



# This is your guide to Employing a Personal Assistant

There are lots of advantages to employing someone to provide you with care and support, but being an employer is a big responsibility.

There is a lot of important information in this guide that will help you to make sure that you are a good employer and meeting all of your responsibilities. It will help you if you are thinking about asking for a Direct Payment so that you can employ someone. It will also help you if you are already employing someone. It explains:

- ✓ what a direct payment is and how it can be used to employ someone;
- ✓ how to choose the right person;
- ✓ employing a family member or friend;
- ✓ paying your employee, and making employer contributions;
- ✓ working hours, regular breaks and time off;
- ✓ preparing a written statement of employment particulars and contracts;
- ✓ insurance, and health and safety;
- ✓ the things that you can do to make sure you are a good employer;
- ✓ what to do when things go wrong (discipline and grievance);
- ✓ record keeping;
- ✓ redundancy; and
- ✓ alternatives to employing a personal assistant (PA).



Wherever you see this logo in this guide, you can find details of websites that include lots of useful information and advice about employing someone as well as templates that you can download and use yourself.

## What is a Direct Payment?

If you have had your needs assessed, and we have agreed that you are eligible for council funded support, you can ask for a direct payment.

A direct payment is a sum of money that the Council pays directly to you so that you can arrange your own care and support services or buy your own equipment to meet your needs.

Direct payments give you much greater choice and control over your care and support. By choosing a direct payment you are not limited to using services and organisations that the Council has contracts with. This means that you can think creatively about how to meet your needs and improve the outcomes that are agreed in your Plan.

## Using a direct payment to employ someone

Some people use their direct payment to employ someone to provide their care and support. This person is usually called a **personal assistant**. There are several benefits to employing a personal assistant:

- ✓ you choose who you want to work for you;
- ✓ you decide what you want them to do;
- ✓ you decide when you want them to work; and
- ✓ you know that the same person will be providing you with care and support.

When you employ a personal assistant, you will become an 'individual employer' and will have a number of responsibilities and legal obligations. This can be daunting as there are lots of things to think about.

It might help you to talk to someone who is already employing their own personal assistant. You should also contact specialist organisations who can provide you with independent advice about becoming an employer. Details of organisations that can provide this service are on the last page of this guide.

## What will my Direct Payment pay for?

The Council has agreed a set rate that we will pay as a Direct Payment to enable you to employ a Personal Assistant. The hourly rate that we pay is enough to cover the minimum wage that they must be paid (see below). It also provides enough for you to pay:

- employers' tax and national insurance contributions;
- employer pension contributions;
- employer liability insurance;
- 4 weeks paid holidays for your employee;
- cover for while your employee is on holiday;
- redundancy payment for staff who have worked for you for more than 2 years; and
- training and development.

This means that you must not pay your full hourly direct payment rate to your employee. In most circumstances, you should pay no more than the National Living Wage (see below). This will allow you to build up a surplus in your direct payment account that will pay for the things that are listed above.

You may also receive an additional allowance to pay for support from a third-party organisation to help you meet your responsibilities as an employer. This could be to provide a Payroll service, or to help you with things like employment contracts.

## **Choosing the Right Person**

Some people already know who they want to employ – for example it may be a family friend, or someone else who you know and are comfortable with. If you do not already have someone in mind, you will need to think about how you find the right person to work for you. Here are some things that you should consider:

### **Advertising the job**

You will need to advertise the job. This could be an advert in the newspaper, job centre, or on the internet for example.

### **Writing the job description and person specification**

You will need to write a job description that includes information such as what the person will have to do to help you, hours of work, where they will be working and how much they will be paid. It should also have information about skills, experience, training and qualifications and personal qualities you are looking for.

### **Choosing people to interview**

Once you have received all of your applications, you should consider each of them to see who you think might be suitable. This process is called shortlisting.

It is very important that you are fair when you select someone for interview. By law you must not discriminate against any person on the grounds of sex, race, disability, age, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment or sexual orientation.

### **The Interviews**

You need to think about where you are going to interview someone, and what questions you want to ask them. You should always have at least one other person to help you interview. This could be a family member or friend, an independent advocate or someone from an organisation that specialises in recruiting personal assistants. Having someone with you to give a second opinion can help you to make the right choice, but the final decision is always yours. You must be comfortable with the person who you are employing.

### **Offering the job**

When you have decided who you would like to employ, you will need to offer them a job. When you offer the job to them, it should be subject to satisfactory references and checks

(see below).

You will also need to tell the other candidates that they have not been successful, and you might have to give them feedback about their interview and the reason that they were not offered the job.

### **Make the necessary checks**

There are a number of checks that you need to make before formally offering someone a job.

- **References:** You should always ask for at least one reference from a previous employer or someone else who knows the person well. If the person who you want to employ hands you a reference, you should always telephone the person who has written the reference to make sure that it is genuine.
- **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks:** A DBS check will tell you if the person you want to employ has a criminal record. You should always carry out an enhanced DBS check if the person who is being cared for is under 18 years old or a vulnerable adult, or if the personal assistant will be working unsupervised if there is someone aged under 18 in the house. The Council can help you to do this. If you find that the person who you want to employ has a criminal record, you must speak to your health or social care worker and they will help you to decide whether or not to go ahead and employ them.
- **Are they entitled to work in the UK:** You will need to see original copies of documents that prove that they have the right to work in the UK?



For more information about making checks before you employ someone: [www.gov.uk/browse/employing-people](http://www.gov.uk/browse/employing-people)

For more information about recruiting a personal assistant:  
[www.employingpersonalassistants.co.uk](http://www.employingpersonalassistants.co.uk)

### **Can I pay a member of my family?**

Direct payments cannot usually be used to pay a close family member/partner who lives with you, to provide you with care and support. In some cases, exceptional circumstances apply and your social care worker will discuss this with you. Any agreement to pay an appropriate family member/partner must be authorised by the Assistant Director of Adult Care. This process can take up to 28 days from the date of your social care worker receiving your request.

If we agree that it is appropriate to pay a family member/partner, this will be a time-limited agreement, written down in your Plan, and reviewed after 6 months or earlier if necessary.

If we do not agree that it is appropriate to pay a family member/partner and you disagree with our decision, you should in the first instance talk to your social care worker.

If we agree that you need support to manage your Direct Payment, you can choose to pay a family member/partner to manage the direct payment for you – for example to arrange and pay for your services, or to keep records for you. Again, this must be written down in your Plan.

### What is considered an ‘exceptional circumstance’?

There is no set definition for exceptional circumstances and every case will be considered on its own evidence with your well-being as the priority. Examples could include, but are not limited to:

- your care needs are intermittent and unpredictable to an extent that recruiting someone else to meet your needs is not possible;
- significant effort has been made to find alternative means which has been unsuccessful and this is the only way for your support to be delivered; or
- it is the only way of meeting your needs due to a sudden breakdown of other service arrangements.

Even if you know the person who you are employing, you will still need to carry out a DBS check if the person who they will be caring for is under 18 or a vulnerable adult, or if they will be left unsupervised in the same house as someone who is under 18.

You should also check that they are entitled to work in the UK and keep a copy of any documents that they provide.

### Registering with HMRC

When you first employ staff, you will need to register as an employer with HMRC. You must register before their first pay day and can do this by phoning HMRC.



For more information about registering with HMRC:  
**[www.gov.uk/payee-for-employers](http://www.gov.uk/payee-for-employers)**

### Paying your Employee

There are lots of rules and regulations that you have to follow when you employ someone. It is important to get this right from the start; otherwise, there could be serious financial penalties. Here are some of the things that you have to think about:

#### How much you are going to pay, and how often?

Employees who are aged under 25 must be paid the National Minimum Wage. Employees who are aged 25 and over must be paid at least the National Living Wage.

You also need to decide how often you are going to pay them. This could be weekly, 4 weekly or monthly.



To check the current rates for minimum wages:  
**[www.hmrc.gov.uk/nmw](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/nmw)**

## Setting up your Payroll

You need to make sure that your employee is paid the right amount of money; on time and that all deductions are made for income tax, national insurance, and pension contribution. You will also need to make sure that they receive a payslip that shows how much they have earned and any deductions that have been made.

You can either:

- **Run your payroll yourself**

Running your own payroll can be very complicated and if you get it wrong, you could be fined. You will have to register as an employer with HMRC and pay your employees as well as operate PAYE.

- **Use a payroll provider**

The payroll provider will make the necessary arrangements, including registering with HMRC. Your health or social care worker can put you in touch with organisations that can provide you with a payroll service. Usually, this can be paid for with your direct payment.

### PAYE Exemptions

PAYE is the HMRC system that collects income tax and national insurance from employment. You are exempt from PAYE if none of your employees is paid £112 or more a week, gets expenses and benefits, has another job or gets a pension.



For more information about PAYE and payroll:  
[www.gov.uk/payee-for-employers](http://www.gov.uk/payee-for-employers)

## Enrolling your employee into a pension scheme

All employers are legally required to automatically enrol eligible staff into a pension scheme and contribute towards it. You must enrol and make an employer's contribution for all staff who:

- Are aged between 22 and the State Pension age.
- Earn at least £10,000 a year.
- Work in the UK.



For more information about pensions, and check what your duties are:  
[www.thepensionregulator.gov.uk](http://www.thepensionregulator.gov.uk)

## Paid holidays and time off

Your employee is allowed a minimum of 5.6 weeks paid holiday per year, up to a statutory maximum of 28 days. The actual number of days off, that someone is entitled to depend on how many days they work per week. For example, someone who works 5 or 6 days a week is allowed 28 days paid holiday (5.6 X 5). Someone who only works 2 days a week would have 11.2 days off (5.6 X 2).



If your PA works less than 5 days a week, you should use the holiday allowance calculator: [www.gov.uk/holiday-entitlement-rights](http://www.gov.uk/holiday-entitlement-rights)

Employees are also allowed 'reasonable' paid time off work to attend things such as training and ante natal appointments and unpaid time off, for example to complete jury service.

### **Statutory Sick Pay**

If your employee takes time off sick, you are responsible for paying statutory sick pay, from their fourth day off up to a maximum of 28 weeks. If they are off for more than 7 days, they will need to get a "fit note" from their doctor to confirm that they are unable to work.



For more information about Statutory Sick Pay:  
[www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay/overview](http://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay/overview)

### **Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Shared Parental Leave and Pay**

Employees are usually entitled to paid time off work if they have a baby or adopt a child.

- Eligible employees are entitled to take up to 52 weeks of maternity or adoption leave. Statutory Maternity and Adoption Pay must be paid for the first 39 weeks.
- Fathers can choose to take either 1 or 2 weeks paid Statutory Paternity Leave.
- Parents can now choose to share their time off and receive Statutory Shared Parental Pay.

As an employer, you can usually reclaim any statutory payments you have to make from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). If you cannot afford to pay, you can apply for HMRC to pay you in advance.

If your employee tells you that they intend to take maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave, you should contact your health and social care worker. They can help you to make alternative arrangements for your care and support while your employee is off work.



For more information about maternity, paternity, adoption and shared parental leave, including a calculator to help you work out statutory pay: [www.gov.uk/employers-maternity-pay-leave](http://www.gov.uk/employers-maternity-pay-leave)

## Working hours and regular breaks

You cannot ask your employee to work for more than 48 hours per week unless the employee has volunteered and put it in writing.

Your employee is also allowed regular breaks:

- A minimum 20-minute rest break if their working day is longer than 6 hours.
- A minimum of 11 consecutive hours' rest in any 24-hour period.
- At least 1 day off each week, that is one day off out of every seven.

### Taking a personal assistant on holiday

If you decide to take your personal assistant on holiday with you, so that they can continue to provide you with care and support, you still need to allow them regular breaks. If you are away for more than a few days, it is likely that your personal assistant will have to work for more than 48 hours per week. This means that they will have to write to you to confirm that they are willing to do this. You should keep a copy of this letter in your records.

## Written Statement of Employment Particulars

If you employ someone for more than 1 month, you must give them a written statement of employment particulars within 2 months of starting their employment. This is not a contract, but will include the main conditions of employment, including:

- Your name.
- Employee's name, job title and start date.
- Salary - how much and how often it will be paid.
- Hours of work (and if the employee will have to work Sundays, nights or overtime).
- Holidays – how many days, and whether this includes bank holidays.
- The place of work (usually your home address), and any other location where the employee may have to work



More information about written statements, including a template that you can download: [www.gov.uk/employment-contracts-and-conditions](http://www.gov.uk/employment-contracts-and-conditions)

## Employment Contracts

As soon as someone accepts a job offer, they have an employment contract with you. The terms of the contract do not have to be written down – for example it could be a verbal agreement. But it is advisable to prepare a written contract of employment that clearly sets out the terms of employment. This will help to protect you as an employer, and your employee as it makes sure that everyone knows exactly what is expected of them.

A written contract of employment should include the same information that is in the Written Statement of Employment Particulars, as well as the following:

- Type of contract – for example is full time, part-time or zero hours.
- Probationary period – a period of time when you can both decide whether the arrangement is working.
- Notice period for terminating employment.
- Working time, hours and breaks.
- Sick leave and sick pay.
- Maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave.
- Pension arrangements.
- What happens when you are away, for example you are on holiday or go into hospital – will the Personal Assistant still be paid?
- What happens if you need to change a contract (see next section).
- Redundancy payments.
- Confidentiality.
- Discipline and grievance.
- Dismissal.



To download a contract template and other useful employment documents:  
[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Employing-your-own-care-and-support](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Employing-your-own-care-and-support)

### Changing a Contract

Sometimes you may need to change your employee's contract. This could be because your care and support needs have changed. You may need to increase or reduce the number of hours that they work or need them to perform different tasks for you. It could be because you decide to move to a new house and so their place of work will change.

If you need to change the contract, you must talk to your employee about it, explaining what the change is, the reasons for the change and how it will affect them. You will need their agreement before you can make any change to their contract. Once they have agreed, you must update their written statement within 1 month of the change taking place.

If they do not agree to the changes you should take independent advice from an organisation such as ACAS about the next steps.



For more information about varying a contract:  
[www.acas.org.uk/varyingacontract](http://www.acas.org.uk/varyingacontract)  
[www.gov.uk/your-employment-contract-how-it-can-be-changed/getting-agreement](http://www.gov.uk/your-employment-contract-how-it-can-be-changed/getting-agreement)

### Making sure you have the right insurance

- **Employer Liability Insurance:** You must have Employer Liability Insurance. Your policy must cover you for at least £5 million and come from an authorised insurer. This insurance will help you to pay for compensation if your employee has an accident or becomes ill because of the work they do for you.

You may not need employer liability insurance if the person who works for you is a close family member. You can check this at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

- **Home Insurance:** If your personal assistant is working in your home you should tell your home insurance provider as this may affect your policy.
- **Car Insurance:** If your PA will be driving your vehicle, you must tell your car insurance provider as it may affect your policy. If the personal assistant will be using their own vehicle to carry out their duties, you should check that their policy covers them for business use.

## Health and Safety

You have a responsibility to make sure that your employee is safe and healthy at work. There are a number of things that you must do:

- Carry out a risk assessment of your home, to identify anything that could result in an accident, injury or infection. If you do identify any risks, you will need to think about how you can reduce the risk or stop it from being a risk altogether.
- Make sure that you regularly talk to your employee about health and safety, for example when you have your monthly catch up.
- Record, and possibly report any accidents that involve your employee and take place in your home.
- Take out employer's liability insurance.
- Think about any training that your employee might need, for example if they need to help you to move about, they may benefit from People Movement training so that they don't injure themselves.



For more information about Health and Safety:  
[www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices](http://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices)

## Being a Good Employer

Being a good employer is not just about having the right paperwork and paying someone on time. It is about supporting and developing your employee and making them feel valued so that they want to carry on working for you. These are some of the things that you can do:

**Induction:** On your employees first day, you should meet with them to go through their contract/written statement and make sure that you are both clear about what is expected of you. You can also show them around, talk about health and safety, tell them where things are kept and go through any house rules, for example which rooms they can go in, whether they can use your phone and how they should handle your money. It is also a good idea to explain any personal boundaries – it is easy for these to become blurred as you get to know your employee and your relationship becomes more relaxed.

**Regular catchups (supervision):** You should set some time aside on a regular basis to have a one-to-one with your employee where you can talk about what is going well, discuss any issues or problems with their performance, and think about any training that your employee might need to help them do their job. This meeting is usually called supervision and should take place at least monthly. It is a good idea to take notes at this meeting and keep a record of them in case there are any problems in the future.

**Communication:** If you want to have a good working relationship with your employee you must have good communication. Your employee needs to know that you are sharing information with them and being open and honest. Your employee also needs to know that they can come to you if they have any issues or concerns.

**Training and Development:** Your employee is likely to need training or qualifications that will help them to do their job and develop their skills and confidence. The Council offers a number of training courses that Personal Assistants can access – for more information speak to your health or social care worker.



For more information about managing a Personal Assistant, or for information about possible funding to train your personal assistant:  
**[www.skillsforcare.org.uk](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk)**

You can also email the Council for information about courses that we offer for Personal Assistants at:  
**[workforcedevelopment@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk](mailto:workforcedevelopment@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)**.

## When things go wrong: Discipline and Grievance

If you have good communication with your employee and have regular supervision meetings with them, you should be able to address any problems that arise as soon as they become an issue. This will stop them from getting worse and prevent either of you from having to take things further. But sometimes these issues cannot be resolved informally and you both need to know what to do if this happens.

Discipline is the action that you need to take if you are not happy with your employee's performance or behaviour. A grievance is something that the employee is not happy about – this could be the way you are treating them, or a change that you have made to their job without their agreement.

As an employer, you should have a Discipline and Grievance Policy that clearly sets out the rules for what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This could include:

- Timekeeping.
- Absence.
- Health and safety.
- Performance
- Use of your facilities.
- Discrimination, bullying and harassment.
- Personal appearance.
- Types of conduct that might be considered as 'gross misconduct.'

The Policy should also include information about the process that you will go through if your employee breaks these rules or is not performing well in their job. It should also include the process that the employee needs to go through if they are not happy about their employment or the way that you are treating them.

The Policy should follow the ACAS code of practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures.



ACAS Code of Practice and Guide to Discipline and Grievance at Work:[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

## Keeping Records

As an employer, by law you need to keep the following records - these are called statutory records:

- tax and national insurance information
- for most workers, it is advisable to keep records of individual hours worked, to enable averaging over a period to meet the requirements of the Working Time Regulations, 1998
- holidays, again for the Working Time Regulations, 1998
- pay, to ensure the requirements of the Minimum Wage Act, 1998 are being met, and to meet the statutory requirement that workers are issued with pay statements
- paid sickness (more than four days) and Statutory Sick Pay
- Accidents, injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences. The Health and Safety Executive can advise on particular requirements and necessary assessments.

It is also helpful if you keep records of the following information, as this can be useful evidence if there are any disputes:

- Your recruitment and selection process for at least 6 months
- Any supervisions or formal meetings that you have with your employee
- Any disciplinary action or grievances

**All information that you keep about your employees must be stored in a secure place.**

## Redundancy

If your care and support needs change, or you decide that you no longer want to employ a personal assistant, it is likely that you will have to make your employee redundant.

If you have to make your employee redundant, you must give them the following statutory notice:

- at least 1 weeks' notice if they have been employed for more than 1 month but less than 2 years; or
- two weeks' notice if the employee has been employed by the employer continuously for two years and one additional week's notice for each further complete year of continuous employment, up to a maximum of 12 weeks. For example, if an employee has worked for 5 years then they are entitled to 5 weeks' notice.

If your employee has worked for you for 2 or more years, they will be entitled to a redundancy payment. The amount of redundancy pay depends on their age, weekly wage and how long they have worked for you.

Before making someone redundant, you should seek independent advice from an organisation such as ACAS to make sure that you are acting fairly.



The ACAS website has lots of useful information and guidance about redundancy: [www.acas.org.uk/redundancy](http://www.acas.org.uk/redundancy)

Further information about redundancy, including Information, including a calculator for statutory redundancy pay: [www.gov.uk/calculate-employee-redundancy-pay](http://www.gov.uk/calculate-employee-redundancy-pay)

## What if I do not want to be an employer but I still want a Personal Assistant?

Although there are lots of advantages to employing your own personal assistant, not everyone wants to take on the responsibility. Another option that you could consider is using your Direct Payment to pay an agency to provide you with a personal assistant. If you do this, the agency will be the employer and will be responsible for most of the things that are described in this guide.

Depending on the contract that you have with the agency, you may be able to choose your preferred personal assistant, and if that personal assistant is off work, the agency will make arrangements for someone else to provide your care and support.



For more information about agencies that might be able to help you, you can speak to your health or social care worker, or visit the Redcar and Cleveland PIN at [www.peoplesinfolnet.org.uk](http://www.peoplesinfolnet.org.uk)

## Adult Social Care Contact details:

### Address:

Directorate of Adults &  
Communities  
Adult Social Care  
Redcar and Cleveland Borough  
Council  
Seafield House  
Kirkleatham Street  
Redcar  
TS10 1SP

### Contact:

Telephone: 01642 771500

Email: [contactus@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)

Website: [www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk](http://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)

Our normal office hours are: **Monday to Thursday: 8.30 am - 5.00 pm**

**Friday: 8.30 am - 4.30 pm**

If you need help in an emergency when our offices are closed, you can contact the  
**Emergency Duty Team: Telephone:01642 524552**

**If you need help to read or understand this guide, please speak to your health, education or social care worker. You can also contact Adult Social Care on 01642 771500.**

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