

## Southampton, Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Portsmouth (SHIP) Transforming Care Partnership (TCP)

### Recruiting personal assistants: model and guidance

The SHIP TCP worked with the University of Portsmouth and the University of Southampton to promote the personal assistant (PA) role to students and increase the number of PAs in SHIP.

#### Background

Across the SHIP footprint there's a shortage of PAs, especially those who are trained to work with people with complex needs and behaviour that challenges. The retention of PAs is also an issue in the area.

Although there are currently PA Networks established within three of the four areas of SHIP, the number of PAs doesn't meet the current or future need.

They worked with the University of Portsmouth and University of Southampton to promote the PA role to students, and provided best practice recommendations to support future work with other universities, schools and colleges.

They did lots of promotional activities including presentations to students on relevant courses, recruitment fairs, videos in local cinemas and online advertising.

#### What they wanted to achieve

They met with various colleagues across SHIP to understand the challenges of recruiting PAs. Here are some of the challenges they found:

- the role of PAs isn't well publicised
- people don't understand what the role of a PA involves, lots of people think it's just personal care
- it's not clear what training is available to PAs
- there's no clear career progression.

The aim of the project was therefore to increase awareness of the PA role and career opportunities, to increase the number of people who want to become a PA - and they'd do this by targeting young people and those in education.

They aimed to talk to 400 students with a view that 40 would become a PA, and wanted to develop resources to support this.

#### What they did

Firstly, they developed a [project plan](#) that included the milestones, finances and stakeholder list to ensure all tasks were completed to meet the project aims.

They developed resources to support promotional activity including:

- an [inspirational video](#) describing what it's like to be a PA from a student's perspective
- promotional [poster](#) and [flyer](#)



- promotional [badges](#) and [pens](#).
- they also signposted people to Skills for Care's [information hub for individual employers and PAs](#) to find more information, including other PA case studies.

### To engage with Universities they:

- wrote a letter to lecturers explaining the project, and followed up with respondents
- asked Health Education England for their contacts with Southampton and Portsmouth universities' health and social care department, and sent them the letter and video
- contacted the student affairs and careers fair links at universities to discuss attending careers fairs
- arranged a date to speak with students
- ensured that their presentation was aimed at the right audience by testing it out on a student before delivering
- took Caroline (one of the students in the film) to the talks to inspire others from her own experience.

### To engage with schools and colleges they:

- met with the Hampshire schools and college careers link to discuss the project
- sent out information around the PA role and video to careers advisors across Hampshire
- presented at the Careers Advisor Consortium to raise awareness of the PA role and give them the opportunity to ask questions
- made contact with schools and colleges at careers fairs they attended
- used social media (Facebook and Twitter) to promote promotional resources, particularly the videos
- sent posters to all GP practices across Southampton, Hampshire and Portsmouth to display in their practices, with an explanation letter
- sent posters and other information to all Hampshire school and college careers advisors to ask them to promote the role when talking to students
- made contact with Winchester City Councillor to display in the Wickham village noticeboard. The poster was also displayed in the village café, arcade of shops and in Wickham Community Centre. They also put

an advert in the Wickham village magazine and the parish magazine in January 2017 which goes to all village residents

- engaged with the Integrated Personalised Commissioning Team from NHS England to share the work we've done with their team – everyone took away a badge to wear and viewed the video.

In total, they attended seven careers events at local universities, schools and colleges to promote the PA role.

## What did they achieve?

They didn't speak to as many students as they hoped, but from discussions with colleagues they're confident that they raised awareness of the PA role with those they spoke to.

From discussions with colleagues it's clear that we've raised awareness of the PA role and we'll continue to do so in future work.

They held an event in January 2017 to review the SHIP TCP after one year, and conversations suggest that PA roles are high on the agenda for many people.

After talking to the people we've engaged with we feel there's a better understanding of the PA role. We'll continue to provide people with a better understanding in order to promote the role in our future work.

## What did they learn?

Here are some of their top tips from the project.

They found that when engaging with universities, schools and colleges it's important to explain what you're trying to achieve, how you can support them and how you can inspire students.

**We found it worked well to have a PA talking about their experience of the role; this seemed to really engage students.**

- make sure your stand looks professional and neat; having a table cloth helps
- ensure there are enough people to do shifts manning the stand as fairs are usually full days
- catch people as they walk by and pull them to the stand as people might not stop if they aren't sure what you are promoting.

### Top tips on delivering talks

When holding talks it's important that you:

- ensure your presentation is aimed at the right level
- provide videos and experiences to make it real
- have someone who the audience can engage with and relate to
- provide things to take away such as leaflets
- make sure you're clear and consistent in the messages you're delivering
- interact with the audience rather than talk at them.

### Top tips on attending careers fairs

When attending fairs it's important that you:

- have all the information available for people to look at
- have a banner stand or big signage to catch people who walk by
- have freebies and flyers for people to take away

### Top tips to support PAs into work placements as part of their course

When thinking about supporting students into PA work placements, make sure the university, college or school support it, and you have employers who'll offer work placements; they can sometimes see the risks and insurance as a barrier.

Remember, students over the age of 16 can work as PA bank staff, so they can get paid and learn on the job. However you'd need to check that paid work counts towards a work placement.

[Download the full recruitment model](#)

## Skills for Care recommends

We have lots of resources to help individual employers and organisations who support them to recruit, train and retain personal assistants.

### Information hub for individual employers and PAs

This hub has links to resources to support people who employ their own care and support. It also has a section for supporting organisations and PAs.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/iepahub](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/iepahub)

### Individual employer funding

Skills for Care has funding available for individual employers to train themselves and their PAs.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/iefunding](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/iefunding)

### Finding and keeping workers

This online toolkit has lots of resources to support adult social care employers, including individual employers, with their recruitment and retention.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/finderskeepers](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/finderskeepers)