

Report to: People Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 17 November 2022

By: Director of Adult Social Care and Health

Title: Scrutiny Briefing – Personal Assistants and Support With Confidence

Purpose: To provide an overview of Personal Assistants (PAs) locally and nationally. To provide an update on services provided by the Council and ongoing development opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the briefing.

1. Background

1.1 Personal Assistants (PAs) are an option to support people to live a full and independent life, alongside other services including Home Care and Day Opportunities.

1.2 PAs support people with a range of needs, including people who are older, disabled, or living with a mental health condition or learning disability. The type of support delivered is flexible but can include household tasks, shopping, meal preparation, support to attend appointments and organise paperwork, daytime activities and social engagement, personal care, medication support and assisting with healthcare.

1.3 Many people choose to become PAs for the flexibility the role offers and through a motivation to improve someone's quality of life. PAs can be employed directly by clients or self-employed and may support one person or several clients.

2. National Picture

2.1. Nationally and locally, there is an increased emphasis on personalised care and self-directed support. Around 70,000 people in England employ a PA. Unlike other adult social care services, PA support is not regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

2.2. Some key findings from a recent state of the workforce report produced by Skills for Care are:

- People employ an average of 1.85 PAs (around 130,000 jobs)
- PAs hold an average of 1.29 jobs each
- 58% of PAs are aged between 25 and 54
- 28% have less than 3 years experience working in adult social care
- 82% of PAs are female
- 93% of PAs are British, 5% are from the EU, and 2% are from non-EU countries
- 86% of PAs work part time
- The vacancy rate for PAs is 13.1%

3. What does the council do?

3.1 The Council Plan includes priorities to keep vulnerable people safe and help people to help themselves. This includes providing people with the option to organise their care through a PA. Some of the services the Council provides include:

- Statutory assessments of people's needs and developing a support plan with them
- Administering direct payments to clients, which people use to pay for their PA
- Support with Confidence Scheme (SWC) - vets, checks, trains, approves and supports an accredited cohort of PAs to deliver quality services
- Free PA training programme
- Commissioning a Direct Payments Support Services - advice and ongoing support for clients employing PAs

4. Personal Assistants (PAs) in East Sussex

4.1 The Council monitors the number of people receiving direct payments as a proportion of the people receiving long term care. There are currently 1,515 people receiving direct payments in East Sussex. This is around 32.7% of people receiving long term care, against a target of 31.5%. Most people receiving a direct payment will employ a PA.

4.2 There are 278 accredited Support with Confidence PAs who are mostly self-employed.

4.3 A recent survey of people receiving direct payments highlighted recruitment of PAs as the most significant challenge they were facing. This trend is reflected nationally, a report by Think Local, Act Personal found 77% of people found it more difficult to recruit a PA. The Council is continuing to work with partners to apply good practice to build resilience within the workforce and support employers.

5. Support with Confidence (SWC)

5.1 SWC is a national brand operating across seven local authority areas. By comparison, East Sussex is a well-established scheme and in the top three for scale of its operation. Each local authority tailors the SWC model to meet its local requirements.

5.2 In East Sussex, the service is delivered in partnership between Adult Social Care (ASC) and Trading Standards. We have 330 SWC scheme members (278 PAs and 52 business members) and around 70 applications going through the accreditation process.

5.3 The aims of SWC are:

- To upskill and improve the services offered by the unregulated care and support market
- To accredit care and support providers that have been checked and vetted on the grounds of quality, safety, and training
- To provide an online directory of accredited providers to the public and ASC operational teams
- To provide clients with choice beyond more 'traditional' care options
- To help develop and support local ASC providers

5.4. Before receiving accreditation, members are required to complete background checks, an enhanced DBS check, an interview, initial training plus any additional training for client specific needs.

5.5. SWC also supports the East Sussex PA Network (three independent PA forums) to encourage peer support and practice and build resilience amongst East Sussex PAs. The

team also act as a link between PAs and a range of other services provided by the Council including the ASC direct payments team, Adult Social Care practitioners and Public Health.

6. Looking Ahead

6.1. The Council is continuing a range of activities to build resilience within the local PA workforce, this includes:

- Support with Confidence – continuing to develop the local workforce market, including supporting networks of PAs
- Direct Payment Support Service – working with our current providers to improve advice services for employers and support recruitment
- Recommissioning Direct Payment Support Services – this will include reflecting on feedback from a recent survey of service users, to help shape priorities for the new service.

7. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

7.1 PAs play a key role within the wider social care system. A number of national trends are reflected in East Sussex, including challenges with recruitment and retention of PAs. The Council will continue to work with partners to build resilience within the local workforce. The SWC scheme will continue to facilitate the development of the unregulated PA market whilst providing greater market oversight and raising quality standards. The scheme will support the recruitment and retention of increased and complementary workforce capacity, to support people in their own homes and communities, through the provision of accredited PAs and community-based support services. This will be achieved through the provision of training and employment opportunities, to enable people to deliver local flexible and personalised services.

7.2 SWC will continue to support an upskilled PA workforce to deliver increased quality delivered through a robust and consistent accreditation framework.

MARK STAINTON

Director of Adult Social Care & Health

Officer contacts:

Paul Bolton, Service Development Manager (Choice, Market Development and Engagement)

Email: paul.bolton@eastsussex.gov.uk

Michael Courts, Project Manager

Email: michael.courts@eastsussex.gov.uk