

Frequently asked questions about personal assistants (PAs) and the Care Certificate standards

The Care Certificate standards are 16 standards that set out the learning outcomes, competences and standards of care that healthcare support and adult social care workers are expected to deliver. Competences relate to the overall ability of the worker to carry out their work safely. This includes the worker's knowledge, skills and behaviours.

We've developed some answers and questions for [health and social care organisations](#).

1. Are the Care Certificate standards and the Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate qualification the same?

No, these are two different learning products.

The Care Certificate standards are not accredited and are a recommended framework to support the induction process.

The Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate qualification is accredited and formally regulated by Ofqual and delivered by Awarding Organisation approved learning providers.

You could choose to engage with one or both. The qualification looks to build on and confirm the content of learning throughout the induction process. The qualification provides formal accreditation of knowledge and skills, enabling learning to be more portable.

2. Do PAs have to complete the Care Certificate standards?

A PA does not have to complete the Care Certificate standards. As an employer you're responsible for ensuring that your PA(s) have the right skills and knowledge to do their role, and a thorough induction is a key part of this. If you recruit a PA who is new to care, you can choose to use the Care Certificate standards as a basis for your induction and tailor it to your care and support needs and their working arrangements.

If you employ a PA with experience, they may have already achieved the competencies or completed the standards outlined in the Care Certificate standards. But it's a good idea, as part of their induction with you, to ask them about their previous experience and training to ensure that they meet your requirements. There's a [Care Certificate standards self-assessment tool](#) to help you do this. This will help you to decide what further training, if any, the PA needs.

There's also an [individual employer and personal assistants training guide](#) to help plan learning needs.

If you direct your own support and use a service where your PA is employed by a provider who's regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), rather than yourself, then the CQC expect that those who are new to care will achieve a suitable induction, which includes statutory and mandatory training, regular supervision and competency checks. The Care Certificate standards are a tool which can be used to help achieve this.

Some people contract with PAs who are self-employed. When you are choosing a self-employed PA, you can ask about their skills and knowledge to help you choose the right person.

3. Does a PA performing delegated healthcare activities have to complete the Care Certificate standards?

The Care Certificate standards can be part of an induction for staff employed as health care assistants, assistant practitioners, care support workers and those giving support to clinical roles in the NHS where there is any direct contact with patients. For PAs performing delegated healthcare tasks, the Care Certificate standards are not mandatory but are considered best practice. [Delegated healthcare activities](#) are tasks which have been delegated to the PA by a registered practitioner.

4. Why should a PA complete the Care Certificate standards or the new Level 2 Adult Social Care qualification?

Both set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours that are expected of health and social care workers to ensure they deliver high-quality care and support. The content is developed and maintained by the sectors and ensures that all new workers are supported when they first start working in care, and lots of these knowledge, skills and behaviours will also be relevant to PAs.

5. Can a PA complete only part of the Care Certificate standards?

You can use separate standards to form the basis of an induction, but the Care Certificate standards can only be awarded if all 16 standards are completed and the PAs skills are deemed competent in a workplace assessment. Where an employer or their existing staff don't feel confident or competent to assess, they can consider getting support from the organisation issuing their budget (if they receive one), a local support organisation or a learning provider.

6. What role does an individual employer have in supporting their PA in completing the Care Certificate standards?

An individual employer can decide whether their PA could benefit from completing some or all of the Care Certificate Standards, based on their PAs skills and training needs.

Employers are responsible for assuring the quality of the teaching and assessment of the Care Certificate standards. The assessment must be carried out by someone who is 'occupationally competent'. This is someone who has the necessary experience to judge whether the learner has demonstrated the required competences. Assessment is a process of measuring a worker's knowledge and skills and will include observing practice.

The guidance doesn't specify that someone delivering the training and carrying out assessment needs a specific qualification. The person who does this could be the individual employer if they're experienced and have the confidence to assess someone, or another PA could be used if they have sufficient care experience in assessing others.

7. What support is available for individual employers who want their staff to undertake the Care Certificate standards or the new Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate qualification?

Individual employers can apply for funding from Skills for Care to cover the cost of care related training for both themselves and their PAs, (including self-employed PAs they contract with) including the Care Certificate, and any training to help an employer feel skilled and confident to assess and lead their PAs development. For more information about the funding, go to www.skillsforcare.org.uk/iefunding. [Find out more](#) about the Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate qualification.