

Safe recruitment of personal assistants

All our information sheets are available on the **My Care North Tyneside** website – mycare.northtyneside.gov.uk – or you can ask your social care worker to give you a copy.

This information sheet gives you advice on how to stay safe during the process of employing a personal assistant.

Advertising and interviewing

- Only provide an email address and mobile number on any adverts for personal assistants. Do not give your home address.
- We advise you not to interview applicants in your home. You might be able to use an interview room at your social care team's offices, or one of the council's Customer First Centres. Your social care worker can help you to arrange this.
- Ask someone to support you when interviewing. This is good for your personal safety, and they can give another view on who is the most suitable candidate. You could ask a friend or family member, and/or our accredited Direct Payment Support Services can interview with you.
- Think of questions to ask in advance, and ask each candidate the same questions. This might cover their work experience, and the skills and knowledge needed to do the job. You should ask for an example of when the person has needed to use the skill you are asking about.
- Questions will depend on the support you want, but some suggestions might be:
 - How would you make sure we are both safe and comfortable when you carry out personal care?



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- Can you give me an example of how you personalise the support you provide?
 - What qualities do you have that make you a good PA?
- Make notes of each interviewee's answers. This will help you to remember what was said. It can be helpful to give each question a score out of 5, to work out which was the strongest candidate.
- You should explore whether the applicant can manage the physical requirements of the job, especially if moving and handling is needed.
- 'Reasonable adjustments' must be made for disabled employees (e.g. additional equipment to support), but if they would be unable to fulfil the job requirements even with reasonable adjustments, you can decline to employ them.

Pre-employment checks

- When you have decided who you would like to employ, you must check their identity documents as part of Right to Work in the UK checks. The easiest way to do this is to ask everyone to bring these documents to the interview.
- Full details of the documents required are available on the Gov.uk website: <http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/right-to-work-checks-employers-guide>
- You may also ask to see two documents showing proof of address, e.g. a utility bill, a council tax bill, or a bank statement with their name and address printed on it.
- You should also ask to see evidence of their National Insurance number – some people still have plastic cards with the number on, others might have a letter or a printed payslip.

References

- Make sure you ask for at least two referees. Ask for their names, addresses, email and telephone numbers. Write to them asking for a reference for the applicant. Do not accept pre-prepared references.
- If you are happy with the written references, follow up with a phone call to make sure the referee is who they say they are, and give the person a chance to tell you anything else they think you should know.

Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) criminal record checks

- You should complete an 'enhanced DBS check' for PAs that you want to employ, including a check of the adults barred list. The children's barred list should also be checked if your PA is going to have contact with under 18s as part of their work.
- The DBS check will show if they have ever been convicted of an offence, or banned from working with vulnerable adults or young people.
- A Direct Payment Support Service from our accredited list will complete these checks for you.
- When the DBS certificate is returned, the prospective PA should show you the result.
- If the check shows convictions, you should consider:
 - The nature of the offence(s): does it show behaviour which could pose a risk to you?
 - How long ago the offence(s) were: a less serious conviction from a long time ago, with nothing since, may suggest the person has turned their life around
 - The applicant's explanations: were they open and honest with you about the offence before the check? How have they shown good character since this time?
- DBS checks give information about past behaviour - but do not let a 'clean' record reduce your vigilance. While most people are of good

character, a dangerous person might have simply not been caught yet.

How long does a DBS check take, and how much does it cost?

This can vary. Some checks come back in a week or two, but others can take several weeks. The council will pay for any DBS checks needed in your first direct payment instalment.

More information

Read our information sheet on **Support to manage a direct payment** for details of what our accredited Direct Payment Support Services can help with. This can include advertising, interviews and pre-employment checks.

You can also speak with your social care worker for further advice.

What should I do if I am worried about my Personal Assistant's behaviour?

The vast majority of people have no problems with their support staff, and get good quality care from committed, skilled people. However, it is best to know what to do if you are unsafe:

- If you are in immediate danger, you should call the police on **999**.
- If you think your PA has done something which is a crime, and they are not present, you should call **101** to report this.
- Then tell Adult Social Care. During weekday office hours, you can contact:
 - The team who oversees your care. Contact details are available from:
mycare.northtyneside.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/howto/contacts
 - Or the Social Care Contact Centre on 0191 643 2777

- Outside of office hours, contact Adult Social Care Emergency Duty Team via Care Call on 0330 333 7475 – even if you are not a Care Call customer.
- If you have any other concerns about your PA, you should contact your social care worker during office hours – if you cannot get through to them, call their team’s duty number.
- The web link above provides information about team contact details, or you can call the Social Care Contact Centre on 0191 643 2777 if you are unsure.

Alternative formats

If you need us to do anything differently (reasonable adjustments) to help you access our services, including providing this information in another language or format, please contact the Social Care Contact Centre on 0191 643 2777, or email: childrenandadultscontactcentre@northtyneside.gov.uk

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