



DHI recognises that the role of the personal assistant is becoming increasingly important, particularly as there is a further move to support and enable people to live independently.

In 2014 DHI worked in partnership with Healthwatch Swindon to develop a questionnaire to give an insight into the skill base of personal assistants and identify what they see as important areas to enable them to develop in their role to support their employer.

The role of a Personal Assistant is diverse and includes administrative support, personal care, shopping, and social support in accessing the community.

During December 2014 and January 2015, DHI wrote to personal assistants and their employers asking the personal assistants to complete the questionnaire either online or hard copy and return by post.

Healthwatch Swindon is an independent organisation that was established to help local people get the best out of local health and social care services. The aim of the questionnaire is to not only give an understanding of their current skills base but to also help highlight potential gaps in training requirements and barriers that they face to help develop themselves in their role.

We have put the questions and answers respondents gave us into some charts on the following pages. We have added the additional comments that were given from people as well.

The questionnaire received 32 responses, of which 18 completed a paper based format and 14 used Survey Monkey (online). Around 56% of Respondents used paper based which shows a high level of respondents do not have access to or use IT, or perhaps do not have IT skills.

The response to this survey mirrored the feedback that DHI have received verbally from PA's.

Demographics:

Swindon is a mainly urban medium sized town with an estimated population of 212,000. The overall population of Swindon is forecast to rise to around 250,000 by 2030.

As with any predominantly urban area there are challenges around inequality and disadvantage. Deprivation is lower than average, however about 17.3% (7,200) children live in poverty. Life expectancy for both men and women is similar to the England average.

Swindon has a diverse and growing population of Black and Minority Ethnic families.

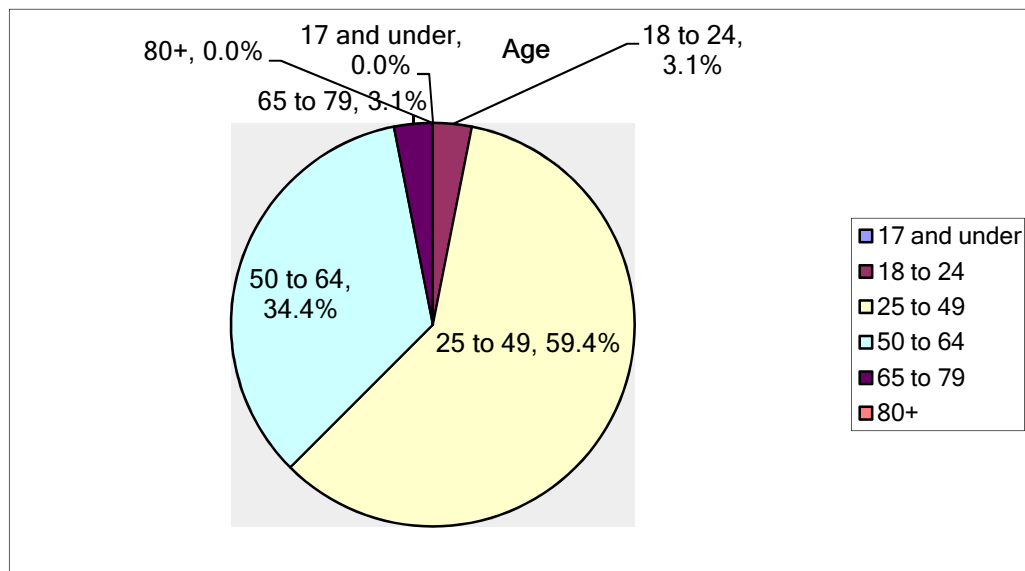
The Table below shows the population of the Borough of Swindon according to broad ethnic group. In 2009 a total of 14.3% of the borough's resident population belonged to black and ethnic minority (BME) communities compared to 17.2% for England as a whole. The 2001 census showed that most of Swindon's BME population live in the centre and west of Swindon.

Ethnic Group	Estimated Population	Proportion of Swindon's total population	Proportion of England's total population
White British	170,300	85.7%	82.8%
White Irish	2,100	1.1%	1.1%
White Other	8,500	4.3%	3.6%
Mixed	3,500	1.8%	1.8%
Asian	7,900	4.0%	6.1%
Black	3,400	1.7%	2.9%
Chinese/Other	3,000	1.5%	1.6%
Total	198,800	100.0%	100.0%

Source: ONS

Question 1.

Age		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
17 and under	0.0%	0
18 to 24	3.1%	1
25 to 49	59.4%	19
50 to 64	34.4%	11
65 to 79	3.1%	1
80+	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		32
<i>skipped question</i>		0



The results above reflect a good cross section of age groups. The largest response rate was from the 25 to 49 age group.

A third of respondents were aged over 50 years, this shows that there is no ageism being experienced by respondents working within this sector.

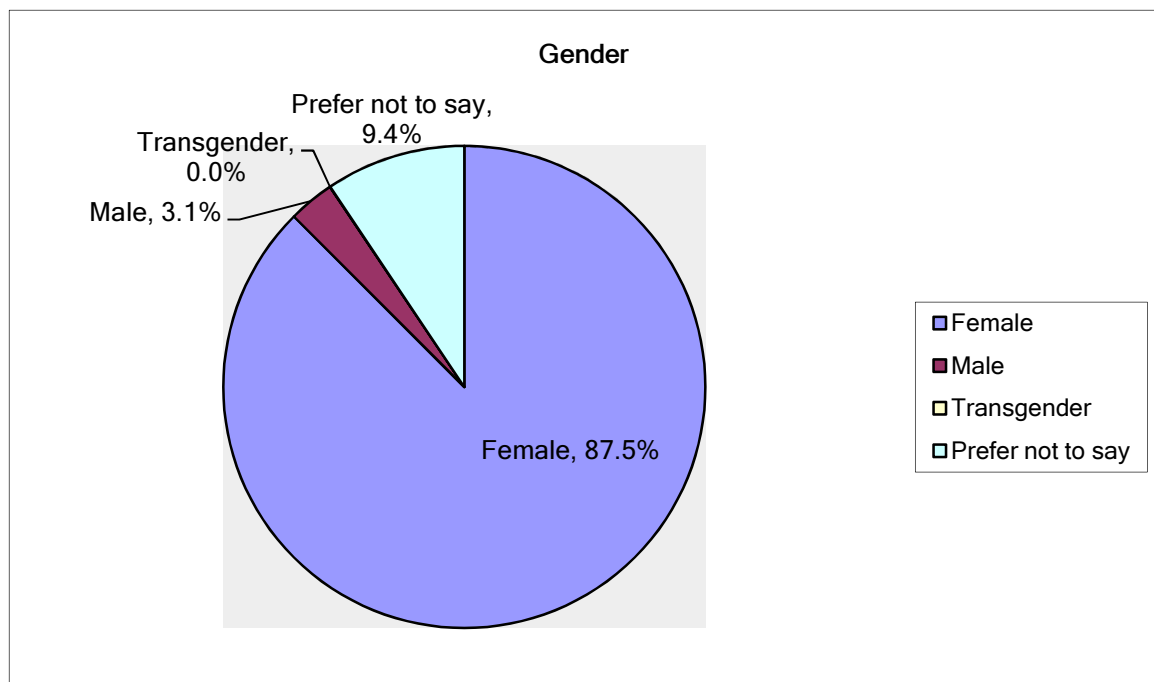
This also shows that older workers maintain their role.

A question that has been raised from these results is:

What are the potential barriers for personal assistants between 50 and 79 to access training?

Question 2.

Gender		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Female	87.5%	28
Male	3.1%	1
Transgender	0.0%	0
Prefer not to say	9.4%	3
<i>answered question</i>		32
<i>skipped question</i>		0

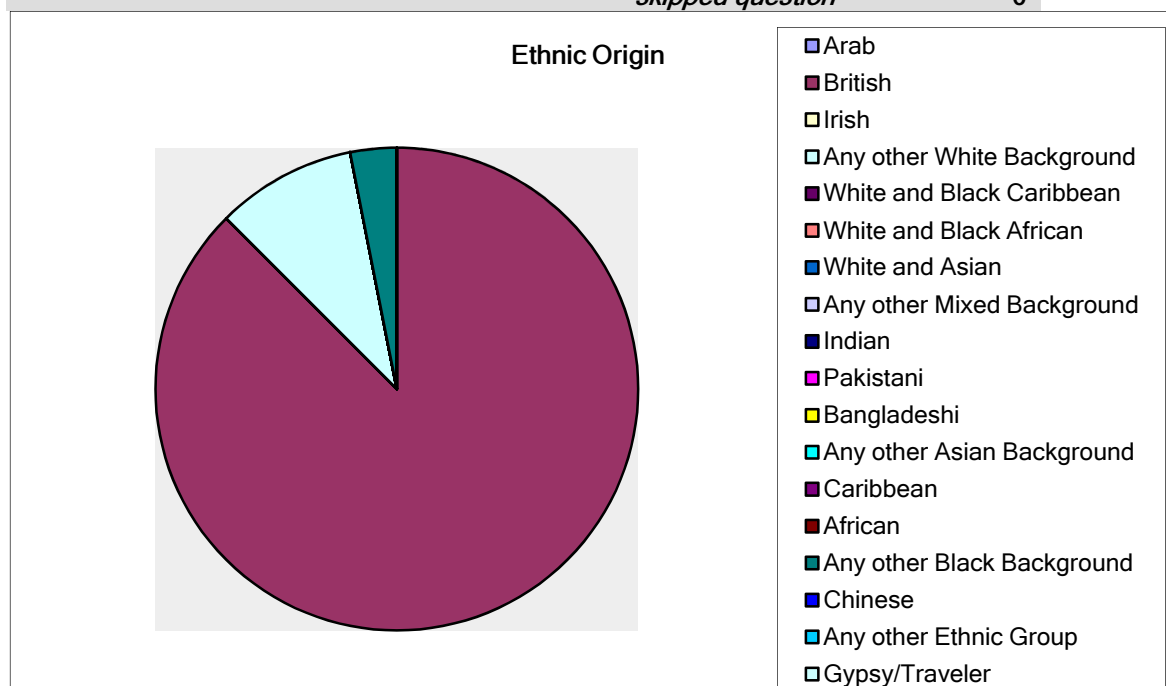


The majority of respondents were Female (87.5%), 9.4% preferred not to say and 3.1% were Male.

The low level of male respondents reflects the gender demographic working within this sector.

Question 3.

Ethnic Origin		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Arab	0.0%	0
British	87.5%	28
Irish	0.0%	0
Any other White Background	9.4%	3
White and Black Caribbean	0.0%	0
White and Black African	0.0%	0
White and Asian	0.0%	0
Any other Mixed Background	0.0%	0
Indian	0.0%	0
Pakistani	0.0%	0
Bangladeshi	0.0%	0
Any other Asian Background	0.0%	0
Caribbean	0.0%	0
African	0.0%	0
Any other Black Background	3.1%	1
Chinese	0.0%	0
Any other Ethnic Group	0.0%	0
Gypsy/Traveler	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		32
<i>skipped question</i>		0

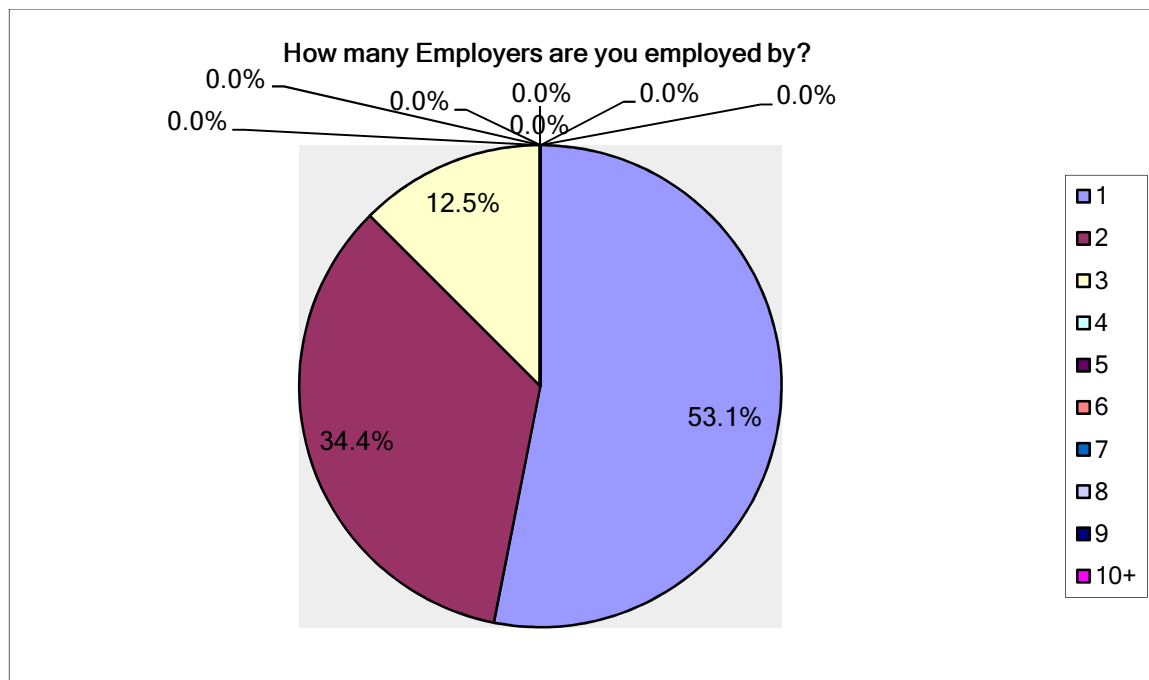


The largest representation of respondents were of a British origin (87.5%), followed by Any other White Background (9.4%) and Any Other Black Background (3.1%)

The results above on the whole reflect the ethnicity make up of Swindon. The population of the Borough of Swindon by broad ethnic group as at 2009; White British (85.7%), White Other (4.3%), and Black (1.7%).

Question 4.

How many Employers are you employed by?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	53.1%	17
2	34.4%	11
3	12.5%	4
4	0.0%	0
5	0.0%	0
6	0.0%	0
7	0.0%	0
8	0.0%	0
9	0.0%	0
10+	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		32
<i>skipped question</i>		0



Just over half of respondents (53.1%) said that they are employed by 1 employer.

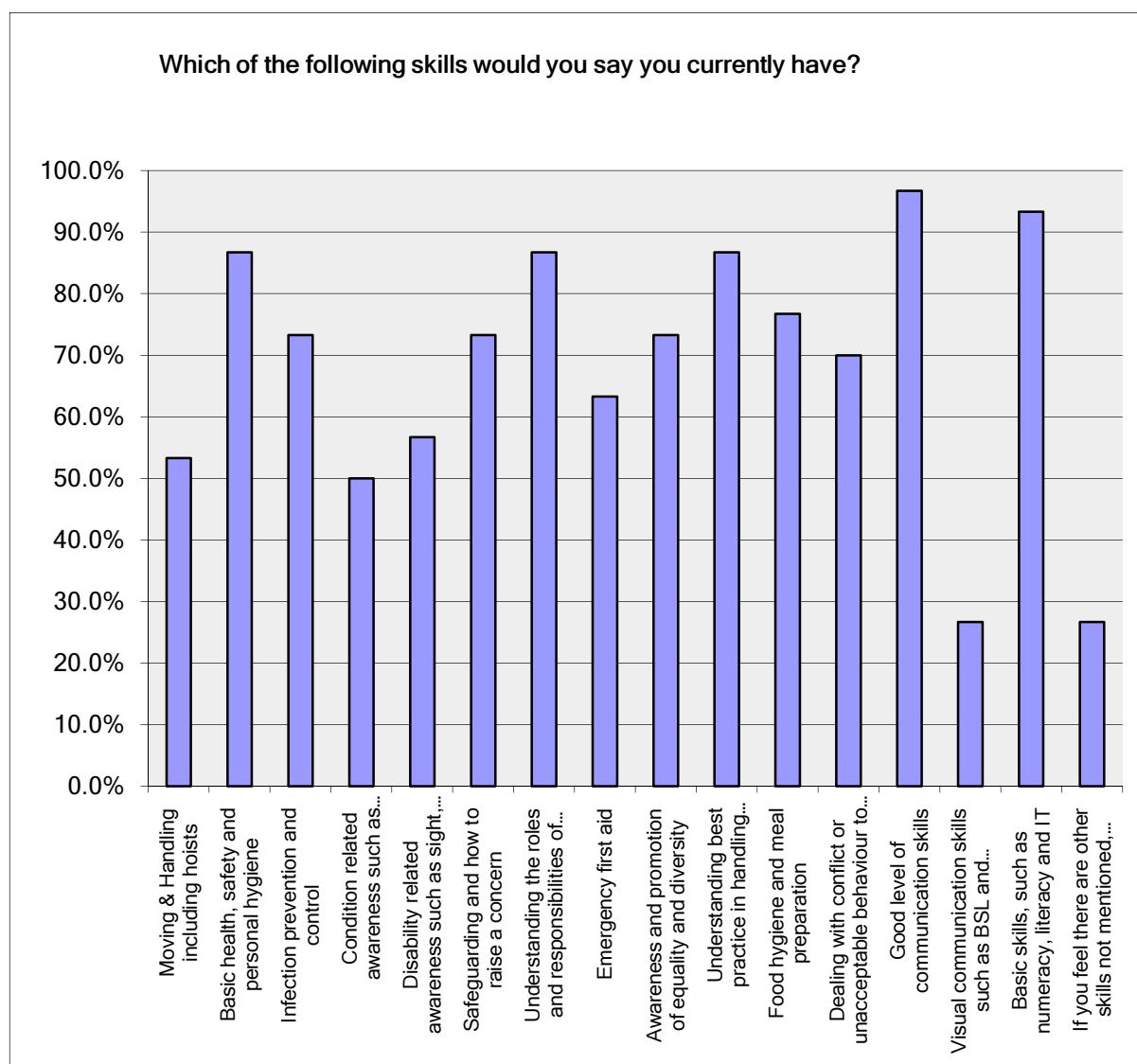
Around one third of respondents (34.4%) said that they are employed by 2 employers.

12.5% of respondents said that they are employed by 3 employers.

Question 5.

Which of the following skills would you say you currently have?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Moving & Handling including hoists	53.3%	16
Basic health, safety and personal hygiene	86.7%	26
Infection prevention and control	73.3%	22
Condition related awareness such as diabetes or dementia	50.0%	15
Disability related awareness such as sight, hearing or learning	56.7%	17
Safeguarding and how to raise a concern	73.3%	22
Understanding the roles and responsibilities of your contract	86.7%	26
Emergency first aid	63.3%	19
Awareness and promotion of equality and diversity	73.3%	22
Understanding best practice in handling information and what is breach of confidentiality	86.7%	26
Food hygiene and meal preparation	76.7%	23
Dealing with conflict or unacceptable behaviour to you and/or your employer	70.0%	21
Good level of communication skills	96.7%	29
Visual communication skills such as BSL and MAKATON	26.7%	8
Basic skills, such as numeracy, literacy and IT	93.3%	28
If you feel there are other skills not mentioned, please specify:	26.7%	8
<i>answered question</i>		30
<i>skipped question</i>		2

- Over half (53.3%) responded to say that they have currently have Moving and Handling (including hoists) skills. Whilst this is a good response rate, another 46.7% of respondents perceive that they do not currently have this skill.
- A majority of respondents (86.7%) say that they have Basic health, safety and personal hygiene skills.
- A majority of respondents (86.7%) say that they currently have an Understanding of the roles and responsibilities of their contract.
- 96.7% say that they have Good level of communication skills, and 93.3% say that they have Basic skills, such as numeracy, literacy and IT.
- Two thirds of respondents (63.3%) perceive that they have Emergency first aid skills. This also says that one third of respondents do not believe they have Emergency first aid skills.



If you feel there are any other skills not mentioned, please specify:
The additional comments received when asked if there were other skills not mentioned are listed below:

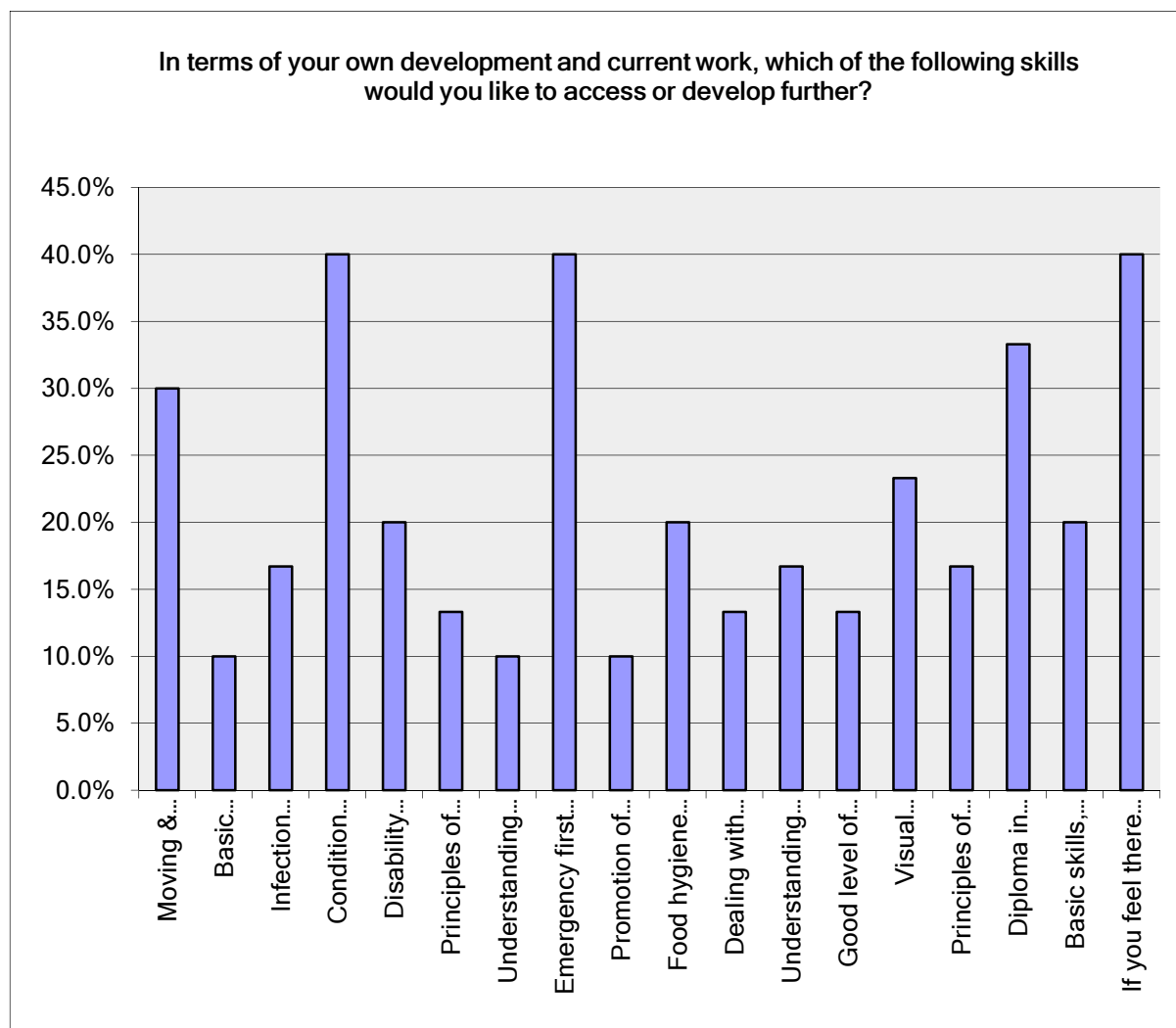
1. Would need to be shown again re: hoists, Emergency first aid not currently up to date
2. Conflict resolution
3. Supervision for PA's or employer to speak to someone would be good
4. Empathy
5. Admin Skills
6. Please be informed that I believe the skills I have accrued are to be caring and patient. I have a good understanding and am always keen to learn any role responsibly. I am hard working and have a positive attitude towards anything I am asked to do. I have always been a good time keeper and am able to work flexible hours.
7. I hold the level 3 Diploma in Health and Social Care
8. Empathy and basic caring

Question 6.

In terms of your own development and current work, which of the following skills would you like to access or develop further?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Moving & Handling including hoists	30.0%	9
Basic health, safety and personal hygiene	10.0%	3
Infection prevention and control	16.7%	5
Condition related awareness such as diabetes or dementia	40.0%	12
Disability related awareness such as sight, hearing or learning	20.0%	6
Principles of safeguarding and the responsibility to raise an alert	13.3%	4
Understanding the roles and responsibilities of your contract	10.0%	3
Emergency first aid	40.0%	12
Promotion of equality and diversity	10.0%	3
Food hygiene and meal preparation	20.0%	6
Dealing with conflict or unacceptable behaviour to you and/or your employer	13.3%	4
Understanding and applying the definition of confidentiality and how it impacts on the role of a PA	16.7%	5
Good level of communication skills	13.3%	4
Visual communication skills such as BSL and MAKATON	23.3%	7
Principles of Health and Social Care	16.7%	5
Diploma in Health and Social Care (previously NVQ)	33.3%	10
Basic skills, such as numeracy, literacy and IT	20.0%	6
If you feel there are any other skills, accredited or otherwise, not mentioned, please specify:	40.0%	5
<i>answered question</i>		30
<i>skipped question</i>		2

- One third of respondents (33.3%) have identified that the Diploma in Health and Social Care would be beneficial for their own development
- Developing Basic skills, such as numeracy, literacy and IT has been identified by 20% of respondents
- 16.7% of respondents have recognised that they need further support with: Principles of Health and Social Care, Understanding and applying the definition of confidentiality and how it impacts on the role of a PA, and Infection prevention and control.

It has been recognised that those who have responded to the questionnaire have been motivated to answer it and may potentially have a higher level of awareness about their own development.



If you feel there are any other skills, accredited or otherwise, not mentioned, please specify:

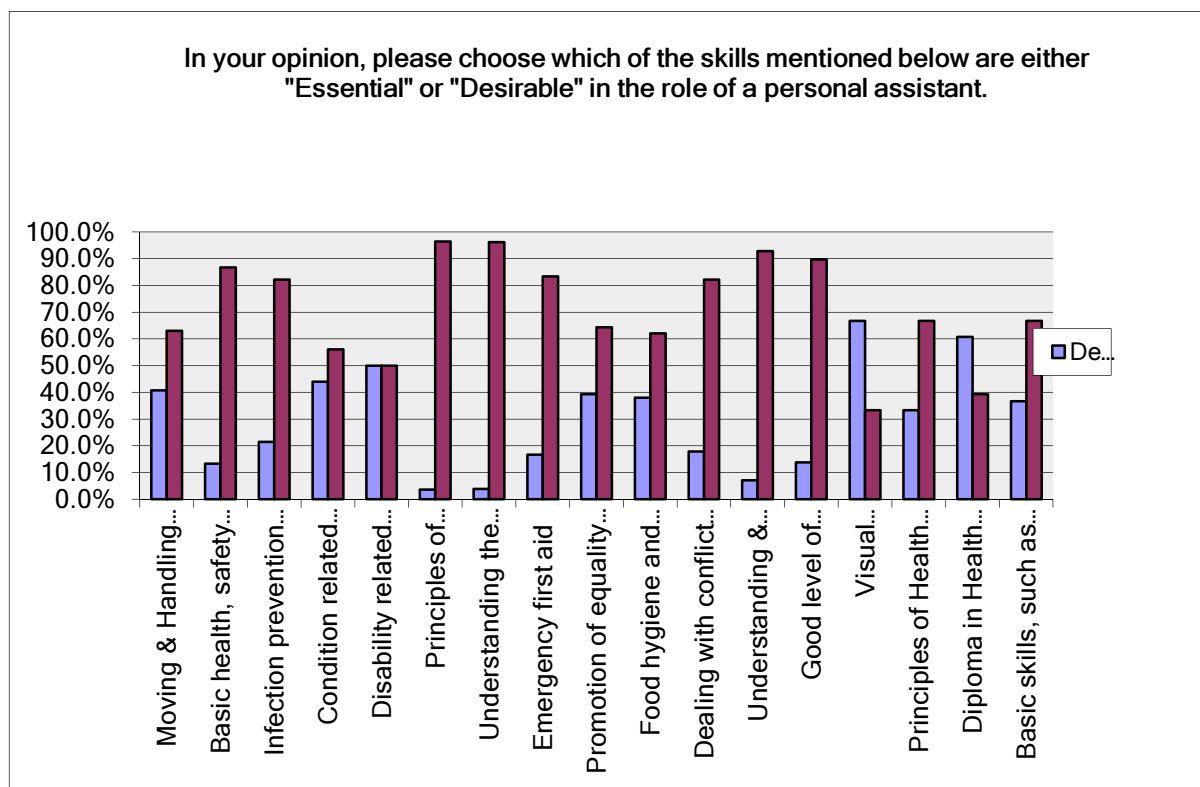
1. Would like to know what Diploma in Health and Social Care involves. Could be more knowledgeable with computers.
2. refresher courses when required
3. Cutting peoples toe-nails, finger nails, shaving etc
4. None as I am the book-keeper.
5. I have my NVQ 2 and 3 so have a lot of knowledge in most of the above skills

Question 7.

In your opinion, please choose which of the skills mentioned below are either "Essential" or "Desirable" in the role of a personal assistant.			
Answer Options	Essential	Desirable	Response Count
Moving & Handling including hoists	63.0%	40.7%	27
Basic health, safety and personal hygiene	86.7%	13.3%	30
Infection prevention and control	82.1%	21.4%	28
Condition related awareness such as diabetes or dementia	56.0%	44.0%	25
Disability related awareness such as sight, hearing or learning	50.0%	50.0%	26
Principles of safeguarding and the responsibility to raise an alert	96.4%	3.6%	28
Understanding the roles and responsibilities of your contract	96.2%	3.8%	26
Emergency first aid	83.3%	16.7%	30
Promotion of equality and diversity	64.3%	39.3%	28
Food hygiene and meal preparation	62.1%	37.9%	29
Dealing with conflict or unacceptable behaviour to you and/or your employer	82.1%	17.9%	28
Understanding & applying the definition of confidentiality & how it impacts on the role of a PA	92.9%	7.1%	28
Good level of communication skills	89.7%	13.8%	29
Visual communication skills such as BSL and MAKATON	33.3%	66.7%	27
Principles of Health and Social Care	66.7%	33.3%	27
Diploma in Health and Social Care (previously NVQ)	39.3%	60.7%	28
Basic skills, such as numeracy, literacy & IT	66.7%	36.7%	30
If you feel there are any other skills, accredited or otherwise, not mentioned, please specify:			0
<i>answered question</i>			30
<i>skipped question</i>			2

The top three skills that respondents have told us are Essential in their role are:

- Principles of safeguarding and the responsibility to raise an alert (96.4%)
- Understanding the roles and responsibilities of your contract (96.2%)
- Understanding & applying the definition of confidentiality & how it impacts on the role of a PA (92.9%)



The top three skills that respondents have told us are Desirable in their role are:

- Visual communication skills such as BSL and MAKATON (66.7%)
- Diploma in Health and Social Care (previously NVQ) (60.7%)
- Disability related awareness such as sight, hearing or learning (50.0%)

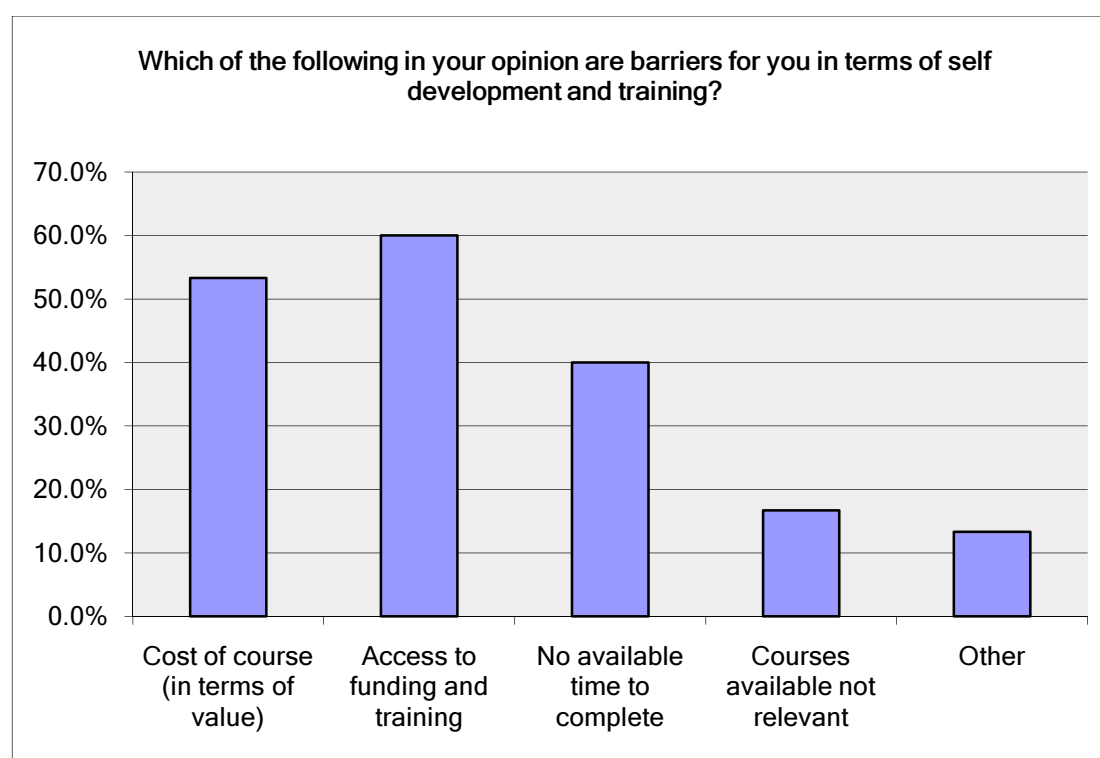
Question 8.

Which of the following in your opinion are barriers for you in terms of self development and training?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Cost of course (in terms of value)	53.3%	16
Access to funding and training	60.0%	18
No available time to complete	40.0%	12
Courses available not relevant	16.7%	5
Other	13.3%	4
If other barrier, please specify:		2
<i>answered question</i>		30
<i>skipped question</i>		2

Access to funding has been highlighted by 60% of respondents as a training issue.

No available time to complete training has been highlighted by 40% of respondents as a barrier to improving self development and training.

No relevant courses has been highlighted as a barrier by 16.7% of respondents.



If other barrier, please specify:

1. I would require some support in my literacy.
2. None of the above are barriers to me as I have NVQ 2 and 3 so have done most of the courses.

Conclusion

The overall perception is that the Personal Assistant's who have participated in this questionnaire have been motivated by the nature of it and have provided responses that reflect the feedback gathered verbally by DHI from PA's verbally previously.

Participants have indentified that they want to improve their skills and training opportunities.

The PA's have indentified a cross section of skill areas that in terms of their current work and self development the skills that they would like to access and develop further.

The list below shows a highlighted selection of what PA's would like access to (it is not in a particular order - please see Question 6 on page 8 for the complete list:

1. Diploma in Health and Social Care
2. Principles of Health and Social Care
3. Developing Basic skills, such as numeracy, literacy and IT
4. Infection prevention and control
5. Condition related awareness such as diabetes or dementia
6. Emergency first aid
7. Moving and Handling including hoists
8. Visual communication skills such as BSL and MAKATON
9. Understanding and applying the definition of confidentiality and how it impacts on the role of a PA
10. Food hygiene and meal preparation

The PA's have highlighted the barriers that they face in terms of self development and training. The majority of respondents (60%) said that access to funding is a training issue.

Training has been indentified by a substantial number of respondents as a barrier to gaining formal training.

Thank you to everyone who has helped by taking part in the questionnaire.

Jason Ferris
Healthwatch Swindon - Information & Research Officer