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Guidance for the assessment of qualifications in the context of Personal Assistants



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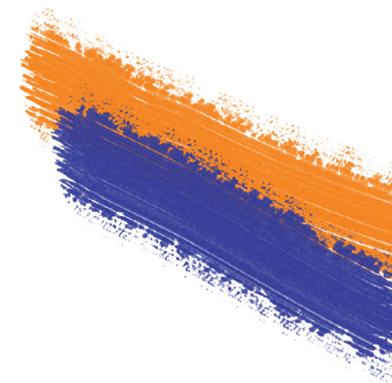
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Introduction and background

The assessment of Personal Assistants against the criteria set out in the diploma units that make up health and social care qualifications has particular sensitivities. This is due to the way that these services are delivered in the employer's home and community setting.

This guidance provides information to assessors and learning providers to enable them to understand how Personal Assistants work and what needs to be considered to assess within this context.

It has been developed in response to the outcomes from the Evaluation of the delivery of the QCF Level 3 Health and Social Care (Adults) Diploma to Personal Assistants in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT)¹ (<http://www.ccwales.org.uk/edrms/153228/>).

The pilot was as a result of a partnership between Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Dewis Centre for Independent Living.

For further information on the pilot programme and the full evaluation report, visit the Care Council for Wales' Personal Assistants (<http://www.ccwales.org.uk/personal-assistants/>) webpage.

¹ Evaluation of the delivery of the QCF Level 3 Health and Social Care (Adults) Diploma to Personal Assistants in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT), March 2014



This guidance document consists of three sections;

Section 1 provides information on the role of Personal Assistants and on Direct Payments and covers:

- 1.1 What is a Personal Assistant?
- 1.2 Who employs a Personal Assistant?
- 1.3 What are Direct Payments?
- 1.4 Suitable person / Capacity
- 1.5 What makes the Personal Assistant role different?

Section 2 looks at areas of assessment that would need to be considered when supporting a Personal Assistant through a competence based qualification. These were highlighted in the evaluation of the pilot programme. It covers:

- 2.1 Initial Set up meetings (introducing the qualification and ensuring employer involvement)
- 2.2 Roles & responsibilities,
 - 2.2.1 Role of support organisations
 - 2.2.2 Employer's role
 - 2.2.3 Assessor's role
 - 2.2.4 Role of Internal Quality Assessor (IQA)
- 2.3 Confidentiality
- 2.4 Boundaries
- 2.5 Job description / 'agreed ways of working'
- 2.6 Qualification and unit selection
- 2.7 Evidence gathering
- 2.8 Expert witnesses
- 2.9 Other areas to consider
- 2.10 Safeguarding

Section 3 refers to terminology that is familiar to health and social care qualification assessment and how it should be interpreted in the context of Personal Assistants.

Section 1

Personal Assistants and Direct Payments

1.1 What is a Personal Assistant?

A Personal Assistant is someone who is chosen and employed by individual(s) who are eligible for Direct Payments to provide support in a manner that enables them to live their life in ways that they choose and promotes their personal choice, control and independence.

There isn't a standard job description for Personal Assistants. The duties will vary according to the needs, aspirations and circumstances of the employer but may include assistance with:

- participating as a member of their local community i.e. socialising, meeting friends, shopping, leisure activities
- going on holiday
- meal preparation and/or cooking
- bill or household management
- accessing medical appointments
- maintaining employment
- parenting tasks
- transport
- meal times, dressing and personal hygiene
- healthcare may be supported where the appropriate training and insurance is in place

The time that they will spend with their employer will vary depending on the personal outcomes that have been identified and agreed as part of the employer's individual assessment or review. The job itself can be very flexible, offering part-time and full-time work on different days and at different times, including evenings and weekends.

Many employers feel the key requirement of a Personal Assistant *"is the ability to communicate well, a flexible approach and an understanding of their employer's needs within their own lifestyle choices"*.

Further reading and resources on what is a Personal Assistant:

Please note that a number of these links, including video links, are from sources external to the Care Council. Please report any issues regarding the functionality of links or videos to the relevant organisation.

1. Employer toolkit for supporting the learning of Personal Assistants Care Council for Wales

www.paemployertoolkit.wales/toolkits/section-2/

Refer to the section: *Preparing to employ the right Personal Assistants*. This toolkit is aimed at employers who employ Personal Assistants or who are considering employing Personal Assistants. It provides useful information, guidance, examples and practical tools to help employers support their Personal Assistants to gain the skills they need to be confident and competent in their role.

2. Diverse Cymru Direct Payments

www.directpaymentscymru.org.uk/jobs

Personal Assistant section – Refer to the section: *Register and apply for jobs*.

3. The Personal Assistants Online Guidebook

<http://pasonlineguidebook.blogspot.co.uk/p/chapter-1-whats-it-all-about.html>

Refer to Chapter 1: 'What it's all about?' – Video 1:3 What is the role of a Personal Assistant?

This guidebook has been developed by Services for Independent Living, Torfaen County Borough Council, Digital Skills Cymru and Unison and is aimed at those who are employed as Personal Assistants in Wales. It is made up of a set of multi-media resources and online learning to help raise awareness of what is involved in the role. Several references have been made to it within this guidance document but it also includes further reading within each chapter and a further reading section.

4. www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCPsJj4K364

Video developed as part of the 'I matter, we matter' campaign.



1.2 Who employs a Personal Assistant?

Personal Assistants are employed by many people who are eligible for Direct Payments. This includes:

- older people
- individuals with a learning disability
- individuals with mental ill health
- individuals with a physical disability
- a disabled child or young person aged 16 or 17
- a disabled parent of children of any age
- a carer aged 16 or over of a disabled adult
- a parent of a disabled child under 18

1.3 What are Direct Payments?

Direct Payments are local authority payments for people who are assessed as needing support from social services. Once assessment has taken place they will receive funding from the local authority to arrange these services, if they are eligible.

1.4 Suitable person / Capacity

During the assessment process where an individual has been assessed as lacking the mental capacity to consent to Direct Payments, the local authority has a duty to appoint a suitable person who will manage Direct Payments to purchase care on their behalf (refer to the Welsh Government link under the further reading section below for further information on a suitable person).

Further reading and resources on Direct Payments:

Please note that a number of these links, including video links, are from sources external to the Care Council. Please report any issues regarding the functionality of links or videos to the relevant organisation.

1. The Personal Assistants Online Guidebook

<http://pasonlineguidebook.blogspot.co.uk/p/chapter-1-whats-it-all-about.html>

Refer to Chapter 1: *'What's it all about'*

Video 1:1 Direct Payments (The Driving Seat)

Video 1:2 Philosophy of Personalised Care and Direct Payments

2. Diverse Cymru Direct Payments

<http://www.directpaymentscymru.org.uk/about-direct-payments/what-are-direct-payments>

Refer to the information under the: '*What are Direct Payments*' tab

What are Direct Payments' tab

The website also includes testimonials from service users on how Direct Payments have benefitted them. Please use the '*View Testimonials*' tab to view these.

3. Welsh Government

<http://gov.wales/topics/health/publications/socialcare/guidance1/directpayments/?lang=en>

Refer to the different guidance documents mentioned below.

- *Direct Payments 'suitable person' guidance*
- *Direct Payments guidance*
- *Summary of the Direct Payments Guidance 2011*

4. Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014

www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/pdfs/anaw_20140004_en.pdf

5. Carers UK: Information on Direct Payments

www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/practical-support/getting-care-and-support/direct-payments

Please note that funding options can change at any time so it is important to ensure that the information you use for research is up to date.

1.5 What makes the Personal Assistant role different?

Working as a Personal Assistant is different to working as a care or support worker within a formal organisation and this will need to be carefully considered during the assessment process. Some of the differences include:

- Their place of work will be their employer's home and local community;
- They undertake a wide range of care and support activities for one person rather than for a number of people such as in a residential care setting;
- Generally they will work for one employer but some may be employed by more than one individual, performing different care and support for each employer;
- They work within a flexible structure to suit the needs of the individual(s) they are supporting;
- There isn't a standard job description as the duties that a Personal Assistant will be asked to carry out will be dependent on the needs of the individual they are supporting to meet their personal objectives;
- The relationship between a Personal Assistant and their employer can be different to that of a support worker and service user in a residential setting. For example the Personal Assistant may be a family member which creates a different dynamic;
- They are not guided by the policies and procedures of a formal organisation, they would instead work to 'agreed ways of working';
- They will have a broader understanding of all aspects of their employers life;
- The level of autonomy will vary for most Personal Assistants depending on their employer's desired outcomes; and
- There is a focus on broad outcomes enabling them to live a full life.

Further reading and resources on the role of Personal Assistants:

Please note that a number of these links, including video links, are from sources external to the Care Council. Please report any issues regarding the functionality of links or videos to the relevant organisation.

1. Skills for Care case studies

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Employing-your-own-care-and-support/Support-for-personal-assistants/Support-for-personal-assistants.aspx

Refer to the case studies section to gain an understanding of what working as a Personal Assistant is like.

This toolkit is aimed at employers who employ Personal Assistants or who are considering employing Personal Assistants. It provides useful information, guidance, examples and practical tools to help employers support their Personal Assistants to gain the skills they need to be confident and competent in their role.

2. Employer toolkit for supporting the learning of Personal Assistants Care Council for Wales

www.paemployertoolkit.wales/

Employer toolkit for supporting the learning of Personal Assistants. Refer to sections 2 and 3.



Section 2

Assessment Considerations

This guidance document compliments 'The Best Practice Guidance for Learning and Assessment in Social Care, The Care of Children and Young People and Early Years in Wales'² (www.ccwales.org.uk/best-practice-guidance-for-learning-and-assessment-1/) that sets out the expectations for the assessment and verification for social care qualifications in Wales.

It also clarifies aspects that are particular to the assessment of Personal Assistants.

2.1 Initial set up meetings (Introducing the qualification and ensuring employer involvement)

The involvement of employers in the process of Personal Assistants undertaking qualifications is essential for the good management and development of Personal Assistants.

Many employers of Personal Assistants may potentially be unfamiliar with the process of assessment for competence based qualifications. Therefore it is recommended that prior to undertaking any assessment, that meetings are held between the assessor, Personal Assistant and employer. Where possible it is recommended that the Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) is involved in these as well so that they are familiar with the support requirements for the employer and where there may be potential challenges in terms of gathering evidence.

These meetings will allow each person involved in the assessment process to establish their expectations. For example, as the observations and assessment will be taking place in the employer's home, it will give the opportunity for employers to establish ground rules and boundaries as to what they are comfortable being observed and what they don't want to be observed. Setting out clear expectations will ensure that everyone, particularly the employer is comfortable and happy to progress.

These meetings are also an opportunity to establish who forms part of the employer's network of care and support and how they can contribute to the assessment process. This will help assessors to establish where and how evidence will be collected (direct observations or the use of expert witnesses and witness testimony).

2.2 Roles and responsibilities

2.2.1 Role of support organisations

During the pilot between Rhondda Cynon Taf and Dewis Centre for Independent Living, a strong partnership was developed that proved successful in the overall delivery.

Support organisations exist across most local authority areas to provide advice, guidance and practical solutions to individuals using Direct Payments. This can involve helping employers employ Personal Assistants, assistance with payroll, employment law issues and training. Some local authorities may do this in-house or contract it to other providers.

Whilst not all employers will choose to link with a support organisation it is recommended to establish what support services are available in the local area as they can be a source of up to date information on Direct Payments and may run training courses for Personal Assistants (refer to the contacts section of the employer toolkit for supporting the learning of Personal Assistants Care Council for Wales (<http://www.paemployertoolkit.wales/useful-information/>)).

2.2.2 Employer's role

As previously stated the involvement of employers in the assessment process is vital to Personal Assistant's development. Also due to the way that a Personal Assistant can be involved in all aspects of their employer's life, working in partnership will be the key to the success of being able to undertake observations and assessment with minimal intrusion in the employer's day to day life. The employer would:

- agree any optional units
- agree assessment plans
- provide feedback – witness testimony
- support learning

Sections 4 and 5 of the employer's toolkit may be useful in the initial set up process for explaining the value of learning for their Personal Assistants.

An unexpected benefit from the pilot was the learning experienced by employers and the benefits this had for them.



2.2.3 Assessor's role

Whilst supporting a Personal Assistant through the qualification it is important in the initial set up meetings that the roles and responsibilities for the assessor and IQA are established. For example; the role of the assessor is to assess the competence of the Personal Assistant for their qualification and should a Personal Assistant have queries about Direct Payments or employment issues such as annual leave, they should be referred to either their local authority contact or support organisation for advice.

To allay any potential anxiety, it is recommended to clarify that when assessment is taking place that the assessor is not there in an 'inspectors' role but they do have a responsibility to question poor practice and report any issues that arise e.g. issues relating to safeguarding and breaches of health and safety that are considered to be a risk.

Flexibility – due to the nature of the Personal Assistant's role, assessment may need to take place at evenings and weekends. Therefore consideration should be given to the assessor needing to be flexible and being in a lone worker situation outside of normal working hours.

2.2.4 Role of Internal Quality Assessor (IQA)

During the pilot programme the IQA was involved from the beginning of the assessment process and in attendance at the initial set up meetings with the employers. Whilst it is recognised that this is not possible in all settings it is recommended where possible that IQA's attend the initial set up meetings in order to understand the relationship between the employer and their Personal Assistant.

The IQA would be expected to support the sharing of good practice of the assessment of Personal Assistants through standardisation meetings.

2.3 Confidentiality

It is important throughout the assessment process to ensure that the confidentiality of those using the service is protected at all times. In terms of assessing a Personal Assistant it is important to be aware that in the learner's portfolio, the employer's job description / agreed ways of working / witness testimonies and signed evidence may enable the employer to be identified. It is recommended therefore that these are removed from the Personal Assistant's portfolio and kept securely within the assessment centre for the External Quality Assurer (EQA) to view when necessary.

In the initial set up meetings with the employer it is recommended that permission to share / view the learner's portfolio with the EQA is sought and that their role in the assessment process is explained.

2.4 Boundaries

Although boundaries will be discussed in the initial set up meetings in terms of what the employer is comfortable being observed, it is important to recognise that the relationship between a Personal Assistant and their employer may differ to that of a formal employer / employee relationship. This is particularly relevant where the Personal Assistant is a family member or friend.

This can create challenges for assessment in terms of clarifying the need for professional boundaries at all times in terms of what is acceptable and unacceptable in terms of 'the working relationship' and 'non-working relationship'. Clarifying this will enable Personal Assistants to be much clearer about their role.

2.5 Job description / 'agreed ways of working'

In terms of assessing Personal Assistants one of the greatest difficulties is that there are limited policies and procedures available for them to work to. It is recommended that the assessor emphasises the need for a current role description or 'agreed ways of working' and this is then used as a basis of expectations from the employer. This document can then be used to plan observations and potential unit choices.

2.6 Qualification and unit selection

The pilot established that the Level 3 Diploma in Health and Social Care was appropriate for the role of Personal Assistant. However, as the role and level of autonomy will vary for each individual that is supported it is important to establish the most appropriate qualification for each Personal Assistant (the level descriptors and assessment criteria will enable the assessor to determine this).

Qualification unit selection will therefore vary according to each Personal Assistant role and the support that is being provided. The pilot did identify one unit that was considered suitable for all Personal Assistants – Unit SSOP 3.1 *Understanding models of disability*.

The initial meetings will provide an opportunity to look at potential unit choices and to discuss with the employer why certain observations would need to take place and agree how and when these would happen.

It is important to note that the qualification isn't a specific Personal Assistant qualification but a generic health and social care one. Therefore it should be confirmed what needs to be applied in the context of the role of Personal Assistant.

2.7 Evidence gathering

Due to the way that Personal Assistants work in their employer's home and community setting, the majority of evidence will be from direct observation of practice. There may be a need for creativity from the assessor for other evidence types. An example of this could be for documenting / record keeping. In a residential care setting there will be formal paperwork and procedures that can be used as evidence whereas this may not be the case for Personal Assistants, other methods may potentially be used as evidence, e.g. receipts, timesheets and payments. It is recommended to check what your Awarding Organisation would accept as evidence.

2.8 Expert Witnesses

Skills for Care and Development QCF Assessment Principles (www.ccwales.org.uk/edrms/157327) state that:

An expert witness must:

- have a working knowledge of the units for which they are providing expert testimony;
- be occupationally competent in the area for which they are providing expert testimony; and
- have EITHER any qualification in assessment of workplace performance OR a work role which involves evaluating the everyday practice of staff within their area of expertise.

We therefore believe that the following could be ideal as expert witnesses:

- occupational therapists
- consultants
- direct payment advisors
- support organisation representatives
- social workers

2.9 Safeguarding

If safeguarding issues arise during the assessment of Personal Assistants, you should follow the policies and procedures of your assessment centre for the reporting of safeguarding concerns.

Further information on safeguarding can be found on the All Wales Basic Safeguarding Awareness Training page of the Care Council's website (www.ccwales.org.uk/all-wales-basic-safeguarding-awareness-training/).

2.10 Other areas to consider

This document aims to address the key assessment considerations that arose from the evaluation of the pilot but it is recommended to consider the other areas noted below:

- Where an employer has more than one Personal Assistant undertaking a qualification separate meetings would need to be held with each Personal Assistant.
- Personal Assistants will not necessarily have access to their employer's care plan.
- In the case of children / young people the person who acts as the suitable person may see themselves as the employer.
- Where an assessor is working with more than one Personal Assistant, it is recommended where possible to create opportunities for peer learning (confidentiality must be ensured in these sessions).
- Where possible, assessment centres could consider offering an induction / diploma workshop for Personal Assistants and employers to explain the process of assessment based qualifications, how evidence can be gained and who will be involved – this could then be followed up with individual meetings.

Section 3

Terminology

Within the occupational competence qualifications, assessors will find that there is some terminology that would be more familiar to more formal work settings such as care homes etc. We have therefore suggested below how these should be interpreted within a Personal Assistant context.

Terminology	How to interpret within a Personal Assistant context
Health and social care	Within the context of Personal Assistants this would be the provision of care and support to the employer in their own home and out in the community.
Work setting	Within the context of Personal Assistant working, this will be either in the employer's own home or out in the community.
Health and safety and risk assessment	<p>This needs to be within the context of an ordinary life e.g. we would not expect Personal Assistants to wear protective clothing for food preparation, rather, just to demonstrate that they have an understanding of what protective clothing is in relation to infection control.</p> <p>We would simply expect to see them safely preparing a meal or snack in line with best practice, e.g. washing hands properly prior to food preparation etc. So too, with moving and handling, if an individual did not use a hoist or other specialist equipment, we would expect assessment of safe moving and handling to be made using everyday objects such as bags of shopping, boxes of goods etc. In relation to risk assessments Personal Assistants would be expected to identify how they risk assess various areas of their daily role. Please refer to http://pasonlineguidebook.blogspot.co.uk/p/chapter-4-better-safe-than-sorry-health.html Chapter 4 on Health and Safety.</p>
Employer	Individuals who are assessed as requiring support and assistance can receive Direct Payments from local authorities to employ their own workers to support them. They are known as individual or Direct Payment employers. Being an employer allows greater choice and control over the assistance and support they require for daily living. An employer may also be a parent of a disabled child or a carer for a family member who manages the Direct Payments and Personal Assistants for the person requiring support.

Job / role description	A job / role description provides a brief summary of the job purpose, lists duties and key responsibilities, details of working hours, salary and who the Personal Assistant reports to.
Work role or job role	Within the context of Personal Assistants, this would be the provision of support to an individual within their own home and community setting.
Others	This could include other professionals and family members. The interpretation of this term needs to be within the context of the unit being assessed.

We hope that this guidance provides enough information to help assessors of Personal Assistants understand what needs to be considered when carrying out qualification assessments and the need to be sensitive to the fact that this is taking place within an ordinary home environment.

Acknowledgements

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- Diverse Cymru
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- Torfaen County Borough Council