Best Practice when employing a Personal Assistant

About this help sheet

This help sheet explains important considerations before you employ a Personal Assistant. A Personal Assistant is often called a PA. A PA is someone you pay to help you with care, support or daily tasks.
This is general information. It is not legal or financial advice. Ask your local council, direct payment support service, payroll provider or insurance helpline if you are unsure.

What is a direct payment?

A direct payment is money from the council. You can use it to arrange your own care and support. This can give you more choice and control.

Before you employ a PA

Before you employ a PA, think carefully about what help you need, what tasks the PA will do, and when you need support. Ask your council what help is available, including support with payroll, recruitment or a managed account. Do not employ someone until you understand the rules and costs.

If you employ a PA, you are the employer

If you employ a PA yourself, you are usually their legal employer. This means you have important responsibilities.
As the employer, you will usually need to provide a job description and written contract, check the PA's right to work in the UK, arrange payroll, pay tax and National Insurance correctly, provide payslips, and pay at least the legal minimum wage. You should also plan for holiday pay, sick

pay, pension duties, employers' liability insurance, good records, and backup cover if your PA is off sick or on holiday.

Choosing the right PA

When choosing a PA, write down what the person will do, where and when the work will happen, and how much they will be paid. Use the interview to ask clear questions, request references, consider whether a DBS check is needed, and put important agreements in writing.

Payroll and money

Payroll means working out pay, tax, National Insurance and payslips. A payroll service can help you do this correctly.
If you are asked to, keep direct payment money separate from your own money. Remember that the hourly wage is not the only cost. You may also need to budget for insurance, payroll, holiday pay, sick pay, pension contributions, training and recruitment. Keep receipts, payslips, timesheets and records, and do not pay cash-in-hand unless this has been agreed and recorded properly.

Working well together

To work well together, be clear about tasks, timekeeping and how you will talk about changes or problems. Respect each other's privacy, keep good boundaries even if the PA is someone you know, have regular check-ins, and talk about small problems early.

Training and safety

Think about what training the PA needs, such as moving and handling, medication, safeguarding, infection control or communication support. Keep a record of training, think about risks at home and outside the home, keep emergency contact details easy to find, and ask for advice before dealing with serious problems at work.

Common Myths

People may think...	But really...

Direct payments are always too hard.	You can ask for help from support services, payroll providers and insurance helplines.
The support service is the employer.	If you employ the PA yourself, you are usually the employer.
You can pay a PA informally.	Pay must be managed properly. You need records, payslips and tax information.
Nothing needs checking after the PA starts.	You should review the support, money, risks and training regularly.

Simple checklist

- I understand my support plan.
- I understand my budget.
- I know what my PA will do.
- I have written a job description.
- I have checked right to work.
- I have asked for references.
- I have thought about a DBS check.
- I have written a contract.
- I have arranged payroll.
- I have arranged employers' liability insurance.
- I have a backup plan.
- I know what records I need to keep.

Where to get help

- Your local council adult social care team.
- Your direct payment support service.
- A payroll provider.
- Your insurance provider or employment helpline.
- Skills for Care.
- Local disabled people's organisations or peer support groups.