

Factsheet A20: Employing a Personal Assistant (PA)

Professional carers have a variety of skills. Some have nursing and first aid qualifications and others may be home helps or personal assistants. Examples of the type of tasks they may undertake are:

- cooking, cleaning and other household tasks
- help with personal care like washing and using the toilet
- driving or help with getting around
- medical tasks like giving injections or changing a catheter
- shopping, banking and paying bills.

The idea is to help you maintain your independence and remain living within your own home. The option you choose depends on your needs and preference for employing services directly, and how much responsibility you wish to take on (i.e. employing a PA yourself) or using a care agency.

Using a PA will give you flexibility because you can arrange working patterns to suit you, and you will have continuity so that you can develop a relationship with the person that you employ. You will have greater control, to have your support and care provided in a way that will enable you to live your life in the way that you wish. You can sometimes employ people you already know and trust to provide your support.

To find a PA, you can use our PA Register at <https://equallives.org.uk/pa-register/>, [where your job listing is active for 3 months. You can search for and approach PAs on the PA Board, or they can apply for your job.](#) It's then up to you to contact the person directly and arrange to interview them and potentially employ them. The pay for a PA



in this type of work can range from £7.50 to £15 an hour, although it is your responsibility as the employer to pay at least minimum wage, details of which can be found on the Government website. You can set the pay rate, though this may already be set for you by your funding body (Norfolk County Council or NHS, for example). Your funding body may permit a higher pay rate if you can show exceptional circumstances (perhaps to allow for the fact that you need someone with a particular qualification, the role carries responsibility or certain skills, or you live particularly remotely and need to attract and retain people once in place).

If you employ a PA, you will have the legal responsibilities of an employer. This will include things like arranging cover for when your PA is ill or on holiday. You might like to think about using a PAYE payroll service plus any other employment services you may need to make sure you are compliant with legal regulations. Any paid-for services that you use will have to be budgeted for, either in your support plan if your support is funded by for example Norfolk County Council or NHS, or by you if you are paying for your own support.

Although PAs are cheaper, there is an argument that care agencies are better able to guarantee care, because they are usually able to find someone to come out even if the regular person they send falls sick or is on holiday.

To get around this, if a PA is unavailable – because of holidays or illness – it can be possible to employ alternative PAs to take their place, either using informal contacts locally, or by trying to recruit for cover staff. It will be a ‘zero hours’ arrangement, where the employee has no regular hours of work, but could be called upon to assist when needed, and are only paid when they work.

Some PAs will choose not to offer assistance with medication, thereby highlighting one of the issues when choosing a carer: you very much have to discuss the parameters of



what they will, or are qualified, to do. You should have employer's liability insurance in place by law when you become an employer, and some policies include cover for PAs administering medication.

If you require further information or would like this factsheet in an alternative format you can contact us by calling: 01508 491210, by emailing: info@equallives.org.uk, or by writing to: Equal Lives, 15 Manor Farm Barns, Fox Road, Framingham Pigot, Norfolk, NR14 7PZ.

