



Retention and sick leave of Personal Assistants

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RESSCW Webinar, 30th September 2021

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Introduction

- Over 100,000 Personal Assistants (PAs) working in 135,000 jobs
 - Employed directly by those they provide care to (or self employed)
- Influenced by policy direction
 - Care at home and in the community
 - Introduction of direct payments (and personal health budgets)
- Little research evidence for England on the factors which influence (continued) PA employment
- Study aims
 - Assess what drives PA job vacancies and staff turnover
 - Assess what affects PA absenteeism (ongoing)

PAs

- Person and role vary depending on the service user
 - Support individual with personal care, leisure activities, shopping, driving, household activities, e.g. cleaning (e.g. Woolham et al., 2019)
- Average wage of £9.53 per hour (£18,300 per year) and similar qualifications to independent sector care staff (Skills for Care, 2020)
 - Can be issues with appropriate training (Ahlstrom & Wadensten, 2012; Woolham et al., 2019)
- Rewarding role – can develop close bonds (e.g. Manthorpe et al., 2020; Shakespeare et al., 2018)
- But...this can have negative aspects, e.g. blurring of job and ‘helping out’ (e.g. Ungerson, 1999; Christensen & Manthorpe, 2016)

Direct Payments & PAs

- 230,000 Direct payment recipients in 2019/20
- Advantages of Direct Payments and use of PAs
 - Choice and control – selection, continuity of care, flexibility
- Disadvantages
 - Increased anxiety and administrative burden (e.g. Poole, 2006; Netten et al., 2012)
 - Recruitment and retention of staff (e.g. Glendinning et al., 2000; McGuigan et al., 2016)
- PA Recruitment – word of mouth, local adverts, job centres, local authority registers (e.g. Figgett, 2017; Skills for Care, 2019; Woolham et al., 2019)
 - Recruitment and retention difficulties
 - High employment/wage areas (Carmichael & Brown, 2002; Woolham et al., 2019)
 - Turnover of staff to other social care providers (Glendinning et al., 2000)

Studies of PA retention and sick leave

- Aim is to analyse:
 - factors that affect PA recruitment and retention,
 - factors that link to sick leave of PAs
- Analyses using statistical methods
- We use national data of PAs and their employers, from surveys by Skills for Care in 2017 and 2019
 - Distributed through two national organisations and online
- Data for over 1,300 (2017) and 2,400 (2019) PAs
- Data for over 1,000 (2017) and 1,950 (2019) PA employers

PA sick leave

- Data for PAs includes information on:
 - Job – e.g. pay, hours of work, training, employment status
 - Personal – e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, qualifications
 - Sickness – how many days off work have you had due to sickness in last 12 months?
- Add PA employer and local authority data on economic factors
- We will analyse what factors determine the likelihood of a PA being absent from their work for sick leave.
 - Factors could be related to retention
- Ongoing research – Study ends March 2022

PA recruitment and retention

- PA employer data
 - Personal: Age range, primary care need, type of funding, training
- Included relevant supply and demand data from local authority (LA):
 - social care supply, unemployment, benefits (Personal Independence Payments)
- Over 1 in 4 PA employers had at least one PA leave in last year
- 1 in 7 PA employers had at least one job vacancy at time of survey
- We analysed the factors that influenced the likelihood of PA turnover and vacancies

PA recruitment and retention - Findings

- Personal factors that increased likelihood of turnover/vacancy
 - More PA staff
 - Those employing staff using a personal health budget
 - Those employers that had undertaken training
- Personal factors that decreased likelihood of PA vacancy
 - Those with a learning disability or sensory support needs (compared to personal care needs only)
 - Older employers (65+)
- Local economic factors had expected influence
 - Higher unemployment (-)
 - Greater alternative social care supply (+)

Implications for policy and practice

- Personal factors important – each PA role unique
 - Care support needs important
- Appropriate skill mix for PAs
 - Training, role demarcation, qualifications, pay
- Difficulty for PA employers in high employment areas
 - All PA employers will need to recruit and retain staff
 - Appropriate policies – e.g. training, local information, local forums
- The joined-up nature of the social care sector job market
 - Important that PA employers are not left without appropriate support
- Potential implications for health and social care system
- Impact of COVID-19 pandemic

Disclaimer

This study is part of the Retention and Sustainability of Social Care Workforce (RESSCW) project, funded by the Health Foundation's Efficiency Research Programme. The Health Foundation is an independent charity committed to bringing about better health and health care for people in the UK. The views expressed are entirely those of the authors.

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