

# 2 How to recruit a personal assistant



These are the key tasks of the recruitment process:

- ◆ **Writing the job description and person specification**
- ◆ **Advertise**
- ◆ **Choose who to interview**
- ◆ **The interview**
- ◆ **Offer the job**
- ◆ **Do the checks**
- ◆ **Keep a record**

## **Job description and person specification**

A job description lists the tasks you would like your personal assistant (PA) to do. Examples of job descriptions can be found at Leeds Centre for Integrated Living (Leeds CIL) <http://www.leedscil.org.uk/employer-info>. A person specification lists the skills, experience and personal qualities you would like your PA to have. Examples of personal specifications can also be found at Leeds CIL.



Visit [www.leeds.gov.uk/personalbudgets](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/personalbudgets) for more downloadable factsheets.

This publication can be provided in large print, Braille and audio.

☎ **0113 247 8630** to request a copy.

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If you do not speak English and need help in understanding this booklet, we may be able to provide a translation or an interpreter. Please contact Adult Social Care customer services to see if we can help.

☎ **0113 222 4401**  
textphone **0113 222 4410**

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## Your ideal PA

Your support plan is a guide to help create a person specification.

- ◆ **Do you want someone who can drive, someone who can lift, use sign language?**
- ◆ **List any previous experience needed, for example, have they been a personal assistant before? Have they had Disclosure and Barring check?**
- ◆ **Think about personal qualities that you think are important such as patience, a sense of humour, initiative.**

## Job description

Refer to your support plan as you list all the jobs your PA will do for you.

If you want to specify someone of a particular gender, ethnicity, religious or cultural background it is important to avoid wording your job description and advert in a way that could be thought as unfair. For further advice check with Leeds CIL [www.leedscil.org.uk](http://www.leedscil.org.uk) or [www.gov.uk/jobcentre-plus-help-for-recruiters](http://www.gov.uk/jobcentre-plus-help-for-recruiters)

## Advertise

There are many ways to advertise for a PA, talk to your social worker or care manager to see what suggestions they have.

Word of mouth	You may already know someone who you trust, a friend or family member, who may be interested in being your PA. But think about how becoming their employer may change your existing relationship.
Local shop or post office	This is a good way to reach people already living near you. Arrangements can be more flexible as people will have less transport problems if they are local to you. These adverts can also be cheap.
Local newspaper	This is a good way of reaching a lot of people in your area and could increase the number of applications.
Jobcentre plus	Using Universal Jobmatch is free. <a href="http://www.gov.uk/jobcentre-plus-help-for-recruiters">www.gov.uk/jobcentre-plus-help-for-recruiters</a>
Online/recruitment agencies	Visit <a href="http://www.leedsdirectory.org">www.leedsdirectory.org</a> who will help you find local services – you can search by service, postcode or the area where you live. Or phone the Directory Helpline on <b>0113 391 8333</b> You can also get in touch with WYPA <a href="http://www.WY-PA.org">www.WY-PA.org</a> or phone <b>0113 231 1125</b> Gumtree <a href="http://www.gumtree.com">www.gumtree.com</a> is a free classified advertisement site.
Local college/university	You could advertise for mature students (who won't be going off on long summer breaks).

## Writing the advert

You are now ready to write the advert. Remember the advert is about attracting the right person to be your PA.

Hours of work	The days and times you need your PA to work
Rate of pay	You will need to pay at least the minimum wage. Your social worker or care manager may have information about standard hourly rates.
General location	Do not give out your home address but suggest the general area so people can make sure they are able to get there when you need them.
Experience and/or qualifications	Do you want someone who has previous experience or the qualifications to meet your needs? If you want a man or a woman you need to say why, for example, you want someone of the same gender as your PA will be helping with intimate personal care. You need to be careful as the Equalities Act bans unfair treatment to help achieve equal opportunities.
How to apply	Do you want them to complete an application form or curriculum vitae (a CV is a history of skills, jobs and education)? You could ask for both.
Closing date for applications	Choose a date that gives people enough time to see and apply for the job – usually a minimum of two weeks.
Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)	Be clear in the advert if you want a DBS check. This is usually a good idea as it will tell you if people have criminal convictions. If your PA will be caring for children or working unsupervised a DBS check is essential.
Other information	In this section say if you want a PA who is a non-smoker or driver for example.
References	Say that you will ask for references, usually two.
Contact details for further information	It is not a good idea to use your personal address, telephone number or email on an advert. Your social worker or care manager, Jobcentre Plus may be able to accept applications for you. You can pay to set up a PO Box to accept applications. For more information go to <a href="http://www.royalmail.com">www.royalmail.com</a> or call <b>08457 950 950</b>

Examples of job adverts can be found at Leeds CIL [www.leedscil.org.uk](http://www.leedscil.org.uk) or [www.gov.uk/advertise-job](http://www.gov.uk/advertise-job)



## Choose who to interview

Look through all of the applications and make a short list of the suitable people – this is called ‘shortlisting’.

After the closing date look at the application forms or CVs and decide who to interview. Check the applications against the job description and person specification to see which ones fit best.

Take care that your selection is fair and does not discriminate against anyone – remember about the Equalities Act. If you want help on how to do this ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) has a useful booklet called ‘Delivering equality and diversity’ that can be downloaded from [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

Then contact these people, often called candidates, and ask them to attend an interview.

### Where should the interview take place?

It is better to have the interviews away from your home if possible. Check if your social worker, care manager, assist adviser or local Jobcentre Plus can provide a room to use.

## The interview

Interviewing can be as nervous for you as for the person you are interviewing. Here is a step-by-step guide to help you through it.

### Prepare for the interview

Use the job description to help prepare a list of questions to ask your candidates. Ask them about their work experience, qualifications and why they want to work for you. Describe the kinds of tasks you will expect them to do, such as physical requirements like lifting. Discuss whether any training is needed and let them know that the cost would be covered.

### Do not interview alone

Ask a friend, social worker or care manager to interview with you. It’s always good to have another opinion but the final decision is up to you.

### Allow time between interviews

Take a break between interviews and make some notes of the answers to your questions. This will help you remember each candidate and make your decision about who to offer the job to.

### At the end of the interview

Finish off by discussing:

- ◆ **pay and conditions**
- ◆ **working times or rotas**
- ◆ **when and how the applicant will hear if they are successful or not**
- ◆ **that you will take up references**
- ◆ **that the preferred applicant will have to provide proof they can legally work in the UK**
- ◆ **if a DBS check is needed for the preferred applicant**
- ◆ **that they have a valid driving licence if needed**

### Don’t rush your decision

If you’re not sure who to offer the job to, sleep on it, ask for more information, or even re-interview. If no one is good enough, then re-advertise and interview different people.

More information:

[www.gov.uk/browse/employing-people/recruiting-hiring](http://www.gov.uk/browse/employing-people/recruiting-hiring)

Home Office UK Border Agency

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

 **0300 123 4699**

## Offer the job

When you have decided who to employ, contact them and offer them the job. Tell them that you will first need to check their references and if needed carry out a DBS check. You will have to allow enough time between offering the job and the start date so any checks can be carried out.

## Telling the unsuccessful candidates

When your preferred person has accepted the job, send a letter to the other candidates who did not get the job.

## Be preferred to give feedback

Unsuccessful candidates may want some feedback on their performance. You can use the notes from the interview to help you. It's always best to offer some positive feedback as well as suggestions for areas for improvement.

## Do the checks

The only way to check that the information people have told you is correct is to take up references. It is also good to have the opinion of someone who already knows the person you want to employ and knows about their job skills.

There are two ways to ask for a reference, in writing and by telephone:

### Writing

A written reference will provide most information. You can ask specific questions and send a copy of the job description so the person giving the reference (referee) understands what the job involves.

### By phone

Quicker than waiting for letters, referees may also be prepared to say more over the phone than in writing. But a phone call may not give the referee enough time to think about what the job involves.

A telephone reference can always be followed up by a written reference.

NOTE: if you are handed a reference by a person at interview or receive one in the post before you have asked for it, always follow it up with a phone call.

**DBS** checks tell you if a person has criminal convictions. This is important if you want your PA to care for your children or work unsupervised when there are children in the house.

Once these checks have been completed and you're happy with the results, offer the job to your preferred applicant and agree a start date.

## Keep a record

ACAS, an organisation that promotes employment relations, recommend that recruitment records are kept for a period of time, such as six months, in case of any discrimination challenge. These are confidential records.

### More information:

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) or call their helpline on  **0300 123 1100**

Courses on how to become an employer are run at Leeds CIL [www.leedscil.org.uk](http://www.leedscil.org.uk)