

# Personal Assistance Handbook 2014

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## The aim of this handbook is to:

Provide Employers, their PAs as well as Health, Care Management and Voluntary sector staff with knowledge and skills in:

- Understanding the importance of Employers making their own life choices
- Building strong Employer/Employee relationships
- Helping PAs provide effective, person-centred support
- Developing understanding of professional boundaries and disability, equality and cultural awareness
- Keeping Employers and PAs safe
- Developing the skills and knowledge of PAs through assessment of their learning and development opportunities

# Introduction

Disabled or older people may need some support to live their lives. Employing a Personal Assistant (PA) ensures that a disabled person has control over how their support is provided.

The Independent Living Movement states that having control over arranging their own support is fundamental to ensuring that people are:

- Respected as citizens and individuals.
- Not reliant on what local authority or agency care services offer.

# Background

## Putting the Employer at the Centre

A disabled person can now receive a Personal (social care funding) or an Individual Budget (made up of various funding streams) to buy their own support and become an employer in some circumstances. These budgets can be used to fund a wide range of services.

The Employer is now firmly at the centre of all decision-making about the support or the services they receive from their PA.

For over a decade, the government has been increasingly ensuring that disabled people can:

- Take control of their own support
- Make choices about what services they want
- Direct their own support
- Employ their own staff in the form of Personal Assistants

Social and Health Care Policy and Legislation which has ensured this includes:

- The Community Care ( Direct Payments ) Act 1996
- Our Health, Our Care, Our Say 2006
- Putting People First 2007
- The Health and Social Care Act 2008

## **One Person's story – Teresa**

Teresa is in her mid 40's and has learning disabilities. She lives in a flat in the London Borough of Newham. Before she received a Personal Budget, Teresa was isolated and did not get on with the Agency staff being sent to support her.

Teresa said “ I didn't like most of them because they treated me the way they wanted to and I got a bit sort of upset with the way they was telling me what to do; and I couldn't do what I wanted and sometimes I used to get very angry”

Teresa receives a Personal Budget from her local authority. With guidance from her brother, Teresa employs a number of PAs who help her with things she wants to do; for example shopping with her friend Debbie, attending an Arts and Crafts centre and going horse riding.

She said “When I go horse-riding with Sarah, Sarah's next to me. If something happens when I'm on the horse she always stands next to me that I don't get frightened.”

Teresa's life has been transformed by the support she gets from her PAs and she says “I'm very happy.”

# Role of a Personal Assistant

## Promoting Independence

Giving someone the money to buy their own support or services:

- Puts them at the very centre of making their own life choices
- Enables them to make as many decisions as possible about how, when and by whom their support is provided
- Places them in the role of Employer

Independent living ensures people make as many choices as possible about their support.

Employing a PA may be the most important service a person chooses in ensuring their independence.

## The Employer

Generally the Employer will be the disabled or older person. However they could also be the disabled person's representative, family member or carer.

Whoever is the official Employer it is important that the PA works:

- To empower the person needing support
- In a way in which the person wants

The PA should take time to understand their Employer and to make sure that they are truly doing what is being asked and not what they think is best.

## **Impact on Service User of having a PA**

First and foremost a PA:

- Is employed by the disabled person
- Is paid by that person
- Must follow their Employer's guidelines

It is very empowering for people to direct their own support. He/she can then decide what happens to them based on their own particular needs, wants, aspirations and desires.

There is now a clear “shift in power”:

- From the traditional provision of “care” supplied by a Service Provider
- To an Employer being at the centre to support them to live their life as they want

## **Empowerment**

It is important that a PA appreciates that their role is about:

- Listening to their Employer's wishes and guidance
- Supporting their Employer to do as much as possible for themselves

All of us have something to offer. Disabled people may need some support to achieve this and live their lives as they choose.

Working with their Employer (or their representative) to find out how they want their support or service provided is crucial to being a good PA.



## **Person-centred Support**

The PA needs to listen to what the person wants them to do and how they want it done.

Their relationship should be primarily professional and the PA needs to:

- Ensure that they do what is asked of them by their Employer
- Not do what they think should be required by others
- Not do what they as a PA think is best

This means the PA putting their Employer at the centre of all decision making. If this doesn't happen the PA may find themselves out of work!

## **Good Communication**

A PA will need excellent communication skills – good questioning and listening so that they really learn about the person they are working with.

They need to discuss openly things that they are concerned about and listen carefully before responding sensitively to comments made by their Employer.

All good working relationships benefit from some 'give and take'. However a PA should always remember that the person employing them is their boss and that their decision is final as long as it is safe and legal.

See Helpful Information for skills to support people who need help with communication.

Good listening and questioning skills include:

- Paying close attention to their Employer's words and body language, for example - are they looking happy or upset?
- Asking open questions to help the person explain "How can I help you ....?"
- Checking understanding "Am I right in thinking that you want .....?"
- Checking feelings "Am I doing this how you want?"
- Briefly summarising "So should I .....?"

A PA can support their Employer through using a calm tone of voice and by communicating in a way their Employer can understand. Not all people can communicate verbally so a PA will need to be very aware of the person they are working with and adapt their approach depending how best to understand and be understood.

## **An Enabling Approach**

To enable their Employer to be as independent as possible, a PA should:

- Empower and support their Employer
- Encourage and work with their Employer so they can do as much as possible for themselves
- Offer ideas to make things easier
- Work alongside other professionals when requested e.g. District Nurses, Occupational Therapists, Physio-therapists.

PAs should not:

- Make assumptions about their Employer's support for example assuming what time they want to get up
- 'Do to' the Employer
- Discuss their Employer and their needs with anyone else without prior agreement

## **Supporting the Enabling Approach**

A PA can work out how much support their Employer may need.

They could start by asking their Employer to show how they do something.

If their Employer is not able to respond to this prompt, the PA could show them what to do.

If the Employer is still unsure what to do the PA could guide them.

When the Employer is tired, anxious or stressed, they may need the PA to help with decisions and tasks more than at other times.

# Employer/Employee Relationship

A good working relationship between Employer and their PA will help to ensure that:

- The Employer lives the life they want in their own home and elsewhere
- The PA carries out their job well

To build a good relationship, the Employer or their representative can:

- Explain what and how they want things done
- Be clear about their wishes concerning answering the phone, opening letters, smoking etc.
- Provide a Contract to make things clear to the PA

In contributing to a good working relationship the PA needs to:

- Learn about their Employer's likes and dislikes
- Take time to understand what is wanted of them
- Show respect for their Employer's ideas, wishes, hopes, beliefs, interests, choices and decisions from the start of the relationship
- Be patient at all times

## **The Employer's Home**

A PA may provide a lot of support in their Employer's home in relation to:

- Personal Assistance, for example washing and bathing.

- Practical Tasks, for example cooking.

The PA needs to provide the support at the right level:

- Too much support and the Employer may become dependent and de-motivated.
- Too little support and the Employer may not achieve what he/she wants and may lose confidence.

The Employer and PA need to discuss what level of support is needed to ensure the Employer's home life is as happy and as fulfilled as possible.

## **Informal Settings**

A PA may also be asked to work in informal settings outside the home. This could include accompanying their Employer to see relatives or friends, to a restaurant, church, pub, shopping, on holiday or going to other appointments.

The PA needs to remember:

- To find out what and how much support their Employer expects
- That they are being paid to be there and support their Employer

The Employer and PA should discuss all these situations and agree what support is needed.

## **Professional Visits**

If the PA is accompanying the Employer to an appointment with a professional, including health professionals, they need to remember that their role is to make their Employer's access to that professional, physically and emotionally possible.

The conversation is between their Employer and the professional and should not involve the PA unless the Employer chooses to do so.

If they are involved, the PA needs to:

- Defer to their Employer
- Direct the professional to their Employer (rather than addressing the PA)
- Remember that any decisions are for their Employer to make

If the Employer wants their PA to help with communication with another professional, they will need to discuss before the visit:

- What and how the PA can contribute to the discussions
- What the PA might explain to the Professional on behalf of the Employer
- How the PA can express their Employer's needs and wishes
- How they can involve the Employer in any decisions to be made

## **Working as part of a Team**

The Employer may employ a team of PAs to meet their needs and the PA should be aware of and show respect to other workers.

The PA should:

- Arrive and leave on time
- Carry out all the tasks required on their shift
- Pass on agreed information for example via a Daily Record

- Learn to work as a good team member

Workers may become friendly with each other, but must always remember that their Employer is the boss; for example the Employer, not the PAs should make decisions about shift changes.

## **Standards and Confidentiality**

To develop trust in the relationship, a PA should:

- Conduct themselves professionally at all times
- Arrive and leave on time
- Work for the length of time agreed
- Respect their Employer's privacy and treat any information with complete confidentiality

They should not share any information about their Employer with anyone without prior agreement unless there is a risk to the Employer's life by not sharing.

By their PA maintaining high standards, an Employer is more likely to feel satisfied that their needs are being met and that they are living the life they want.

## **Difficult Issues**

Occasionally the relationship between Employers and PAs may get into difficulties. This may be because of:

- Misunderstanding between the Employer and PA about the level of support or the way it is being carried out
- Personality clashes between the two
- A breakdown in communication

In many situations, the Employer and PA can resolve the difficulties by listening to each other's point of view and negotiating a solution.

The PA in particular needs to redouble their efforts to understand their Employer's needs and wishes.

If the Employer and PA cannot reach agreement, they may need someone:

- Independent to help,
- Who can mediate and support them both to resolve the problem.

Support can be provided by family, friends, Direct Payments Support Services, Social Workers or Advocates.

In extreme situations, an Employment Tribunal may be needed.

## **Employer's Capacity to make Decisions**

If the Employer has the capacity to make his/her own decisions, then all decisions go through the Employer and the PA should not pass anything to anyone else without their permission and direction.

The only circumstances when this might not be the case could be in an Emergency or if the Employer:

- Is doing something illegal
- Asks the PA to do something illegal
- Is harassing / abusing or discriminating against the PA
- Is putting them at risk



Or:

- If a child or Vulnerable Adult is being abused

In those circumstances the PA should talk to their Employer first if possible.

Except in an emergency, the Employer/PA then need an agreement about what the PA does if they have concerns about their Employer. For example if the PA has concerns about the risks the Employer is taking with their health or safety or the safety of others.

Go to the Helpful Information and Mental Capacity Act in the “Keeping Safe” chapter for more advice about the Employer’s capacity to make decisions.

## **Contracts**

Good working relations can be helped by having:

- A Job Description or Contract
- Agreed working arrangements
- Insurance cover

To further underpin good working relationships, both Employers and PAs need to be clear about:

- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks,
- Other Checks,
- Good Records,
- Disability, Equality and Cultural Awareness.

## **Job Description or Contract**

The Employer has a legal obligation to give a PA a Contract of Employment which:

- Is a legal agreement between them
- Starts when a PA agrees to work for an Employer in return for pay
- Does not have to be a written contract but can be a verbal agreement
- Helps to provide clear guidance and minimises potential problems

Employers must put some of the main details of their Employees' terms and conditions in a 'Statement of Particulars' or Job Description within 8 weeks of starting work.

## **Working Arrangements**

PAs:

- Should not work more than 48 hours per week unless they sign an 'opt out agreement'
- Working more than 6 continuous hours entitles a 20 minute break

Night workers should not do more than 8 hours work in any 24 hour period.

PAs must be paid at least the legal minimum wage.

A PA is entitled to:

- A statutory amount of holiday pay
- Statutory sick, maternity, paternity and redundancy pay

- Be treated fairly and without discrimination in the workplace
- A Statement of Particulars / Job Description which should have details of hours, pay, holiday, redundancy and disciplinary procedures

See Helpful Information for:

a) Holiday pay

b) Local sources of employment advice including:

Citizens Advice Bureau; Direct Payments Support Service and Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

## **Insurance**

People who employ workers, including PAs need to ensure that they have sufficient insurance in case there is an accident. Most people who employ PAs buy both Employers and Public Liability insurance. This protects the Employer, Employee and any third party.

It is also a good idea to have insurance that covers costs associated with Employment Tribunals in case the PA has to be dismissed and claims against their Employer.

People can check their Household Insurance for potential cover.

A number of Insurance Companies specialise in providing insurance for Employers of PAs.

If a PA is to drive the person who they are working with in their own car, they will need to ensure their car is safe, IE child locks where appropriate, is covered by business insurance and they only claim for mileage undertaken (ensuring they take the shortest routes).

## Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks (previously CRB checks)

To protect children, Employers must ensure that a PA has a DBS check if:

- they are a parent employing a PA to look after their disabled child
- a child lives in their household

A DBS check highlights criminal convictions and an enhanced disclosure highlights cautions and spent convictions.

Local Authorities may pay for these checks.

A PA does not, by law, need to be DBS checked for providing support to an adult, but an Employer can choose to have a PA checked and it is good practice to make the following checks.

Options for Employers to use as further checks include:

- PAs references preferably from last Employer.
- An optional DBS check
- Asking the local authority to check the Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) or Protection of Children Act (POCA) lists replaced by the Vetting and Barring scheme from October 2009

Someone employing a close relative is unlikely to need to make these checks.

## Recording & Reporting

Records which an Employer is required to keep by law include:

- Tax and National Insurance contributions for all workers
- Records of individual hours worked and holidays taken to enable averaging over a period to meet the requirements of the Working Time Regulations 2003
- Pay to ensure the Minimum Wage Act 1998 is being met, and to meet the statutory requirement that workers are issued with pay statements
- Paid Sickness (more than 4 days); Statutory Sick, Maternity and Paternity Pay
- Accidents, injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences

It is good practice for Employers to keep information/records readily to hand to provide to new workers and to keep other records in case of future challenges. For example:

- Records of all recruitments carried out
- Daily Records
- Induction information
- Training and development information
- Records of absence, lateness, and staff turnover
- Disciplinary and grievance procedures
- Termination of employment information
- Equal opportunities issues and information

## **Support Plans and Daily Records**

Most people who receive money from the Local Authority to pay for their support will have created a Support Plan (previously called a Care Plan). This Support Plan highlights how a person wants to live their life and what aspects they need support with.

When a PA starts work they should make sure they understand what they need to record and when. They may be asked by their Employer to complete a Daily Record of their tasks; for example what medication or Personal Care has been provided.

## **Disability, Equality and Cultural Awareness**

The working relations between Employers and PAs can be further strengthened by an understanding of:

- Independent Living Movement
- Disability Equality legislation and the main aspects of the Equality Act 2010
- Cultural Awareness in recognising and celebrating differences between people from across the world living and working in this country

## **Independent Living**

In the 1970s, disabled people developed the Independent Living Movement.

They felt that if they were provided with the funding that their 'care needs' cost the Local Authority, they could use the money more effectively to purchase their own support.

This would enable them to:

- Make their own choices
- Have the support and services they wanted

- Do the things non-disabled people take for granted
- Live independently in the community
- Play an active part in society with every opportunity possible

## **Equality Act 2010**

It is important that both Employers and PAs have an understanding of the Equality Act.

The Equality Act gives people with protected characteristics rights in areas such as employment, education, public transport, goods & facilities and premises.

The Equality Act also made further additions to prevent discrimination by public authorities and in other areas.

The Act requires public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

## **Disability, Equality and Cultural Awareness**

It is crucially important people treat each other respectfully in relation to a person's colour, culture, disability, gender, sexual orientation and religious beliefs.

PAs moving to another country need to learn:

- The new values and culture of the host country
- New language, habits and thinking styles

For example, Employers and PAs may need to be aware of the other person's cultural or religious needs including:

- Removing shoes on entering someone's house if asked
- Taking certain religious festivals off work
- Eating (or not eating) certain foods

# Personal Assistance

The Employer may need PAs to provide a range of services to support them in:

- Personal Assistance
- Practical Skills

The Employer has a responsibility to their PA to ensure they have the skills and expertise required to do the tasks they are asking their PA to provide.

Based on the values set out in previous chapters on the Role of Personal Assistants and Employer/Employee relations, what follows is:

- An outline of some of the major tasks which an Employer may need support with
- How PAs might provide the support

## **Bathing and Dressing**

Being a PA may involve supporting their Employer to wash, bathe, shower or dress. This should be based on:

- What the Employer wants and likes
- Whether it involves any equipment
- What sort of products the person likes and whether they need anything specific

A PA should always remember to treat their Employer with dignity and respect and never rush them with bathing and dressing. They should always listen and respond to their Employer's wishes.



## **Intimate Care**

Being a PA can involve providing intimate care; for example washing private body parts.

The PA should remember that their Employer:

- Will have a way in which they want things to be done
- Has a right to have their dignity maintained
- Will always be the expert in their own care

The PA needs to:

- Be sensitive to their Employer's needs
- Listen carefully to them to ensure that they do what is asked; not what they think should be done or what they, as PA, thinks is best

## **Hygiene**

When a PA supports anyone with their personal care, maintaining good hygiene is of vital importance.

Cross infection can happen if bacteria are passed from one individual to another or from one part of the body to another. Infections can be easily spread, so maintaining high standards of hygiene is critical.

PAs should:

- Always wash their hands thoroughly after each task if helping someone with intimate tasks
- Ensure that they do not cross infect, if for example they are helping someone with dressing a wound
- Wear gloves when appropriate

## **Going to the Toilet / Managing Incontinence**

PA's may be required to support their Employer to use the toilet. This can range from:

- Assisting them to physically get to the toilet
- Helping them to clean afterwards
- Supporting people who have continence issues; for example with bowel and bladder care

This is very intrusive support. If the Employer has issues with continence they will need to explain what support they want and coach their PA in providing this.

In some authorities, District Nurses provide additional training if the Employer feels it is needed.

## **Hair, Foot and Nail Care**

Some Employers may ask their PA to help them with hair, foot and nail care. Again the PA needs to listen to how the person wants these tasks to be done.

If there are any concerns about the skills needed, the PA should discuss this with their Employer.

## **Mobility awareness**

A PA may need to work with people who have mobility issues and will need to listen to their Employer's exact needs.

Someone who has mobility issues may:

- Use furniture to support them around their house
- Have a walking frame or walking stick
- Use a scooter

It is the PA's job to work in a way that best supports their Employer. It is important that the PA is guided by their Employer about their mobility.

## **Sight and Hearing Awareness**

People who are sight-impaired often have highly developed other senses. A PA needs to work with their Employer in a way which is empowering, being a guide to the person, not taking control.

If the Employer has an Assistance dog to help them this may be all the support they need.

The key to working with people with any impairment is to let them take the lead and to be there to ensure that there is support available if needed and to help them to stay safe.

## **Sight and Hearing Continued**

If someone is hearing impaired, it would be useful for a PA to know or learn about different methods of communicating:

- Hearing aid or loop system
- Lip reading and sign language
- Adaptations such as flashing door bells, vibrating alarms and speaker/headphone systems for the television
- A text phone which may help to talk to people via the telephone system
- Mobile phone texting
- Learning to use the web and email can also be really empowering for people with impairments
- What they can do to make their communication clearly understood

## Specialist Care - Medication

Taking medication correctly can be the difference between someone being well or unwell.

If involved in helping with medication, a PA should normally do what their Employer asks. However a PA does not have to do something illegal or agree with something harmful to their Employer, for example contradicting the GP's recommendation on the bottle or packet.

If concerned, the PA should:

- Tell their Employer that their health may be at risk by doing what they have requested
- Say that either the Employer or they, the PA should seek further medical advice

# Practical Skills

## Cooking

Cooking and preparing food can be an important part of a PA's job.

A PA should:

- Find out if their Employer wants to cook and what support they want
- Ask the person what they like to eat and how they like their food prepared
- Support their Employer to do as much as they can for themselves

Knowing how to cook may be an essential part of the PA role. If a PA does not know how to cook certain foods they can ask their Employer for help.

## Food Hygiene

Hygiene is important when preparing food and a PA needs to use common sense. For instance, being aware of what can cause food poisoning, such as using the same knife or chopping board for cooked and uncooked chicken, is the sort of food hygiene standard that is necessary.

If a PA is unsure of food hygiene issues, the Employer can provide training either directly themselves or professionally. Some Local Authorities provides this sort of training free of charge.

## Shopping

A PA may be asked to assist their Employer with shopping. This could involve:

- Physically helping someone to get to and around the shops
- Facilitating ordering, by supporting the person with on-line or telephone shopping

The Employer is the person who needs the shopping so the PA should always ensure it is their decision about:

- Where they go to shop
- When they go
- What they buy

A PA could make suggestions about diet and healthy eating but they should never force their opinions on their Employer.

## Housework

A PA may be asked to carry out housework, including:

- Vacuuming
- Dusting
- Cleaning windows
- Changing curtains
- Laundry

It is important for the Employer and PA to agree which tasks may be required regularly and which may need to be done in emergencies or infrequently.

An Employer should never ask the PA to do something that could put them at risk. For example, a PA should never attempt a task which could put them at risk of a fall.

If a PA feels worried about doing a certain task they should discuss the issue openly with the Employer so that a mutually satisfactory solution can be found.

## **Child Care**

In some situations a PA may be required to help their Employer with childcare tasks. This should be agreed before employment starts.

Childcare tasks can include:

- Escorting the child to and from school
- Supporting the child with personal care tasks
- Entertaining and taking out on trips
- Babysitting

If supporting a disabled child, there may be different skills needed for some tasks e.g. being able to work with children with specialist health, medical or communication needs.

These should be made explicit by the Employer and or professionals before the PA starts work.

## **Pet Care**

Some Employers have pets that may require:

- Feeding
- Walking
- Being cared for

It is best that when recruiting, an Employer states that pet care will be part of the PA's role, as this allows the PA to decide if they are comfortable working with an animal in the house.

## **Light Gardening**

An Employer may ask a PA to do gardening. The PA must feel comfortable doing this and be fit enough to undertake it without it causing them any problems. It is important for the Employer to expect only light gardening.

When recruiting, the Employer should be clear that gardening will be part of the PA's tasks. They may also need to teach the PA to do the gardening effectively.

An Employer may find a PA who is excellent at many tasks but not at gardening. The alternative would be for the person to employ a gardener separately.

## **Social Contacts and Leisure**

A PA may accompany their Employer to:

- Meet family, friends and colleagues
- Medical appointments
- Shopping and leisure trips
- Educational opportunities
- Employment
- Holidays
- Any other activity or visit



It is important that the Employer and PA work out what part the PA will play in these various situations, for example:

- How the Employer will show if they want support and how much
- Whether the PA should join in any of the activities or remain in the background

A PA is being paid to assist their Employer and should always behave professionally in social situations. It is easy to cross boundaries and sometimes the Employer may even encourage this.

In social situations A PA should:

- Carry out tasks they are employed for
- Observe confidentiality and never discuss their Employer's private business
- Try not to 'hover' over their Employer or create tasks that are not needed but be ready to respond to requests
- Have things to do if they are not needed, like reading a book

# Keeping Safe

## Risk Awareness

Both Employers and PAs have responsibilities under the Health & Safety Act and need to be aware of risks within the home such as:

- Risk of harm due to access to knives and electrical equipment - for people who lack capacity to use them safely
- Wandering, for example people with Dementia can become confused about where they are
- Tripping hazards e.g. piles of clothes, badly positioned furniture or loose wires

## Safety and Support

As part of receiving an Individual or Personal Budget, the Employer will have a Support Plan.

This plan should identify situations where the Employer will need particular support to keep safe.

It is important that the PA does not assume that their Employer is unsafe, just because they have a Learning Disability or Dementia.

The PA should support their Employer to live their life the way they choose, including taking calculated risks. The PA is there to support their Employer to do what they want not to impose their beliefs on them.

## **First Aid**

A PA must deal calmly with accidents and may need knowledge about:

- Wounds
- Scalds and burns
- Heart attacks
- Head injuries and seizures
- Breathing problems
- Fractures
- Lifesaving procedures, such as the recovery position and chest compressions

### **Remember ABC:**

Airways should be cleared i.e. is there an obstruction (e.g. tongue)?

Is the person Breathing? If yes, put in the Recovery Position and ensure;

Circulation isn't restricted.

In any life threatening situation the Emergency services should always be telephoned on 999.

## **Manual Handling**

Each year unsafe manual handling is responsible for 50% of work related injuries in the Health and Social Care sector.

It is important that Employers and PA's work together to minimise the risks by:

- Exploring the options of equipment to aid with transfers and moving, such as hoists, ramps and bed rails
- Carrying out a task-based Manual Handling risk assessment
- Using safe lifting techniques.

Occupational Therapists can offer advice on these.

An Employer should never expect a PA to do something which is likely to or could potentially cause them harm.

## **Fire Safety**

The following tips can help improve home safety:

- Fit smoke alarms
- Keep the exits clear
- Take extra care in the kitchen - accidents while cooking account for over half of fires in homes
- Never leave lit candles in rooms that nobody is in
- Make sure cigarettes are stubbed out properly. Never smoke in bed
- Don't overload electrical sockets
- Don't leave the TV or other electrical appliances on standby - always switch them off and unplug when not in use

## **Infection Control**

To minimise infection and cross infection PAs should:

- Wash hands immediately before and after every direct contact or care task- alcohol based cleansers ensure no bacteria survive
- Wear gloves for contact with sterile sites, open wounds and all activities that carry a risk of exposure to blood or bodily fluids
- Wear a disposable plastic apron if there is a risk that clothing may be exposed to blood or bodily fluids
- Wear face masks or other eye protection where there is a risk of splashing from body fluids

## **Continence**

When dealing with issues of continence, the Employer will generally be able to advise their PA.

However with permission, a PA could receive professional advice and training (for example from District Nurse or Continence staff) to ensure that they do not put the Employer at any risk.

Support may be needed for:

- Bladder and Bowel care
- Changing and emptying a catheter bag, urinary sheathes and incontinence pads
- Continence and hygiene
- Faecal incontinence and management
- Constipation and remedies

- Digital removal of faeces and manual evacuation

## **Emergencies**

Most emergencies in the home can be avoided or reduced by simple precautions which the Employer or their representative can carry out, including ensuring that:

- There are an adequate number of working smoke detectors
- Gas appliances are regularly checked by a competent person
- The necessary emergency numbers are readily available for gas, water and electricity supply problems
- They have sufficient insurance to cover household emergencies

PAs should:

- Know how to turn off the services to the home – gas, water and electricity
- Identify and remove any potential hazards

## **PA Safety**

Employers have a responsibility to their staff to ensure they are safe.

PAs should also be aware of their own safety and make sure that they do not do anything that puts them at risk.

It is important that Employers and PAs discuss issues of safety openly with each other. Both have rights and responsibilities.

## Safeguarding Adults - What is abuse?

There are many forms of abuse including:

- Physical: hitting, pushing
- Emotional or Psychological: swearing, threatening and hiding belongings
- Sexual: any non-consenting sexual act or behaviour
- Financial: improper or illegal use, stealing of someone's money or property
- Neglect: leaving someone uncared for, unwashed, hungry
- Discriminatory: remarks about someone's age, gender, disability, race, colour, sexual or religious orientation
- Institutional: from neglect to outright physical abuse

People can be abused by anyone including family members, friends, and professionals or paid Carers.

Safeguarding means making sure people are safe from abuse, neglect or discrimination. It also means enabling people to be independent and to make choices.

“No Secrets” is a Department of Health guide to help keep adults safe. The guidance helps the police, local authorities and health services staff. It is important for Employers and PAs to know about it.

Each local authority will have its own Safeguarding procedures which must be followed at all times.

## **Mental Capacity Act**

The Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 protects people lacking the capacity to make decisions. It empowers and protects a person assessed as lacking mental capacity. People lacking capacity can include those with:

- Dementia
- Learning disability
- Mental health problems
- Brain damage
- Physical injury or illness

The Act:

- Covers how to assess people who may lack capacity
- Provides clear guidelines for carers and professionals about when, how and who can take decisions if someone lacks capacity regarding their Social Care, Medical treatment and Finances.

## **Mental Capacity – Support from the PA**

It is important that the PA does not make an assumption that just because someone has a Learning Disability or Dementia that they don't have the capacity to make decisions

The PA should support their Employer to make decisions for themselves wherever possible for example by:

- Giving their Employer time to think about the decision
- Presenting the information in a clear and simple way



- Explaining options available and the consequences of different decisions
- Checking their Employer's understanding by asking what he/she has understood

## **Mental Capacity - Making Decisions**

If the Employer has been assessed as not being able to make their own decisions by a Doctor or Social Worker then the PA may be involved in:

- Making a Decision
- Acting on their Employer's behalf

If so, the PA needs to:

- Take reasonable steps to find out if their Employer has the capacity to make specific decisions, for example about what shopping they want bought
- Act in their Employer's best interests
- Think about what their Employer would decide if they could make their own decision

# Developing Skills and Learning

## Assessment of PA's learning needs

When an Employer takes on a PA they need to:

- Discuss the tasks to be provided
- Assess what skills the PA already has
- Find out whether they need to develop other skills

The relationship between the PA and Employer needs to be open and honest so that if the PA lacks certain skills the Employer:

- May train the PA in some of the skills they need
- May also look at developing their PA's skills through local training courses

## The Learning and development of PAs

By and large, Employers will induct/coach PAs into the work and role, making it clear what they want done and how.

If they are able to access additional training for their PA, the PA will then need to work with the Employer to tailor what they have learnt to their particular needs & circumstances.

## Induction

Inducting new staff is a way for Employers to maximise their PA's ability to do the job properly.

The PA's induction may include:

- Getting to understand their Employer's way of doing things.

- Becoming clear about any Health & Safety issues and discussing risks with their Employer.
- Understanding any issues of capacity.
- Being clear about their contract in terms of working times and job details.

A good induction process will ensure the Employer receives the support they want and the PA achieves job satisfaction.

## **Funding**

Some Employers only get enough funding to cover the costs of their support services. However the local authority has to ensure that PAs working with a client on Direct Payments have the necessary skills to do the job, so they should:

- increase funding to pay for training; or
- provide the training through local courses

Other sources of funding:

- Councils receive funding from the Department of Health to provide training in care and should have courses that PAs can attend
- Skills Funding Agency funding

## **NVQ and other Learning Opportunities**

These include:

- NVQ in Health and Social Care, a nationally recognised qualification showing how a PA can work at a set national standard
- Individual courses in Health & Safety, Hygiene, Manual Handling, Safeguarding Adults

In 2010 Skills for Care introduced the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), a flexible approach enabling workers to gain credits for learning specific tasks which can then go towards an award, certificate or diploma.

Employers may want their PAs to gain additional knowledge and qualifications to benefit both of them.

### **What is Available Locally?**

Both Employers and PAs can find out about local training courses by talking to the:

- Training and Development department of the local council
- Local Disability organisation or Carer's centre
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Local Job Centre Plus

# Helpful Information

## Statutory Holiday Pay

Statutory Holiday Pay is 5.6 weeks per year (working time regulations 1998 and amendments 2003).

This is worked out by multiplying the average number of hours worked per week by 5.6.

For example a PA working 35 hours a week is entitled to:

5.6 multiplied by 35 = 196

Therefore the worker is entitled to 196 hours holiday leave a year.

## National Minimum Wage

Year	21 and over	18 to 20	Under 18	Apprentice*
2013 (current rate)	£6.31	£5.03	£3.72	£2.68

## Employer support

Being an employer can be daunting, with responsibilities such as keeping records, working out holiday pay or maternity pay etc. However every local authority has a duty to ensure that people who use Direct Payments to buy their own support have sufficient support to enable them to do it legally. Some authorities have third-party support services which will manage the Direct Payment and ensure that all employer duties are carried out. This can take all the stress out of being an employer.

The Direct Payment Support services should be able to provide useful advice and support. Circles of Support can also be used to manage the money as can user controlled trusts, relatives and friends. Using the methods of support available a person employing a PA only needs to inform the worker how they want things to be done (legally) - all the bureaucracy and paperwork can be undertaken by someone else.

# National information

ACAS - [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

BERR - [www.berr.gov.uk](http://www.berr.gov.uk)

Disability Discrimination Act 2006 -  
[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/DisabilityRights/DG\\_4001069](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/DisabilityRights/DG_4001069)

Health and Safety Executive - [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

Fire Service - [www.fireservice.co.uk](http://www.fireservice.co.uk)

Department of Health - [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

Criminal Records Bureau - [www.crb.gov.uk](http://www.crb.gov.uk)

POVA/POCA/Vetting and barring scheme  
[www.criminalrecordchecks.co.uk/pova-list](http://www.criminalrecordchecks.co.uk/pova-list) (POVA)  
[www.crb.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=2242](http://www.crb.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=2242) (POCA)  
[www.isa-gov.org.uk](http://www.isa-gov.org.uk) (Vetting and Barring from the Independent Safeguarding Authority)

No Secrets -  
[www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_4008486](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4008486)

Mental Capacity Act 2005 and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards -  
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/SocialCare/Deliveringadultsocialcare/MentalCapacity/MentalCapacityAct2005/index.htm>

# Local information

**Some of the following organisations may be in your area**

- PCT
- Social Services
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Age Concern
- Carers Centres (Carers UK)
- People First
- Mind
- Alzheimer's Society
- The MS Society
- Connexions
- Scope
- Barnardos
- Headway
- Macmillan Cancer Support
- RNIB
- SSAFA
- Crossroads

