

SECTION 6

How to meet your Personal Assistants' learning and training needs?

People learn in different ways:

- some like to read about how to do something
- others like to be shown, or told how, and so might prefer to go on a practical course
- some people like to learn from practical experience, trying things out and getting some feedback
- others like to talk and ask questions
- some like to attend formal classroom based learning where they are taught in traditional ways

Many people like a mixture of different ways of learning. Talk to your Personal Assistant about what he/she would prefer. Think about what approach both you and your Personal Assistant would prefer. You need to be comfortable with the method and approach to be used. You might want to learn and train together.

Learning is an ongoing process and you can provide positive support and encouragement to your Personal Assistants to continue to learn and develop. It will be helpful to write down agreed learning needs such as in a learning plan. You can use or adapt the learning plan form or example.

Identify the learning and training needs

- Get to know your Personal Assistant and his/her experiences, knowledge and skills.
- Talk about what he/she need to know and do. See how this matches your personal requirements and support plan. Use the job description to help.
- Ask where the gaps in understanding are. Talk about how to meet them.
- Use the learning plan form. This will help you think through what you want your Personal Assistant to get out of the training, what activities will help his/her learning, how to deliver the training and who will deliver it.

Decide how to meet the need

- Think about different ways of learning.
- Consider availability, times, cover and costs.
- Check if what you decide on will meet your requirements.
- Discuss with your Personal Assistant and your local authority/direct payment support service.

Write down what you will do and when. You can use the learning plan. The learning plan is something you fill in as your Personal Assistant completes different learning activities.

Arrange learning

- Arrange the learning and development.
- Support the assessment, where needed. This may involve you commenting on how your Personal Assistant has demonstrated or applied skills and knowledge in their work as part of the assessment for a qualification.

Check progress and update their learning plan.

- Ask if the learning was useful. See if your Personal Assistant works differently after the training. Ask to see the certificate, where provided. Talk through any issues.
- Keep a list of the learning that has happened and how it has helped. Both the individual employer and Personal Assistant should have a copy.

Regularly review and check learning needs.

- Do this during supervision, or as your requirements change. Supervision is about giving your Personal Assistant the support and development he/she needs and is an opportunity to review learning needs.
- Update the learning plan, following supervision and reviews.

Relevant learning and development topics

These are some areas of learning and development to consider:

- emergency first aid
- fire safety
- food hygiene
- health and safety introduction
- infection control
- moving and handling
- safe handling of medication
- safeguarding vulnerable adults/ children

Other possible subject areas to consider and discuss with your Personal Assistants are:

- assistive technology
- citizen directed support
- communication skills
- confidence building
- confidentiality and privacy
- cultural awareness
- dementia
- disability equality
- end-of-life care
- health conditions such as autism spectrum and neuro diversity
- independent living principles and values
- learning difficulty
- legislation such as the Mental Capacity Act
- mental health
- nutrition
- person-centred support
- sexuality and gender
- social model of disability
- wellbeing and outcomes

Training on specific areas will vary according to an individual employer's requirements or could relate to specific conditions such as epilepsy. Contact your local direct payment support service or other support organisations for further information and advice.

Looking after your own learning

You may also have some learning and development needs, particularly if you are new to employing staff. The Personal Assistants are working for you, and you are the manager. You direct what they do and when they do it. The employee listens and learns from the employer and there may be things the employer can learn from the Personal Assistant.

It is important that you are able to access information, advice and guidance that can help you to be a good and successful employer. This support should be offered by local authorities and your local support service and other independent support services.

What other subjects might help you?

- Assertiveness
- Boundaries and expectations
- Building self–confidence
- Conflict and dispute management
- Difficult conversations
- Disability Rights
- Employment law
- Health and safety/risk assessment.
- Human Rights
- Managing and supervising a personal assistant
- Pensions
- Recruitment and selection
- Stress management
- Time management