



**Cornerstone SDS**  
Aberdeenshire

# Newsletter

Spring 2017

## Laura's Story

I was born with a congenital disorder which meant I had limited movement and stiffness. I also had other complications in my childhood and I had several surgeries and frequent appointments, but despite this I managed fairly well at school and in early adulthood.

I moved to Stonehaven in 2002. I was in my late 30s and had to admit to the fact that I was not doing so well. I was in a lot of pain and had increased stiffness in my joints. In 2005 I was diagnosed with further complications. I was told I was no longer fit to work and things were likely to deteriorate further.

In 2006 I had surgery on my left shoulder. After a lengthy hospital stay I was discharged but I still felt very weak and was unable to use my left arm for many months. I was on my own at this time, bringing up two school age children.

My sister, who is a community nurse, put me in touch with Social Services and a Care Manager arranged for Crossroads to help me with personal care and some housework including ironing.

When I moved to Portlethen in 2009 I was unable to continue using Crossroads and had to use the council's Homecare. I was approached towards the end of 2013 by my Local

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Pictured: Laura with her PA, Pam

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Area Coordinator about taking part in a pilot scheme for Self-Directed Support, which I agreed to. I was assessed for this and by using Option 1 and a Direct Payment, I employed my own Personal Assistant.

I would describe the difference in the care from the Homecare staff and the PA through SDS like chalk and cheese. Don't get me wrong, I was very appreciative of the care I received through Homecare, but I never knew who was coming in from one day to the next, or even when they could come in. Their time is very limited and I was at the mercy of the needs of others.

Having my own PA through SDS has helped me build up a good working relationship with my carer as we have got to know each other. SDS has helped me get on with my life, allowing me to do the things I want to do. I feel I don't have to keep relying on my family and friends to help with general day to day things and this is important to me and my well-being.

My PA, Pam, helps me with shopping which I would not be able to do on my own. We also go swimming which helps me greatly as it helps keep my joints mobile. I feel better for having Pam here. I have good days and bad

days. Bad days are when I'm too sore to do anything, but try to make the best of it.

I have more confidence in going out, and will now do things I wouldn't normally do on my own. You can feel very vulnerable in a wheelchair especially when going out, checking for accessibility, etc but now I am more likely to go out on my own to places that I have visited with Pam. We go clothes shopping and do other general day to day things. This means I don't have to rely on family and friends all the time for these activities, enabling me to spend more quality time with them.

At the start of the SDS process, I was put in touch with Signposting Aberdeenshire through which I found out about pain group meetings in Aberdeen. They held regular meetings but unfortunately funding for this was stopped and a few of us got together to set up our own group, Grampian Pain Support, of which I am secretary. This keeps me very busy. We meet once a month, with a regular programme of guest speakers. We also organise trips out during the summer months and host fundraising activities. We currently have around 50 members and always welcome new members. If it hadn't been for SDS I may not have got involved in the way I have.

Being an employer is very straightforward for me and if I ever had any employment issues I know I can get support from my Cornerstone SDS Advisor, Empire HR or my payroll provider.

I don't really feel like I am Pam's employer nor that she is my employee, we are more like friends and I don't feel guilty asking her to do things for me. I have another PA, Elma, who helps me out when Pam is on holiday or off sick.

Pam is always willing to go above and beyond. She helped me visit my mum during a recent spell she had in hospital and helped me get her back home again. Pam has also offered to take me and mum out for trips during the summer months. With Pam's help, this makes me feel like I'm still able to do things for mum. This is important to me as instead of feeling like a burden I feel like I am still of help to my family. Over the years I have developed other health problems and having the support of my PA is very reassuring.

SDS has helped and benefitted me greatly, not just physically but mentally, it has made a huge difference to me and my family.

## Aberdeenshire Council Team Update

The SDS team at Aberdeenshire council ended at the end of March. Sheena Thomson will remain in post as Strategic Development Officer. The team have completed some extensive work around Self-Directed support and getting the new processes and systems in place for the Social Work Practitioners. Any SDS queries will now be directed to Team Managers or you can contact Cornerstone SDS.





## Pension Update

### What is Automatic Enrolment?

The law on workplace pensions has changed. Under the Pensions Act 2008, every employer in the UK must put certain staff into a pension scheme and contribute towards it. This is called 'Automatic Enrolment'.

### Does Automatic Enrolment apply to me?

Automatic Enrolment applies to all employers who have at least one member of staff. It doesn't just apply to businesses; if you employ someone directly to work for you – like a cleaner, personal care assistant or nanny, for example – you are an employer and will need to ensure that any eligible employees are enrolled into a workplace pension.

### What do I need to do?

You should have received a letter from The Pension Regulator informing you of your staging date. This is the date by which you will have to set up a pension scheme for your employees, if they are eligible for auto enrolment or want to opt into a pension scheme.

Some people have past their staging dates and have their pension scheme set up, through their payroll provider.

Aberdeenshire Council have been co-ordinating this with

the transfer of managed accounts to Fife Business Services as the approved payroll provider. If you have chosen to transfer to FBS, your transfer will happen in time for FBS to set up your pension scheme. The process is a manual task and you will be notified when your transfer is happening.

If you have chosen to stay with your existing payroll provider, they will set up your pension scheme if this is required.

For any new employers from 1st October 2017, staging dates will be from the first day of their employee starting employment, so there will no longer be letters issued advising of staging dates.

If you have any questions regarding pensions please do not hesitate to contact Laura Hendry on 01467 530527 or contact DWP Workplace pension helpline on 0345 600 1268.

The Pensions  
Regulator



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions



# personal assistants network scotland



Personal Assistant Network Scotland is a joint initiative of the Scottish Government, WEA and Unison and is a space especially for PA's. The aim of the network is to provide peer support, give PA's a collective voice, arrange suitable and free training to improve skills and generally increase knowledge, awareness and confidence in their own abilities.

The PA Network has been established to provide a support network for PAs working across Scotland. They have regular meetings, events and training opportunities in a variety of areas/regions to meet local demand. The PA Network is a place where PAs can talk about their concerns, get the answers they need and have their

voices heard.

The network can support the PA by:

- Organising free or low cost demand led training to meet the needs of members
- Inviting/arranging guest speakers to give talks on a variety of subjects relevant to your role
- Provide a forum for peer support to seek other PAs help and advice on specific issues
- Use the website to get online support, knowledge and information.

Stay informed by joining the network at [www.panetworkscotland.org.uk](http://www.panetworkscotland.org.uk) and help shape the future by

telling PANS what you need by completing the online survey <http://surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PANetwork2016>

Another source of support for PA's and employers is:



Acas (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) provides free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law. We support good relationships between employers and employees which underpin business success. But when things go wrong we help by providing conciliation to resolve workplace problems.

We also provide good value, high quality training and tailored advice to employers. Our expertise is based on millions of contacts with employers and employees each year and we are governed by an independent Council, including representatives of employer and employee organisations and employment experts.

Newsletter: <https://obs.acas.org.uk/subscription/>

Helpline: 0300 123 1100

Website: [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

Twitter: @Acas\_Scot

# Team Update



Pictured: Hannah Reynolds

There have been a few changes in the team over the past few months.

Laura Hendry is now the Team Leader and her replacement as Resource Mapping Project Officer is Hannah Reynolds who is in post from the end of March. Hannah will be working part time from the office in Inverurie and will continue to build on the database of resources that are available and continue to link with Grampian Care Data and the other resource mapping groups covering Aberdeenshire. You can contact Hannah by:

phone: 01467 530525

mobile: 07584473651

email: [Hannah.Reynolds@cornerstonesds.org.uk](mailto:Hannah.Reynolds@cornerstonesds.org.uk)



Pictured: Angelika Mckenzie

We also have a new SDS Advisor who will be covering the Peterhead area. Angelika Mckenzie joined the team at the end of March and will also be part time. Angelika can be contacted on:

mobile: 07900740227

email: [Angelika.Mckenzie@cornerstonesds.org.uk](mailto:Angelika.Mckenzie@cornerstonesds.org.uk)

## Employer's Responsibilities

If you are the employer of PA's/Carers, it is your duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of your employees. This means making sure those workers are protected from anything that may cause harm, effectively controlling any risks to injury or health that could arise in the workplace.

The employer has duties under health and safety law to assess risks in the workplace. Risk assessments should be carried out that address all risks that might cause harm in your workplace. The HSE website has lots of useful information to help you, including risk assessment templates. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/workers/employers.htm>

As an employer you must give your employees information about the risks in the workplace and how they are protected, also instruct and train on how to deal with the risks. Any training required will have been assessed by the Social Care Practitioner and it is therefore important that the employees complete this training as soon as possible.

You can find a useful guide in managing health & safety by following the link below:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg449.pdf>

If you have five or more employees you are required to have a Health & Safety Policy and you can find a template for this in the above link.

Employers are required, by law, to either display the HSE-approved law poster or to provide each of their workers with the equivalent leaflet. You can purchase these or download them for free by following the link below. With Self-Directed support it might not be appropriate to display a poster as the workplace is the client's own home so leaflets or pocket cards can be given to your employees instead. These can also be downloaded for free by following the link.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/lawleaflet.htm>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/lawpocketcard.htm>

# Sickness Absence and How to Manage it Effectively

Sickness absence is not just a matter of ill-health. It is affected by a combination of the health condition, personal and work/organisational factors. Early intervention is key - the sooner action is taken, the better the chances are of an employee making a full and speedy return to work.

There are two types of sickness absence – short term and long term. Long term is commonly defined as lasting 4 weeks or more. Two thirds of absence is attributed to short term absence and is often the most disruptive as it is not planned for in advance.

To help you manage this you can contact Empire HR at any time on **01224 701383** or follow the simple flowchart, which can be accessed on the Cornerstone SDS website in the Employer Zone section. Following these steps will ensure you can manage any absence effectively and reduce any problems you might have with short term absences.

Your Cornerstone Advisor can support you to manage any sickness absence.



## Training Procedure

If you employ a Personal Assistant/Carer your Care Manager will have identified relevant training requirements whilst carrying out your assessment. This could be anything from Adult Protection, First Aid, Moving & Handling or any other relevant training.

The Cornerstone SDS service will support you to book any relevant training, some of which is e-learning which can be completed at home but some are classroom based and may require the PA to travel to attend. As the employer, you have a responsibility to ensure they can attend the training so you will need to make arrangements to find alternative cover if the training is due to take place whilst the PA should be working a shift.

We have been facing a big problem with training being cancelled as this can cause a lot of extra work for the Cornerstone SDS Admin team who have to then spend a lot of time trying to secure other dates and there is sometimes minimal spaces available, if any.

To try and combat this problem we have developed a training procedure which will be available on the Employer Zone section of the Cornerstone SDS website. The procedure will reinforce the importance of the training and the need to complete this mandatory training during the first 6 months of employment.

There will also be a cancellation policy introduced by external training providers and this has been put in place to recoup some of the costs when an individual cancels at short notice or doesn't show at all.

If you have any questions about training for your care package you can speak to your Cornerstone SDS Advisor who will be able to help you.

# Social Workers in Training

We have been helping to further raise awareness of SDS with our future Social Care Practitioners by offering placements for students from RGU. Placements are central to the social work student experience. They create opportunities for learning and practising social work knowledge and skills, ensuring that students meet the standards for professional conduct in practice. It is not possible for students to become practitioners through writing and college based assessments alone. Practice requires complex skills, involving assessment, analysis, decision making and professional judgement. These skills can be supported by reading and discussions, but we can only identify what students have really learnt when they are assessed in real life situations.

Placements give students the opportunity to meet the standards of professional practice, develop a range of knowledge, skills and practice qualities and work in multi agency environments. Placements give students the opportunity to interact with other professionals and learn more about how to work effectively in a multi-agency environment. It's one thing to hear in college about what health visitors, police officers or community mental health nurses do, but quite another to work together to support a service user. Through their placements, students will get to know what everyday practice is really like and will be able to make informed career decisions. Students often change their career options when they discover new interests and abilities.

Some of you reading this might have already met our students, Emma and Rue, who is pictured here on the last day of her eight week placement. We hope to have more students in the future and hope that you will allow them to gain valuable experience through attending meetings or reviews along with the SDS Advisor. We will of course always ask your permission before bringing a student along.



Pictured: Rue

Further information about SDS can be found on the Scottish Government's website - SDS Scotland:  
[www.selfdirectedsupportscotland.org.uk](http://www.selfdirectedsupportscotland.org.uk)

If you would like to find out more about the Cornerstone SDS Aberdeenshire service please get in touch with us at:

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Inverurie  
Aberdeenshire  
AB51 3QA

Tel: 01467 530520

Email: [aberdeenshire@cornerstonesds.org.uk](mailto:aberdeenshire@cornerstonesds.org.uk)

Facebook: Cornerstone SDS

We are always seeking ways to improve our service so if you have any feedback on the service we provide we would welcome your comments. You can do this by speaking to your advisor or by contacting the Service Manager, Angi Wood on 07825050028 or email [angi.wood@cornerstonesds.org.uk](mailto:angi.wood@cornerstonesds.org.uk)

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