



Dudley Adult Safeguarding Board

Fact Sheet

Information about Safeguarding for People Employing a Personal Assistant

Consultation with service users and carers has shown in a number of situations that the decision to directly employ a Personal Assistant (PA) has been taken without fully understanding the responsibilities of being an employer, or what could happen if they fail to take on those responsibilities.

This fact sheet is to help people wanting to employ a PA for themselves, or on behalf of the person they care for. Even if you employ a family member or a friend, it is still advisable to consider some of the issues outlined in this fact sheet.

1. How can I manage professional boundaries with my PA?

- A 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/difficult if you feel your PA has let you down. This can also lead to both you and your PA feeling exploited/let down. These different expectations can also cause conflicts.
- 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 what you will do if the boundaries are over stepped.
- Discuss initially how you like things done. You should think about what is acceptable and not acceptable within your home. This should be relayed to your PA before they start. Written guidance is a more formal way to ensure that a person knows your wishes and will give you a structure point.

- Decide what you want in terms of privacy and what balance you want between independence and support and ensure this is clearly communicated to the person you are employing
- Ensure your PA knows that all information regarding you, your family and your domestic or personal circumstances are strictly confidential and cannot be discussed with anyone else without your specific permission or in an emergency situation. Only share what you need to.
- 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. Your support organisation can advise on this.

2. How can I agree my priorities with my PA?

- Explain to your PA what you want and don't want regarding things such as:
 - visit to other places, payment for them.
 - visit to other people's home.
 - smoking whilst with you/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.
- Be clear about who is in control and what you want. Think about whether this is acceptable to you. You will be working towards the outcomes you have agreed in your support plan.

3. What do I need to know about training my PA?

- Safeguard Awareness Training is available for both the employer and the employee from the Local authority
- If your PA needs moving and handling training, then this should take place before your PA starts work.
- If food/drink preparation is an identified task, then food hygiene training is recommended.
- If intimate care or contact with bodily fluids is an identified task, then Infection Control training is recommended and you need to provide

protective clothing or equipment free of charge to them. Your support agency can help you cost this from your Personal Budget.

4. What should I include in the contract with my PA?

- 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).
- Decide what your PA needs to know when they start working for you. Have a first day checklist and a clear job description.
- The contract should state clearly that there is a probationary (trial) period and either you or your PA can terminate employment by giving one weeks notice.
- Have a written checklist of your PA's tasks and responsibilities.
- Have a disciplinary policy that is understood by your personal assistant. Your support agency can assist with this. Give your personal assistant a copy of your disciplinary policy with their contract so that you both understand what will happen.
- You may want to include information in your contract that says if your PA does not keep information confidential you may take them through disciplinary procedures.

5. What sort of supervision should I give my PA?

- Meet frequently at set times (supervision) to discuss what is going well, what needs improving and any specific employment issues such as time keeping or holidays. If you find this difficult or threatening you can obtain advice from your support agency.
- Confirm the probationary (trial) period arrangements and when they have ended.
- Yearly meetings with your PA to discuss their work will help you and your PA to identify any learning and development needs.
- Keep a brief written record of these meetings to confirm issues discussed.

6. What might I need to do to keep my money safe?

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

- Keep money secure, do not reveal you PIN number and change it regularly.
- Keep separate bank accounts for your Direct Payments.
- Keep a record and receipt of all money spent.
- Never lend money to your personal assistant or borrow money from them.
- Do not get involved with your personal assistants financial affairs.
- Never advance wages.
- Do not allow your personal assistant to become a signatory on any bank account or to become your appointee.

7. How can I encourage my PA to raise any concerns?

- You should encourage your Personal Assistant to feel sufficiently confident to raise any major concerns over wrongdoings. Examples could include:
 - harassment.
 - Abuse of a child or an adult
 - Unlawful conduct
 - Financial malpractice
 - witnessing a criminal offence.
 - health and safety issues occurring which could endanger others.
- Indicate who they should raise these matters with and create an atmosphere where the personal assistant feels able to raise issues so they can be resolved.

8. How can I keep myself/family safe?

- Discuss with your PA how they should treat you with dignity and respect at all times.
- 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.

- If you begin to feel uncomfortable about the actions of your personal assistant towards you, or your family/children and are unable to talk to them directly then speak with a trusted family member or friend, your social worker, the police or your support organisation.
- Take action immediately do not feel trapped or beholden to someone who you feel is starting to abuse you.

A. R. Harris
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October 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.co.uk/Dudley.aspx>

Information and Advice for Personal Assistants

<http://panet.org.uk>

Disability in Action – email address

disabilityinaction.ulo@hotmail.co.uk

Safeguard & Protect – link

<http://www.dudley.gov.uk> (in left hand column click on Health & Social Care link – click on Adult Health & Social Care link. The Safeguarding Adult link is on this page)

Children’s Safeguard – link

<http://www.dudley.gov.uk> (in left hand column click on Health & Social Care link – click on Children & Family Care link. The Children’s Safeguard link is on this page).