

# **BECOMING A PERSONAL ASSISTANT**



**A guide for people  
who want to or are  
already working as  
a personal assistant**



**Isle of Wight  
Council**

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# What is a personal assistant?

Personal assistants (PAs) are employed to support individuals who need social care or health care support, to live their life in a way they choose that enables them to live as independently as possible in their home.

As a PA you are likely to be involved in many aspects of the individuals life and may be asked to provide support in the home, at leisure or at work. The opportunity to focus directly on the needs of an individual and the diversity of the role and tasks is what often attracts many people to this type of work.

## What makes being a personal assistant a rewarding job?

Working as a PA can be rewarding, challenging and varied as well as offering flexible working patterns to suit your other commitments. It has a number of advantages:

**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.

**INCOME** – As a personal assistant you can often be better paid than working through an agency.

**JOB SATISFACTION** – 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.

# What do personal assistants do?

The role of a PA is extremely varied and no two jobs will ever be the same; this is because the individual, employing a PA can choose exactly how they are supported to ensure their needs are met.

PAs can provide support for the things people need day to day; to maintain their health and wellbeing, things that they are aiming to do and things they want to learn to do again.

### **As a PA you may be supporting an individual:**

- at their place of work or education;
- to maintain relationships with family and friends including supporting the person with childcare;
- to meet new people and develop new friendships;
- to get about in the community;
- to maintain hobbies and interests;
- by providing personal care including support to dress wash and bathe;
- by carrying out household tasks like cooking, cleaning, meal preparation and shopping;
- by going with them to their hospital and other appointments.

When employing a PA people look for someone who is a good personal fit; so it's not always about previous experience, but ensuring the person they employ has the right values and skills to do the job.

The majority of PAs on the noticeboard will be DBS checked.

### **Anyone can be a PA as long as they:**

- 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;
- are comfortable working on their own or with other PAs as part of a team;
- have the ability to develop a strong, trusting relationship with the individual;
- understand that they are an employee and not a friend;
- understand that this is a professional relationship.

### **As a PA you should:**

#### **VALUES**

- **be responsible and reliable;**
- **be respectful;**
- **be encouraging and understanding;**
- **be flexible;**
- **be understanding of the challenges faced by disabled people;**

#### **SKILLS**

- **have the ability to listen;**
- **have good interpersonal skills;**
- **have the ability to be personal yet professional;**
- **have local knowledge;**
- **have the ability to treat people with dignity.**

## **Things to be aware of**

As a PA you will have a unique relationship with the individual you are supporting to be independent, although this can feel like a personal relationship it is not. It is important to remain independent and professional.

It is important to understand the impact certain circumstances may have on the individual for example, if you do not or cannot turn up to work.

There are times when being a PA could be personally difficult or emotional, particularly if it involves working with a person at the end of their life.

As such, there may, from time to time, be problems with the relationship between you and the individual.

Any problems should be addressed properly between the individuals, a family member or the local authority.

## The recruitment process



### Where to find a job

There are lots of ways to find a job as a PA. Here are a few examples of where to look. You may also be able to find a job through friends or family.

The PA Noticeboard is a service that lists PAs looking for work and individuals looking for PAs. As part of the accreditation process you will have a conversation with a member of the PA market development team and will be asked to provide some information. If you are unable to do that, the member of staff will be able to provide you with information and advice on who to contact to be able to help you.

The best way of finding a job or to register as a PA is on the Isle of Wight Council's personal assistant jobs noticeboard at [isleofwight.panoticeboard.org.uk](http://isleofwight.panoticeboard.org.uk) or email: [pamarket@iow.gov.uk](mailto:pamarket@iow.gov.uk)

If you do not have internet access, contact the PA market development team on 01983 823340. They will send you an accreditation form to complete in the post.

### Understanding the role

As a PA, the job can involve different tasks. The person requiring a PA will have an idea of the type of person they are looking for and an outline of what they want them to do. This will usually be set out in a job description.

Before applying for a job, read the advert and job description carefully so that you are clear about the tasks you are going to be asked to do. It is important to make sure you can do them all.

People often recruit different PAs to do different tasks; For example, one may be able to help them bathe, while another will support them to go out and socialise with their friends.

**More helpful information can be found in FAQ and useful information sections towards the end of this guide.**

It is up to the individual to define the role and the tasks you will be asked to carry out. As a PA it is important to be flexible, however if you feel you are asked to do anything outside of what you expect, it is vital to have a conversation with the individual to clear up any issues and continue a good working relationship.

## **Getting the job**

Individuals may wish to hold a very informal interview, and may be held at a different location to where you will be actually working. During the interview remember to be yourself, talk about relevant experience and qualities and be prepared to ask questions. The National Careers Service has interview hints and tips – [nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk)

After interview you should be contacted to let you know if you were successful or not. If you have not heard anything, contact the person who interviewed you. If you were not successful, you may want to ask for feedback to help you with future interviews.

If you are successful, you should then agree a start date, and you may be provided with an employment contract, so that you can be sure of what the job involves.

## **Checks and references**

These may include references, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) (formerly known as CRB) and right to work checks. Please contact the PA market development team for further information.

You should bear this in mind when applying for jobs and be prepared to give names of former employers and character references. You may also need to provide forms of identification as specified by the Disclosure and Barring Service.

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service)

or the Home Office [www.gov.uk/government/publications/right-to-work-checklist](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/right-to-work-checklist)

## Starting work

Getting off to a good start with the individual is very important. A way to do this is through an induction.

### **Induction – what is it and when should it take place?**

Induction is an introduction to everything related to the job you will be doing and the environment in which you will be working. It will usually be carried out by the individual and could be as simple as turning up on your first day and being guided through what to do and what is expected of you. It is about getting to know each other and developing your working relationship.

Depending on the tasks that are required in your new job, this will determine what the induction will be like. Use this list as a guide of what should be included:

- The individual explaining the different tasks they want you to do for them and show you around their home.
- The individual explaining what assistance they require and how they prefer to be supported.
- If you are working as part of a team, an introduction to the other PAs.



- The house rules for example, please do not accept personal calls while working for me, please do not use my telephone, please do not smoke in my house, do not leave the back door open as my dog will run out.
- Other information that could be valuable for example, whether there is a back-up plan should you be delayed or are unable to come in. What are the arrangements to implement the back-up plan and how you report incidents or accidents?

An induction may also involve the opportunity to shadow more experienced personal assistants.

## Working together

### Keeping safe

Being a PA may mean you work alone with the individual, this is often referred to as 'lone working'. Therefore, it is important to be aware of your safety and that of the individual.

Good and speedy communication is the key to avoiding any problems; if this does not sort out the issues then speak to others, for example the individual's family, friends, or professionals working with them.

It is good to keep an accident or incident book, so that anything out of the ordinary can be noted down.

### Health and safety

Because the individual's home will be your place of work, it is their responsibility to ensure you have a safe place to work. You should speak with the individual about any risks or potential hazards you have noticed.

It is also your responsibility to make the individual aware of anything that may impact on your health and safety, for example, pregnancy in a job that requires heavy lifting.

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality is important for both parties. The individual will hold confidential information about you and you will have access to personal information about the individual.

You should discuss with the individual who you can share information with, for example, their doctor, and under what circumstances.

No information should be shared with anyone against the individual's wishes. This includes sharing personal information about your employer on social media (Facebook, Twitter and so on).

However, in extreme circumstances, for example a medical emergency, or if you feel there is a safeguarding issue, then you may have to share personal information without the consent of the individual.

Confidential information should always be kept securely so that other people are not able to access it.

## Getting support

The PA market development team will be holding quarterly catch-up meetings for PAs to attend and discuss any issues or training opportunities. Please visit [isleofwight.panoticeboard.org.uk](https://isleofwight.panoticeboard.org.uk) for dates.

## Peer support

Peer support is when people provide knowledge, experience, emotional, social or practical help to each other. It can be beneficial and useful and may take different forms, for example, a PA network, support group or forum. These may be virtual or online, or groups that meet regularly. It's a great way to share experiences and speak with other PAs who understand the unique nature of the role. If you can't find a network in your area, you may want to consider starting one.

## Training opportunities

Various opportunities will made available at:  
[isleofwight.panoticeboard.org.uk](http://isleofwight.panoticeboard.org.uk)

## Further career options

This is a growing sector which offers a range of rewarding careers, with many different job roles and lots of opportunities for progression. For more information about health and social care careers visit [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Recruitment-support/Support-individual-employers-PAs/Personal-Assistant/Personal-assistants.aspx](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Recruitment-support/Support-individual-employers-PAs/Personal-Assistant/Personal-assistants.aspx)



## Frequently asked questions

### **Are there any standards or codes of practices for PAs?**

There are no standards or codes of practice for PAs, but it may be relevant for your role to follow Dignity in Care ([www.dignityincare.org.uk](http://www.dignityincare.org.uk)) and the code of practice for social care workers ([www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Documents/Standards-legislation/Code-of-Conduct/Code-of-Conduct.pdf](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Documents/Standards-legislation/Code-of-Conduct/Code-of-Conduct.pdf))

### **Can a personal assistant be self-employed rather than being an employee?**

There are two options available for becoming a PA, this can be on a self-employed basis or employed basis .

### **What happens if I am ill?**

Back-up PAs for holiday cover should be included in your employment contract. You should have something in place if you are unable to work, and for planned holidays. You should speak to the individual if you are not sure about this. More information can be found here: [www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay/overview](http://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay/overview)

It would be advisable for PAs to work in small teams to support each other.

### **Will I get travel to work costs?**

No, you would not normally get travel to work costs. Although if taking an individual out, you would be able to get the travel costs covered by supplying a receipt or invoice. Travel cost may be added to the persons independence plan; for example, time allocated from A to B and back to A.

### **Can I work with more than one person? If so, do I have to tell my current employer?**

Yes you can work for more than one person. If you are self-employed you will need to pay your own tax and national insurance.

### **Who is responsible to find cover for holidays?**

The PA is responsible for finding cover for holiday entitlement. The PA market team can provide support with this.

### **Do personal assistants maintain contact with social care or health services?**

An individual employing a PA may or may not have on-going support from social services or health services. Either way you, as a PA, should not be expected to have direct contact with social services or health service staff unless the individual has asked you to do this on their behalf or you are supporting your employer at appointments.

### **What do I do if I think someone is being mistreated?**

If you suspect someone is in immediate risk, harm or danger, please telephone the Police on 999.

If you are concerned that an adult is, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, please call the safeguarding team on 01983 814980 (outside office hours call 01983 821105) or email [abusereporting@iow.gov.uk](mailto:abusereporting@iow.gov.uk)

More safeguarding information can be located at:  
[www.iow.gov.uk/housing-and-adult-social-care/adult-social-care/adult-safeguarding](http://www.iow.gov.uk/housing-and-adult-social-care/adult-social-care/adult-safeguarding)

# BECOMING A PERSONAL ASSISTANT

## How easy is it to find work?

You can find opportunities through the website:

[isleofwight.panoticeboard.org.uk](http://isleofwight.panoticeboard.org.uk)

## Who pays me?

The individual will be responsible for paying you, however they can choose to do that through a payroll service or Isle of Wight managed providers.



# Useful information, websites and contacts

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/iepahub](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/iepahub)

The information hub for individual employers and PAs brings together essential information into one place. It includes information about being a PA and links to organisations that run PA registers (or banks), job vacancies and networks.

## **Government**

This website is the best place to find government services and information. It has been designed to make it simpler, clearer, and faster for you to get to what you need from government.

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

## **HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)**

They collect and administer direct and indirect taxes and pay and administer things like child benefit, child trust fund and tax credits. They also protect you by enforcing and administering border and frontier protection, environmental taxes, national minimum wage enforcement and recovery of student loans.

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0300 200 3300

Textphone: 0300 200 3319

Opening times:

8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday

8am to 4pm, Saturday

Closed Sundays and bank holidays

## **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)**

HSE's job is to prevent people being killed, injured or made ill by work.

[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

## **The pensions regulator**

This organisation has information for employers about work-based pension schemes for employees as well as information about automatic enrolment.

[www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk](http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0845 600 1011

Email: [customersupport@autoenrol.tpr.gov.uk](mailto:customersupport@autoenrol.tpr.gov.uk)

The Pensions Regulator, PO Box 16314, Birmingham B23 3JP

## **Stop Hate UK**

A charity that provides independent and confidential support to people affected by hate crime.

[www.stophateuk.org](http://www.stophateuk.org)

Telephone: 0113 293 5100

Text relay service: 18001 0113 293 5100

Email: [info@stophateuk.org](mailto:info@stophateuk.org)

Stop Hate UK, PO Box 484, Leeds LS7 9BZ

Telephone: 0800 138 1625

Text relay service: 18001 0800 138 1625

Text: 07717 989 025

Email: [talk@stophateuk.org](mailto:talk@stophateuk.org)



# How the personal assistant role fits into the world of social care and health

## **The social model of disability and person-centred practice**

The social model is a way of understanding disability. It says that disability is created by barriers in society which generally falls into three categories:

- The environment – including inaccessible buildings and services.
- People's attitudes – stereotyping, discrimination and prejudice.
- Organisations – inflexible policies, practices and procedures.

Using the social model helps identify solutions to the barriers disabled people experience. It encourages the removal of these barriers within society, or the reduction of their effects, rather than trying to fix an individual's impairment or health condition.

The social model is the preferred model for disabled people and encourages society to be more inclusive.

Personalisation and person-centred care is about individuals being in control of building a system of care and support that is designed with their full involvement and tailored to meet their own unique needs.

## **Direct payments**

Individuals choose to employ PAs rather than having care and support arranged for them because it gives them more control of where and when they have support as well as control over deciding who will provide this support.

Most individuals who employ a PA have something called a direct payment. They receive this direct payment after having an assessment of their needs, by either a social services department or the local health service. This money is for individuals to buy their own care and

support from care organisations, specialist equipment, or employ their own PA's. Not everyone who employs a PA will have a personal budget, people who are able to can fund their own care and support needs are called self-funders.

Direct payments have been in existence for many years but in recent years social services and health services, have been encouraged to support more people to have the choice of organising their own care and support. If you would like to know more about this, please visit:

[www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/our-hubs/choice-and-control](http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/our-hubs/choice-and-control)

## About Skills for Care

Skills for Care are the employer-led workforce development body for adult social care in England. they work with employers across England to make sure their people have the right skills and values to deliver high quality care.

Home of the National Skills Academy for Social Care, they offer workforce learning and development support and practical resources from entry level right through to those in leadership and management roles.

By working with employers and sharing best practice, they help raise quality and standards across the whole sector and ensure dignity and respect are at the heart of service delivery.

For more detailed information about what they do and how they can help please visit: [www.skillsforcare.org.uk](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk) or telephone: 0113 245 1716, 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.



**For more information for personal assistants  
on the Isle of Wight please contact the Isle of  
Wight Council.**

**Telephone: 01983 823340,  
between 9am and 5pm, Monday to  
Thursday, and 9am and 4.30pm, Friday**

**Email: [pamarket@iow.gov.uk](mailto:pamarket@iow.gov.uk)**

**[isleofwight.panoticeboard.org.uk](http://isleofwight.panoticeboard.org.uk)**

If you have difficulty understanding  
this document, please contact us  
on 01983 823340 and we will do  
our best to help you.



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