

PARENT & CARER GUIDE

Personal Assistants (Direct Payments & Self-Funded)

A practical guide for disabled adults and families employing a personal assistant, whether through direct payments or self-funded.

Employing your own personal assistant (PA) gives you choice and control over your support. It also means you are responsible for choosing someone you can trust. Since January 2026, eligible PAs can get an Enhanced DBS check, and you can ask to see it.

They can get a DBS check. You can ask to see it.

Since 21 January 2026, eligible self-employed workers can apply for their own Enhanced DBS check through a DBS Umbrella Body.

What has changed for personal assistants

Since 21 January 2026, eligible self-employed workers and personal employees can apply for an Enhanced DBS check. Personal assistants are named as an example. Depending on the role, this can include a check of the Adults' Barred List, the Children's Barred List, or both.

A PA you employ directly, often paid through direct payments or a personal budget, is usually known as a personal employee. Not every role qualifies for a check, so use the DBS eligibility tool: gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check.

- You cannot apply for a check on your PA's behalf.
- Your PA applies themselves through a DBS Umbrella Body, such as self-employed-dbs.co.uk.
- The certificate belongs to them. You can ask to see it.

Which workforce should the check cover?

- Supporting a disabled adult: adult workforce, with an Adults' Barred List check where eligible.
- Supporting a disabled child: child workforce, with a Children's Barred List check where eligible.
- Supporting both, for example in a family home: ask for a check covering both workforces.
- If the role changes, check the certificate still fits the work.

How to check their DBS certificate

For a status check you need their certificate number, surname as shown on the certificate, and date of birth. GOV.UK suggests entering "private employer" as the organisation name. If new information exists, ask them to apply for a new check.

If a certificate shows the person is on a relevant barred list, they are legally prohibited from that work. Do not employ them. Report it to the police if you know a barred person is doing this work.

- ☐ See the original paper certificate. Copies or photos are not acceptable.
- ☐ Check the name and details match their government photo ID.
- ☐ Look at the issue date.
- ☐ Check it covers the right workforce and barred list for your PA role.
- ☐ Ask whether they subscribe to the DBS Update Service.
- ☐ With their permission, do a free status check at gov.uk/db-update-service.
- ☐ Do not photocopy it, share it, or keep details longer than needed.

Your responsibilities as an employer

When you employ a PA directly, you take on some employer duties. Your council's direct payments support team, or a local support organisation, can often help with these.

- Give a written contract and agree duties, hours and pay.
- Pay at least the National Minimum Wage and holiday pay.
- Sort out payroll, tax and National Insurance, or use a payroll service.
- Check whether you need employer's liability insurance and workplace pension enrolment.
- Check your PA's right to work in the UK.
- Agree clear rules on money, keys, medication and personal information.

A certificate is only one part of the picture

A DBS check is helpful, but it is not the whole story. Combine it with references, relevant training, experience, recommendations and your own judgement. Have a trial period, be nearby for early shifts if you can, and keep talking openly. If your PA supports a child, talk to your child regularly about how things are going.

Where to get help

- Direct payments questions: ask your local council's direct payments support team.
- In an emergency, call the police on 999.
- Concerns about a child: NSPCC on 0800 800 5000.
- Concerns about an adult: your local council's adult safeguarding team.
- Find a DBS Umbrella Body: gov.uk/find-dbs-umbrella-body
- GOV.UK guidance: gov.uk/guidance/private-individuals-employing-self-employed-workers-or-personal-employees

Questions to ask

1. Do you have an Enhanced DBS certificate covering the right workforce for this role?
2. Can I see the original certificate and your photo ID?
3. Are you on the DBS Update Service, and may I do a status check?
4. Can you give me references from previous PA or care work?
5. What training and experience do you have that fits my needs?
6. How would you handle personal care, money or medication?
7. Are you comfortable with a trial period and a written contract?

Warning signs

- Reluctance to show an original certificate, or offering only a copy.
- Details that do not match their photo ID.
- A certificate for the wrong workforce, with no plan to update it.
- Pressure to pay cash in hand or skip a contract.
- Asking for PINs, passwords or control of your money.
- Crossing agreed boundaries or discouraging contact with family and friends.

KEY POINT

You are the employer, so ask to see your PA's original DBS certificate, check it covers the right workforce, and get support from your council's direct payments team.

Working with children or vulnerable adults?

Point them to **self-employed-dbs.co.uk**. Eligible self-employed workers can apply online in around ten minutes and get their Enhanced DBS check processed by a registered Umbrella Body.

self-employed-dbs.co.uk

This guide is general information based on DBS and GOV.UK guidance published September 2026. It is not legal advice. Always check the latest guidance at gov.uk. DBS for Self-Employed is a brand of MJD Ventures Limited.