

A Step-by-Step Guide to Recruiting your Personal Assistant



Direct payments can help you take greater control over the support that you have been assessed as needing. For some people employing a Personal Assistant of their choice, someone they can get to know, and trust can be life changing and enables them to live a fuller and more independent lifestyle. However, with this option also comes some responsibilities. Employing a personal assistant means that you need to understand and comply with certain employment rules to ensure that you treat your personal assistant well and that you both get the best outcomes from the arrangement.

The Flintshire direct payments support service has produced a range of direct payments related information designed to give you relevant information and help you make choices that are right for you. Your allocated direct payments officer will discuss this information and the options available to you and provide appropriate support at every stage.

You can also access a variety of useful information at our web site, so please visit:

<https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Social-Services/Direct-Payments/Home.aspx>

If you have considered all the options and feel that employing a personal assistant is the right choice for you, then this handbook is designed to support with all aspects of recruiting the right Personal Assistant for you.

This step-by-step guide will support you through the key steps from advertising through to appointing your new personal assistant. Whilst this may appear daunting the Flintshire Direct Payments Support Service will be with you every step of the way and will provide support as it is needed.

A Recruitment Checklist has been developed to work alongside this guide. Please see **Appendix A**

Please remember that Support is available from the Direct Payments Support Service at every step of this process, so if you have any questions please contact the team:

Tel: 01352 701100

Email: dp.support@flintshire.gov.uk

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Step 1

Writing your Job Description & Person Specification

A **job description** is a list of tasks that you would like your personal assistant to do.

A **person specification** is a list of the skills, experience, and personal qualities that you would like your personal assistant to have.

Your Care & Support Plan will have specific requirements that you will need to think about when writing the job description and person specification.

Think about what would make your ideal personal assistant.

- List the skills that you would like your personal assistant to have, for example, do you want someone who can drive or has good communication skills.
- Think about their values, for example, a sense of humour, patience or being able to use their initiative.
- List the tasks that you would like your personal assistant to do, for example, support at work, with personal care, attending social events or making meals.
- You might also want to think about your own cultural and religious needs and whether you want to employ someone who understands them.

More information

A Social Worker or equivalent worker should support you with completing your Person Centred Care & Support Plan during your Social Care Assessment. This document details your assessed needs, the things that matter to you and the ways you aim to live your life regardless of personal challenges.

This will help you think about the things that are important to you and what you may need support with and what you want to achieve with your personal assistant.

You can also use this as a tool for your personal assistant to get to know you, learn about the things important to you and what you want them to support you to achieve.

For support and a template to help you write your Job Description/Person please speak with your allocated direct payments support officer or contact the Direct Payments Support Service:

Tel: 01352 701100

Email: dp.support@flintshire.gov.uk

Step 2

Writing your job advert

Your job advert should include the following information – remember this is about the type of person that you want to be your personal assistant.

Who you would like to apply

Give a brief description about the type of person that you want to apply. Think about what values, skills, experience and qualifications they need. For example, your job advert could say 'Are you caring, resilient and have a good sense of humour? Do you mind if the person is a smoker? Do they need to be able to drive?'

Say if you want someone who has certain experience or qualifications (or both) so they can meet your requirements.

Is it important if the person is a man or a woman? If so, you need to make sure that you say why, for example, you want them to do intimate personal care and you want someone of the same gender. You need to be careful here because of the Equalities Act which bans unfair treatment and helps achieve equal opportunities.

Your advert should also include:

What you want your personal assistant to help you to achieve – For example, to help you build confidence and become more independent, to help you to go to college or get employment, or something else that is important to you.

Hours, type of work and main duties - state the days and times that you need your personal assistant to work and a summary of the type of work that you want them to do.

Rate of pay – you must state the hourly rate you will pay your personal assistant. The Flintshire Direct Payments Team will help you calculate how much you will be able to pay your personal assistants.

General Location - tell people where they will be working but do not give out your home address at this stage.

Application form or curriculum vitae (CV) - tell people how you want them to apply, for example, by completing an application form or sending you a copy of their CV. This is your choice, and you could ask them to do both.

Closing date for applications - choose a closing date that gives people enough time to see and apply for the job. A minimum of two weeks is usual.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (previously CRB checks) - It is important that you are clear in the advertisement people will go through a DBS check before they start work. The Flintshire Direct Payments Team will arrange this for you to ensure that you know whether your personal assistants have criminal convictions.

In most cases it is a legal requirement for your personal assistant to have had a DBS check. This helps keep you and others safe.

References

Say that you will ask for references. It is usual to ask for two.

Contact details for further information

Tell people how they can contact you to find out more. Do not give your personal address - asking people to contact you by telephone, email, or post is usual.

Flintshire County Council Direct Payments Officers can help you coordinate the applications you receive.

For support and a helpful guide to help you write your Job Description/Person please speak with your allocated direct payments support officer or contact the Direct Payments Support Service:

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Step 3

Advertising your vacancy

Flintshire County Council has an online Personal Assistants register and vacancy page. This can be found by following the link below:

<https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Social-Services/Direct-Payments/PA-Portal.aspx>

Personal Assistants in Flintshire can upload their profiles to this register to advertise that they are looking for work. You can use this to contact potential personal assistant candidates.

Each Profile will provide information about the personal assistant, their area of work, their experience and any special skills or interests they have.

You can advertise your personal assistant job on social media, including on local community noticeboards.

There are also places in the local community that may also support individuals, carer/parents with advertising for personal assistants, such as:

- A Community Centre notice board
- Your local library notice board
- Your local Supermarket
- A charity or voluntary organisation notice board
- Your local paper
- Religious or faith groups notice board

You should also consider online forums that would support adverts for individuals, carer/parents such as:

- www.wecare.wales
- www.monster.co.uk
- www.totaljobs.com
- www.gumtree.com
- www.indeed.co.uk

You can also advertise at your local job centre.

For support with advertising please speak with your allocated direct payments support officer or contact the Direct Payments Support Service:

Tel: 01352 701100

Email: dp.support@flintshire.gov.uk

Step 4

Choose who to interview

This is often called 'shortlisting' because you are making a short list of all the applications that you have received.

After the closing date, look through the application forms or CVs and decide who you want to interview. You could use the job description and person specification to rate the applications and shortlist the ones that most closely fit the job and the type of person that you want.

You must make sure that this is fair, and you do not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of protected characteristics, for example, their age, race, gender or sexual orientation.

ACAS has a useful booklet called 'Delivering equality and diversity' that can be downloaded from www.acas.org.uk - the section on recruitment and selection is particularly helpful. You can also call ACAS on 0300 123 1100 for free and confidential advice.

The people that you choose to interview are often called candidates. Once you have made your decision, you can contact the candidates and ask them to attend an interview.

For support and a template letter please speak with your allocated direct payments support officer or contact the Direct Payments Support Service:

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Email: dp.support@flintshire.gov.uk

Step 5

Interviewing

Interviewing can be as nerve racking for you as it is for the person that you are interviewing, so here is a step-by-step process to guide you through it.

Where should the interview take place?

It is better to do the interviews away from your home if possible. Your local library, a community centre or the Flintshire Direct Payments Support Service may be able to provide a room that you can use.

Prepare for the interview

Arrange a venue and, if required, arrange for someone to support you.

Prepare a list of questions that you want to ask each candidate, for example, about what they are like as a person, their work experience, their qualifications and why they want to work for you.

It is important that you do not ask inappropriate discriminatory questions, related to protected characteristics such as the persons age, sexual orientation, marital status, religious beliefs etc.

It is also a good idea to think of a particular situation that is relevant to you and ask them how they would deal with it.

Here are some questions that you could ask.

- What qualities and experience do you have that you think would make you a good personal assistant?
- What are your hobbies and/or interests?
- Would you be willing to undertake regular training and take responsibility for your personal development?
- What experience of working with disabled people do you have?
- If you were out with me and someone persisted in ignoring me and spoke only to you, how would you react?
- I will need to tell you how to do things in the way that I want them done. How do you think that you would cope with this?
- How would you react if you have done something, and I want it done again in a different way?
- What if I ask you to do something, and you think there is another way to do it that you would prefer – what would you do?
- If we did have a difference of opinion, how do you think that you would deal with it?
- Would you be interested if there is any training available?
- What shifts would you prefer, for example, days, nights or a mixture?
- Are there any questions that you would like to ask me?

Do not interview alone

It is a good idea to ask a friend, representative, or Direct Payments officer to do the interviewing with you. It is always good to have another opinion, but do not let the other person influence your decision making – you make the final decision.

Allow time between interviews

Take a break between interviews and make some notes of the answers to your questions. This will help you to remember each candidate and make your decision about who to offer the job to.

Do not rush a decision

If you are not sure who to offer the job to, sleep on it, ask for more information, or even re-interview. If you did not think that anyone was good enough, then you can re-advertise and interview different people.

More information

The Government also has practical advice to help you to employ people at www.gov.uk/browse/employing-people.

For support to interview and/or for further ideas about questions you should ask please speak with your allocated direct payments support officer or contact the Direct Payments Support Service:

Tel: 01352 701100

Email: dp.support@flintshire.gov.uk

Step 6

Offer the job

Once you have decided who you want to employ, contact them and offer them the job.

Tell them that you will first need to check their references and carry out any other checks (for example, a DBS check). Make sure that you give enough time between offering the job and start date to enable you to carry out the checks.

Find out more in the '[Do the right checks](#)' section of this booklet.

Tell the unsuccessful candidates

Once your preferred person has accepted the job, send a letter to the people that you interviewed who did not get the job (you do not need to phone them).

They may want to have some feedback on their performance during the interview. If you are asked this, use your notes from the interview to provide feedback.

For support and a template letter please speak with your allocated direct payments support officer or contact the Direct Payments Support Service:

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Step 7

Do the right checks

There are some checks that you need to do before someone starts working for you.

References

Candidates should supply references when they apply for the job. They are the name and contact details of someone that knows them, usually a previous employer. They help you to make sure that the information that people have told you is correct. It is also good to have the opinion of someone who already knows the person that you want to employ.

There are two ways that you can ask for a reference - in writing and by telephone.

Request a reference in writing

This is the best way to get the most information. You can ask specific questions and send a copy of the job description, so that you are sure that the referee (the person giving the reference) understands what the job involves.

For a template letter requesting a reference please speak with your allocated direct payments support officer or contact the Direct Payments Support Service:

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Email: dp.support@flintshire.gov.uk

Request a reference by phone

This is quicker than waiting for letters and referees may be prepared to say things over the phone that they would not write down. But a quick phone call may not allow the referee to think about what the job involves. It is a good idea to follow up a telephone reference with a written reference.

NOTE: If you are handed a reference by the person, you interview or receive one by post before you have requested it, always follow it up with a phone call.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

DBS checks help you to know whether people have a criminal conviction. In Flintshire it is a requirement for all personal assistants to undertake a DBS check before they commence work for you. This helps protect you and ensures that you and the council know the conviction history of an applicant before you employ them.

Remember:

- A DBS check should only be done for a successful job applicant.
- Your Direct Payment Officer can help you complete a DBS check
- The cost of your DBS checks is covered by Flintshire County Council

- In most cases a personal assistant cannot start work until their DBS check has been completed.

Visit the Government website for more information about DBS checks at www.gov.uk/dbs.

You can also call them on 0300 0200 190 (Minicom: 0300 0200 192) or email customerservices@dbs.gsi.gov.uk.

Right to work check

Before you offer someone the job you need to check that they have the legal right to work in the UK. You should check and keep copies of certain documents before your personal assistant starts.

Your allocated Direct Payments Officer will help complete this check.

The documents that you need to check will depend on the type of worker that you are employing, but usually include a:

- British or European passport
- Birth certificate confirming that they were born in the UK or Republic of Ireland
- Letter from the Home Office confirming that they have a legal right to work in the UK.

Visit the Government website for more information about right to work checks at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/right-to-work-checklist/employers-right-to-work-checklist-accessible-version>

For advice and support to carry out the above checks please speak with your allocated direct payments support officer or contact the Direct Payments Support Service:

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Email: dp.support@flintshire.gov.uk

Step 8

Issue a Contract of Employment

You will need to issue your personal assistant with an employment contract. This is important because it is the agreement between you and your employee, it sets out the personal assistant's employment rights, responsibilities and duties as well as your own responsibilities as their employer.

It will also detail things like holidays, notice period, how to deal with a grievance, disciplinary procedures and sick pay.

Your direct payments support officer can provide you with a template contract of employment. Please note that if you want to make changes to the contract you should seek advice from your direct payment's insurance provider.

If changes to your contract result in additional funding being required, this must be agreed with FCC before being issued to your Personal Assistant.

If you are experienced and confident you may choose to complete the employment contract independently with your personal assistant. However, support is available from your Direct Payments Officer to guide you. It is always worth asking your employment liability insurer to check your contract before it is issued to make sure you have included everything that you need.

You are required to calculate how much annual leave your personal assistant will be entitled to. You can work this out using an appropriate formular. Your Direct Payments Officer can support you with this.

A record of leave taken must be kept and signed by you and your personal assistant.

For support and a template contract please speak with your allocated direct payments support officer or contact the Direct Payments Support Service:

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Other Considerations

Professional Boundaries

From the start you should establish boundaries about how you will relate to each other. You should discuss how you will deal with any problems that may arise. For example, if boundaries have become blurred or if either of you are unhappy with something.

Always remember that your personal assistant is an employee and should not be considered a friend whilst they are being paid for their time.

Communication is vital to sorting out any problems, the quicker an issue is talked about the faster it can be resolved to stop small things becoming bigger problems.

You can receive advice and support from your Direct Payments Officer.

Alternatively, you will also receive specialist Employers Liability Insurance. This is funded by FCC and is designed to help keep both you and your employees safe should something go wrong. All approved insurers provide comprehensive legal cover and 24hr advice. Your Direct Payments Officer will help set this up and you will receive an introduction pack with information and relevant contact details. If you ever require employment related advice or legal support your insurance provider must be contacted in the first instance.

Training

Arrange any mandatory training for your PA before they start work and support them with their personal development by continuing to provide opportunities for training throughout the time they are employed by you.

Recording Sickness

If your PA is ill and unable to attend work, they should inform you as soon as possible to enable other arrangements to be made.

They may be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) on production of an Employee's Statement of Sickness (form SC2) which must be completed for sick leave of four days or more in a row.

If they are sick for more than seven days, they must obtain a medical statement of fitness for work 'fit note' from their doctor. These forms must be sent directly to you. For absences of less than four days a written record will need to be kept.

Contingency Arrangements

From time to time your Personal Assistant is likely to be absent from work for a planned reason, for example, annual leave, scheduled hospital stay or unpaid leave, or for an unplanned reason such as sickness. It is very important that you consider who will step in to provide your support at these times – this is called having a contingency plan/back up plan.

Your contingency plan can help you manage situations where your support is not

available and will ensure everyone is clear with what needs to happen, and who will action things.

For support and a helpful contingency planning template please speak with your allocated direct payments support officer or contact the Direct Payments Support Service: Tel: 01352 701100 Email: dp.support@flintshire.gov.uk

Appendix A

Employer Name: _____ Date of commencement: _____

	STEPS TO COMPLETE	INFORMATION	COMPLETION DATE
1	Write your Job Description and Personal Specification	Focus on what you would like your new Personal Assistant to help you to achieve. What are your goals and ambitions. For example: How might they help you to live a better life, be more independent, do the things that you are currently unable to do etc. What type of person are you looking for? What skills, abilities and experience do they need?	
2	Write your job advert	Using the information above use your advert as an opportunity to describe the job, what the person would be expected to do and what they would be helping you to do. Say if you want somebody with certain skills, experience or qualifications. Consider whether you need someone who can drive, prepare food, or something else that is necessary to do the job. Include hours of work, main duties, rates of pay, general location etc. Your advert should also include the closing date for applications and details of how they can apply.	
3	Advertising your vacancy	Place your advert in places where you will attract the right applicants. Social media can be useful to advertise your vacancy, but please seek advice from your Direct Payments Officer first as there may be things that you need to consider.	
4	Shortlist your applications	Consider what each of your applicants has to offer and decide who you would like to interview. Arrange an interview venue, date and times and invite prospective Personal Assistants to attend an interview.	

5	Interviewing	Prior to your interview day prepare questions based on what you would like to find out about your candidates.	
6	Offer the job	If you have found someone that you would like to support you and become your Personal Assistant. Offer them the job in writing Inform other candidates that they have been unsuccessful	
7	Do the necessary checks	Get references Arrange a DBS Check Complete a Right to Work Check	
8	Contract of Employment	Calculate Holiday entitlement Issue a contract of employment that contains all the necessary terms and conditions. Arrange mandatory training prior to your Personal Assistant commencing their duties.	

If you have any questions, or would like any further support, please contact the **Direct Payment Support Team on:**

- Tel: 01352 701100
- Email: dp.support@flintshire.gov.uk
- Post: Direct Payments Support Service, St Davids Park, Ty Dewi Sant, Ewloe, Flintshire, CH5 3FF.