

Nottinghamshire County Council

Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) delivered a project to recruit more personal assistants (PAs) from rural and hard to reach communities.

They did this by doing targeted promotional activities in these areas, including events, a drop in session and advertising.

Background

With more people choosing to use a direct payment to employ their own PAs, NCC need to ensure there's a flexible and high quality PA workforce to support them.

The council use Support with Confidence (SWC), an accreditation scheme that ensures PAs have the right values and skills, and supports them to do training and find work. PAs and individual employers can then advertise their services or roles on the PA register.

Despite actively promoting SWC, one of the challenges NCC face is that around a fifth of the population of Nottinghamshire live in rural areas. Travel time and other costs mean that the number of PAs in these areas is low.

They used funding from Skills for Care to do targeted promotional activity in rural and hard to reach communities to increase the number of PAs on their register and sustain this level of applications.

What they did

NCC worked with Nottinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire (RCAN) and Nottinghamshire Deaf Society (NDS) on the project.

Integrating social care and health PAs

NCC and Nottinghamshire CCGs are an early adopter of Integrated Personal Commissioning and throughout the project they promoted the role of the PA for people across both organisations.

They made the SCW scheme the 'one stop shop' for individual employers to search for potential PAs who can support with social care and health tasks.

Promoting the PA role in rural areas

They held five promotional events across the county, with the locations based on advice from RCAN who have experience working in rural communities.

They chose community buildings that were easily accessed and actively used by local people, such as town halls and libraries.

One of these events was aimed at the gypsy and traveller community and although no one signed up to SWC, feedback suggested that working as a PA would be something they'd consider in the future.

They developed a generic plan for the events, although each one was slightly different depending on the size of the audience.

The event included:

- Introduction
- Why we're here - introducing SWC
- The employer perspective - benefits of recruiting a PA
- The PA perspective - benefits of becoming a PA
- What skills and qualities PAs need
- Different PA roles, including health roles and career progression
- SWC - demonstration of the site.

To support the events they produced six promotional videos that talk about the PA role, career development opportunities and the SWC scheme.

1. [Why are you a personal assistant?](#)
2. [What skills are useful as a personal assistant?](#)
3. [A day in the life of a personal assistant](#)
4. [What individual qualities make a good personal assistant?](#)
5. [How can you develop your career as a personal assistant?](#)
6. [Support With Confidence and Notts Help Yourself](#)

They also held a drop in session for people who couldn't attend the full event or who wanted to speak one to one with someone.

NCC promoted the events through RCAN and other local networks. They developed a leaflet and advertised in:

- town and parish councils
- community and volunteer services
- Nottinghamshire Together
- stands at community events
- posters in local buildings such as libraries, charity shops, village halls, supermarkets and Citizens Advice offices
- Facebook posts.

They also promoted the PA role through Facebook advertising and an advert on the council's jobs e-bulletin. In total 12 people completed the application form from the Facebook advert, and 15 from the bulletin.

Making information and training accessible to the deaf community

They worked with NDS to make the information and training on SWC accessible to the deaf community.

This was to increase the number of PAs who can communicate using BSL and provide more choice for people with care and support needs from the deaf community.

They produced two BSL accessible videos and ran an event specifically designed for a deaf audience.

[British Sign Language - personal assistant clip](#)

[British Sign Language - Support with Confidence clip](#)

The 12 people that attended this event were very engaged and feedback was positive. Six attendees signed up to SWC and will complete the accreditation programme.

Very informative training session with good access for deaf and hearing people.

Ensuring the training on SWC was relevant to PAs

They reviewed the training on the scheme with partners 'Optimum Workforce Leadership'.

They updated the current learning programme to include elements of the Care Certificate as they felt it was important for PAs to have this level of knowledge as a starting point in their career.

This included supporting CCGs to identify suitable training courses for PAs who'll be undertaking health tasks as part of their role.

What did they achieve?

On the whole, we feel that the project has been successful and has enabled us to establish links with community groups that previously we had difficulty reaching.

They exceeded their target of 24 people going through the SWC scheme, with 66 applications throughout the project.

They built good links with partners who they'll continue to work with. In particular, they worked with the local CCG so that the SWC scheme is now promoted as the first place to go to recruit PAs across both organisations.

They plan to streamline this further by working with NCC's children's services, to integrate the SWC scheme into their processes.

They've also established good working relationships with RCAN who'll continue to help them promote the PA role in rural communities.

What did they learn?

On the SWC application they asked where people had heard about the scheme.

The most successful promotional methods were through online channels, particularly social media. However, word of mouth was also an effective way to raise awareness - for example, they found that existing PAs used their own social media networks to promote the scheme.

Other less popular channels were through radio, posters in libraries and the NCC customer service centre.

They also gave us some of their **top tips** for others wanting to do a similar project.

At project meetings, there needs to be active participation from the whole group who take on tasks so that the lead does not have to do all the work.

Have critical friends – someone to bounce ideas off who is not involved in the project so that you can get independent, objective comments and advice.

Keep a bit of money in reserve for unexpected costs.

Allow for slippage of timings of project –



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