



Guidance on employing Personal Assistants (PAs) during the COVID-19 pandemic

As part of Bromley Council's measures to reduce and prevent the spread of Covid-19, we have put together the following guidance for those who use Direct Payments, and for those who support someone else in using Direct Payments. This will help us all to manage during these unprecedented times

Key Workers and Essential Care - Personal Assistants (PAs) have been deemed as key workers by central government and therefore would be expected to carry out Essential Care duties, whether directly employed or self-employed. Essential care includes things like washing, dressing, preparing meals and in some instances shopping. Support for social activities will be restricted to provision at home, or support to get out once a day for daily exercise if applicable.

If you suspect that you have Covid-19 - you will need to follow the government and NHS guidance. You should contact your PA to inform them that you are displaying symptoms, but they would be expected to continue to provide support in line with [government Guidance on Homecare Provision](#).

Please note: if your PA is unavailable to support you and you cannot arrange an alternative means of support please contact the Adult Early Intervention Team on 0208 461 7777.

What should I do if my Personal Assistant is not available to support me because they are self-isolating?

Your PA may be unavailable to support you because they suspect that they, or another family member, have the Covid-19 virus and so they need to self-isolate for 7-14 days (see the NHS guidance [here](#)).

Statutory Sick Pay - it is likely that they will be entitled to statutory sick pay from their first day of isolation if they meet the criteria (see the government guidance [here](#)).

Self-employment - if your PA is self-employed a scheme is being developed by HMRC through which they may be able to claim reimbursement, please see more information [here](#).

If your PA is temporarily unavailable

If your PA is temporarily unavailable because they are self isolating for 7-14 days and you need support during this time then you should attempt to arrange cover. Please follow the guidance below:

- a) If possible ask family or friends living in the same household as you to provide care and support until your PA is available again.
- b) We do not advocate breaking the Government guidelines on isolation and social distancing by asking friends and family who do not live in the same household to provide care support unless this is absolutely necessary.
- c) If there is no informal support available we recommend that you use alternative arrangements via a care agency. A list of agencies can be found on the [CQC website](#) - and we suggest that you choose those with a rating of Outstanding or Good.
- d) If the cost of the care agency is greater than the amount of Direct Payment that you receive you will need to contact Bromley Council to discuss this. Please contact the Coordination and Review Team (details at the end of this information sheet)

Please note: if, as an interim measure, you are paying a relative you will not receive additional funding for 7-14 days as it is expected that you will use the contingency funds available in your direct payment account during this time. You must contact the Council before the end of the 14 days to seek approval if this situation is likely to continue (contact details at the end of this information sheet).

Please note: under no circumstances can you give notice to your PA in order to pay a relative or friend instead during this pandemic. If your PA has given written notice that they will be unable to continue visiting you will need to follow the guidance above.

What should I do if I have to self-isolate?

Please follow this link for the latest [Government guidance](#) and [NHS advice](#) on whether you should self-isolate. You should inform your PA if you are displaying symptoms of Covid-19 so that they can take necessary precautions; but they should still be able to support you during this time.

If your regular PA feels that they are not able to support you during your 7-14 day isolation period then you can speak to your PA to find out what their concerns are and if these can be minimised. If they still do not want to come to work, and it does not leave you at risk, they could potentially take unpaid or annual leave, however you do not have to agree to this. Please see the FAQ sheet from Vibrance at the end of this information sheet. You can also contact your Employer's Liability Insurance provider who will offer employment advice and guidance on these matters.

If you choose to self-isolate and tell your PA not to come into work then you will still need to pay your PA their usual rate in accordance with their contract. You can request that the PA takes annual leave for some or all of the period of isolation if you give sufficient notice.

Personal Protective Clothing (PPE)

For advice around Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) please see the [government website](#).

If neither you nor your Personal Assistant has / develops any symptoms, then care should continue as usual.

If you have / develop symptoms, your Personal Assistant should:

- wash their hands for 20 seconds upon entering your home and dry them on a paper towel or their own towel (they should not use any of your towels);
- put on PPE: gloves and fluid repellent surgical facemask (new PPE must be used for each episode of care);
- safely dispose of the PPE within a disposable rubbish bag.

PPE should continue to be worn whilst you have symptoms; and for 72 hours after these have cleared.

If your Personal Assistant requires a stock of PPE in accordance with the guidance above please contact Vibrance between 11-1.00pm Monday to Friday - 0208 2906639. Vibrance will collate your information and share this with Bromley Council who have a limited supply of PPE available. You will be contacted regarding collection arrangements.

For more information see the [information sheet provided by Vibrance](#).

Who to contact?

Bromley Council Coordination and Review Team - for queries regarding your Direct Payment rate, how you can use your direct payment or using your direct payment to employ relatives:

Tracey Ennis
Telephone: 020 8461 7385
Email: tracey.ennis@bromley.gov.uk

Claire Wichett
Telephone: 020 8313 4935
Email: Claire.wichett@bromley.gov.uk

Vibrance - for queries regarding employing another PA, employment advice or for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):
Telephone: 0208 290 6639
Email: bdp@vibrance.org.uk

Please note: this guidance has been produced by Adult Social Care in accordance with current available guidance from the NHS and central Government and may be subject to change.