

Putting you first

Factsheet 4 Employing a personal assistant: choosing a personal assistant

This range of fact sheets has been designed to support and advise you through the process of employing a personal assistant.

We know that some of the things mentioned in these fact sheets are quite complicated so please don't worry if you find any of it difficult to understand - the self directed support team can offer you help, advice and information.



You can discuss a referral or assessment by contacting Adult Social Care Direct on **0191 433 7033**.

You can also contact the team on **0191 433 2379 / 433 2425** or email **selfdirectedsupportteamenquiries@gateshead.gov.uk**

Offering the job - which candidate should you employ?

It is important to remember that you are not choosing a best friend but someone to do a job. It may be helpful to look at any notes you made during the interviews and also to discuss your thoughts. You should only employ someone who matches the job and person descriptions you wrote at the beginning of the process.

You'll need to make sure that the person you choose is entitled to work here before they start working for you. The government has recently introduced checks that you must make on all new employees to safeguard you from employing someone illegally.



References

Checking the references of an applicant is important, as this is the only way you have to confirm that the information given to you by the applicant is correct. It is also valuable to have the opinion of someone who knows the candidate and their suitability for the job. If you haven't already done this, you should check the references before you make an offer of employment.

Equal opportunities

As with the application stage, you should avoid unlawful discrimination, but you can employ someone who suits your needs.

Police checks (Criminal Records Bureau)

In March 2002 the government introduced new rules to the National Care Standards, which require every organisation providing services to disabled people living in their own home, to check all of their employees with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). This is to check for any listed previous convictions for a criminal offence and helps to keep you safe.

As an employer, you are not obliged to make these checks on your personal assistant(s), however, you might find it advisable to do so to make sure you employ the best people for your care.

The self directed support team can advise you on how to carry out a CRB check if you choose to.

The CRB code of conduct makes it very clear that you would have to keep any details you became aware of confidential.

Vetting and Barring Scheme:

This is a new scheme run by the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) which aims to improve the protection offered to children and vulnerable adults. After November 2009 any person who applies for a job looking after a vulnerable adult has to be registered with the ISA. If they are not it is a criminal offence for them to apply for the job.

Once registered under the scheme, the worker is monitored and any employer who has concerns about them can notify the ISA who will investigate and, if they are found to have been guilty of misconduct likely to cause harm, they will be barred from working with vulnerable adults again.

Glossary of terms

National Insurance (NI) number:

A NI number is used as a reference number for the whole benefits and tax credits system. Those born in Great Britain are automatically sent a plastic card with their NI number on just before their 16th birthday.

P45: An employer provides a P45 to someone when they stop working for them. It's a record of their pay and the tax that's been deducted from it so far in the tax year.

P60: A P60 is the summary of pay and the tax that's been deducted from it in the tax year. By law employers must provide this at the end of every tax year (which runs from 6 April to 5 April the next year).

Employer: This is a person or a business which pays other people money for their work.

Independent Safeguarding

Authority (ISA): This is a new scheme which aims to improve the protection offered to children and vulnerable adults. After November 2009 any person who applies for a job looking after a vulnerable adult has to be registered with the ISA. If they are not it is a criminal offence for them to apply for the job.

Useful contacts

ACAS: For advice regarding equal opportunities call ACAS on **08457 47 47 47**, minicom **08456 06 16 00** or log on to **www.acas.org.uk**

Criminal Records Bureau (CRB): general enquiry line: **0870 90 90 811**, minicom: **0870 90 90 344** or log on to **www.crb.gov.uk**

HMRC: Call **0845 60 70 143**, text phone **0845 602 1380** or visit **www.hmrc.gov.uk**

National Centre for Independent Living **www.ncil.org.uk**

Government information site **www.directgov.uk**

The other fact sheets in this series help you think about some of these issues so you can decide if you want to employ a personal assistant.

Other fact sheets in the the 'Employing a personal assistant' series are:

Factsheet 1: an introduction

Factsheet 2: pay and tax

Factsheet 3: recruitment and selection

Factsheet 4: choosing a personal assistant

Factsheet 5: contract of employment

Factsheet 6: health and safety

Factsheet 7: being a good employer - supervision

Factsheet 8: disciplinary and grievance

Factsheet 9: ending the employment period

