

A black and white photograph of a woman with short, light-colored hair, smiling and looking towards the right. She is wearing a light-colored, possibly plaid, jacket over a collared shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a workshop or classroom setting with a chair and some equipment.

Delivering learning for individual employers and personal assistants

A guide for learning providers

Updated February 2019



What is an individual employer?

An individual employer is someone who needs care and support and who directly employs a personal assistant(s) (PA) to meet their needs. This gives individuals the choice and control over their support, which may be delivered in the home, workplace or community.

Individual employers can pay for their PAs using a personal budget (from social care or health) which they choose to take as a direct payment or personal health budget, or their own money (self-funders).

By recruiting a PA, individuals become an employer and take on all the responsibilities that entails, often with no prior knowledge or training.

An individual employer's focus and motivation is likely to be about keeping themselves (or a loved one) healthy and safe, and ensuring their support is good, so they can live their life in the way that they choose. They're less likely to have formal training and supervision processes and aren't always aware of the continued professional development needs of their employees. Some will have little interest in the ongoing development of their PAs, while others will be keen to engage.



What is a personal assistant?

A personal assistant (or PA) is someone who is (usually) employed directly by a person who needs care and support. They can also be employed by a family member or representative when the person they're supporting doesn't have the physical or mental capacity to be the employer. A PA always works directly with the individual they're supporting, in a person-centred way.

PAs are likely to be involved in many aspects of their employer's life and may be asked to provide support in the home, at leisure or at work. The opportunity to focus directly on the needs of an individual and the diversity of the role is what often attracts people to this type of work. The role can vary from house to house, employer to employer.

To work as a PA there are no mandatory registration, learning or qualification requirements.

If someone receives a PHB from their local NHS team, and their care plan specifies that their PA will perform a delegated health care task (for example tracheostomy or bowel care), the NHS team will specify the training that the PA needs - without this training and the PA being assessed as competent, a PA cannot perform the delegated task.

Delivering training for individual employers and PAs: considerations for learning providers

It's going to be different to delivering training in a care home or to a care agency; individual employers are **not** organisations:

- the PA's workplace is often the individual's home
- the PA's 'manager' is their employer or the employer's representative
- the workplace doesn't come under any regulatory framework such as the Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- you must work flexibly with individual employers to deliver the type of training to meet their needs, at a time when they need it
- for formal qualifications you should be open with awarding organisations and external verifiers about the employment situation and training setting.

You're not confined to delivering 'off the shelf' programmes, you're doing something that is unique and flexible

It's not all about qualifications:

- both employers and their PAs don't necessarily need to do formal qualifications from the start of their learning journey
- new employers are likely to need short courses, for example on health and safety, first aid and moving and assisting
- qualifications can come later when both the employer and PA feel more confident about the benefits of training.



The size of the individual employer and PA market is big!

There are around 240,000 adults, older people and carers who receive a direct payment from social services departments in England. It's estimated that approximately 70,000 of them employ their own PAs. There's very little information available about the number of individuals employing care and support staff via other funding streams or as self-funders.

Skills for Care estimates there are around 145,000 people working as PAs. These figures don't include those that are working with individuals that use a PHB or their own money (self-funders) to employ PAs.

All of these people could be buying training to help them improve their knowledge and skills as a PA or as an employer.

Expect it to be challenging (but rewarding):

- delivering training for individual employers and PAs requires an individualised approach
- their health, personal circumstances, PAs shifts and day-to-day life will all play a part in how and when training can be delivered
- you may need to work with the individual employer from the start of their learning and development journey, to identify what training they need and test different approaches
- be prepared to explain all aspects of the training.

Invest your time:

- many individual employers want a learning provider to visit and have a chat with them, so think about doing a home visit. This is a good way to establish what the individual employer wants and assess whether the training can take place in their home
- if possible, schedule several visits in the same area on the same day.

I get real job satisfaction from training individual employers and PAs

Communicate, communicate, communicate:

- individual employers may have no prior knowledge of how training and qualifications work, and will expect you to explain this in detail
- you're likely to need to remind individual employers and their PAs about the training more often than other employers and learners.

Be flexible about your terms and conditions:

- you may need to consider a different approach with your cancellation or rescheduling policy. For example, some individuals' conditions can change quickly which means that the training cannot go ahead as scheduled
- offer different opportunities to reschedule cancelled training sessions
- make sure your trainers understand this and accept there may be late notice cancellations.

Ensure you understand personal budgets and direct payments:

- although this isn't essential, it may help to understand how personal budgets and direct payments work
- individual employers are responsible for looking after their personal budget and ensuring it's spent in line with their support plan.

How and where the training is delivered is really important:

- most individual employers would like training delivered within their home which is usually the PAs working environment
- some individual employers and PAs prefer to have training in a group, where they can meet others. This encourages peer support which can be extremely valuable, as they often work in isolation.



Think about health and safety:

- although it's best practice to have formal policies and procedures in place, they're not entirely necessary to carry out training for individual employers in their home (although a health and safety policy is required where there are five or more workers)
- many individual employers take an informal approach to training, and may have 'house rules' or 'agreed ways of working' rather than fire regulations and evacuation procedures
- make sure individual employers have public liability insurance before any training starts, that way you can be sure that trainers are covered if anything does go wrong
- trainers should have a current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and carry identification that can be verified
- ensure trainers have done emergency first aid at work training, in case of emergency situations during training sessions.

Use accessible venues, particularly when delivering learning for individual employers:

- physical access is only one aspect that needs to be considered. Individual employers and PAs might need other facilities such as hearing loops, clear signage, visual fire alarms and on-site parking
- trainers will need to ensure there are enough people available to evacuate the building in emergency situations if they're training people with a learning or cognitive disability, mobility difficulties or who use a wheelchair
- you may wish to consider providing a 'floating PA' to support individual employers with things such as getting into the training venue and any eating or drinking requirements.

Adjust your learning materials and presentations:

- make sure you find out the learners requirements in advance
- ensure your learning materials, presentations and teaching style are accessible and inclusive. For example, you might need to print your materials in large print or easy read
- you may be delivering training to people that have visual or hearing impairments or to individuals with a learning disability - you should consider whether sign language interpreters, lip speakers or translators are needed to support the learners.

Train PAs to be assessors:

- assessors who work as or have worked as a PA will understand the unique working relationship and environment.

The trainers know they've made a real difference: they love it!

Advertise that you can deliver bespoke programmes of learning:

- make it clear on your website that you can offer bespoke training programmes for individual employers and PAs (at additional cost)
- make connections with your local authority, NHS team, support organisations and networks, as they may be able to refer individual employers to you. You can find details at www.skillsforcare.org.uk/localregisters.

Get endorsed by Skills for Care:

- this will help individual employers to find you and it gives them the confidence that you're a quality trainer. Find out more at www.skillsforcare.org.uk/endorsement.

Useful resources



The information hub for individual employers and their PAs

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/iepahub

The hub has lots of resources, templates and guidance for individual employers and their PAs. There are specific sections about training and qualifications.



Funding to support learning and development

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/iefunding

Individual employers can apply for funding to pay for training and qualifications to develop their own skills or their PAs.



Skills for Care endorsement

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/endorsement

Skills for Care endorsement is a unique mark of quality which recognises the high quality learning and training you deliver to meet the needs of adult social care.



Employing personal assistants toolkit

www.employingpersonalassistants.co.uk

This toolkit has practical guidance for individual employers about recruiting and managing a PA. It includes advice about recruitment, induction, managing a PA, training and sorting out problems, and includes templates.



Being a personal assistant

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/beingaPA

This guide explains what a PA does, outlines what PAs should expect in employment and tackles FAQs about working as a PA.



A practical guide to learning and development for personal assistants

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/PAlearningguide

This guide helps PAs think about their ongoing learning and development and gives some ideas about the qualifications and training they could do.

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