

## Adult Social Care Provider Guide

# Useful information for people wishing to become a Personal Assistant

## Have you got what it takes to work in social care?

- Do you want a job that makes a positive difference to other people's lives?
- Do you have the ability to develop a strong, trusting relationship with your employer?
- Are you reliable, respectful and trustworthy?
- Are you happy to chat and put people at ease but understand you are an employee and not a friend?
- Do you think you are a good listener?
- Can you empathise with other people's feelings?
- Do you respect other people's values and beliefs?
- Do you respect other people's privacy and dignity?
- Are you willing to learn and develop your own work skills?
- Do you enjoy helping people to live their life in the way that they choose
- Would like to enable others to make a real change to their life

**If you've answered 'Yes' to more of these questions than 'no', then read on;**

### What is Adult Social Care?

People and their families come to Leicestershire County Council's Adult Social Care (ASC) services (part of the Adults and Communities department). When they feel they need help with looking after themselves or the person they care for. They are either given advice and information or offered a Care and Support Assessment, If this assessment shows that they need support then can choose to take this money and organise their own support or let the ASC organise it on their behalf.

The workers who help the person through their assessment are called Community Support Workers and are Social Workers or Occupational Therapists (Equipment/ Aids and Adaptations within the property.) Sometimes people do not have a current an Allocated Worker and if they have a need to contact ASC they do this through the Customer Service Centre on 0116 305 0004. This is the number anyone should call for any queries relating to Adult Social Care.

### **Direct Payments**

If a person chooses to organise their own care and support they have what is called a direct payment, which is also referred to as their personal budget.

People can then either:

- Employ their own staff as their Personal Assistant (PA)
- Organise their care and support from an organisation that employs PAs
- Occasionally people will choose someone who is a self- employed PA

Over 600 people in Leicestershire employ PAs, so the most common way PAs work is by being employed directly by the person with a direct payment.

### **What is a Personal Assistant (PA)?**

A PA is someone who is employed to provide support to enable people to lead independent lives.

### **What type of work do PAs do?**

A PA is often employed to support an individual to support with a variety of daily tasks, for example:

- Help with personal care tasks including eating, washing, dressing, toileting, changing pads
- Prepare meals
- Carry out household tasks such as cleaning, laundry or gardening

- Help with shopping
- Assist a person to attend college or work.
- Drive a person to wherever they need to go
- Assist to arrange other travel
- Help a person to participate in hobbies
- Assist with paying bills or other household management
- Help with attending appointments

### **What are the benefits of being a personal assistant?**

- Flexible  
You can work around your other commitments as required. That means you can find a job with the hours to suit when you are able to work. You can also work for more than one person if you want to.
- Varied  
There are opportunities to provide a wide range of support for different people who want or need different things. You could also work with someone who has the same interests as yourself.
- Job satisfaction  
Because you are employed directly by the individual, you will be there for the time they need, and tasks can be done well without the need to rush off. This also means you can build a longer-term professional relationship with your employer.

### **What type of work are you looking for?**

It is a good idea to think about what you want to offer. Do you want to provide personal care, or social support tasks or both?

### **Who decides what a PA does?**

A PA is most commonly employed by the person needing the support and they will produce your job description and decide on the work you do. They will also provide a written contract of employment and an induction.

Occasionally their family, main carer or an agency might sort out the arrangements but still the person is in control of what you do, how and when.

An employer of a PA is known as an Individual Employer (IE), as an employee a PA will have employment rights. The best arrangements are one where you and the person work together to agree your duties, when starting up as a PA it is a good idea to consider what you want to do and what you are not able to do, so you can match your needs with the individual's requests.

### **How will you be paid?**

Your IE (Individual Employer) will pay your wages; this will usually go directly into your bank account.

The hourly rate is generally set by your employer. If you need to gauge an average hourly rate for PAs you may wish to look on the local Job Sites. However, the employer will be made aware of minimum wage requirements by the local authority, health service or direct payment support organisation. Employers in receipt of direct payments need to understand that PAs are employees and that, as the employer, they are responsible for ensuring that all tax and NI contributions are paid.

### **What skills and experience are needed to become a PA?**

Whilst skills and training are very useful the most important quality is your ability to develop a good relationship with the person you are supporting.

PAs have found it useful to have:

- worked as a volunteer within a community setting
- related experience, e.g. looking after a family member
- studied or be studying for a Social Care qualification
- worked as a care assistant in the past

### **What training will I need to become a PA?**

Training will be specific to the role that you have undertaken so will need to be discussed at interview. You may well be asked to complete some training prior to appointment for example how to operate certain pieces of equipment.

### **Where do I find work as a PA?**

There are a number of ways to find a job as a personal assistant. Here are a few examples of where to look:

- LCC website – jobs pages
- Employers also advertise in local shops, libraries and local papers.
- Personal assistant networks, registers or banks run by local councils, health or support organisations - you can register on these when you are looking for work. Some may require you to undertake checks or training before being added to their list. For more information visit [Skills for Care Information Hub](#) and click on 'in your area'.
- Online job sites:  

<a href="#">Monster</a>	<a href="#">Indeed</a>
<a href="#">TotalJobs</a>	Facebook
<a href="#">Gumtree</a>	
- Advertise your services locally contact Local voluntary sector organisations which work with disabled people
- You may also be able to find a job through friends or family.

You can apply to be a PA for more than one person.

### **Other things to think about**

- Where you can work? How far are you willing to travel to get to work, what areas of Leicestershire would you prefer to work?
- When you can work? Do you need hours to work around your family or other employment?

- Do you have your own car to travel to work or will you be using public transport, walking or cycling? Are you willing to use your own car to go out with your employer? If so you will need business use car insurance and consider what additional cost for travel you might charge.
- What is your experience, skills and values and what do you think you are short of and need to find out about?
- Do you have a preference for working for a particular client group, e.g. older people, younger adults, children and families, people with dementia, learning disabilities, physical disabilities or mental health support needs?
- Have you any specific needs in relation to your health and safety that you need to inform your employer about?
- Do you know your basic rights as an employee?
- Work can sometimes come to an abrupt end if someone no longer requires support, do you know your rights in this case, and is it covered by your contract?
- Are you currently on benefits and how would this affect them?
- Have you got a bank account where you can receive your pay?

### **Being selected and starting work**

- You are likely to be interviewed like any other job and may need to fill in a short application form, advice on how to do this can be found in local Job Centres
- You will need a DBS check (previously called a CRB Check) and usually two references to work as a PA. You can use a previous DBS check if the employer is willing to accept this.
- Individuals cannot request a DBS check on themselves. Your employer will request this is completed via the local authority that is providing their funding.

- If you have recently been in paid employment, then alert your employer about your need for a reference so this doesn't delay your appointment. Character references may be acceptable. This will be down to each individual employer.
- If you do not have a British or EU passport you will need to be sure you can work in this country your employer will also need to check this.

### **Insurances**

- Business Use Car Insurances – If you will be using a vehicle during working hours it is strongly recommended that you check with your insurer which type of cover is needed as there are different types of Business use.
- Employers Liability – the law says you must have this if you employ staff yourself, IE's will require this insurance.
- Public Liability – This type of insurance would cover a business if a customer or member of the public was to suffer a loss or injury as a result of its business activities and if that person made a claim for compensation. This insures against compensation payments plus any legal expenses. You would want to consider this if you are self-employed.

### **Self-Employment**

There are some concerns over the employment status of PAs working for direct employers. In some cases, employers who are in receipt of direct payments have decided that their PA is self-employed and have neglected to pay National Insurance (NI) contributions and deduct income tax. This has resulted in arrears owed by the employers and loss of benefits to PAs.

Ultimately, it is for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to decide a PA's employment status on an individual basis using case law tests. In the majority of cases, PAs are not eligible to be treated as self-employed, as the nature of their work does not meet criteria set by HMRC.

If you need further information the links below may help;

[Gov UK – working for personalised care – a framework for supporting personal assistants working in adult social care](#)

[Skillsforcare – Working as a personal assistant](#)

### **Other useful contacts**

Association of British Insurers Helpline: Tel No: 0207 6003333

[ACAS](#)

Help with employment disputes. Telephone 08457 47 47 47, Minicom 08456 06 16 00

[HMRC](#) – You need to register if you are self employed.

Telephone 08457 143 143, Text phone 0845 602 1380

There are several public sector unions that you can join and are particularly interested in supporting individual PAs. You will need to do your own research.

If you are planning to be self-employed and even employ PAs yourself, you might find our other information document useful:

[Gov UK – Starting up a business](#)

[CQC – apply as a new provider](#)

### **Support from ASC**

Look on our [website pages](#) and take a look at the video in the link attached

[Video: What is the role of a Personal Assistant? \(Youtube\)](#)