

## Writing a job description and person specification

### Introduction

To successfully recruit a Personal Assistant (PA) you will need to carefully define the requirements of the job ('tasks and responsibilities') and the type of person you need for the job eg skills, knowledge and experience. This is called a job description and person specification and ultimately it will form part of your PA's employment contract.

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#### 1. What is a job description?

A job description lists the main tasks and responsibilities of the job and details of how you would like these tasks to be carried out.

A job description also contains key information for prospective job applicants including how much they will be paid and where they will be working.

Taking time to write an effective job description will save you time in the long run and is part of good management as an employer. This is because job descriptions are helpful in the recruitment, induction and supervision of PAs.

#### 1.1 Why should I write a job description?

The job description will form part of your PA's employment contract and will also be useful for:

- deciding the scope of the work involved in the job
- effectively advertising the job and clarifying what applicants will have to do as part of the job
- assessing your PA's performance and determining training needs once they are working for you

The job description will also help you to develop interview questions which ask candidates about the previous experience/ transferable skills they have which make them right for the role.

# Direct Payments

All employees like to know what is expected of them and how their performance in the role will be assessed. A job description is a very useful tool which you can use to help you do this.

If there is ever a misunderstanding between you and your PA over what the job involves, a well-prepared job description can help both of you to reach a common understanding of the role and where the PA's duties start and end.

## 2. What is a person specification?

A person specification will be useful when writing a job advertisement and defining the qualities you are looking for in a candidate. The person specification should include the

- knowledge
- experience
- skills

that you would like candidates to have. You should separate those which are **essential** from those which are **desirable**. For example;

| ESSENTIAL   | DESIRABLE  |
|---|--|
| <p>Candidates must be able to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Entitled to work in the UK</li> <li>- Female (for personal care)</li> <li>- Able to learn the needs of a disabled person</li> <li>- Honest and trustworthy</li> <li>- Reliable with good timekeeping</li> <li>- Self-motivated</li> <li>- Hygienic and well presented</li> <li>- Able to follow instructions and work on their own initiative</li> </ul> | <p>It is desirable but not essential for candidates to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have previous experience of providing personal care</li> <li>- Experience of working with people with MS</li> </ul> |

However you must remember that it is essential not to discriminate and to value diversity. For more information on this please see the factsheet about **Avoiding discrimination in PA employment**.

A person specification will also help you to formulate interview questions so that you can make sure you employ the best person for the job.

For example, using the person specification above you might ask interview candidates:

**‘Can you give me an example of a time when you’ve had to maintain good hygiene standards as part of your job?’**

Or

**‘What methods would you use to make sure you completed the tasks involved in this role to a high standard?’**

### 3. Writing a job description and person specification

If you wish you can use the factsheet called **Job description and person specification template** as a template for writing your job description.

#### 3.1 What basic information should I include?

You should include the following key information in your job description:

**Job title** Personal Assistant

**Job reference number** ABC123

**Location** Monmouth

**Hourly rate** £7.66 per hour

**Hours/ shifts** Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:00 13:00.

**Contract type** Permanent. Part time.

#### 3.2 Detailing tasks and responsibilities

If you wish you can use factsheet called **Preparing your PA job description** to help you think about the tasks and responsibilities involved in your role. You may wish to use the following key headings when writing your job description:

##### **About the employer**

In this section you may wish to include information about yourself and your family. It is a good idea not to include your names or specific details of where you live.

E.g. I am a 45 year old woman with multiple sclerosis. I live with my husband and three children in Worthing.

##### **Summary of the role**

In this section you may wish to include a brief summary of the role (inc. key tasks and responsibilities) and the purpose of the role.

E.g. This role involves assisting and supporting me with domestic and personal care tasks to support me in my role as a mother and to enable me to live as independently as possible.

##### **Typical tasks**

Under the sort of headings listed below you should provide a detailed list of the tasks your PA will be expected to perform.

- Personal care tasks
- Admin tasks (helping me with paperwork)
- Social support tasks (accompanying me to appointments)
- Other

##### **Person specification**

In this section you can provide details of the skills and qualities that you would like your PA to have.

## Additional information

You can use this section to provide details of any further requirements

E.g. applicants must have a full UK driving licence and be willing to drive employer in their own car or applicants must be comfortable working around family pets.

If you have specified what sex your PA should be (because your role involves personal care) you should include the following in this section: \*Sch. 9 s. 1 (1) Equality Act 2010 Applies.  
You should also state that:

Successful applicants are entitled to holiday pay and will be given an employment contract. All applicants must be willing to undergo an enhanced DBS police check.

## 3.3 What types of tasks and responsibilities might be involved in my PA's job?

If you wish you can use the factsheet called **Preparing your PA job description support sheet** to help you think about the tasks and responsibilities involved in your PA's job.

Ultimately the tasks involved in your PA's job will be specific to your personal situation, but might include:

| Admin                    |   | Personal Care Tasks              |   | Social Tasks (assisting me to)       |   |
|--------------------------|---|----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| Opening and sorting post | ✓ | Getting up and going to bed      | ✓ | Work, learn or train for work        | ✓ |
| Writing letters          | ✓ | Showering or washing             | ✓ | Attend support or focus groups       | ✓ |
| Filling in forms         | ✓ | Going to the toilet              | ✓ | Take part in leisure activities      | ✓ |
| Making phonecalls        | ✓ | Getting around at home/ shopping | ✓ | Socialise with/ meet others          | ✓ |
| Arranging appointments   | ✓ | Food and drink preparation       | ✓ | Perform civic or civil functions     | ✓ |
| Paying bills             | ✓ | Eating and drinking              | ✓ | Contact and meet with family/friends | ✓ |