

Being a personal assistant employed by a disabled person

Phoenix supports older and disabled people recruit and manage their own personal assistants. We do this in the following ways:

- We help people find and take on the right staff
- We manage everything relating to payroll, tax and contracts
- We help out if there are any difficulties relating to the management of staff

However, once a care arrangement has been set up, it is expected that the arrangement should be self-managing, and not need the active involvement of Phoenix on a day to day basis.

This is quite different from how Care Agencies operate. Care agencies employ their own staff who they send out to see clients. The care agency takes much of the responsibility for managing the care delivery arrangements out of the hands of the clients and those who care for them.

What does this mean for you as a Personal Assistant (PA)

As a personal assistant, you are employed directly by the person you are looking after. Often this is a more satisfying arrangement for both PAs and the person being cared for because it means that the person being cared for has more control over how they arrange their support, and they can make decisions by talking directly with their PAs, (without having to go through an Agency)

For the PA the arrangement works out better because often shifts are longer, and it can also mean that PAs work with far fewer clients than is often the case with agencies. This means that that the PA can really get to know the person that they are working for better and establish a really positive relationship.

However, because PAs are not working for an Agency, but working directly for the person they are supporting, they have some important extra responsibilities. These responsibilities mean that PAs employed directly by a disabled person generally find that the rates of pay are higher than those offered by Agencies.

Extra responsibilities are as follows:

- There is no Agency with a bank of staff to provide cover for you to take holiday or become sick. Your back up is the other people on your team who support the same person. If you want cover, they can cover for you but it is vital that you take the initiative to make this arrangement yourself. Discuss your absence with the person you support and give as much notice as possible. To create good relationships, it is a good idea if you cover for them when they ask as well! In emergencies, Phoenix can be contacted to arrange cover.
- If for whatever reason your employer doesn't need their PAs to work a normal shift then they can cancel their support. The guideline is that if a shift is cancelled with less than 24 hours notice then it gets paid out as a normal shift.
- If for whatever reason PAs are not required for a longer period of time (for example during a holiday or hospital admission) then you will be asked to draw down your holiday pay, after which you will be paid a 'retainer' rate of half their normal pay to keep them available for when they are needed.
- It is also really important that everyone on the team communicates with each other well, with each other and the person they are providing support to. It may be useful to suggest to share mobile phone numbers and to set up a communication book that all PAs can write in.
- You will be one of the people who sees the person you care for most, and if you become aware of any worries or concerns about them or any of your team members, then it is vital that you take action. Don't hesitate to notify Phoenix or Social Services on 01225 396000 about any issues. This is called Safeguarding.
- You should also always be thinking about what training you might need. If you feel that you need more training, then please talk with your Employer or Phoenix to arrange this.

If you are at all concerned or confused by any of this information, or if it raises any questions then please do call Phoenix on 01225 481923 or email info@phoenixsw.co.uk