



Recruiting Personal Assistants

Some useful tips based on the personal experiences of DDPSG members

The tasks involved in recruitment can be summarised as:

1. Writing a job description
2. Deciding where to advertise
3. Short listing
4. The interview
5. Contracts
6. Induction

1. Job description / application pack

This will be based on your needs identified in your care plan. Make a note of exactly what assistance you need, what tasks need to be carried out and how many hours you need someone for. This is the **Job Description**. Then make a list of what skills and experience your assistant *must* have (essential) e.g. experience of care work, and what things you would *like* them to have (desirable) such as moving and handling training. This is your **Person Specification**. You then need to put together an **Application Pack** which will contain the Job Description, Person Specification and Application Form and a covering letter. Most people use the Direct Payments Support Service application forms but you can make up your own. Get several packs ready for when you advertise. If you don't want to include your home address you can use the Support Service or set up a PO Box number through the Post Office

2. Advertising

Most members of our group have found the best place to advertise is the Free Press. This got a much better response rate than the Job Centre, shop windows, supermarket notice boards, GPs' etc. but it is still worth trying some of these. Costs for a Free Press advert will vary so check exactly how much you are paying, what size the advert is and for how many weeks it will be included. Your Direct Payments should cover advertising costs.

Think carefully about what information to include in the advert. You need to capture the essential information: **Job title, hours, pay and contact details**. Some members have used the phrase 'no experience necessary' and this has produced a much higher response rate. Not everyone is familiar with the term 'Personal Assistant' so it may be helpful to add 'support worker' or 'carer'. You might also want to mention any essential requirements.

Remember to make a note of anyone who contacts you for an application pack

3. Short Listing

When you receive the completed application forms you need to decide if any of the applicants are suitable. Use your Job Description and Person Specification as a guide. Few applicants will meet *all* your requirements but make sure they have any essential skills or experience. Try not to make judgements based on handwriting, background, names, circumstances etc.

4. Interviewing

Most people tend not to interview in their own home for safety reasons. Most have booked a room through the Support Service. You need to allow about 1 hour for each interview and have someone with you to take notes and offer support. Write a list of interview questions based on your Job Description and Person Specification. It is a good idea to have a practice run through your questions to make sure they are clear and understandable and cover everything you want to find out from the applicant.

An interview is your chance to find out if you will get on with this person and for them to decide whether they would like to work for you so try to be as relaxed and friendly as possible. One member of our group held a second interview at home, which is worth considering if you cannot decide between two applicants. Do not forget to take up **references**, most people do this after offering someone the job but before they start work, but you could collect them all before interviewing. If your PA is likely to be around children you ought to get a Criminal Records Bureau check (CRB). The Support Service can offer advice on this. Most people use Age Concern as the agency to carry out the check on your behalf.

5. Contract

Once you have offered someone the job you need to draw up a Contract of Employment which details all the terms and conditions under which they will be employed. The Support Service or NCIL have examples that you can easily adapt for your own specific circumstances. Include a 'Probationary Period' to give you time to see if they are able to do the job and if you get on alright with each other.

6. Induction

Put together an Induction Pack containing their contract and any other policies and procedures they need to be aware of, such as Disciplinary Procedures and Time Off Work policy, and go through them together. Plan a proper induction / settling in period of about a week during which you introduce your PA to their job and to your routines.

There is lots of help and support available from organisations such as SYCIL (01302 892949), Direct Payments Support Service (01302 737707), NCIL (020 7587 1663) or chat to a member of our support group (01302 822401)