

4. WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS

If you are worried that you are at risk of harm you should contact your care manager or phone the general Social Work phone number 01546 605517 (during office hours) or 01631 566491 or 01631 569712 (during the evenings or at weekends).

There is always someone available to help you.

Harm can happen anywhere: in someone's own home, out in the community, in a care home, a day centre, a hospital or anywhere else where people spend time. Anyone may cause harm. This could include the people closest to you, such as family members or friends, as well as people you rely on such as paid care staff.

The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 exists to provide ways to help people at risk of harm. It gives the council the responsibility for investigating when anyone may be at risk and helping to protect them.

We hope you do not find this leaflet too alarming however, we need to make sure that you know how to keep yourself safe. Not everyone who offers to work with you may be as genuine as they seem. If you are in any doubt, contact your care manager who can support you to make sure you are protected.

ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL NHS HIGHLAND



STAYING SAFE WHEN ORGANISING YOUR OWN CARE AND SUPPORT

**Information to help you protect
Yourself from harm if you have chosen
to employ someone to provide
your care and support**



**Act
against
harm** |

3. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Financial harm is unfortunately one of the most common types of harm that social work has to investigate. It covers any kind of behaviour that leads to your money being misused or taken by someone else without your consent. Because you have Personal Assistants working for you at home you need to take extra care to make sure this does not happen to you.

- * Keep your money in a bank or building society and not in cash at home.

- * Arrange for bills to be paid by direct debit from your account rather than take cash out to pay them.

- * Keep your cash card or book in a safe private place and do not tell people where they are.

- * Keep your PIN number private.

- * If your Personal Assistant helps you with banking or shopping, keep the records and receipts of all transactions so you can check them later or get a family member or friend to do so.

2. ENSURING YOUR PERSONAL ASSISTANT HAS THE NECESSARY SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING

As a PA employer it will be your responsibility to ensure that your employees receive the appropriate training to deliver their role.

It is important to ensure anyone supporting you has the appropriate training and skills to do so, so they do not harm you or themselves. Your Care Manager will discuss this with you when setting up your payments and ensure that sums to cover any identified training needs are included in your Direct Payment.

Your care manager will talk to you about training that is available to your personal assistant

Argyll and Bute Council offer free training to all personal assistants on identifying and reporting harm to people — this is the Introduction to Adult Support and Protection training, details of the dates and venues can be found on <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/aptraining> or alternatively please contact your Care Manger for more information.

There may be other training you consider important to ensure your Personal Assistant can effectively support you. If this is the case please discuss what would assist you with your care manager.

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INTRODUCTION

All adults should be able to live free from fear of harm and have their rights and choices respected. People who need care and support often have to trust and depend upon family members or paid staff for help. This means that they may be more vulnerable to harm than other people.

You have chosen to take on the responsibility of managing your own care and support rather than have the Social Work department arrange this for you. This can be a very positive step for many people, but it also means that you will not have some of the safeguards that come with using services arranged by others. It is therefore important that you know how to keep any risks to yourself to a minimum.

Your Care Manager can provide you with information about how direct payments work. Further information on employing a personal assistant is available through the Scottish Government's Personal Assistant Handbook 2014 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0044/00447315.pdf>

This leaflet provides information about ways that you can minimise any risk to yourself and what to do if at any stage you are worried that you are being harmed.

Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG)

The PVG Scheme has now replaced the previous Enhanced Disclosure that was used to check if the person you wished to employ has a criminal record. It is a membership scheme which ensures that people who are barred from working with certain vulnerable groups are not able to do so.

It is important for you to have the care and support you need. So, it is recommended that you make it a condition of employment that your PA is a member of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme, to ensure that they do not have any convictions which would make them unsuitable to work as your PA.

You do not have to do this, but **we strongly recommend it.**

As a personal employer you are entitled to see an employee's **Scheme Membership Statement.** (A Scheme Membership Statement confirms that the individual is not listed and barred from working with certain groups).

Your Care Manager can give you more information about the scheme and also provide you with an application form.

Further information is also available from <http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/disclosureinformation/pvgscheme.htm>

Using an Agency:

If you prefer to use an agency to provide your care and support

- It is strongly recommended that you check that the agency is registered with Care Inspectorate www.careinspectorate.com or 0845 600 9527
- The Care Inspectorate registers and inspects all agencies whose staff provide personal care such as help with bathing or using the toilet
- You can find more information about The Care Inspectorate and the registered services in this area at www.careinspectorate.com or 0845 600 9527
- A Care provider resource directory list is also available at:

www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/care-resource-directory

PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM HARM

While most people who work in care do so because they want to help and support others, there are some members of society who deliberately target people they feel are vulnerable and less able to protect themselves from harm.

They may seek out situations where they feel there will be less scrutiny and supervision of their work. This can happen in someone's own home and there has been research showing that families, friends and paid carers are more likely to abuse people than strangers.

Harm to people who are disabled, ill or frail is rare but it is important you know it can happen and what you can do to minimise the risks to yourself by:

- following the advice below about employing staff, you will help to make sure that you only take on personal assistants that you can trust;
- by taking advantage of the training opportunities on offer you will be able to provide them with information about keeping both you and themselves safe while they work for you;
- by taking steps to keep your money safe you will protect yourself from financial abuse;
- by knowing what to do if you are worried you are being harmed, you will be able to seek advice immediately if this happens to you

1. GUIDANCE ON EMPLOYING STAFF

Advertising:

- Do not put your home address, telephone number or details about yourself on any advert unless there is someone else available to deal with any enquiries.
- Think about asking a friend or relative if they would be your contact address and telephone number; otherwise a job centre may be able to do this for you or you can use a PO Box.
- Some people advertise or search for staff on internet sites, but again, remember not to disclose personal information about yourself.

Applications:

- Make sure all applicants fill in a full application form.
- Look carefully for any gaps in their employment history (this could mean they are hiding something); ask them about any gaps and think about checking out the reason they give you.
- If they are not working ask them why they left their last employment.

References:

- Always take up references for someone you think you may employ.
- Try and get a reference from a previous employer, not just a friend.
- If the person has worked in a care setting in the past it can be very helpful to take a reference from the manager there.
- Good questions to ask in a reference are, “Was the person ever subject to any disciplinary procedures?” and “Would you re-employ this person?”

Further information how to safely recruit your Personal Assistant can be found in the Scottish Governments booklet “Personal Assistants Employers Handbook– what you need to know 2014” <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0044/00447315.pdf>