

Becoming an individual employer or personal assistant

We designed and developed four courses for people who are, or who are interested in becoming individual employers or personal assistants – understanding your rights and responsibilities and how to build an effective working relationship.

Background

- Dudley Centre for Inclusive Living (CIL) is a user-led disabled people's organisation which has recently started to offer training, advocacy, guidance and support for disabled and deaf people, people with learning disabilities and mental health issues, and also for their friends, families and support workers.
- With the move towards many disabled people receiving direct payments or personal budgets to employ personal assistants, CIL realised that there was a distinct gap in training provision. They decided to create a training programme to give assurance to people put off by the complexities and responsibilities of becoming an employer. At the same time, they wanted the programme to provide some sound basic skills and knowledge for personal assistants.
- For disabled people who were, or wanted to become employers CIL devised a programme which would provide training in recruitment practices, interviewing techniques, people

management and interpersonal skills, negotiating skills, money management, payroll and administration. For the personal assistants they devised training in disability equality, safeguarding, dignity, recognising signs of distress and conflict resolution. The training would be designed by disabled people for disabled people.

What we wanted to achieve

- The main aim of the programme was to design and deliver a training pack of materials and a series of four short courses which would enable CIL to provide training for a target of 100 participants. The purpose was also to offer the courses to people who were considering the use of direct payments or were considering taking up the role of personal assistant.
- The intention was to develop a training programme which would lead to a better working relationship between people who need care and support and their staff, through both having a good understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities.
- The purpose was also to develop separate initial courses for people who need care and support and their staff and then bringing together the two groups for a short follow-up course.
- Ultimately, the training was aimed to lead to the empowerment of people, lower levels of staff turnover, improved confidence, greater skills and more job satisfaction for people taking up the role of personal assistant.

“During the training we encountered people who need care and support who clearly did not know what their rights were and whether a personal assistant working for them was acting correctly or incorrectly.”

Tracy McClymont, Project Lead

What we did

- At the outset of the project the Dudley CIL team visited various organisations to discuss what people most required in terms of content from the proposed training course. Organisations such as Mind, Age UK, and those representing people with learning difficulties were all included in this process.
 - CIL commissioned a user-led training and consultancy agency with many years' experience of providing advocacy, support and best practice training to disabled people to provide this training – also to provide mentoring to the trustees of CIL to equip them with the skills to sell and deliver the training. In its turn CIL would train other people who need care and support and their staff to deliver the training, thus providing an effective rolling programme.
 - A training pack was produced containing materials written and produced in a range of formats to suit all course participants and based on current and forthcoming legislation and on best employment practice.
 - As a user-led disability organisation, CIL set out to design a course that could accommodate people of varying degrees of disability, so the course intended for employers was prepared as either a one-day or two-day course to accommodate people's differing needs and capabilities.
- In total four courses were prepared:
- Recruiting and Managing my Staff – a one-day course for disabled people/ parents or carers of disabled people employing or wishing to employ personal assistants. This course was conducted over one day lasting six hours including lunch.
 - Recruiting and Managing my Staff – the same course in easy-read format conducted over two days to accommodate differing needs and delivered in approximately half-day sections.
 - My Rights, Roles and Responsibilities – a one-day course lasting six hours including lunch aimed at people working or wishing to work as personal assistants.
 - Working Together – a half-day follow-up course for both employers and personal assistants.
 - Significant effort was put into publicising the courses from posters to leaflets distributed to hospitals, community centres, shops, GP surgeries, day centres and leisure facilities, as well as promoting via e-mail. Twitter, Facebook and the local media were all used to publicise the programme.
 - Eventually, the courses were delivered to a total of 73 participants and each delegate received an evaluation form. The contents of these forms were collated shortly after the delivery of the course so that CIL could address any areas of concern and make adjustments.
 - One change was to deliver the course in Urdu to reach a group of family carers of Asian people with learning difficulties.
 - The final session of both the personal assistant and employer courses involved participants in the completion of a personal development plan in which they each identified one 'big change' they would make to improve their knowledge or skills in managing their staff or working successfully as a personal assistant. Dudley CIL has maintained contact with participants since the courses in order to provide support which enables them to achieve these changes.

What we achieved

- The main outcome from this project has been the design, development and delivery of not one but four training courses, completed with supporting training materials. The courses can now be delivered directly by Dudley CIL as and when they may be requested. The training pack includes materials designed on the social model of disability principle and produced so as to be easy to read and in a range of formats. CIL also arranged for an audio version of the course to be prepared in Urdu.
- With approximately 35,000 people in England receiving personal health budgets, the potential for adapting this course for use by other care-related organisations is immense.
- At the end of the follow-up course involving both personal assistants and employers, all participants were awarded with a specially prepared certificate evidencing their attendance and completion of the course.
- The courses led to immediate and comprehensive feedback in the evaluation forms with a great deal of positive comment, some of which was subsequently written up on Facebook and Twitter. Dudley CIL has consequently developed a good working relationship with a range of employers and personal assistants and has subsequently been approached by them to provide other forms of advice and guidance.
- According to Tracy McClymont, project lead at Dudley CIL, “At one point we even turned up evidence of abuse, of a mental and psychological nature, and were able to advise and support the individual about the situation. We have learned a great deal from this training programme and it has increased our confidence in supporting disabled people.”
- The project also developed an effective way of providing personal assistants and those who wished to work in this role with the knowledge of what to expect when working in the homes of people who need care and support, how they will be managed and how conflicts between them and employers can practically and effectively be resolved.
- Dudley CIL gained immeasurably by creating, effectively from scratch, with the essential help of a consultancy and training agency, an entire training course which set out with specific aims. The programme has provided a wealth of evaluation material that has informed Dudley CIL of the key areas required to meet the further training needs of both employers and personal assistants.

What we learnt

- Dudley CIL has learned, by means of this project, how to develop training that provides highly relevant information about good practice and gives opportunities to implement this good practice through participative exercises. All the employers and would-be employers who took part in the training were encouraged to reflect on their own practice and how this could be improved. They were provided with sound information on work planning, practising assertive behaviour and giving clear messages about how they wish their needs to be met.

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Tracy McClymont, Project Lead

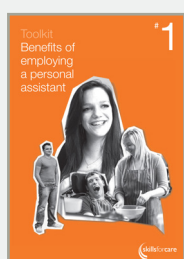
For more information please contact

Tracy McClymont
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Skills for Care Recommends

Skills for Care continues to produce various resources that can help those involved in dementia care, from formal qualifications to related guidance and information. We have listed a few of these below.

Employing Personal Assistants Toolkit



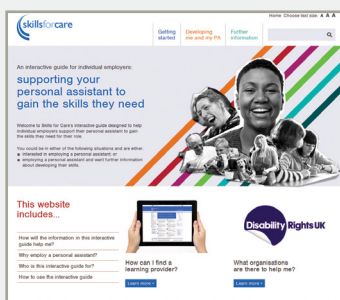
This helps guides you through the process of employing a personal assistant, what to do when they

are working for you as well as helping you to understand your responsibilities as an employer and your legal obligations.

www.employingpersonalassistants.co.uk

An interactive guide for Individual Employers

This resource has been designed to help individual employers support their personal assistant to gain the skills they need for their role.



www.paskills.org.uk/

Individual Employer Funding

Individual Employer can now apply for funding to support the training and development of themselves and their personal assistants.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/iefunding

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