

Useful Guidance for People Employing a Personal Assistant

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Consultation with service users and carers has shown in a number of cases that the decision to directly employ a PA has been taken without a full understanding of the responsibilities of being an employer or of the implications of failing to discharge those responsibilities.

This paper seeks to assist people proposing to employ a Personal Assistant for themselves or on behalf of the person they care for. If you employ a family member or a friend it is still advisable to consider some of the issues outlined in this paper.

2.0 Boundaries

- 2.1 The personal assistant can end up feeling more like a friend than an employee. This can be a good thing as it means that there may be more give and take on both sides. However it may also mean that it is more painful if the employer feels the personal assistant has let them down. This can also lead to both the employer and the personal assistant feeling exploited and these different expectations can cause conflicts.
- 2.2 When you take on a personal assistant think about where the boundaries are in your relationship. Think about how you will make this clear and how you will deal with it if the boundaries are over stepped.
- 2.3 Discuss initially how you like things done. You should think about what is acceptable, not acceptable within your home and this should be relayed to the personal assistant before they start.
- 2.4 Decide what you want in terms of privacy and what balance you want regarding independence/support.
- 2.5 Ensure the personal assistant knows that all information regarding yourself, your family and your domestic or personal circumstances are strictly confidential and cannot be discussed with a third party without the employers specific permission or in an emergency situation. Only share what you need to.
- 2.6 If you become unhappy with something your personal assistant does think about how serious it is. Sometimes things like poor timekeeping or occasional rudeness can be dealt with by a conversation. There may be a reason for what has happened and it may be able to be clarified quickly.

When problems do not improve or your personal assistant does something more serious it is best to follow the correct legal procedure as an employer.

3.0 Priorities

3.1 Make it clear to the personal assistant what you do and do not expect regarding things such as:

- visit to other places, payment for them.
- visit to other people's home.
- smoking whilst with the person they are caring for.
- whether the PA can do their own shopping or attend to their personal medical business with the person they are caring for.

3.2 Be clear about whose agenda is being met and whether this is acceptable to you.

4.0 Training

4.1 If there are training requirements for the personal assistant in moving and handling then training should take place prior to the personal assistant commencing work.

4.2 If food/drink preparation is an identified task then food hygiene training is recommended.

4.3 If intimate care or contact with bodily fluids is an identified task then Infection Control training is recommended and the employer should provide protective clothing or equipment free of charge.

5.0 Contract

5.1 Take advice on how to draw up a contract of employment and whether you require advice on insurance to cover employment issues (see Appendix 1).

5.2 Decide what the personal assistant needs to know when they start working for you. Have a first day checklist, revisit the job description.

5.3 State clearly there is a probationary period and either party can terminate employment by giving one weeks notice.

5.4 Have a written checklist of the PA's tasks and responsibilities.

5.5 Have a disciplinary policy that is understood by your personal assistant. Give your personal assistant a copy of your disciplinary policy with their contract so that you both understand what will happen.

5.6 You may want to include information in your contract that says if your PA does not keep information confidential then you may take them through disciplinary procedures.

6.0 Supervision

6.1 Meet frequently at set times (supervision) to discuss what is going well, what needs improving and any personnel issues.

6.2 Confirm the probationary period arrangements and when they have ceased.

6.3 Annual appraisals help you and your personal assistant to identify any learning and development needs.

6.4 Keep a brief written record of these meetings to confirm issues discussed.

7.0 Finances

7.1 If you require your personal assistant to go to the shops or a cash machine for you then make sure you ask them to get a receipt.

7.2 Keep separate bank accounts for your Direct Payments.

7.3 Keep a record and receipt of all transactions.

7.4 Keep money secure, do not reveal you PIN number and change it regularly.

7.5 Never loan or lend money to your personal assistant or borrow money from them.

7.6 Do not get involved with your personal assistants financial affairs.

7.7 Never advance wages.

7.8 Do not allow your personal assistant to become a signatory on any finance account or to become an appointee.

8.0 Whistle blowing

8.1 Encourage a whistle blowing procedure and indicate that your personal assistant must feel confident to raise any concerns they have. Examples could include:

- harassment.
- witnessing a criminal offence.
- health and safety issues occur which could endanger others.

Indicate who they should raise these matters with and create an atmosphere where the personal assistant feels empowered to raise issues so they can be resolved.

9.0 Adult Safeguarding

- 9.1 Discuss with your personal assistant your understanding of the need to be treated with dignity and respect at all times.
- 9.2 Recognise that abuse can occur in a variety of ways ie:
- being given too much medication.
 - personal care not carried out thoroughly.
 - being encouraged to watch DVD's that you may feel uncomfortable about.
 - being criticised or disrespected by your personal assistant.
 - being kept from your usual activities, your usual network or cared for in a manner which is convenient for the personal assistant and not yourself.
- 9.3 If you begin to feel uncomfortable about the actions of your personal assistant and are unable to talk to them directly then speak with a trusted family member or friend, your social worker, the police or your Direct Payment advisor.
- 9.4 Take action immediately do not feel trapped or beholden to someone who you feel is starting to abuse you.

A.R.Harris
Head Of Adult Safeguarding
Oct 2011

Appendix 1 – Useful Documents

Ref NCIL Fact Sheet about Employer and PA relationship

<http://www.ncil.org.uk/contentid103.html#eandarels>

Keeping Safe Leaflets and Fact Sheets

<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/health-social-care/adult-health-social-care/support-planning/direct-payments/>

People Management

www.scie-peoplemanagement.org.uk

<http://pant.org.uk>

Dudley Community Directory

<http://www.dudley.gov.uk> (in left hand column click on Health & Social Care link – then on right hand side of screen click on Dudley Community Information Directory)

A4e Team in Dudley

<http://dpsec.a4e.coluk/Dudley.aspx>

Information and Advice for Personal Assistants

<http://panet.org.uk>