
Being a Personal Assistant...

...the job for you?

Information Pack

**Everything you wanted to know about
being a Personal Assistant, Support
Worker, Facilitator,
Enabler, Carer ...**

"I never thought of myself as being the 'carer' type but I know that Joe should have the opportunity to do the everyday things I do. The things I do with him are far more exciting than the time I spend in my main office job!"

"I've always liked helping people, so becoming a PA was a natural thing to do, and I get paid for it!"

This information pack was developed in conjunction with Individual Employers, Personal Assistants and Sheffield City Council.

... so what is a Personal Assistant and what skills do I need to be one?

Being a Personal Assistant (PA) is a very different type of caring or support role; in fact the clue is in the job title! It is all about supporting somebody in their day-to-day life in the way they need and want. Sometimes this means helping with personal support but more importantly it is about enabling someone to be independent and live their life in a way they want to. Being independent doesn't mean people have to do everything by themselves, it means being in control of their life and being supported in the way that helps achieve this.

You can bring all sorts of skills to the role of a PA. Some skills are qualities you may already have and others you may require some formal or informal training. People who employ PAs may want different skills and qualities from their PAs and this can help a PA to do the job well.

These are some of the skills or qualities that people have said they like in their PAs:

- Understanding the need for privacy
- Understanding the need to be discrete
- Trustworthiness
- Flexibility
- Friendliness
- Open mindedness
- Enthusiasm
- Having common sense
- Punctuality
- Sensitivity
- Reliability
- Being able to follow directions and yet still show initiative when appropriate
- Good communication skills
- Good sense of humour
- Patience

These are some of the skills you can develop through formal and practical training - details of how to access training are given in the "PA Training Brochure". You may record evidence of how you have learnt and developed your skills through the 'PA Skills Passport'. You can build up your own PA Skills Passport which you can take with you throughout your career. Find more information at:

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/caresupport/adults/asc/supportplanning/spending/employer/employingpas.html>

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- First Aid Training
 - Moving and Handling
 - Health and Safety
 - Food Hygiene
 - Safeguarding Adults and Children
 - Personal Care
 - Self Directed Support
 - Promoting Effective Communication
 - Qualification and Credit Framework
 - Disability Equality Training

Personal Assistants are employed by people who require their own individual support they each have different ideas about what skills are important for their PA to have. As a result not everyone employed as a PA will need to have all of the skills listed above - these are an indication of what the majority of people who employ PAs look for.

... a day in the life of a PA



My name's James. I'm 29 years old, and I've been Duncan's PA for two years. Duncan is 43 and lives in his own flat. Duncan likes living on his own and enjoys going out meeting people, especially when it's at his local snooker club. Duncan has two PAs. He has a learning disability and needs people around to remind him to do some things and to support him when he goes out.

I'm going to tell you about a typical day with Duncan...

- 9.15am** *I meet Duncan at his flat. When I arrive, Duncan has already started to get ready, so I help him finish off getting dressed by helping with his socks and shoes. Each morning I remind Duncan to take his tablets too. Then I help Duncan make his breakfast - today it's scrambled eggs on toast! We spend some time tidying Duncan's flat and put his washing in the washing machine.*
- 10.00am** *Duncan and I head out to the shops. Duncan likes to do his food shopping on a Tuesday.*
- 11.00am** *When we get back from the shops we put all the shopping away. Each item has its own place in Duncan's kitchen. This helps him remember where to find things when his PAs aren't around. After that we sort out the laundry and I put the kettle on. We spend a while talking about the latest football news and open the post.*
- 12.00pm** *I finish at 12 o'clock today because Duncan goes to his college course for the afternoon. Duncan has other support while he's at college. It suits me finishing early today because it gives me time to go to the library before it shuts. Before I go, I make sure Duncan has got everything ready for college and arrange a time to come back tonight.*
- 8.30pm** *I'm back at Duncan's tonight because he goes to the local snooker club where he meets his friends. We all shoot a few frames and have a good laugh.*
- 10.00pm** *Back at Duncan's flat I help him get ready for bed and make sure everything is switched off and safe before leaving.*

... All those rumours you've heard about Personal Assistants, are they true?

This section tries to dispel some of those myths you've heard about what being a Personal Assistant (PA) is all about. Do any of them sound familiar?

Myth PAs are admin assistants who work for big managers and buy their manager's wife a birthday present, because he forgets!

Buster *This is not always the case, in this instance a PA works for people that need some support to carry out every day tasks, like people with disabilities, mental health problems or the elderly. PAs do all sorts of things like personal support, household tasks, support people to get out and about or assist them in their workplace.*

Myth PA is another word for a carer.

Buster *Carer often refers to someone who provides informal or unpaid support to a person. That said, there are lots of job titles that describe the role of a PA. It depends what the employer feels comfortable with. Other alternatives include Support Worker, Facilitator.*

Myth Being a PA means that I work for just one individual so I've got no rights as an employee.

Buster *No, that's not true. As a PA you have the same employment rights as any other employed worker.*

Myth Only old people need care in their own home.

Buster *There are all types of people that need support to help them live their lives in the way they want to. People can be of any age and require different types of support, no one person is the same.*

Myth Being a PA means I get paid in cash.

Buster *No it doesn't. The role of a PA is a 'proper' employment, which means that PAs have to pay tax and National Insurance like in any job.*

Myth You have to have care qualifications to be a PA.

Buster *No you don't. PAs do all sorts of different tasks and not just care work, so you don't have to have any formal qualifications. Most people who employ PAs are looking for somebody they get on with in the first instance. Anyway, any training that you might need can be arranged.*

Myth Care work is long hours, underpaid and undervalued.

Buster *PAs are paid more than the minimum wage, and because they work with individuals, they can build up relationships which are valued and respected. All sorts of people become PAs.*

... so is it a 'proper' job?

Being employed as a Personal Assistant (PA) means that you are automatically entitled by law to the same statutory employment rights as any other employee in any other job. These are the sort of things that you can expect from your employer.

A Job Description

This outlines the different types of work you will be expected to carry during your employment. More information about this can be found in the "What's in a Job Description" factsheet.

A Contract of Employment or Written Statement

This outlines the conditions of work; including rates of pay, hours of work, annual leave entitlement, disciplinary procedures, notice requirements and other general conditions of work. It is the employer's responsibility to provide you with a contract of employment.

Payment of Tax and National Insurance

As a PA you receive wages or money for the work you do, and your employer is obliged to pay tax and National Insurance to the HMRC. These are usually deducted out of your pay and should be declared on any payslips.

Annual Leave

By law all employees, whether part-time or full-time are entitled to take paid annual leave. As is the case in any employment your employer has the right to ask you to take some or all of your leave when they need you to - providing that it is agreed in your contract of employment.

Statutory Sick / Maternity / Paternity / Adoption Pay

These are basic allowances of pay that employers have to make to qualifying employees, by law. The amount of pay is determined by the HMRC; you can find more information about this on their website.

Disciplinary Procedures

There are statutory requirements about how an employer takes an employee through a disciplinary process if they are not happy with the work their PA is doing. PAs have the right to go through this statutory process.

What might a job description be like?

A job description should be given to you at the beginning of your employment and lists the sorts of tasks you will be expected to do. As an employee you have a right to be given a job description by your employer.

A job description may look like this:

Job Purpose

To provide a high standard of personal support, in order for me to carry out tasks that enable me to live the life I chose.

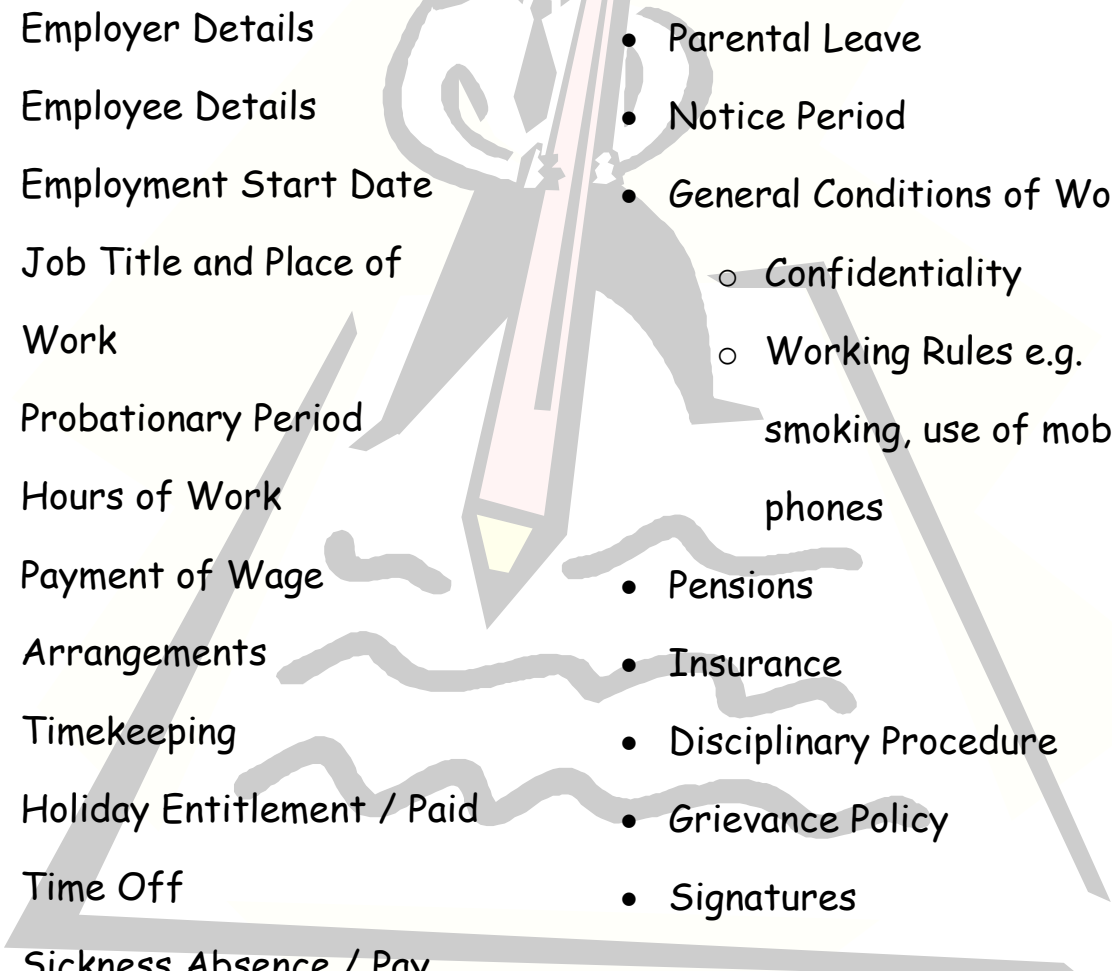
Main Duties

1. To provide a high standard of personal support in a dignified, sensitive and safe manner.
2. If required, to drive in a safe and proficient manner.
3. To accompany and support me on shopping or social activities or outings.
4. To respect my privacy at all times.
5. To uphold confidentiality at all times especially with regard to my personal life.
7. To carry out any domestic duties, such as, vacuuming, cleaning or laundry.
8. To undertake any training relevant to the post.
9. Under my direction, assist with household management with day-to-day tasks.
10. To undertake any duties which may be reasonably allocated and fall within the scope and responsibilities of this job.

So what's in a Contract of Employment then?

Being a Personal Assistant (PA) means that you become an employee and that entitles you to a contract of employment; sometimes referred to as terms and conditions of work. Your employer may vary these.

Below are examples of the sections sets out particulars of the Terms and Conditions in which you are employed:

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- Employer Details
 - Employee Details
 - Employment Start Date
 - Job Title and Place of Work
 - Probationary Period
 - Hours of Work
 - Payment of Wage Arrangements
 - Timekeeping
 - Holiday Entitlement / Paid Time Off
 - Sickness Absence / Pay
 - Maternity/ Paternity/ Adoption Entitlements
 - Parental Leave
 - Notice Period
 - General Conditions of Work
 - Confidentiality
 - Working Rules e.g. smoking, use of mobile phones
 - Pensions
 - Insurance
 - Disciplinary Procedure
 - Grievance Policy
 - Signatures

... how do people pay for PAs?

Personal Assistants are employed and paid by the person, or their representative, for whom they are providing support for. People pay for this in different ways. People sometimes pay for this themselves others get funding from different organisations so they can purchase the support they need to keep them safe, healthy and well.

Examples of other funding sources are:

Local Authority Funding - This is usually known as a Personal Budget. Local Authorities have a duty to provide support to certain groups of people. The person can choose to have the money as direct payments to arrange their own support.

Independent Living Funds - This is a government trust fund that enables people with a disability and high support needs, who receive local authority funding and higher rate disability living allowance, to receive additional money to use towards their care needs.

Access to Work - This is a scheme from the Department of Work and Pensions which provides support to people in their workplace - this may be in the form of equipment and/or providing money to employ a PA.

Other Funding - There are many possibilities for people to receive funding to buy in support such as charity organisations, however the above funding streams are usually the core components of a person's package.

Although people can have funding from different sources each funding provider has a responsibility to give enough money so that PAs can be employed safely and in a way that covers statutory employment legislation.

Where to find a Personal Assistant job?

Personal Assistants (PAs) are employed by a wide variety of people who choose a variety of different ways to advertise.

The following list suggests just a few but if you really want to be a PA then sometimes it can just be about keeping your eyes and ears open!!

- Shop windows like in Local newsagents
- Local libraries / Community Centres
- Jobs sections of newspapers
- On the internet -
 - Sheffield Forum www.sheffieldforum.co.uk
 - Sheffield Gumtree www.gumtree.com
 - Sheffield Help Yourself Database www.sheffieldhelpyourself.org.uk
 - The Sheffield e-market place is on its way...
- University job shops
- Job centres

Remember, these are just suggestions. There are many other places to look!

