

Recruiting personal assistants during a pandemic

21 September 2020

Questions that weren't answered during the webinar

Q. Wouldn't you have to get the candidates written permission to record the interview?

A. Getting written permission is best practice, but verbal consent is ok too. It's best to tell the applicant in advance that you want to record the interview and explain why you want to do this. You could include this information in the invite to interview and you can also give contact details for them to discuss this with you before the interview if they wish. Discuss recording the interview at the start of the interview and check they are happy for you to record it.

It's really important that you keep data of any virtual interviews you record safe. The [National Cyber Security Centre](#) has some useful resources on their website including some short information videos and best practice guides.

Disability Sheffield Centre for Independent Living worked with funding from Skills for Care to develop a Digital Security Guide and Animation which you can find on their website here <https://www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk/support-for-individual-employers-and-personal-assistants#6>.

Q. A family I'm supporting want's a new PA to get a covid test and this is increasingly difficult due to the government only want symptomatic people to be tested. What is the general view around this, it is an acceptable ask and expectation to ask a newly appointed PA to be tested before they start in the role?

A. The government updated their guidance on 11 September which might help with this. There are three useful guidance documents:

- [Guidance for people receiving direct payments](#)
- [Guidance for Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups in the delivery of direct payment and personal health budgets](#)
- [Using direct payments during the coronavirus outbreak: the most important things to know](#)

Q. Is there an age limit for personal care? I thought it was 18?

A. It's both legal and beneficial to employ young people (aged 16 and 17), in social care services, including as a Personal Assistant. We have a guidance leaflet on this available [here](#).

Q. Is there an upper age limit for recruits? Or is it just that PAs need to be physically capable of the work?

A. There is no upper age limit for care workers. In fact, active retirees are always a good target group for PA recruitment as they are often looking to stay active, meet with others and give back to the community, plus they are likely to have available time, with pay potentially less of a priority. The Age Action Alliance have produced an [employer toolkit: guidance for managers of older workers](#), which might be useful.

Q. Is there any help available for safely advertising on social media and how to do it?

A. We have produced a [top tips guide for using social media](#) which may help (although this is primarily aimed at care organisations). NHS Employers have also produced a [social media toolkit for the NHS](#) that might be useful. It is probably worth contacting your local disabled people's user led support organisation as they may be able help you do this. You can find details of local support organisations in the [in your area](#) section of the information hub (www.skillsforcare.org.uk/iepahub).

Q. Personal development definitely helps retain PAs, we support with offering training on the underpinning knowledge for the care certificate. A lot of this we're able to provide remotely / virtually. However, in order to achieve the award a workplace observation/assessment is required. Given the hesitancy a lot of people have to allow even trusted people into the home, do you know of any alternative approach to this?

A. We have updated our current guidance for employers, learning providers and in-house trainers on face-to-face training and assessment during **COVID-19**. During this period, we still encourage you to use digital solutions to deliver and access training, as far as is practical. If digital solutions are not practicable, then a thorough risk assessment must be carried out to ensure the safety of all involved. Our [guidance](#) will assist you with this process.

Q. The DWP website seems to focus on England Scotland and wales. Are there equivalents in Northern Ireland?

A. [NI direct government services](#) seems to have a similar role to DWP for Northern Ireland. However, the way social care is regulated and managed is different in Northern Ireland. Visit the [Northern Ireland Social Care Council](#) website for more information.

Q. A lot of authorities are against family members in the same household (Parents) acting as PA as it may be deemed as a family function. Any advice?

A. In general, local authorities and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) recommend that family members living the same household as the person who requires care and support should not be employed as their personal assistant. There are several reasons why this is the case, e.g. the parent may also be the personal budget holder/direct payment recipient and therefore this will be seen as a conflict of interest, family members often already provide a significant levels of care and support and the potential impact on family relationships. However, during this time, short-term changes where family members can be employed as a PA can be considered, particularly if this is the best way to keep someone safe. The guidance recommends that you discuss any proposed change in arrangements with your direct payment provider. See [guidance here](#).

Q. How can we advertise our register on our service we are a user led organisation providing support and have a successful register but haven't been able to have it listed on your site?

A. Organisations that support individuals who employ PAs (using direct payments or their own money) can ask to have their details added to the 'In your area' [section of the information hub](#) by contacting Skills for Care. The most direct route is to email pa.framework@skillsforcare.org.uk.

Tips suggested by attendees to support recruitment of PAs

- We have used our local radio station for recruitment; find out if they have any free or discounted offers to advertise at specific times of the year.
- Nextdoor app where communities come together <https://nextdoor.co.uk/>.
- We sometimes use the term Personal (Care) Assistant.
- Most universities have jobs boards where you could advertise PA job opportunities for students.

- Gap year students who have lost their volunteer and travel opportunities this year may be available for volunteer and/or PA roles.
- Disabled people's user led and other support organisations can support safe recruitment e.g. by placing adverts on their Facebook page, using a unique number to identify the job and could act as contact for any enquiries and applications.
- Consider setting up a separate email account to manage your PA recruitment. It can be used on your advertisements and be a place to receive applications and respond to potential PAs.