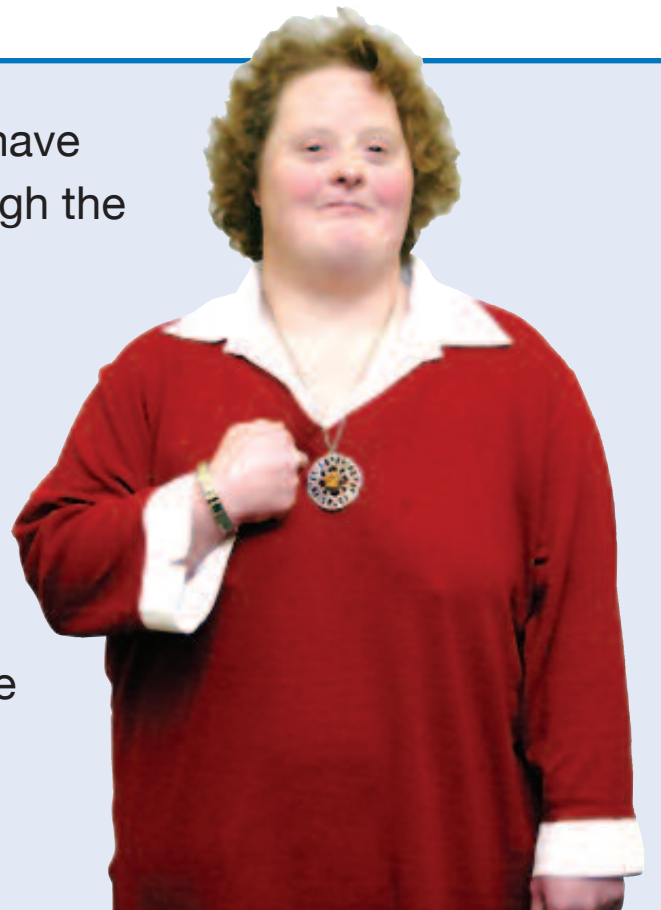


Putting you first

Factsheet 10 Employing a personal assistant: keeping yourself safe

The 'Putting you first' factsheets have been designed to guide you through the process of employing a personal assistant.

We know that some of the things we mention in these factsheets are quite complicated, so don't worry if you find them difficult to understand - the Adult Social Care Direct team are on hand to offer guidance, advice and information.



You can discuss a referral or assessment by contacting Adult Social Care Direct on **0191 433 7033**.



Consumer advice and guidance

When you ask an organisation, company or individual for goods or services it is important to find out how you can get the best from them while looking after your finances, and keeping yourself safe. This information is called consumer advice.

You can get consumer advice from the National Consumer Direct helpline on **08454 04 05 06** or from their website at **www.directgov.co.uk**

You can also contact Gateshead Councils Trading Standards service who can tell you your rights, help with problems with goods and services you have bought, and contact the trader on your behalf. You can contact them at **0191433 3987** or **0191 433 3930**.

If you are having problems with any residential, nursing, day care or domiciliary care services you are receiving, you can contact Care Quality Commission on **03000 616161** or visit their website at **<http://www.cqc.org.uk/>**

Employing your own personal assistant or using care agency staff

If you employ your own personal assistant or use care agency staff, you can also make sure you stay safe by taking out insurance, and by recruiting and managing your relationship with staff in the right way.

Taking up references and carrying out a CRB check before employment, having a probationary contract period, and arranging regular supervision can all help you to manage your relationship with your personal assistant.

Skills for Care provide a free toolkit that can help you employ and manage a personal assistant. You can get it from **www.skillsforcare.org.uk** or by calling **0113 245 1716**.

You can also download the toolkit from the Gateshead Council website at **www.gateshead.gov.uk** together with a series of useful factsheets.

Induction

A well-prepared induction period is also a good idea. It gives you an opportunity to talk to your personal assistant about what the job entails and how you want them to carry it out.

An induction is also a useful way to introduce any 'house rules' you have - for example, about the use of mobile phones, taking tea breaks, and where things are kept. This would help your personal assistant know what you expect of them at work - and help to keep you safe.

Some things you can expect from your personal assistant are:

- Supporting you with tasks that you have identified in your care and support plan, such as help with getting up, washing, dressing and toileting, and making meals and drinks.
- Treating you with dignity and respect, and providing care for you in a way which you want, as long as it is safe to do so.

- Being punctual and working at the times you both agree on, and informing you if they are not able to attend due to illness.
- Listening to you.

You can also let your personal assistant know about the things that you will not expect from them, for example:

- Operating personal or household equipment that is unsafe or they are not trained to use.
- Climbing anything that they feel is unsafe, such as step ladders or stools.
- Moving heavy furniture.
- Helping or supporting other members of the household.

Your personal assistant has the right to say 'no' if they feel that you are asking them to do things which they think are risky, or are not trained to do.

You can also ask a family member, friend or someone else who you trust to spend time with you and your new personal assistant at first.

Managing professional boundaries

Your relationship with your Personal Assistant or care agency staff should be professional, and setting boundaries can make sure you are protected.

For example, personal assistants or care agency staff should not:

- Lend you money or borrow money from you.
- Buy goods from you or sell goods to you.
- Ask to be paid in cash.
- Smoke or drink alcohol whilst in your home.
- Bring children or other family members to your house when they are working.
- Suggest that their family members do work for you.
- Ask for your bank account details.
- Act as Attorney for you, or Appointee for benefits, or as Executor of your Will.

- Ask for access to your property when you are not present.
- Open or read mail or correspondence when you are not present and without your permission.
- Discuss your personal needs or circumstances with other people.
- Wear clothes that are inappropriate for the work they need to do.

Independent Advocacy

You may have particular views about any aspect of your direct payments that you would like to air. An Independent Advocate can support you in speaking up for yourself, making decisions about your direct payments, and telling the people who matter about what you want from social care.

You can find out more by getting in touch with Gateshead Advocacy Information Network who can signpost you to an Independent Advocacy project on **0191 478 3130**, or by visiting **www.gain.org.uk**

Peer mentors in Gateshead

You can also get valuable advice from people who have experience of setting up direct payments in Gateshead.

There are a number of peer mentors who can talk to you about how they arranged their own care and support. You can contact a peer mentor by calling **0191 477 1913**. You can also arrange to meet a peer mentor at a time and place to suit you.

Important words - and what they mean

Employee: A person who works for another person or business in return for money.

Employer: A person or a business which pays other people for their work.

Insurance: A way of guaranteeing against loss or harm, which can help you financially if something goes wrong. You will have to pay a

contribution to the insurance company.

Probationary contract: During a probationary contract phase you can assess whether the person you've selected is suitable for the job. If they are not then you will not have to extend their contract or stick to the usual notice period.

Useful contacts

National Centre for Independent Living www.ncil.org.uk

Government information site
www.directgov.uk

Skills for Care
Phone **0113 245 1716** or visit
www.skillsforcare.org.uk

Consumer Advice

Phone **08454 04 05 06** or visit
www.directgov.co.uk

Gateshead trading standards

Phone **0191 433 3987** or **0191 433 3930**, or visit www.gateshead.gov.uk

Care Quality Commission

Phone **03000 616161** or visit
www.cqc.org.uk

If you have concerns

You may be vulnerable at times because of your age, illness or disability, and our advice is to try to keep yourself safe at all times.

However you may have concerns or worries that someone is harming you, abusing you, or neglecting you and the

care you need - in a physical, emotional, verbal or financial way.

We will always take your concerns seriously. We call this adult safeguarding, and you or a friend or someone you trust can contact us on **0191 433 7033** if you need help or support in dealing with a situation.

The other fact sheets in this series help you think about some of these issues so you can decide if you want to employ a personal assistant.

Other fact sheets in the the 'Employing a personal assistant' series are:

Factsheet 1 : an introduction

Factsheet 2 : pay and tax

Factsheet 3 : recruitment and selection

Factsheet 4 : choosing a personal assistant

Factsheet 5 : contract of employment

Factsheet 6 : health and safety

Factsheet 7 : being a good employer - supervision

Factsheet 8 : disciplinary and grievance

Factsheet 9 : ending the employment period

Factsheet 10 : employing a personal assistant: keeping yourself safe

Factsheet 11 : starting direct payments: what happens once your direct payment has been agreed?

