

Personal Assistants – Current Data Sources and Future Work

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Personal Assistants – Current Data Sources and Future Work

This report provides an overview of key sources of data on personal assistants in Scotland. It aims to support the work of the Personal Assistants Programme Board in estimating the size of the personal assistant workforce in Scotland in order to aid with future workforce planning and determine what support is required.

Executive Summary

The Personal Assistant (PA) workforce is a heterogeneous and fragmented segment of the social care workforce, containing several distinct groups of PAs i.e. full-time, part-time, self-employed, directly employed, publicly funded, privately funded, urban-based, rural-based etc.

Consequently, attempts to capture the size and composition of this workforce face a number of obstacles, as there is a lack of regularly collected statistics that are able to sufficiently capture the PA workforce. There are only two data sources that are regularly collected which provide insight into the size and composition of the PA workforce and both are known to be incomplete. Additionally, there are a number of standalone datasets that provide snapshots of the workforce, at specific moments in time, but these also have some known limitations. Figure 1 (below) visualises the range of data sources available and summarises their content and limitations.

Of the two data sources that are regularly collected, Public Health Scotland's (PHS) annual Insights in Social Care dashboards provide some insight to the potential size of the workforce based on data returns that detail employer-side statistics. One dashboard details the number of people receiving direct payments as part of their care package – 10,035 in 2021/22 – some of whom will be PA employers; another dashboard details the number of “personal assistance contracts” – 3,115 in 2021/22 – by local authority, however the data in both dashboards are known to be incomplete due to missing or incomplete data returns from Local Authorities/Health and Social Care Partnerships.

Since 2022, Self Directed Support Scotland (SDSS) has also begun regularly producing a survey of the PA workforce. Thus far there have been two editions of this survey: one in 2022 and one in 2023. However, it cannot provide a headcount estimate of the PA workforce, as it samples from a list of known PAs who registered for the Scottish Government £500 Thank You Payment during the COVID-19 pandemic, which in turn had eligibility criteria that may have excluded a number of PAs, including those working for persons aged under 16, and also may not have had 100% coverage amongst eligible PAs for reasons below. As a result, the PA survey, which samples from this database is unlikely to capture elements of the workforce that remain unknown. Additionally, response rates to this survey remain low. Whilst 4,799 PAs were recognised as eligible for the COVID thank you payment, only 912 responded to the first edition of the survey (19.0% of known workforce) and 798 to the 2023 survey.

In addition to these two regularly collected data sources, there are the following standalone datasets that provide snapshots of different segments of the PA workforce at specific moments in time:

1. Records of the £500 Thank You Payment administered by Scotland Excel (SXL) on behalf of the Scottish Government to Health and Social Care workers during the pandemic which registered 4,799 PAs as eligible for payment. However, eligibility criteria for the payments will have meant that a number of groups may be underrepresented or unrepresented within the total number of PAs registered. Details on this can be found below.
2. A 2010 report on the PA workforce commissioned by the Scottish Government with the purpose of identifying issues faced by self-directed support (SDS) users as employers, and PAs as their employees. This report was not intended to

provide quantitative insights on the PA workforce but did estimate that 1,183 PAs were employed by SDS users in 2010. However, there is a lack of clarity on how this figure was reached, so it is not possible to say whether this figure is correct or not, or whether the PA workforce has grown significantly since 2010.

3. A 2021/22 notification from the Independent Living Fund Scotland (ILFS) to the Scottish Government that they funded 464 PA employers in 2021/22 – however ILFS does not regularly or officially report on these individuals.

It is not possible to create a headcount estimation for the PA workforce from any of these datasets, whether alone or in combination. In order to create such an estimate new and/or improved sources of data will be necessary. At present, there are four ongoing avenues of exploration for this kind of improvement:

1. There are ongoing plans to require all PAs to register with Disclosure Scotland for the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme – such a move should provide a reasonable estimate of PAs employed. This mandatory aspect of the PVG Scheme will come into force on 1st April 2025.

It should be noted that this estimate will not include:

- where the PA is either a family member who lives in the same household (or the PA shares a household with the individual receiving care)
 - where the PA has a personal relationship with the person receiving care and there is no commercial benefit
2. Self-directed support leads are in ongoing talks with the Scottish Government about providing data on the number of SDS option 1 recipients who are PA employers. This would allow for comparison with Public Health Scotland's (PHS) Insights dashboards, particularly on the question of how many of the 10,035 SDS option 1 recipients are PA employers.
 3. Self Directed Support Scotland (SDSS) has ongoing plans to survey PA payroll providers which would allow for an estimate of the average number of PAs employed per PA employer.
 4. SDSS is commencing a quality mapping exercise by surveying people who access Self-Directed Support (SDS) on "the role of Independent Support in making SDS work for people in Scotland." Data from this project will include the ratio of PAs and PA Employers who access Independent Support compared with those who don't, which may provide further insight into data gathered directly from the payroll provider survey and support workforce estimates.

These four measures would allow for improved estimation of PA workforce size, although timescales are not currently clear. With these new or improved sources in place, we would be able to replicate the approach taken by Skills for Care in England to estimate the number of PAs in Scotland. This is discussed in more detail in the Future Work section. Once there is clarity on timelines for data improvement, responsibility for analysis of improved data can be established.

Other national sources of workforce data such as the Scottish Census or data from HMRC cannot be used to determine the size of the PA workforce, because they do not distinguish between PAs employed in the context of social care, and PAs employed for other, non-social care related purposes.

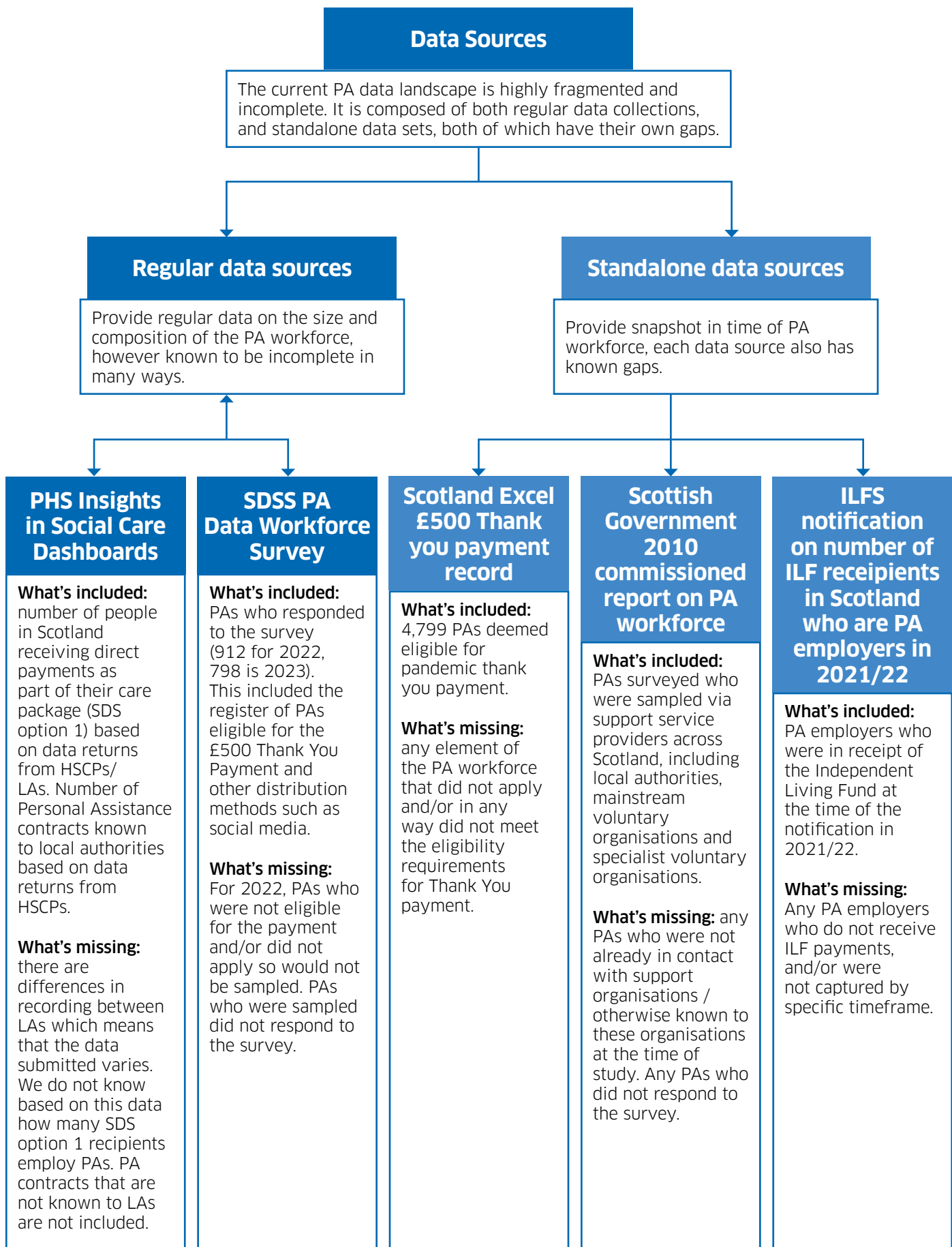


Figure 1: Visualisation of current source of PA workforce data.

Background

For the purposes of data collection, a Personal Assistant (PA) is defined as any person directly contracted by someone in receipt of Self-Directed Support option 1 and/or Independent Living Fund. The person who is in receipt of these payments may contract one or more PAs to meet their support needs. Some people contract with PAs via other funding streams such as the Disabled Student Allowance of Student Awards Agency Scotland; the daily living component of the Adult or Child Disability Payment or by using their personal funds. However, there is no way at present to collect data on this workforce. The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) has responsibility for publishing data and intelligence on the workforce in the social service sector in Scotland. The SSSC refers to and works with two main sets of data: The first is 'workforce' data; workers who work in either registered care services or local authority social work services. The second is 'registration' data; all those who are in active employment in specific roles and services within the social service sector, where mandatory registration is in place. Neither of these data sets include PAs. There is an annual Social Care data collection by PHS which counts the number of people who are recipients of SDS option 1 and includes the option to indicate if a service user received support from a PA contract. However, data recording varies across local authorities and not everyone is able to provide the requested data. In England, it is similar data on option 1 recipients which is used to derive the PA workforce.

The size of the current PA workforce in social care in Scotland is not currently known. It is important for workforce planning purposes to develop a method for calculating this workforce as it is currently and as it will be in the future.

A method to provide robust data and calculate size of the whole PA workforce is needed to enable Scottish Government (SG) to:

- comply with the Independent Review of Adult Social Care (IRASC) recommendation to fully recognise PAs as a part of the social care workforce; and
- meet the commitment set out in the published joint SG/COSLA Health and Social Care National Workforce Strategy which requires SG/COSLA to quantify the size of the social care workforce for workforce planning purposes and to publish full health and social care workforce projections for one, three, five and ten years ahead.

For medium term, it is necessary to explore all options and identify further opportunities. All agree that there will not be one collection method as using the existing data provided by Scotland Excel (SXL), even projected forwards would not give us a clear indication of supply and demand for PAs via SDS option 1 and ILFS as these are affected by many other variables.

Feedback from key partners and stakeholders, such as SDSS, has highlighted a need for greater numbers of PAs in the social care workforce to fulfil current and future demand for PAs to support individuals. PA Programme Board members have told us that some people who require social care support are unable to obtain any care due to lack of option 1 availability while others are being pushed into more traditional routes for social care because of the lack of PAs. Therefore, any analysis needs to look at current workforce size and estimate the future size, taking into account the pressures to increase this workforce.

Short term priorities

- To work out the existing workforce size in social care.
- To begin to scope out options to estimate the number of vacancies in the PA workforce and then invest in a method to be able to consider an accurate PA vacancy rate.

Medium term priorities

- To develop the method to measure the whole workforce size including for children and young people.
- To scope out workforce planning requirements for PAs for 3,5,7 and 10 years ahead assuming current demand for PAs.

Longer term priorities

- To scope out the likely future need for PAs. This involves an element of future proofing considering issues such as changing demographics, move to prioritise proactive and preventive focus and further development towards a National Care Service.

Method of estimation

Our intention is to replicate the [work carried out by Skills for Care in England on estimating the size of the PA workforce](#). To estimate the number of PAs, Skills for Care (SfC) first estimate the number of PA employers in England by using NHS England's Short- and Long-Term Support (SALT) return to obtain the number of direct payment recipients. SfC then use data from the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) Spring Survey to estimate the percentage of direct payment recipients who employ PAs, which was 32% in 2022/23.

The number of PA employers is then multiplied by the average number of PAs they employ in order to estimate the number of filled PA posts. This is then divided by the average number of employers a PA works for to estimate the total number of PAs. The calculation can be summarised using the steps below.

Calculation to estimate number of PAs

1. Number of direct payment recipients x proportion who employ PAs = **Number of PA employers**
2. Number of PA employers x number of PAs they employ = **Number of filled posts**
3. Number of filled posts / Average number of employers PAs work for = **Number of PAs**

Some of the information required to replicate this approach is already available from existing sources.

- Number of direct payment recipients - the Insights in Social Care publication produced by Public Health Scotland (PHS) includes the number of direct payment recipients. However, variation across areas in what data is recorded and submitted means that this data is not always available and is known not to be robust. Further work with PHS is required to better understand this data.
- Average number of employers PAs work for - this can be obtained from Self Directed Support Scotland's (SDSS) annual PA Survey.

However, more work is needed to obtain the proportion of direct payment recipients who employ PAs and the average number of PAs an employer employs.

Required information that is not currently available

To provide information on the average number of PAs people employ, the Scottish Government is working with SDSS to produce a survey of PA payroll providers, which are organisations used by PA employers to manage the wages of the PAs they employ. The 2010 Research Report produced by SDSS estimated an average number of 2.4 PAs per employer in Scotland.

Work is also underway with the SDS Practice Network, to explore a voluntary collection of data including the direct payment recipients in Scotland along with the proportion of those recipients who employ PAs. SDS Practice Network is set up by Social Work Scotland who are the professional leadership body for the social work and social care professionals in Scotland, this practice network ensures implementation of Self-directed Support (SDS) across all client groups. While it is unlikely that all areas would be able to provide this information, it may be possible to obtain a proxy figure based on those areas who are able to return information.

With these additional sources of information, we would be able to replicate the Skills for Care approach and estimate the number of PAs currently working in Scotland. However, this estimate will also be dependent on the data quality of the sources used. The benefits and limitations of the existing sources which would be used are discussed in the following sections.

Data Source – Insights in Social Care, Public Health Scotland

Data can be accessed via the Public Health Scotland website. The latest data on Self-Directed Support (SDS) can be accessed directly [here](#).

Background to data collection

Public Health Scotland (PHS) collects information directly from Local Authorities on a variety of social care topics, including Self-Directed Support. The full list of variables collected can be found [here](#). Data is submitted to PHS on a quarterly basis. The data is then cleaned and quality assured before being published annually on the PHS website.

Currently, direct payments (SDS option 1) are one of the main ways people can fund a PA. People can fund PAs through other methods as well such as the Independent Living Fund, other government payments and personal funds. It is important to note however that not everyone who receives direct payments will employ a PA. People funding PA using direct payments are included in Skills for Care's approach to estimating the number of PA in England. Insights in Social Care collects data on the number of people receiving direct payments in Scotland and has the option for data providers to indicate if the service user received support via a personal assistance contract or other support mechanism.

Latest findings

The latest Insights in Social Care publication shows that in 2021/22, 10,035 people in Scotland were recorded as receiving a direct payment - which is the equivalent of 1.8 per 1,000 population. This number includes mostly adults (1% of records refer to children) and will be an undercount of the true number of people receiving direct payments, as Aberdeen City, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and South Ayrshire did not submit any data on Self-Directed Support for 2021/22.

The number of people choosing to receive support via a direct payment varied across Scotland, with the highest rates seen in rural areas. The highest rate of direct payments was seen in Scottish Borders with 5.9 per 1,000 population followed by Dumfries & Galloway, with 4.8 per 1,000 population. Table 1 shows the rate of direct payments in each area that submitted information on Self-Directed Support.

Table 1: Number of people receiving a direct payment in 2021/22, by Local Authority

Local Authority Area	Number of people receiving a direct payment	Rate of people receiving a direct payment per 1,000 population
Aberdeenshire	685	2.6
Angus	160	1.4
Argyll & Bute	250	2.9
City of Edinburgh	1,655	3.1
Clackmannanshire	40	0.8
Dumfries & Galloway	720	4.8
Dundee City	175	1.2
East Ayrshire	240	2.0
East Dunbartonshire	215	2.0
East Lothian	85	0.8
East Renfrewshire	395	4.1
Falkirk	65	0.4
Fife	565	1.5
Glasgow City	885	1.4
Highland	195	0.8
Inverclyde	65	0.8
Midlothian	60	0.6
Moray	275	0.9
North Ayrshire	210	1.6
North Lanarkshire	345	1.0
Orkney Islands	80	3.5
Perth and Kinross	435	2.8
Renfrewshire	335	1.9
Scottish Borders	690	5.9
Shetland Islands	85	3.7
South Lanarkshire	775	2.4
Stirling	75	0.8
West Dunbartonshire	100	1.1
West Lothian	175	0.9
Scotland (all submitted)	10,035	1.8

Table 2 shows the number and rates of people receiving support via personal assistance contracts. The rates presented in Tables 1 and 2 are different, as presented on the PHS website and should not be compared. This is a separate variable collected by PHS and is not necessarily linked to the number of people receiving direct payments (SDS option 1). For instance, it would be possible for someone to be recorded as receiving support via a personal assistance contract but not be recorded as receiving a direct payment as they could be funding this through an alternative route. This explains instances such as in Orkney, for example, where there are more people recorded as receiving support via a personal assistance contract than recorded as receiving direct payments.

However, this information is poorly returned by local authorities and so results shown in Table 2 should be treated with caution. It should also be noted that data is only available for 18 out of 32 Local Authorities as 3 areas did not submit any information on SDS, 4 areas recorded all clients as 'Not Known' for the Type of Organisation Providing Support and Services (East Ayrshire, Highland, Moray and Scottish Borders) and so are not included in the table and 7 areas recorded 0 people as receiving support via a personal assistance contract, which indicates that the information was not available.

Table 2: Number of people receiving support via a Personal Assistance Contract in 2021/22, by Local Authority

Local Authority Area	Number of people receiving support via a personal assistance contract	Rate of people receiving a support via a personal assistance contract per 1,000 Self-Directed Support clients
Aberdeenshire	445	95.7
Angus	0	0.0
Argyll & Bute	235	108.3
City of Edinburgh	345	40.1
Clackmannanshire	0	0.0
Dumfries & Galloway	0	0.0
Dundee City	110	36.9
East Dunbartonshire	185	72.1
East Lothian	65	80.2
East Renfrewshire	190	155.7
Falkirk	50	10.5
Fife	360	39.4
Glasgow City	75	17.1
Inverclyde	0	0.0
Midlothian	0	0.0
North Ayrshire	140	19.8
North Lanarkshire	235	136.2
Orkney Islands	95	253.3
Perth and Kinross	205	35.3
Renfrewshire	0	0.0
Shetland Islands	80	800
South Lanarkshire	45	12.2
Stirling	0	0.0
West Dunbartonshire	75	26.7
West Lothian	175	70.3
Scotland (all submitted)	3,115	30.2

Benefits and Limitations of the data

PHS' Insights in Social Care publication is the main source of national level social care data in Scotland. As it collects individual level data, it can provide very detailed analysis by demographic characteristics and types of support received. PHS publish a number of breakdowns related to SDS such as options chosen by age, implementation rate, SDS by client group and assessed support needs.

However, data on SDS is not always returned by every area and the SDS support variable (type of support mechanism) in particular is poorly returned by Local Authorities. The number of people recorded as receiving direct payments may also be an undercount due to the variation in data recording between data providers.

Applying the percentage of direct payment recipients who employ PAs used in the SfC calculation would give an estimated figure of around 3,210 PA employers in Scotland (who use direct payments for funding). When also considering the 489 people who funded a PA via the Independent Living Fund, this would account for around 94% of the number of PA employers approved by Scotland Excel for the £500 COVID-19 Thank You payment, as discussed in the next section.

This figure is slightly greater than the number of people recorded as receiving support via a personal assistance contract (3,115); however, more work is required to understand how Local Authorities are interpreting this question as it may include more people than those receiving direct payments. It should also be noted that this information is only available for 18 out of 32 Local Authorities and so is likely a sizeable undercount.

The Scottish Government will work with the SDS Practice Network to look at the number of people receiving direct payments and how many of them employ PAs and will work with PHS to improve understanding on how support via a personal assistance contract is interpreted.

Data Source – Excel Report, Scotland Excel

This dataset relates to the [£500 Thank You Payments issued to PA working in the social care sector](#) by the Scottish Government in June-July of 2021. The payment applications were managed externally by [Scotland Excel](#) (SXL) and the original dataset has now been destroyed in compliance with data protection commitments, however high level aggregate data has been stored [here](#).

Background to data collection

The £500 Thank You Payments were announced in November 2020, as part of a package of measures to provide bonuses for workers across the health and social care sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Payments were issued to those who applied via the dedicated online portal and met the eligibility criteria. In order to be eligible, PAs must have been employed for a minimum of one continuous 4-week period between 17 March 2020 and 30 November 2020, and have been employed by a PA employer who was a) over 16 and b) funded their support via either ILFS, or from a Local Authority or Health and Social Care Partnership through Option 1 Social Care (Self Directed Support). Details of how this eligibility criteria may have shaped the dataset are contained below in the “benefits and limitations” section.

The application portal opened in June 2021, and was initially to be open for applications for a period of 8 weeks. Additionally, a telephone helpline was made available between 09:30-16:30 Monday-Friday for those who may have required additional assistance with their application. It was later decided by the Scottish Government that the online application portal should be kept open until May 2022. However, this decision was made to accommodate late applications that arrived after the formal cut off point and was not publicised. Additionally, while the helpline did continue to operate in the extended application period, it was not publicised. No data has been stored on how many applications were received after the initial 8-week period.

As part of the application process, applicants provided the following information (Table 3 below) which was processed by SXL, however the Scottish Government acted as data controller.

Table 3: Data processed with data sourced from the applicant

Variable
Forename
Surname
Date of Birth
Email Address
National Insurance Number
Telephone number
Tax Code
Bank details of applicant
Name of employer
Address of employer
Details of who funds employers support package
Number of hours worked per week
Details of any other employer worked for

Latest findings

In total, 4,799 applicants were deemed eligible by SXL to receive the payment. These 4,799 applicants worked with 3,923 PA employers – these figures include both PAs who were directly employed by the person they provided services to, and PAs who were self-employed - giving an average estimate of 1.22 PAs per employers who meet the eligibility criteria. However, 90% of eligible PAs had just one employer.

The vast majority of eligible PAs were female (82.5% compared to 17.5% eligible male PAs) and of older working age (28.3% were aged 51-60, 18.7% were aged 41-50 and 18.6% were aged 61 and over). Just over one third (36.4%) of eligible PAs were aged under 40.

The highest concentrations of SXL approved PAs per capita – calculated by dividing the number of eligible PA applicants by the total population of their local authority – were found to be in the following five local authorities, skewing heavily towards Island authorities and central belt:

1. Shetland Islands Council (0.39% PAs per capita)
2. Scottish Borders Council (0.28% PAs per capita)
3. Orkney Islands Council (0.25% PAs per capita)
4. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (0.19% PAs per capita)
5. Perth and Kinross Council (0.17% PAs per capita)

Of the 3,923 PA employers approved by SXL, the majority of these were validated by their local authority (82.2%) with a further 17.8% validated by ILF Scotland. This shows that the vast proportion of the PA employment in Scotland is paid via sds option 1.

As with individual PAs, PA employers who were approved by SXL expressed as a percentage per capita of the local authority population, were concentrated in Island authorities and the central belt, with the five highest concentrations found in the following local authorities:

1. Scottish Borders (0.33% PA employers per capita)
2. Shetland Islands Council (0.24% PA employers per capita)
3. Orkney Islands Council (0.23% PA employers per capita)
4. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (0.17% PA employers per capita)
5. Perth and Kinross (0.17% PA employers per capita)

Details on applications that were deemed ineligible (whether due to not meeting the eligibility criteria or simply being incomplete) were not retained, so it is not possible to comment on the profile of ineligible applicants.

Benefits and Limitations of the data

The central benefit of the Thank You Payment dataset is that the £500 payment constitutes an in-built incentive for PAs to present themselves. However, there are a number of ways in which we can anticipate the dataset will still be incomplete, despite this incentive.

Due to the specific eligibility criteria of the Thank You payment a number of groups are likely to be completely absent from the dataset. This includes:

- PAs who work for an employer that privately funds their own care
- PAs who work for young people or children aged under 16 (regardless of their funding arrangements)
- PAs who were inactive in the workforce between March 17th and November 13th, 2020, which may include those who were absent due to sickness or parental leave.
- PAs who cannot verify their tax status, such as PAs who are also undocumented migrants and would therefore not have a national insurance number.

Additionally, PAs who simply missed the 8-week application window and/or were unaware about the extension of the online application portal, whether because of lack of knowledge about the scheme or another reason will also be completely absent. As will those who submitted incomplete applications.

A number of groups are also likely to be under-represented in the dataset. These include:

- PAs who are employed by more than 5 employers. This group were required to apply through a separate system which involved calling the helpline that had the opening hours 09:30-16:30 Monday to Friday. As this created additional obstacles to application, this may have suppressed the number of applicants from this group.
- PAs who are in receipt of cash benefits like Universal Credit may also have been deterred from applying as the Thank You Payment was considered taxable income and thus may have impacted benefit levels.
- PAs who could not secure the cooperation of their employer(s) in applying for the payment are also likely to be under-represented, whether this lack of cooperation stemmed from relationship issues or because their employer has since died or is otherwise uncontactable.
- PAs with low levels of digital literacy and/or access are also likely to be underrepresented, since the application portal was hosted online. There were attempts made to mitigate the impact of this kind of digital exclusion, including disseminating 100 hard copy applications – although who these were disseminated to remains unclear – and establishing the central helpline. However, as with other under-represented groups, any additional obstacles in the application process is likely to have a deterrent effect on applications.

It is not, at present, possible to know what size these groups may be.

Data Source – Personal Assistants Survey, Self Directed Support Scotland (SDSS)

Data can be accessed via the SDSS website. The latest data on the PA Survey can be accessed directly [here](#).

Background to data collection

In April 2022, the first-ever nationwide Annual PA Workforce survey was conducted with a particular focus on individuals working as PAs for persons aged 16 or older in Scotland. The survey was published by SDSS for the Personal Assistants Programme Board and funded by the Scottish Government.

The aim of the annual survey was to gain comprehensive insights into the PA workforce in Scotland to provide practical support to improve the situation and opportunities for PAs working in Scotland.

The survey was conducted online. The link to the online survey was shared through social media, the SDSS website and through the PA Network Scotland. Furthermore, a survey invitation email was sent to all 4,795 PAs who had applied, been approved for the Scottish Government £500 Thank You Payment for Personal Assistants for work conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and consented to be contacted.

Latest findings

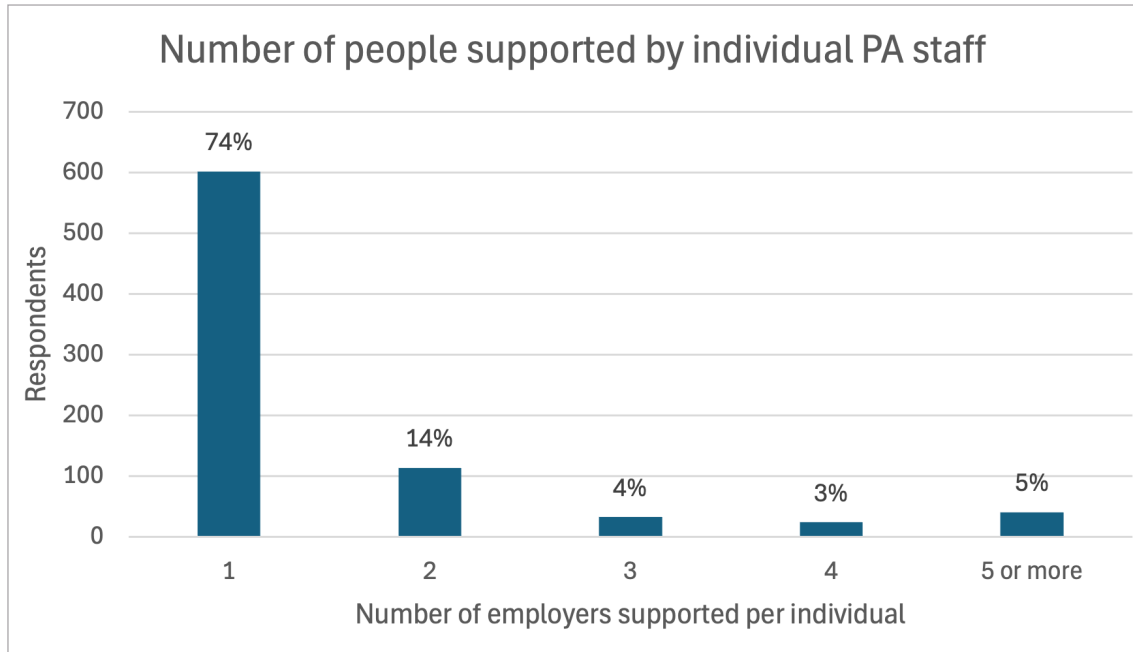
A total number of 912 participants responded to the survey which makes up 19% of the known PA workforce in Scotland based on data from 2021 Scottish Government “Thank You” payment provided the number of applicants from each Local Authority area for a £500 bonus offered for work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participation in the survey was optional, and none of the questions were mandatory. Therefore, the findings were based only on the response of the survey participants.

Of the 905 respondents who chose to answer the question, “Where in Scotland do you work right now?”, a total of 941 responses (regions) were selected. The following table shows total number of survey responders compared with PAs who received Thank You Payment (% PAs per capita).

Table 4: Total number of survey responders compared with PAs who received Thank You Payment

Local Authority	PA survey responses	PA Thank You Payment
Aberdeen City	16 (1.70%)	131 (2.73%)
Aberdeenshire	73 (7.76%)	352 (7.34%)
Angus	18 (1.91%)	164 (3.42%)
Argyll and Bute	26 (2.76%)	111 (2.31%)
City of Edinburgh	60 (6.38%)	281 (5.86%)
Clackmannanshire	5 (0.53%)	25 (0.52%)
Dumfries and Galloway	61 (6.48%)	233 (4.86%)
Dundee City	15 (1.59%)	112 (2.33%)
East Ayrshire	41 (4.36%)	110 (2.29%)
East Dunbartonshire	31 (3.29%)	82 (1.71%)
East Lothian	20 (2.13%)	90 (1.88%)
East Renfrewshire	15 (1.59%)	51 (1.06%)
Falkirk	10 (1.06%)	64 (1.33%)
Fife	49 (5.21%)	282 (5.88%)
Glasgow City	102 (10.84%)	373 (7.78%)
Highland	35 (3.72%)	238 (4.96%)
Inverclyde	5 (0.53%)	30 (0.63%)
Midlothian	23 (2.44%)	94 (1.96%)
Moray	26 (2.76%)	139 (2.90%)
Na h-Eileanan Siar	7 (0.74%)	50 (1.04%)
North Ayrshire	17 (1.81%)	94 (1.96%)
North Lanarkshire	49 (5.21%)	317 (6.61%)
Orkney Islands	8 (0.85%)	57 (1.19%)
Perth and Kinross	63 (6.69%)	250 (5.21%)
Renfrewshire	16 (1.70%)	103 (2.15%)
Scottish Borders	39 (4.14%)	319 (6.65%)
Shetland Islands	9 (0.96%)	75 (1.56%)
South Ayrshire	13 (1.38%)	44 (0.92%)
South Lanarkshire	47 (4.99%)	240 (5.01%)
Stirling	13 (1.38%)	48 (1.00%)
West Dunbartonshire	14 (1.49%)	102 (2.13%)
West Lothian	15 (1.59%)	117 (2.44%)
Outside Scotland	--	17 (0.35%)
Total	941 (100%)	4,795 (100%)

The survey respondents were asked, “How many individuals do you assist or support in your role?,” to which 74% of PAs reported that they assist or support one employer out of 814 respondents who responded to this question. On the other hand, 89.9% of the PAs whose applications were approved for the Scottish Government £500 Thank You Payment reported that they support or assist one employer one employer (with the average number of employers per PA being 1.14).



Benefits and Limitations of the data

Without any other research available this survey report would appear to represent the best estimate to date, of known PA workforce in Scotland. A key benefit of this report is that it gathered data from the PAs directly. When relevant, this report also compared the results of the survey with data from various sources including data from the Scottish Social Service Sector: Report on 2020 Workforce Data, the data from the Scottish Annual Population Survey 2020/21, Scottish Government data on PAs of adults who had been approved for the £500 Thank You Payment and Sheffield City Council Individual Employer Pay Scale Report: Survey & Interview Findings in 2021 (the only comparable data we have found on PA rates of pay in the UK).

However, the number of PAs who could have been eligible for the Thank You Payment but did not apply is unknown. Moreover, the actual number of PAs will be higher as PAs of children were ineligible for the payment. Therefore, these numbers may not be reflective of the entire PA workforce. Additionally, as a web-based survey low levels of digital literacy and/or access may have acted as a barrier to some respondents.

As the findings of the survey report reflect only the responses of the participants, therefore, the findings of the report lack generalisability as it does not assert representation of the entire PA workforce.

There is a recommendation to maintain a biennial survey, with the aim of supporting PAs with limited internet access and/or disabilities. The benefits associated with a longitudinal survey include the tracking of change over time to inform policy decisions.

Data Source – 2010 Research Report, Self Directed Support Scotland (SDSS)

Data can be accessed via the Iriss website [here](#).

Background to data collection

Reid-Howie Associates (RHA) was commissioned by the Scottish Government in March 2009 to identify the issues faced by SDS users as employers, and PAs as their employees, including but not limited to, assessing their training and support needs. Amongst the other objectives of the report, one of the main objectives was to provide background on the profile of the PA workforce across Scotland.

RHA identified support service providers across 32 local authority areas which included local authorities, mainstream voluntary organisations, specialist voluntary organisations whose remit is wider than SDS and specialist voluntary organisations whose remit is restricted to SDS. The support organisations identified the approximate number of employers of PAs in their areas (although the exact number was often unknown).

RHA supplied the organisations with the requisite number of packs, to which addresses were applied. Along with other documents (letter to the employer about the research, postal questionnaire to the employer, freepost return envelope) each pack contained two sealed envelopes which employers were asked to pass to their PAs, each containing a covering letter to the PA, a postal questionnaire to the PA and a freepost return envelope.

Latest findings

It was assumed that the number of PA employers was approximately 1,500 based on the report of local authorities to the Scottish Government and assuming a number for the employers who do not have any contact with the support services.

A total of 495 responses were received from employers suggesting approximate response rates of 33%.

The following table shows the total number of PAs employed by the employers who responded to the survey.

Table 5: Total number of PAs employed.

	Number	Percentage
0 ¹	5	1.0
1	185	37.4
2	136	27.5
3	67	13.5
4	41	8.3
5	25	5.1
6	14	2.8
7	4	0.8
8	7	1.4
10	3	0.6
12	2	0.4
14	1	0.2
Not answered	5	1.0

The employers who responded to the survey together employed 1,183 PAs. The report suggests an average of 2.4 PAs per employer, although the actual number employed varies widely. Nearly two thirds of employers in the survey employed either 1 or 2 PAs. Few (6.3%) employed 6 or more. A total of 512 responses were received from PAs suggesting approximate response rates of 20%.

¹ These employers were in the process of recruiting a PA.

The following table shows the local authority where PAs who responded to the survey work.

Table 6: Local authority where PA works

Local Authority	Number	Percentage
Aberdeen City	18	3.5
Aberdeenshire	33	6.4
Angus	17	3.3
Argyll and Bute	23	4.5
Clackmannanshire	2	0.4
Dumfries and Galloway	42	8.2
Dundee	20	3.9
East Ayrshire	13	2.5
East Dunbartonshire	7	1.4
East Lothian	8	1.6
East Renfrewshire	4	0.8
Edinburgh	45	8.8
Falkirk	8	1.6
Fife	48	9.4
Glasgow	15	2.9
Highland	38	7.4
Inverclyde	1	0.2
Midlothian	8	1.6
Moray	10	2.0
North Ayrshire	10	2.0
North Lanarkshire	14	2.7
Orkney	9	1.8
Perth and Kinross	12	2.3
Renfrewshire	9	1.8
Scottish Borders	40	7.8
Shetland	2	0.4
South Ayrshire	9	1.8
South Lanarkshire	9	1.8
Stirling	5	1.0
West Dunbartonshire	9	1.8
West Lothian	11	2.1
Western Isles	3	0.6
Not answered ²	12	2.3

² Although 7 of the 12 gave home addresses, it is not possible to say definitively in which local authority each worked. The local authority areas associated with these home addresses were Edinburgh (2), Fife (2), Scottish Borders (2) and Dumfries and Galloway (1).

Benefits and Limitations of the data

This report was undertaken in 2010 and is the first study on the PA workforce in Scotland which attempted to describe the characteristics of the PA workforce and identify their support and training needs. It provides an insight into the nature of work undertaken by PAs, their working conditions, and their future work intentions.

Due to the fragmented and isolated nature of the work, it was not easy to identify the PA workforce as a group. The report lacks generalisability as there was a lack of confidence about the estimated number of total employers as well as PAs, although it tried to include data from the entire workforce.

Moreover, although a total of almost 2,000 packs were distributed to organisations for circulation to employers, however, a number of them were distributed to SDS users who are not PA employers. There are no records of those accounts. This raises concern regarding data accuracy and resource efficiency due to the probability of overestimation of questionnaire distribution (which is also suggested by RHA), potentially causing reduced survey effectiveness, emphasising the need for improved planning and execution in data collection effort.

Additionally, the report lacks clarity in terms of calculating the number of the total PAs as 1,183 as the calculation from the Table 5, noting the total number of PAs employed according to responses from PA employers, gives an estimation of around 1,179. It is unclear where the additional 4 PAs in the headcount have come from. Moreover, the clarity of the reported count of the PAs by the employers remains uncertain, as it remains unclear whether the figures represent the cumulative number of PAs throughout an extended period or the count at a specific point. For example, it seems unlikely that 1.2% of employers who responded to the survey are simultaneously employing 10 or more PAs. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that a significant portion of PAs, approximately 12.9% (with 4.7% opting not to respond), reported being employed by multiple employers, while the majority, constituting 82.4%, worked for a single employer. This aspect was not considered in the report, leading to an omission in reflecting the possibility of individual PAs having engagements with multiple employers. This may have contributed to give a wrong estimation of total number of PAs based on the number of PAs employed by an individual employer. To rectify this discrepancy, implementing a cross-validation process between the data collected from PA survey and the Employer survey while estimating the total number of PAs is recommended. This would have enhanced the accuracy of the estimated number of PAs by considering the diversity in PA employment arrangements.

Next steps

An essential part of the PA Programme Board's commitment to workforce planning is to first estimate the current number of PAs in Scotland as accurately as possible. The Scotland Excel report on the number of PAs who received the COVID-19 'Thank you payments' has been used as a minimum known number of PAs in Scotland (around 4,800 people); however, a more robust estimate is required for workforce planning.

As a part of the workforce planning, this report will be shared with the Data subgroup of the PA Programme Board and other relevant organisations and will be used as the basis for future work.

Work is under way to improve the accuracy of existing data sources and consider additional data sources. There is also a need to demonstrate the potential validity and generalisability of the method used by SfC in England for the PA workforce across Scotland. This work includes:

- Development of membership data from 2024 as part of the creation of the PA national membership organisation and data collection by Disclosure Scotland following the introduction of PA as a regulated role from 2025.
- Explore potential of regular sample surveys with a view to identifying sources which align with and complement existing data collection. We are in discussion with SDSS and SDS leads with a view to finding a way to independently verify the proportion of SDS option 1 recipients who are PA employers and the average number of PAs employed by PA employers.

Discussion will also be maintained with ILFS to ensure that their systems can capture the additional PA employers and PAs funded only via their fund.

Conclusion

This report has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of four available data sources on PA workforce - Insights in Social Care, Public Health Scotland; Excel Report, Scotland Excel; Personal Assistants Survey, Self Directed Support Scotland (SDSS) 2022 and 2010 Research Report by Reid Howie Associates.

These sources have been explored to estimate the number of PAs working across Scotland. This report highlights both the strengths and limitations of the methodologies involved with data collection as per the existing sources. In addition this report includes reflection on the existing data gaps which need to be addressed to obtain an estimate of the number and nature of the PA workforce in Scotland as well as insights regarding ways to reach the PA workforce in the future both in terms of data collection as well as collaboration with external partners (e.g. PHS, SDSS, ILFS and SDS Practice Network).

The findings will be made available online at the Scottish Government website. This report represents an audit of current sources and a way to calculate the size of the PA workforce going forward.



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