an example?

6. What are the key challenges experienced by PAs/DP recipients?

   Prompt: what impact do they have? How can they be overcome?

7. What (if anything) could be done differently to better support PAs/DP recipients?

   Prompts: what is missing? What difference would it have?

   10. Do you have any examples of 'good practice' in terms of the support offered to PAs/DP recipients?

   Prompt: What difference (if any) have they made?

11. Thank you. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me that we haven't covered?