

Sian Vasey Best Practice Guide for recruiting and employing Personal Assistants



**Produced by the Direct Payment User Group and the
Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group**

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Sian Vasey Best Practice Guide

Sian Vasey, former vice-chair of Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group (ERSCAG), died prematurely in 2020. A dedicated campaigner and trade union activist all her life, she was involved, amongst many other initiatives, with promoting good practice in the relationships between Personal Assistants and Direct Payment Users.

This Best Practice Guide has been developed in her memory.

The initiative was undertaken by Pat McCarthy working closely with ERSCAG members Alex Cowan (who succeeded Sian as chair of ERSCAG's Direct Payment User Group) and Maggie Beirne. The input of other members of the group and various Personal Assistants was also invaluable.

The document is intended to assist Direct Payment Users, who will have many different needs, think through what is needed when they recruit a Personal Assistant, and what the potential recruit needs to know about the work before agreeing to undertake it.

Please note that the legal employment framework changes frequently.

This Guide is intended to assist Direct Payment Users produce draft adverts/job descriptions/employment contracts.

When finalising, you should take up-to-date advice from your Local Authority and/or insurance company.

- **Sian Vasey Best Practice Guide**

Contents Page

❖ ***Template for a Job Description for Personal Assistants (pp 4-6)***

The template for a draft job description outlines what is expected of potential recruits and employers. The more detailed the job description the less likely it will be that either PAs or their employers will have different expectations of each other.

❖ ***Template for a Person Specification for Personal Assistants (pp 7-8)***

Person specifications set out the kinds of expertise/attributes needed to carry out the tasks set out in the job description. The person specification is useful for advertising and interviewing. Being clear about the attributes needed should ensure that only potentially suitable candidates will apply.

❖ ***Practical tips for advertising, interviewing and recruiting a Personal Assistant (pp 9-14)***

The Guide brings together practical experience of other Personal Assistants and employers which may be useful to bear in mind when advertising, interviewing and recruiting a Personal Assistant.

❖ ***Terms and conditions (pp 15-18)***

Once a PA is recruited, the employer and employee will need to sign a contract including the main terms and conditions of employment. The checklist provided here is intended to remind Users and PAs of what needs to be included. This will eventually be a legally enforceable document, so it is imperative that the model written up complies with any guidance offered by the insurance company that will provide public liability insurance.

❖ ***Additional resources (pp 19-21)***

Enclosed with this Guide are details of some other sources of information and help in recruiting and employing Personal Assistants.

Template: JOB DESCRIPTION for a Personal Assistant

(Guidance in black bold; red text needs personalisation)

This template tries to alert people to the kinds of issues which should be included in a job description. Individual job descriptions should be adapted to the specific circumstances of the people involved. A Personal Assistant employer should finalise a job description that suits their particular circumstances and then check it with their insurance company to confirm that the text (which eventually should form part of the terms & conditions) complies with all legal obligations.

Introduction

The employer (uses a wheelchair/has mobility problems/has communication difficulties/has a health condition....) which requires them to employ a Personal Assistant to assist in day-to-day tasks and to ensure that they can live as independent a life as possible. A care plan is available highlighting key tasks to be carried out.

The PA will be working alone/as part of a rota of PAs/alongside family carers/ week on/week off/.....

The employer requires support to live life to the full. (Give some flavour of the work to be done: for example, “has an active social life” “has professional responsibilities” “regularly/occasionally/rarely works away from the home”, “is a regular churchgoer/ loves travel/is entirely housebased/a social media fan/.....”.)

1. Duties of the Personal Assistant

This section is intended to give the applicant as much information as possible about the duties they will be expected to undertake – under categories such as personal, social, household. Err on the side of detail and treat the following issues as a checklist:

Personal:

- The PA will assist the employer with dressing/hair/make-up...
- The PA will assist the employer with their meals.

Clarify here (if not in a distinct care-plan) issues such as whether this involves cooking/microwaving food/physical help with eating and drinking. At what frequency? Are there any issues to be covered regarding PA/employer/family eating together?

concerns the PA/client have about religious/culturally or ethically appropriate food?

- The PA will assist with the employer's **personal toileting/bathing needs**
- The PA will assist the employer with **their physical transfers (eg.....)**
- The PA will assist the employer **with medication:**

Most PAs are not legally allowed to “administer” medication. It should therefore be clear what their role in this task is: do they merely remind the employer of the medication schedule? Hand over/or physically assist the employer take pre-prepared medication doses? Clients cannot be left without necessary medication because of PA fears, but nor should either party be put at risk when dealing with this particular task.

Social:

These tasks outline how the PA can help the employer live as independently as possible. Be clear how much the PA is expected to perform jobs for the employer, or whether they are expected to help the employer carry out tasks, as much as possible unaided.

- The PA will assist the employer **with administrative tasks.**
For example: making or helping make phone calls/use of IT/ dealing with visitors to the home/making medical appointments/ pharmacy visits
- The PA will assist the employer **with a range of in-door activities.**
For example, supporting them in their hobbies (reading/TV/playing cards) and/or regular events such as hosting visitors/facilitating prayer services.
- The PA will assist the employer with a **range of outdoor activities.** **For example - meeting up with friends, going to restaurants/cinema/ religious events/trade union meetings/going clubbing/sporting events Be clear if this will normally involve accompanying the employer at such events, helping them only with transport arrangements, or transporting them to such events/or staying with them and/or helping them at those events.....**

These social tasks will require the PA to be flexible **about night-time events/periods of inactivity etc.....**

The more detailed the list above the more likely it will be that problems do not arise later around the client's social life (for example, the use by employer of sex workers; employer or PA's religious observances etc.)

Household:

To what extent will the PA help maintain the client's household and how does this work relate to other members of the household?

- The PA will **assist the client with /be responsible for cleaning**
Include details such as - maintaining good hygiene; and/or dishwashing; and/or daily/weekly laundry; and/or light or heavy household cleaning.....)
- The PA will **assist/be responsible for removing rubbish/recycling**
- The PA will assist with **garden/plant maintenance**
- The PA will assist with **financial matters** relating to household expenditures/banking.

Once employed, there should be a clear agreement between employer and PA about the handling of cash/bank cards/petty cash/accounts etc. to protect them both against any charges of financial misconduct.

Other: The job description above is intended to give a full picture of the regular duties of the PA, but they are also expected to undertake any other reasonable duties asked of them. There may be periods when the PA is very busy and also periods of downtime where the PA needs to keep themselves occupied. It is also possible that the work changes over time, to reflect changing health circumstances, but any major changes will normally be a matter for agreement.

PAs are employees yet, in practice, live as part of a household, so will be expected to respect the privacy and expectation of confidentiality of the client and other members of the household.

Template: PERSON SPECIFICATION for a Personal Assistant

A Person Specification (sometimes called a Job Specification) is intended to outline the skills/expertise/attributes needed for a Personal Assistant, in light of the job description. Any specific qualifications needed should be listed in the person specification. A person specification provides material for use in drafting an advert and interview questions. If more than one PA is employed, it may be useful to look for complementary skills – for example do they all need to have a driving licence? The draft below is an attempt to trigger questions in the employer’s mind, and assist potential candidates know whether they have the skills necessary to carry out the tasks required of them.

When drafting a bespoke Person Specification, pick and choose from the issues below, and indicate against each characteristic whether it is an ESSENTIAL or merely a DESIRABLE criterion (for more information on the difference – see page 10 etc on advertising and interview processes).

The PA employed needs the following knowledge/skills such as:

- Ability to use – or willingness to learn skills such as the safe use of hoists/wheelchair/to work with Braille user.....
- IT skills (such as) ?
- Basic cooking skills?
- Language skills?
- Able to drive? Able to drive client’s vehicle?

The successful candidate should have the following qualifications such as:

- Specific carer qualifications?
- Clean driving license?
- Health and Safety certificates/ training courses? (for example, Moving and Handling course?)
- Basic first aid skills ?

The successful candidate should have the following experience such as:

- Previous experience as a Personal Assistant
- Previous experience as a PA with an employer with similar support needs
- Experience of facilitating physical transfers/other practical skills as above

- Experience of working flexibly, adapting to the varying needs of the employer

The successful candidate should have personal characteristics such as:

- Able to travel (occasionally/frequently; locally/nationally)?
- Willing to undertake any necessary training
- Emotional intelligence and good social skills
- Able to be self-directed/be flexible/ capable of handling 'downtime'
- Given close personal contact should be – non-smoker/accepting of a smoker as employer/ comfortable with pets/client's children/partners etc.
- Respectful of the client's expectation of confidentiality

Any job offer will be subject to the successful completion of an enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service)

Practical tips for advertising/interviewing/ appointing a Personal Assistant

Advertising for a Personal Assistant

The following groups all have expertise in the recruitment/employment and training of Personal Assistants and may be able to help you in the recruitment process:

1. If you are a resident of the Borough of Ealing, the Council may be your first port of call: Ealing Council – Direct Payment section – can be reached via ealingdirect@ealing.gov.uk ; or Sham Baig, Team Manager, Ealing Direct and Funding Officers Team, at baigs@ealing.gov.uk; or 0208 825 9204. If you receive financial support by way of Direct Payments from the London Borough of Ealing, these contact details above can be used to seek assistance. Alternatively, a named social worker working with the user and/or family can be a first port of call.
2. Ealing Council for example produces a short guide on (free and paid) advertising including government websites, social media options, and an array of suggestions about local venues for advertising (the 2022 version of this is included in this pack). The Council also provides a Guide to Direct Payments (Independence, Choice & Well Being) and a separate guide on “Determining your Financial Contribution” for all users – see www.ealingdirectpaymentsguide.co.uk. Ealing Direct regularly issues advice on recruiting and employing Personal Assistants, and circulates such material produced by Skills for Care (see resources p.19 onwards).
3. Independent Living Alternatives (ILA) is a social enterprise established in 1989 that enables disabled people to live independently. Many disabled people want self-control over their own lives and hire Personal Assistants to support this. ILA provides innovative and flexible alternatives to institutional and domiciliary “care” provision through a flexible range of personal assistance services informed by disabled people, mainly but not exclusively in and around London. ILA provides a bespoke service and a range of services to pick and choose from, including – recruiting and managing PAs; training and advice for PA users; advice whether Direct Payment user is employer or ILA acts as the

employer. The website explains “*The first stage is to complete a PA User Registration form telling ILA what you want – we can then tell you what services ILA offer and how we can do it. At this stage we can also tell you how much it will cost.*” Tracey Jannaway (Director) can be reached at: Rowlandson House, 289-293 Ballards Lane, London N12 8NP, www.ILANet.co.uk; email - tracey@ILANet.co.uk; tel: 020 8369 6032

4. Advertise only when you have prepared a job description and person specification so that they are available to provide immediately to applicants. A deadline for applications should be included in the advert.

Practical tips for interviewing and appointing a Personal Assistant

1. All interested applicants should be given a copy of job description and person specification (templates for texts elsewhere in this guide) and given a deadline for submitting application.
2. In person specifications, distinguish between ESSENTIAL and DESIREABLE characteristics. It is not fair on candidates to add expectations at the interview stage. Essential characteristics are ones that a candidate *must* have if they are to be interviewed and should be few in number. Desirable characteristics can be as numerous as possible since they help distinguish between acceptable candidates and excellent ones.
3. Ask those interested to fill out an application form. If instead you prefer them to submit a c.v., ask candidates to include a personal covering letter which addresses the job description/person specification directly. To be fair to all candidates, employers must assess each application against the same criteria; a generic covering letter used for a variety of jobs will not help either candidate or employer know whether they are suitable for shortlisting.
4. When short-listing and deciding whether or not to interview applicants:
 - a. Compare job description/person specification with the cv/ application form
 - b. Have possible candidates got all the essential characteristics? Candidates without ESSENTIAL characteristics should not be

interviewed; normally candidates with all essential characteristics should be interviewed.

- c. Have some candidates also got some of desirable characteristics? If in addition to essential characteristics, candidates have additional (desirable) characteristics, this can be a useful way of making a shortlist for interview (if for example there are more candidates with essential characteristics than can be comfortably interviewed)
 - d. If you are looking for more than one PA, you may want to look for complementary skills across the team?
 - e. Note any areas of uncertainty to be explored in interviewing.
 - f. Confirm the shortlist; notify any unsuccessful candidates; give successful applicants a date for interview.
5. When interviewing:
- a. It helps to have more than one person interviewing to ensure that all relevant items are covered and to exchange reactions.
 - b. Work out in advance who will take different aspects of the job description and ask questions about the applicant's know-how and experience. Have some questions ready in advance and be prepared to drill down if the answers are vague or otherwise incomplete.
 - c. Ask the same questions of all the candidates so you are treating them all fairly (though their responses/experiences may vary, so be prepared to adapt in reaction to the information they provide)
 - d. To avoid any implication of discriminatory questioning, ensure that all questions relate to genuine occupational requirements of the job involved (and not your personal biases about the gender/religion/age/health status of any potential PA)
 - e. An interview is about both parties agreeing that this is a job that they want and can do: it should therefore be a team effort in tone. Be professional and both parties should be encouraged to be open to answering and asking questions.
 - f. Any job offer should be made subject to references (including previous or current employers) and relevant police or other checks.

- g. Once the job offer is accepted, the terms and conditions of employment (which will include the job description and/or care plan to be followed) should be signed by both parties and relevant insurance put in place.

If you want to use an application form, the form should ask for basic information in light of the job description/job specification. For example, application forms should cover items such as:

- Name/Address/Contact Details of applicant
- List as fully as possible experience/skills in the following areas as outlined in job description: Personal, Social & Household
- List as fully as possible skills/qualifications/experience/personal characteristics relevant to those outlined in the person specification.....
- Referees

If you want to have a marking chart to use during the interview, prepare and adapt something like this:

<u>Task (chart should reflect the list of skills set out in Person Specification). See pp 7-8. For example:</u>	<u>Candidate has essential requirements (tick)</u>	<u>Candidate meets desirable demands (tick/mark out of 10/comment)</u>
<p><u>Which knowledge/skills are ESSENTIAL?</u> Willingness to learn use of XYZ? Basic cooking skills? English language skills? Willingness to learn sign language etc?</p> <p><u>Which knowledge/skills are DESIRABLE:</u> Ability to use XYZ? IT skills? likes cooking my favourites; other languages used in the home?; ability to drive? etc.</p> <p><u>Which qualifications are ESSENTIAL:</u></p> <p><u>Which qualifications are DESIRABLE:</u></p> <p><u>Which experience is ESSENTIAL:.....</u></p> <p><u>Which experience is DESIRABLE:.....</u></p> <p><u>Which personal characteristics are ESSENTIAL:.....</u></p> <p><u>Which personal characteristics are DESIRABLE:.....</u></p>		

Appointing a Personal Assistant

Once a job offer has been made and accepted, and the references and legal checks have been undertaken, the terms and conditions of employment (which will include the job description and/or care plan to be followed) should be signed by both parties and relevant insurance put in place. Advice from the insurance company to be used will ideally have been sought beforehand to avoid any last-minute problems with the contractual arrangements.

Insurance providers

The companies below are known to provide insurance to social care users in the Borough of Ealing. It is a legal requirement to have Employer Liability Insurance/Public Liability Insurance. In that context, these companies can often offer reassurance and advice on employer/employee contractual arrangements:

- **Mark Bates Ltd: Premier House, Londonthorpe Road, Grantham, Lincs, NG31 9SN; www.markbatesltd.com; tel: 01476 591104; e: enquiries@markbatesltd.com**. Offers a range of insurance options including Personal Care Assistant Insurance and Home Employment Insurance. Produces a regular bulletin – Premiercare newsletter – which has been recommended by Direct Payment User Group (DPUG) members for advice on up-to-date legal and other employment issues.
- **FISH Insurance Company: 12 Sceptre Court, Sceptre Way, Bamber Bridge, Preston, PR5 6AW; 0333 331 3770; e: admin@fishinsurance.co.uk**. For over 40 years, Fish Insurance has provided specialist insurance in the UK for people with pre-existing medical conditions, disabilities or mobility issues. Their website reports that each of their 80,000 policyholders has policies that have been specially designed to meet their unique and specific requirements.

Practical tips for being a good employer

- **Payroll/PAYE arrangements**
These administrative arrangements can be delegated to specialist support. One company recommended by Ealing Direct Payment Users is DD Payroll Services (a social enterprise and member of the Disability Syndicate) – www.ddpayroll.co.uk

- **Appraisal and supervision:** Once a month (even after any initial probationary period), the employer and employee might want to review the work formally to see if there are any issues to be resolved.
- **Mediation services:** Some Ealing Direct Payment Users contract an independent person to review the employment relationship every 3 or 6 months. The close working relationship between the Direct Payment User, and the Personal Assistant, and their reliance on one another, can sometimes make it awkward to raise any minor tensions that arise and the regular assistance of an external person can sometimes be of use.

Template for “Terms and Conditions of Employment”

The “Terms and Conditions” set out the contractual arrangements between employer and Personal Assistant. One insurance company explains: “in terms of physical documentation, employers are legally required to give all of their employees a written ‘statement of main terms’. In addition to this, the contract of employment also covers verbal agreements and implied terms. By law, the statement of main terms must include the following pieces of information: name of employer and employee; start date; place of work; details about pay, holiday and pension entitlement. Employees must receive this by the start of their employment. Terms and conditions allow employers to inform staff what is expected of them in their respective job roles, but also provide an opportunity to detail any benefits that apply to their employment. They can also be used as a key reference point if it is alleged that an employee has broken a rule or is in breach of contract”
www.peninsulagrouplimited.com

Since Terms and Conditions will constitute a legal document, it is very important to comply with current employment law. The eventual text should be drafted and/or checked with the insurance company providing employers/public liability insurance.

The elements to be covered in the Terms & Conditions of a contract should include but are not limited to:

Introduction: Include here name and address of the employer and employee; the date employment begins; and any general statements useful to set the context. For example, it may be helpful at this point to state that “No previous employment counts as part of your period of continuous employment” and/or “Your post is subject to funding from the Local Authority and will be subject to review depending on my needs and the current (Ealing) Local Authority policy on Self Directed Support. In the event of any changes affecting the funding for the post, or your duties, I shall notify you within seven days of any changes”.

Absence and sickness: *Check latest legal provisions.*

Confidentiality: The employer and employee will respect each other’s right to privacy and confidentiality. All information gained in the course of working together must be treated in confidence and not shared with others, save with the employer’s specific permission. On termination of employment, all property and documentation gained should be returned and any information gained, whether verbal or otherwise, will remain confidential. ***See also safeguarding entry.***

Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures: *Check latest legal advice*

Duties of work: These have been set out in the formal job description/care plan which is attached and form part and parcel of these Terms and Conditions of work.

Expenditures: *This may require a whole section if the employee carries out any financial transactions on behalf of the employer. Plus:* Where the employee incurs travel expenses during the course of the work undertaken at the employer's request it will be reimbursed at public transport rates or vehicle fuel if using the employee's car at a set mileage allowance agreed in advance (currently.....).

Holidays: *Check latest legal advice: this section needs to cover the number of days of paid annual leave; the practice regarding Bank and other public holidays; any requirement of advance notice for taking leave or for coordination of leave with other staff; any limitations on amount of leave to be taken in a single consecutive period etc. This section might also need to cover issues such as maternity/paternity/parental/adoption/special/bereavement or other statutory leave provisions.*

Hours of work: *Check latest legal/payroll advice and whether a disclaimer will be required to allow exceptions under the Working Time Directive? Otherwise specify the days and hours of work; break arrangements; and how (with what advance notice) are changes to be agreed.*

Insurance cover: *Indicate here the nature of insurance cover with company/policy number.*

Lawful actions: *(Some PA users have found this useful)* - The employer and employee commit always to act lawfully. In a practical example, if an employee parks illegally/uses the congestion zone/or gets a speeding fine because of a direct instruction by the employer, the employee should not comply or will be liable for any resultant fines. Similar decisions, if taken on the authority of the PA, will mean that the PA pays any resultant fines. ***If relevant include here any insurance arrangements regarding use of employer's car, legal use of Blue Badge etc.***

Pay rates: *Include here information on hourly/weekly/monthly rate of pay; payment for extra hours; arrangements for Time Off in Lieu; any difference*

between late night/overnight/Bank Holiday working; annual review of pay levels; practical pay arrangements including PAYE and tax arrangements – if using a payroll company for example. It may be important to note something about whether the pay arrangements are tied into a Council or NHS system (such as Direct Payments or Continuing Healthcare).

Pension arrangements: *Check latest payroll/legal arrangements since it is currently a legal requirement to offer employees a pension arrangement and have in writing their acceptance/rejection of such an option.*

Permanent employment: *Check latest legal arrangements and ensure consistency with any reference (see on) to probationary periods.*

Personal relationships: *(Some people find it useful to include something along these lines)* - The job description (part of these terms and conditions) does not require close personal relationships to be developed between the employee and the employer's representatives, family members or others close to them. If circumstances arise where such relationships develop in such a way as to potentially affect the employee's ability to carry out their work in a professional way or creates any conflicts of interest, the employer should be notified immediately. Any such information will be treated in the strictest confidence, and it is recognised that the employee (as well as the employer) has a right to privacy in personal matters.

Place of work: *Include the normal place of work but indicate if the PA will be expected to work away from this place of work on a regular basis.*

Probationary period: *Check latest legal advice and make consistent with 'permanent employment'.*

Redundancies or temporary lay-offs: *Check legal advice regarding putting employee on short time working (for example, in case of employer hospitalisation/ holidays) or permanent severance.*

Safeguarding: *If there are potential safeguarding concerns for the client (for example, on health or financial matters) the PA should be alerted to appropriate 'guardians' or 'powers of attorney' that exist, in case they require advice or support.*

Timekeeping and communication: *Indicate if time sheets are to be completed (perhaps for Local Authority records?); the expectations regarding advance notification of any delays.*

Training: *Indicate if the employee is expected to attend any relevant training courses/events and reimbursements; if financing and/or leave for discretionary training is likely indicate here also.*

Visas/residency requirements: *Check latest legal situation; employers are expected to ensure that their employees have a legal right to live and work in the UK.*

These terms and conditions are intended to give clear contractual certainty to both employee and employer. At the same time, flexibility may be required to make these arrangements work to everyone's benefit, so both parties will at the outset – and routinely thereafter in supervisory arrangements - explore the best way to balance certainty and flexibility.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Services) – www.acas.org.uk

Ealing Council: www.ealing.gov.uk/vital_help provides a useful resource for Ealing residents to get advice and help on various issues - benefits, housing issues, paying for fuel bills or childcare, jobs and training opportunities, accessing health, mental health or interpreting services etc.

Ealing Direct (ealingdirect@ealing.gov.uk) writes about **ADVERTISING** a care job:

Advertising a care job: <https://www.gov.uk/advertise-job>; https://my.freeads.co.uk/placead/2/home_care_services; Free 30-day listing - £0 <https://us.jora.com/> - top right, select “post a job” free service. Select United Kingdom from drop-down. Or: <https://help.freeads.co.uk/support/solutions/articles/47000874306-terms-and-conditions>. Or check out www.myhometouch.com; or <https://us.jora.com/> - top right, select “post job free”. Select United Kingdom from drop-down. Or - joinsocialcare.co.uk | Join us “Find care workers for your organisation in minutes. Thousands of new candidates join each week”. Careplace is another option for searching for alternative domiciliary support, please visit www.careplace.org.uk

Posting ads on Facebook: <https://resources.workable.com/tutorial/how-to-post-a-job-on-facebook> and **Gumtree:** <https://recruiters.gumtree.com/> Quoted prices exclude 20% VAT.

Disclaimer: do check if/how fees are being charged, as it is not always apparent at first glance. <https://www.betterteam.com/free-job-advertising-uk> provides information on useful websites, most of which charge in one way or another (upfront fee or to disclose contact information or according to number of “clicks”, “hits”, traffic).

Locally, see <https://nextdoor.co.uk/search/posts> - post a message, event, poll or alert to your neighbourhood. You could place a notice in the Post section. Local businesses, services, news updates, recommendations and stuff for sale from people down the road.

Ealing Direct has a **PA register**, which consists of PAs currently in work with other customers and who have expressed an interest in obtaining more work. Disclaimer: we have not vetted them, for example, obtained references/DBS’s. Contact Social Services if you require the funding for a DBS check to be carried out. (We have an arrangement with the Havelock Centre in Southall.)

Community advertising:

Consider your community and where you might place a notice, for example, faith groups, schools/colleges, GP surgeries/hospital notice boards, community notice boards (community halls), in supermarkets, leisure centres. If placing a notice in this way, it should be anonymised (e.g. the contact details should be your mobile number and first name, to protect your identity). Meet candidates away from home or, if at home, with a family member or friend on hand. If the options available to recruit for free are unsuccessful, customers should contact Social Services to discuss the funding needed for paid advertising if not already included in the Direct Payment Support Plan.

Reading Resources:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/employing-professional-carer-or-personal-assistant> - Although part of the Northern Ireland government information services – rather than local – this site has several articles with practical advice on recruitment of Personal Assistants and carers.

Research carried out by **Professor Tom Shakespeare** and others highlights that there are three main sources of potential conflict in employer/PA relationships: PERSONAL (political, religious, social, cultural differences), PRACTICAL (failure to perform certain tasks and/or being over managed), or PROXIMAL (difficulty of spending lots of time with someone and need for separate space). Direct Payment users would benefit from thinking about how to identify and resolve these potential conflicts, since his research suggests that “*every PA relationship involves conflict somewhere*”. See for example: Metaphors to work, by Shakespeare et al 2018; Porter and Shakespeare - Work, Employment and Society, for the British Sociological Association, September 2019; and Porter, Shakespeare and Stockl – Performance Management, in Sociology of Health and Illness, 2020; See also free online course run by the University of East Anglia offering advice and support to employers and PAs – The role of Personal Assistants in disability support:

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/personal-assistants-disability-support>

Sian Vasey (after whom this Best Practice Guide is named) herself wrote “The Rough Guide to Managing Personal Assistants” in 2000. It can be downloaded from the Independent Living Institute at <https://www.independentliving.org/docs6/vasey2000.html>

Skills for care

Is an independent charity, working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care offer employers a lot of guidance around recruiting and can provide employers with grant funding to access training for their employees:

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Recruitment-retention/Finding-and-keeping-workers/Finding-and-keeping-workers/Finding-and-keeping-workers.aspx> ;

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Employing-your-own-care-and-support/Information-for-individual-employers/Information-for-individual-employers.aspx>

For example: **How to fund a personal assistant:** You can use a personal budget from health and/or social care (direct payment or personal health budget) or your own money (also called self-funding) to pay for your personal assistant(s). You can find out more about personal health budgets and if you qualify for one on the [NHS website](#).

Key things to think about before recruiting a personal assistant: have a clear picture of what you want from a PA before you start the recruitment process, 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, such as, support at work, helping 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.

Where to start when recruiting a personal assistant: Skills for Care has a [PA toolkit](#) which is designed to support individual employers to recruit, manage, and train their PAs. Booklet 1 '[Recruiting a PA](#)' guides you through: developing a job description and person specification; advertising the role; setting up an application; interviewing; completing all the correct checks for example, references and DBS.

We also have a webinar on '[Understanding your responsibilities as an employer of a personal assistant](#)' which is supported with a useful resource list as well as some question and answers on the topic. You can also [hear first-hand from other individual employers](#) about how they approached the recruitment process and how they used Skills for Care resources to guide them through it

Solidarity:

For information on a range of groups working on issues of interest to people using social care (for example, Age UK, Carers UK, Disability Action, Inclusion London, National Pensioners Convention, Womens Budget Group etc.) ask for contact details from Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group (ERSCAG). Locally, our Direct Payment Users Group could supply on request sample copies of adverts/application forms/care plans they have developed.

If you would like this Guide in a different format, please get in touch.

ERSCAG also produces a monthly newsletter which carries regular news about local and national campaigning on social care that might be of interest – email: erscaginfo@gmail.com or phone 0772 6132 125 – to ask to be put on our newsletter mailing list.



The Sian Vasey Best Practice Guide for recruiting and employing Personal Assistants

Produced by Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group
in collaboration with its Direct Payment User Group

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