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Dear Colleague,

I am writing to make you aware of the work that Scottish Government and our partners are undertaking to support Personal Assistants (PAs) and ensure they are fully recognised as members of the social care workforce.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued hard work and dedication demonstrated throughout the pandemic. PAs are valued members of the social care workforce and play an essential role in providing individuals with personalised and flexible support.

I would like to know more about what your views are, as a PA, in order to understand better how to support the PA workforce.

Annual PA Survey

I am pleased to announce that we have launched an annual PA survey. This is your opportunity to give us your feedback which will help inform what work is required to support PAs. You can access the survey using this link:

<https://sdsscotland.formtitan.com/ftproject/annual-pa-survey-2022>

The survey will provide a confidential opportunity for PAs to tell us about the experiences and challenges you have faced in your role. If you are interested, I would strongly encourage you to take part in the survey.

The survey will close on 30 April 2022 and is supported by a helpline (0800 8411 321).

Below I have detailed some ongoing work and opportunities for PAs that may be of interest to you.

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PA Programme Board

The Scottish Government have established a PA Programme Board whose key function is to advise the Scottish Government and help us fully understand the wider issues which affect PAs. I attended a Programme Board meeting on the 26 October 2021 to meet with members and discuss their experiences. The Board meets regularly and I will continue to be involved with the work of this group.

The Programme Board has representation from PA's, PA Employers and key stakeholders within the sector. Their approach is to identify issues, prioritise actions and recommend necessary changes which will be fed into long term work-streams. This approach will include promotion of the value of the PA role, the support of improvements in working conditions, raising awareness of PA roles as a career choice, work to reduce isolation and increase access to information and support.

If you would like to learn more about the Programme Board, further information can be found on the PA Programme Board webpage (<https://www.sdsscotland.org.uk/personal-assistant-programme-board-2/>).

The PA Network Scotland

I would like to make you aware of the PA Network Scotland (<https://www.panetworkscotland.org.uk/>), which is the national membership organisation representing PAs. It is free to join and it provides a range of support services to PAs.

There are many benefits to joining the PA Network including: a photo ID badge to allow you to show your key worker status, access to a range of learning and development resources, local peer support groups, a dedicated support service helpline and email address, and a website providing a range of resources and support.

The PA Network will strive to continually expand the services they can offer. As the membership grows, the PA Network aims to offer increased benefits to its members, have a greater influence within the sector and be a powerful voice for PAs.

If you would like further information, you can contact the PA Network directly by email on info@panetworkscotland.org.uk or by telephone on 01563 522551. If you would like to become a member you can join on the PA Network website: (<https://panetworkscotland.us9.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=3e3b98e382fb1f95d9ef5afec&id=2898e21286>).

PA Handbook

Self-Directed Support Scotland (SDSS) has developed an online PA handbook that will be launching soon.

Content including videos and case studies is being compiled in collaboration with a working group of nine PAs and the PA Network. The agreed approach is to use lived experience involving PAs, employers and funders.

While the guide will be published initially with essential content, it will be updated regularly and expanded by key experts, including review by an employment lawyer and to address

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feedback from users. When published, you will be able to access the PA handbook on this website (<https://pa.handbook.scot>). The handbook will support PAs in a similar way to the PA Employer Handbook (<https://paemployer.handbook.scot/>) which SDSS developed last year.

My Job Scotland

The PA jobs page on the my job scotland website has been recently updated to provide a comprehensive overview of the role of PAs in Scotland, and advice on how to find work with links to regional PA vacancy pages. The page can be accessed on the my job scotland website (<https://www.myjobscotland.gov.uk/personal-assistant-jobs>).

Wellbeing Resources

There are a range of wellbeing resources available to the social care workforce, including PAs and I have detailed each of these below.

The National Wellbeing Hub (<https://wellbeinghub.scot/>) provides a range of self-care and wellbeing resources to enhance personal resilience and signposts to relevant mental health and support services. Coaching for Wellbeing is also available through the National Wellbeing Hub, and offers support through a bespoke digital platform in partnership with NHS Education for Scotland.

The National Wellbeing Helpline (0800 111 4191) provides a 24/7 service to those who need further psychological support, including in light of the coronavirus crisis. Trained practitioners at NHS 24 offer callers a compassionate and empathetic listening service based on the principles of psychological first aid, as well as advice, signposting and if required onward referral to local services.

The pandemic has highlighted the unique and essential work undertaken by PAs. I hope this information is interesting and provides reassurance that the Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that PAs are recognised and valued as members of the social care workforce.

If you would like further information on any of the work described above you can contact the team by email at: SocialCarePAs@gov.scot.

Yours sincerely,



Kevin Stewart
Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care

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