Guidance on how to develop a personal assistant register

This guidance note is for all types of organisations that provide support to individual employers including:

- local authorities
- direct payments support organisations
- user-led organisations
- centres for independent living.

skillsforcare

Developing a personal assistant register[1]

Personal assistant registers are a way for people who want to employ personal assistants and people who work as personal assistants to find each other. They can make finding a personal assistant (PA) or employer easier and more flexible.

A PA register is not an agency, but is a list of PAs who are available for work. They can also include advertisements from employers (known as individual employers) who are looking to recruit a personal assistant.

PA registers provide useful information about finding and recruiting personal assistants as well as other relevant information for both individual employers and personal assistants.

A good PA register will reduce the time and cost involved in finding and recruiting personal assistants for both organisations providing support (including local authorities) and individual employers.

This guidance note is for organisations that are developing a PA register and suggests that there are seven key points to consider.

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1   The guidance note is the result of intelligence gathering by Skills for Care involving relevant support agencies and desktop research.

Key point 1: Clear, concise, easy to use and up to date

Key point 2: Support individual employers and personal assistants to use the register

Key point 3: Safety

Key point 4: About the person

Key point 5: Searching process

Key point 6: What to do if something goes wrong

Key point 7: Advice and guidance

This guide also includes suggested content for the home page of a personal assistant (PA) register and a personal assistant's listing.

Key point 1

Clear, concise, easy to use and up to date

- Develop the register with the people who will be using it.
- Have a step by step guide.
- Keep it jargon free.
- Have processes in place to keep information current, for example if someone has not logged in for a specific time period their entry is taken off the register.
- Make it visually appealing.
- Design it so that the fewest clicks possible take you to where you want to go.
- Devise it for both individual employers and personal assistants.
- Think about how you will manage your register and keep it up to date; this is something to think about when you start planning it. A PA register should be sustainable.

Good practice

CareMatch Staffordshire use a short video to introduce the Personal Assistant Register and then links to the next stage of the process.

www.carematch.org.uk

Vibrance also use a video to promote and introduce their Link Me Up PA register.

www.linkmeup.org.uk

Key point 2

Support both individual employers and personal assistants to use the register

- Provide an introduction pack with key information about the support available, what is expected of an individual employer and personal assistant and terms and conditions for being on the register.
- Provide one to one support either over the phone or face to face.
- Use standard templates for things like job descriptions or personal assistant details.
- Offer the use of computer equipment and support where necessary to input information.
- Input information on behalf of people and collate responses if needed.

Good practice

PA Pool have their terms and conditions on the front page of their PA register.

www.papool.co.uk/paRegister.aspx

Wiltshire CIL SW PA register[2] developed a peer mentoring system to assist people through the process.

www.sw-pa.org

Cheshire CIL North West and Age UK Cheshire Personal Assistance Register has developed pre-populated documents to help and support people to complete their information.

www.nw-pa.org/useful-links

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2   Wiltshire CIL SWPA has adopted the Cheshire CIL North West and Age UK Cheshire Personal Assistance Register.

Key point 3

Safety

- Include a tick box on the personal assistant information to show whether they have had a recent DBS check.
- Ask for references as part of the conditions of being listed on the register whilst remembering you are not going to be their employer.
- Moderate the information from both the individual employer and personal assistant before it goes live on the register.
- Encourage individual employers to ask for references and DBS checks when interviewing/ offering someone a job.
- Have processes in place so that personal contact information is not shared online by using reference numbers.
- Encourage individual employers not to carry out interviews in their own home.
- It is important that your register meets the necessary data protection standards.
- Make it clear that the PA register works to make an introduction; it is not you recommending a personal assistant to an employer.

Good practice	Brighton and Hove P.A. Noticeboard has a system of moderating information from both individual employers and personal assistants before it goes on to the website.
	www.panoticeboard.org.uk/ie

More information	www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check

Key point 4

About the person - including training, qualifications, skills and interests

- Have a drop down list where personal assistants can select the formal training and qualifications they have taken including dates (some qualifications are time limited).
- Use an open text box so that personal assistants can highlight other training and skills that might be useful in the role.
- Make sure individual employers ask personal assistants to bring their training and qualification certificates to the interview, if relevant.
- Encourage personal assistants to include their interests and hobbies, this may help an individual employer decide who they want to employ as their personal assistant.

Good practice

CareMatch Staffordshire uses a drop down box where personal assistants can select their relevant social care qualifications and an open text box to add any other relevant training and qualifications.

www.carematch.org.uk

Key point 5

Searching process

- Make sure that individual employers are able to filter their search for a personal assistant, for example: by geographical area, whether they have a driving licence, if they are willing to work in an environment where personal care is needed.
- The filtering process could be further refined by adding or removing key words to increase or reduce the list of search results.
- The individual employer may need support with the interview but the decision to employ or not to employ is theirs.
- Have a section where individual employers can post job vacancies that can be searched by personal assistants and a process through which they can apply for those jobs they are interested in.
- Use standard keywords for personal assistant and job vacancy listings, this will help with the filtering process (suggested content is at the end of this guide).

Good practice

Independent Lives PA Pages states that it is critical to gather the correct information from PAs for their profile that will enable individual employers to search and filter the register, this could be area, experience, interests and combinations of those.

www.independentlives.org/working-as-a-pa

Key point 6

What to do if something goes wrong

- Clear terms and conditions should be in place on the use of the PA register and use them to remove PA details from the register if needed.
- You may want a policy and process in place for taking a personal assistant's listing off the register if they don't follow the terms and conditions of the register, for example, if they don't turn up for a planned interview after three invitations.
- Use a 'report' button on your system so that a confidential issue can be brought to your attention.
- Advise individual employers to use a support service and or get advice from their insurers and ACAS for any disciplinary issues.
- Make individual employers aware of resources available from Skills for Care, like the employing personal assistants toolkit which includes a section about sorting out problems.

Good practice	Nottingham PA Register managed by DIPSU (Direct Payments Service Users Ltd) has been implementing three strikes and you are out policy to address the issue of PAs on the register saying they are available for work but not turning up for interview.
	www.dipsu.co.uk

More information	www.acas.org.uk
	www.skillsforcare.org.uk/individualemployers

Key point 7

Advice and guidance

- Link to Skills for Care, particularly the employing personal assistants toolkit, the learning and development guide and information about effective individual employer/personal assistant working relationships.
- Provide specific information about training and development for both themselves as employers and their personal assistants, including any funding available.
- Highlight the support that is available for self-funders as well as direct payment recipients.
- Include helpful factsheets.
- Signpost to information about being an employer including insurance, HMRC, ACAS etc.
- Link to any employer and/or personal assistant peer support forums.
- Highlight any relevant events.
- Advertise services for individual employers, for example, a payroll service.

Good practice	Wiltshire CIL SWPA has a section on support services that includes information about personal budgets, employing staff, peer support, training opportunities and much more. www.sw-pa.org
More information	www.hmrc.gov.uk

Suggested content for the home page of a personal assistant register

- Explanation of the PA register
- List of sections
- Terms and conditions
- Contact details
- Link to PA listings
- Link to job vacancies
- Links to useful information
- Link to Skills for Care
- Links to other services.

Suggested content for a personal assistant's listing

- Name or reference number
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- About the person (including interests and hobbies)
- Statement of values or why they chose to be a PA
- Experience
- Driving licence (able to use own vehicle)
- Languages spoken
- Type of work (full time/part time)
- Area available to work (location)
- Times available to work
- Training and qualifications undertaken
- DBS check
- Willing to deliver personal care
- Smoker/non-smoker
- Happy to work with pets in the house.

Links

A list of existing PA registers has been published on the Skills for Care website. To access this list please visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/personalassistants.

This list is not exhaustive and there may be other networks/registers available. If you know of one in your area that is not on this list or are developing a network/register and would like to be included, please contact Skills for Care on info@skillsforcare.org.uk or 0113 245 1716.

The Skills for Care 'Employing a personal assistant' toolkit is available at www.skillsforcare.org.uk/individualemployers. An EasyRead, Word and audio/visual DVD version of the toolkit is also available.