



DIRECT PAYMENTS

A good practice guide to employing Personal Assistants

When Direct Payments are used to employ Personal Assistants (PAs), the thought of this can be a bit daunting. Direct Payment Recipients (DPR) are supported and guided through the process which hopefully will enable them to become confident in their new role as an employer.

When employing PAs it is good to establish positive working relationships from the start. All parties will need to be open and honest and raise concerns and give positive feedback as soon as possible.

Good employers ensure:

- **Contract of Employment:** Employee's should be provided this on day one.
- **Register with HMRC as an employer:** Payroll provider will support.
- **Hourly Rate and Minimum Wage:** Sufficient funding is provided.
- **Employment responsibilities:** DPR must work within the legal boundaries of employment law. Support, guidance and information is provided.

Recruitment

Direct Payment Recipients may want to employ Personal Assistants, they may need advice on how to recruit and the Direct Payments Support Service can provide information and guidance on how to do this. The DPR needs to think about what is required, what tasks someone will do, whether the role is part time or full time, what days the person might have to work, etc.

It may be helpful if the potential PA has similar interests to the DPR, such as does the PA like to go out to the shops, theatre, cinema etc? Also, if the DPR has any animals, it may be best to check if the PA likes animals and doesn't have any allergies. All this information will help towards creating a job description, job advert and job specification.

Disclosure and Barring Services

Anyone employed to undertake Regulated Activity as set out by the Disclosure and Barring Service must have an up-to-date certificate.



DBS are funded and organised by the Local Authority so the Direct Payment Support Service will advise the steps to take.

Induction for Personal Assistant

It is good practice to plan an induction with PAs, explain the tasks they will perform along with the care and support outcomes the DPR wants to achieve and documented in a care and support plan. Always discuss any training requirements for the PA and any gaps in their skills and knowledge. The Direct Payments Support Service can support with accessing appropriate training, there are free e learning courses available alternatively, the DPR may want to arrange on site training before the PA starts work or shadow a well-established Personal Assistant already employed.

The Personal Assistant's Online Guidebook is a very good information and learning resource for Personal Assistants. paonlineguidebookwales.co.uk

The following are examples of things to consider discussing on the PAs first day.

- **Revisit the contract of employment:** Ensure the PA is clear on their responsibilities
- **House rules should be explained:** for example, wearing slippers or indoor shoes, using a phone and eating arrangements.
- **Show the PA** where things are kept.
- **Inform PA** when they can take breaks.
- **Explain and show any recording:** notes about their shift or recording time-sheets etc.

- **Explain what will happen on their next shift:** if different to what they may expect, for example, attending meetings, appointments, or social activities.

After a month, hold a supervision/chat to discuss how the PA is settling in and finding the work. This should be completed regularly and the PA given the opportunity to highlight anything they feel is important.

Some DPRs find it useful to provide the PA with a name and contact number of someone the PA can speak to if they feel they can't speak directly to the DPR about something. The DPR decides who this person should be - it could be a family member, friend or a professional involved in assessing the care and support.

Being a good employer often means staff will want to keep working for a long time. It is important to value and respect PAs.

Good Communication

Communication is key to sharing information, develop understanding and building relationships. As part of the induction, DPR should tell PAs about preferred methods of communication:

- Text, email, WhatsApp, phone call or another method suitable for both parties.
- Whether interpreters, equipment or visual aids are required.
- When to seek guidance from family or other people who know the DPR well.

The DPR should be confident the PA and DPR understand each other or will be able to after training or instruction.

Set Clear Boundaries

The relationship with a PAs is unique and may not be like more formal employer/employee relationships. Sometimes, PAs can feel more like friends than employees. However, whilst this can sometimes be beneficial DPRs need to be careful the relationship isn't too friendly. It is important to maintain the employer/employee relationship.

DPRs need to think about boundaries and how to deal with situations if the boundaries are over-stepped. This is a good thing to talk about during the induction and at supervision. Other topics the Direct Payments Support Service will discuss with the DPR during the initial period of them becoming an employer are:

- Working time, hours and breaks, flexible working, wages and when it is paid.
- Sick leave and sick pay arrangements.
- Bank and public holidays, holiday pay and holiday entitlement.
- Pension arrangements.
- Training as an employer, training for the PA.
- Notice period for both parties.
- Probationary period.
- Confidentiality and GDPR.
- Dismissal.
- What happens when the DPR is away, or the PA is not required to work?

Useful Contacts

Each Local Authority have experienced Direct Payments Support Teams to support with queries or information.

They provide as much help and reassurance as is needed, until the DPR is confident to manage arrangements themselves.

This guide provides basic information on Employing Personal Assistants via Direct Payments.

For further information please contact your local Direct Payments Support Service.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Direct Payments Team Office

e. directpayments@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk t. 01495 355265

Caerphilly County Borough Council

Direct Payments Team Office

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Monmouthshire County Borough Council

Direct Payments Team

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Newport City Council

Direct Payments Support Team

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Torfaen County Borough Council

Independent Living (Direct Payments) Team

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