

Supporting employers of Personal Assistants

Community Brokerage Network: East Ayrshire

How a community organisation worked with a health and social care partnership to ensure people who employ personal assistants have the support and equipment they need during COVID-19



“a quality and consistent service will be provided throughout the COVID-19 period”

Anne Marie Monaghan, Community Brokerage Network

What was the community need?

In response to COVID-19 there was a recognised need across Scotland for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for people providing caring roles in the community. The Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) in East Ayrshire recognised a particular need to ensure that people who employ Personal Assistants (PAs) to provide their care and support, had an adequate supply of PPE.

It was also recognised that as a result of lockdown measures people employing a PA may have other concerns and needs that were impacting on their wellbeing.

East Ayrshire HSCP approached the Community Brokerage Network (CBN) to organise and deliver a service that would support employers of PAs: both in ensuring access to PPE and to support health and wellbeing.



Background to the community organisation

CBN supports people who manage their own social care budget. It aims to help people and carers to:

- feel more informed, listened to and less stressed
- creatively and flexibly plan to achieve personal outcomes including accessing community assets, and
- have increased skills so are better able to manage social care packages.

CBN coordinate a ‘network of brokers’ across Ayrshire who help people to plan and organise their support, and to make the most of any budget or resource. If the person does not qualify for formal support the broker can help by linking to activities in the community or with other people who may have similar interests.

CBN are funded by the Scottish Government as part of the Support in the Right Direction programme. They provide a service which is free at the point of delivery ensuring that it can be accessed by anyone requiring their support.

Insights into how community groups/national organisations are responding to new community needs during COVID-19



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How was this different?

Eight CBN brokers are providing a service to approximately 150 employers of PAs across East Ayrshire. These are people who did not normally receive any support from CBN. To coordinate logistics CBN were provided contact details of each employer by the HSCP. This data sharing was enabled through updated guidance from the Information Commissioner as well as permission from the employers.

The brokers pick up and deliver packages of PPE to employers. This significantly reduces community contact as otherwise each PA would be required to go to a distribution hub to pick up PPE.

Brokers are trained in good conversations, so during PPE drop-off they are able to discuss with those employing PAs how things are going during the lockdown period and if any other issues have arisen.

Brokers have excellent local knowledge of community support available and are able to signpost to additional services as required such as shopping, medicines pick up etc. Where community solutions cannot meet needs identified then information is shared with the HSCP to be followed up.

What was the response from the community?

"Informed by our shared aim to 'doing the right thing' we were able to work together in a flexible and responsive way in the midst of a global pandemic"

Lee McGloughlin, East Ayrshire HSCP

"Brilliant, I didn't know it would get sent out, I'm really pleased it will be delivered."

PA Employer, East Ayrshire

Key insights:

Anne-Marie Monaghan, Chair/Director, CBN

"Core to the success of this work has been a pre-existing trust-based relationship between ourselves at CBN and East Ayrshire HSCP. This enabled the flexibility to develop a broader service. Through our reputation we are also strongly trusted by people using Self-directed Support in East Ayrshire so are ideally suited to carrying out this role.

In order to coordinate the delivery of PPE an element of data sharing between East Ayrshire HSCP and CBN was essential. This could have challenged risk attitudes but was again enabled by the trusted relationship with the HSCP.

The knowledge and skills of the brokers has also been key. This includes:

- local intelligence to enable connection to a wide range of community support and the efficient planning and coordination of PPE.
- knowledge to answer questions e.g. understanding of rights and self-directed support legislation.
- being skilled in good (strength-based) conversation and ability to address anxieties and concerns.

CBN and East Ayrshire HSCP now have a process in place to ensure check-in and delivery of PPE to PA employers across the local area on a monthly cycle. This will ensure a quality and consistent service will be provided throughout the COVID-19 period"

If you are interested in exploring something similar in your area or to find out more, please get in touch.

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