

# Being a good employer

A guide to create a good working relationship and to manage and develop your Personal Assistant



## PA Employer Guides: part 3

WORKING TOGETHER AT ITS BEST



Disability Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group



Sheffield



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# Introduction

This guide helps you to think through what you need to do once your Personal Assistant (PA) has been recruited.

For advice on recruiting and employing PAs see our employer guides 1 and 2.

This guide provides information and good practice tips on how you and your PA will work together. Employers should offer their PAs support to do their job well. Having good information and providing induction, training and supervision are key ways of doing this.

It may feel daunting at first but there are many people, organisations and resources offering help, advice, coaching and mentoring support. A great place to find information is the comprehensive Skills for Care Employing Personal Assistants Toolkit. Website: <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Employing-your-own-care-and-support/Information-for-individual-employers/Information-for-individual-employers.aspx>. Or call them on 0113 245 1716. You can also refer to the list of support services at the end of this document.

The information in this guide has been created by both people who employ their own PAs and PAs themselves, so it gives you an honest reflection of what you need to think about and put in place to be a good employer.

Remember, you don't have to do everything or make all the decisions by yourself. You're in control so you can decide to do as much (or as little) as you want to. As long as you (or someone you have chosen) follow this advice you will do well.

You'll find information and links to organisations you can use at the end and throughout this information sheet.

This is a guide to help you consider some of the best things to do from the PA's first day at work to maintaining a long successful working relationship.

# Working together

## Managing and developing your PA

As with any new role, your PA will need your guidance to learn how to support you, especially when they're new. You should spend time with your PA going through important information about the role and what your expectations are.

## Induction

An induction is basically the time and information you give your PA at the start of their role helping them feel informed and comfortable in what they need to do. You should decide what your PA needs to know when they start working for you. Think about how you'll present this information to them. This is a great way to start an effective working relationship with your PA.

Some good ways to introduce a new PA to the role are:

- On their first day have a conversation with them about your expectations and theirs for the role and learn a little about each other.
- To shadow another PA (you need to let them know beforehand if this is paid or unpaid).
- Have a first day check list prepared about what you need them to know.
- Re-visit the contract and job description.
- Be clear what you will teach them and any other forms of training provided.
- You may like to provide information describing typical duties, a typical day and how tasks are to be performed. You may include any important rules and procedures and any important health and safety procedures that need to be followed.
- Give them a tour of the place where they will be working so they know where everything is, like First Aid kits and the loo!

- Make sure your PA has access to timesheets and knows when and how to fill them in and submit them to you.
- Make sure you give your PA time to ask any questions they may have, especially at the end of their first shift.

## **One to Ones and on-going supervision**

One to ones are regular discussions with your PA to talk through how the job is going such as what is going well or what needs improving. It should be an opportunity for you and your PA to share views and talk through issues. You should discuss any training that might be needed or available for your PAs. It's useful to keep notes as a record of the discussion, especially if either of you have agreed to do something.

It's helpful to start doing regular one to ones from the beginning of the employment.

Think about giving PAs peer time (coffee and cake) so that PAs have a chance to meet each other.

You could pay for an organisation to provide external supervision.

The Individual Employer and PA Development group in Sheffield has produced a Person Centred Supervision and Appraisal toolkit which provides templates and guidance to support you with supervision.

The toolkit is available from the Disability Sheffield website:

[www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk/support-for-individual-employers-and-personal-assistants](http://www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk/support-for-individual-employers-and-personal-assistants).

# Identifying training needs (personal development)

Offering training is a good way of supporting your PA to develop and grow in their role. You should:

- discuss any training needs as part of the one to ones
- look at the job description and the skills your PA needs
- take into account your responsibilities and an employer
- record all types of learning on a learning passport.

If the training has a cost, you should have an agreement that the PA pays some cost back if they leave shortly after completing it. This should be fair and reasonable. For example they pay the full cost if they leave within 2 months, then half within 4 months, then a quarter within 6 months. A guide is available: <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Employing-your-own-care-and-support/Resources/Information-for-individual-employers/5-Training-and-qualifications/A-practical-guide-to-learning-and-development-for/A-practical-guide-to-learning-and-development-for-PAs.pdf>.

## The Personal Assistants Skills Passport

A Skills Passport is a record of your PA's skills and training achievements. It helps to show what your PA knows and understands about their job, and helps them to develop their skills and record evidence of their learning. It's a really good way for you and your PA to develop their skills and abilities. See <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/social-care/employing-a-personal-assistant> for a blank Skills Passport and guidance on how to use it.



All of the above helps to make sure your PA is safe in their role and ensures they can offer the right level of support to suit you. You may feel you need to offer refresher training to your PAs so they keep their knowledge up to date.

As an employer you may also wish to access training yourself. You can get guidance from local Social Care Services Workforce Development Unit. Go to the Council website for more information: <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/social-care/employing-a-personal-assistant>.

The diagram below describes a way for you to think about training and development.



# Training to offer

There are lots of training opportunities to offer your PAs and many ways that it can be provided. Here is a list of some examples of the training that is available:

- Moving and handling
- First Aid
- Dementia awareness
- Eating and drinking support
- Effective communication
- Food safety
- Health, safety and fire
- Learning Disability awareness
- Mental health awareness
- Personal care
- Safeguarding
- Self directed support
- IT skills such as using Word, Excel or email.

For employers, there is also learning opportunities available via:

- Coaching and mentoring
- Observation of training (sit in on your PA's training courses)

Training may be taught face to face or through on-line courses.

Some training is provided by Sheffield City Council or through Health services. You should contact Disability Sheffield for an up to date list of current training: <https://www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk/support-for-individual-employers-and-personal-assistants>.



# Paying for training

Skills for Care provide funding for training of PAs and their employers. They will pay for the cost of the course and the cost of paying PAs. This funding is really helpful when you want to arrange training that may be specialist or not easily available. To find out more about how to apply:

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Employing-your-own-care-and-support/Information-for-individual-employers/Information-for-individual-employers.aspx>.

# Providing a positive work environment

If you find a good PA you will want to keep them so it is important to think about creating a positive and supportive work place.

Here are some ideas of how you might do this:

- develop a strong relationship
- be respectful of each other
- respect each other's values, beliefs and lifestyles - we are all unique
- have an understanding for your PA's values and what's important to them
- provide a good work / life balance ensuring your PAs get to have adequate breaks and time off
- appreciate your PAs life outside of work, only contacting them if you really must during their time off
- give each other privacy
- make the workplace a nice place to be
- make sure working conditions are safe for your PAs
- ensure equipment that your PA has to use is regularly serviced, clean and safe.

## Developing strong relationships

Think about the things you can do to make the job a good one. You have an on-going responsibility to make sure your PAs are safe and happy.

- be flexible, where possible. If you can be flexible, it's likely your PA will be flexible too
- discuss how you like things done
- praise your PAs when they're doing well
- make sure they have all the knowledge, skill, equipment and resources to do the job
- communicate often by listening and talking to each other – not just when things go wrong.
- recognise the things you've got in common and enjoy being together

## Boundaries

Whilst creating a good working relationship be mindful that sometimes a PA relationship can feel informal. This is understandable due to the nature of support your PA may provide. Although you should always be kind, respectful and friendly towards your PAs, you should always keep professional boundaries; you are their boss.

Having boundaries can help you keep your relationship with your PAs strong and positive. Think about the boundaries that are important to you. How will you make these clear and how will you be clear about what you do and do not expect?

Confidentiality is very important and works both ways. You should always keep information that your PA shares with you to yourself, however trivial it seems. You should think about what you share with your PAs and make sure they understand that information about you, your life, family and personal circumstances must not be shared with anyone. It is useful to have your expectations about confidentiality written down as part of your contract of employment or have a separate policy.

Think about how you stay in control of the decisions you make in your everyday life. Often PAs will want to make sure you are safe and may worry about doing things that may feel unsafe to them. You should listen to their concerns and make decisions based on your understanding of the potential risk or outcome and what enables you to live the life you choose. You should also consider what has been highlighted in your Assessment, Support Plan and what your PAs job description says.

Some examples:

You may want to be lifted without a hoist even though your assessment says this shouldn't happen. Your PA may not want to do this because they could hurt themselves or you. It may also mean your insurance for injury becomes invalid. Your PAs refusal is reasonable.

You may want to travel by bus rather than go by taxi or car but your PA doesn't like using the bus. You have taken bus rides before and know it's safe. You've got a bus pass or will pay for your PA's fare. After talking to your PA you find it's just a personal preference to them. It is fair for you to ask them to go with you on the bus.

## **Paying a fair wage**

- Look at what other employers in your area are paying PAs doing similar tasks.
- Use the Direct Payments PA Rates Tool to help decide an appropriate pay rate.
- Can you offer other benefits?
  - extra Holidays
  - training and qualifications
  - flexible working

# Resolving problems

## Have a disciplinary and grievance policy

The disciplinary policy sets out how you will deal with situations where you are unhappy about the quality of your PA's support or conduct. For example the PA may regularly arrive late for work, take lots of sick days or not carry out tasks as you wish even though you have provided training. It describes the steps you will take to support your PA as well as tells your PA what is expected by them to improve. It should have timescales and goals to achieve. As it's a formal process, it provides an opportunity to address concerns with your PA and for your PA to change the way they work. Sometimes when improvements haven't happened it may lead to dismissal.

A grievance policy is a process for how your PA can raise concerns with you about how you are treating them. For example, if you treat your PAs unfairly, shout at them or put too much demand on them outside of the expectations of the role. You must give your PAs a safe and secure place to raise these concerns without fear that their job is at risk by raising them. You should listen and take on board their worries.

For both disciplinaries and grievances, the best way to approach it is to try and resolve it informally. Many potential disciplinary or grievance issues can be resolved informally when an open discussion is often all that is required.

Make sure your PA understands this policy and what it means.

There are examples and templates available:

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Employing-your-own-care-and-support/Information-for-individual-employers/Templates.aspx>.

You should always talk to your Employers Liability Insurance company when you want to use this policy or procedure as they offer support and advice.

# Keeping yourself and your PAs safe

Whichever way you choose to arrange your support it's important to think about how you might keep yourself safe. It's important for you to think about how to protect yourself when your support is up and running.

- Make sure you've got the right cover under your insurance. If you employ a PA, you must have Employer's Liability Insurance. If you expect your PA to drive your car or to take you out in their car make sure they are properly insured.
- Try not to leave money or personal information lying around.
- If you require a PA to go to the shops or cash machine make sure you get a receipt.
- Take action to make sure your money is secure.
- Keep a record and receipt of all transactions with your PA.
- Don't give your PA access to your bank accounts or pass responsibility for your accounts to your PA.
- Don't pay wages to your PA in cash.
- Don't agree to pay your PA an advance of their wages.
- Don't lend money to your PA, and don't borrow money from them.
- If you don't feel you are being supported in the right way then it is okay for you to say so. If you find this difficult then talk to the Council and they can make sure you receive the right advice or help.

# Have a contingency plan for cover

A contingency plan is basically a back-up plan. You will need to consider what you will do if your PA is unavailable, due to sickness or holidays. Your Direct Payment should have funds included to cover such situations. Do you have a back-up for such circumstances? Such as:

- agency care
- other PAs
- friends or family

It's helpful for a PA to know back-up is in place. They'll not have to worry that they're leaving you in a difficult situation if they're not able to come to work. Make sure your PA knows what to do and who to contact in an emergency. Include things like, who can help, pet care, care responsibilities and if the house needs securing who has the spare keys.

It may be worth keeping a contact list somewhere visible.

## Know what to do, and who to contact, if you are, or believe you are, being abused

- Abuse is any action that harms another person.
- It includes physical, sexual, psychological, financial abuse or a combination of these.
- If your PA or whoever supports you has concerns about your safety then under safeguarding rules they have a responsibility to report their concerns.
- If you feel you're being abused tell someone immediately. This could be the police, the Council, direct payments advisor or trusted friend or family member.
- More information can be found at <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/abuse>.

# Useful links and support available

**Please see Sheffield City Council's website for information on Direct Payments and the PA Employers guides.**

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/social-care/employing-a-personal-assistant>.

Further information on supporting and developing your PA can be found on Disability Sheffield's website:

<https://www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk/support-for-individual-employers-and-personal-assistants>.

Skills for Care also have a practical guide to learning and development of PAs. <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Employing-your-own-care-and-support/Resources/Information-for-individual-employers/5-Training-and-qualifications/A-practical-guide-to-learning-and-development-for/A-practical-guide-to-learning-and-development-for-PAs.pdf>.



# Helpful organisations

## Sheffield City Council

### Adult Social Care

Tel: 0114 273 4567, option 5. Email: [asc.howdenhouse@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:asc.howdenhouse@sheffield.gov.uk)

### Children's Services

Tel: 0114 273 4567, option 4. Email: [CYPF-LDD@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:CYPF-LDD@sheffield.gov.uk)

### Mental Health Services

North Sheffield Recovery Service: Northlands: Tel: 0114 226 3636

South Sheffield Recovery Service: Eastglade: Tel: 0114 271 6451

## NHS Sheffield

### Clinical Commissioning Group

Tel: 0114 305 1000. Email: [sheCCG.sheffield@nhs.net](mailto:sheCCG.sheffield@nhs.net)

### Continuing Health Care

Tel: 0114 305 1700. Email: [sheCCG.sheffieldCCG@nhs.net](mailto:sheCCG.sheffieldCCG@nhs.net)

## Local voluntary and community organisations

For a list of voluntary and community organisations visit the Sheffield Directory: [www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk](http://www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk)

### Age UK Sheffield:

[www.ageuk.org.uk/sheffield/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/sheffield/) Tel: 0114 250 2850.

### Disability Sheffield:

[www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk](http://www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk) Tel: 0114 253 6750.

### Sheffield Mencap & Gateway:

[www.sheffieldmencap.org.uk](http://www.sheffieldmencap.org.uk) Tel: 0114 276 7757.

### Sheffield Carers Centre:

[sheffieldcarers.org.uk](http://sheffieldcarers.org.uk) Tel: 0114 272 8362.

### Sheffield Young Carers:

[sheffieldyoungcarers.org.uk](http://sheffieldyoungcarers.org.uk) Tel: 0114 258 4595.