

PAs Returning to Work: Advice for Employers Coronavirus COVID-19

Although many personal assistants (PAs) have worked throughout the pandemic, some PAs have been asked not to work or been unable to work as they or their employer are shielding, for example. As people start to go back to work, we know PAs or their employers may be nervous about it.

Doing a risk assessment before the PA returns to work

You should do a simple risk assessment before the PA returns to work. Consider:

- Any equipment you may need e.g. PPE, hand sanitiser, disposable hand towels.
- Any new rules you need to put in place e.g. no visitors to the house, shoes off at the door, hand washing routine, cleaning routine.
- Any new signage you should put up e.g. washing hands guide in bathroom.
- Any new rules for other household members e.g. to observe the 2 metre social distancing rule may mean they need to stay in a different room whilst the PA is caring for you.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

If the PA is providing personal care, do they need Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)? It does depend on a number of factors but the general advice is if you are being provided direct care, your PA should use:

- Disposable (single use) gloves
- Disposable (single use) apron
- Face mask (may be used for more than one task provided the PA doesn't touch or remove it e.g. to have a drink or it becomes wet/soiled)
- If the PA is at risk of getting droplets in their eyes e.g. from coughing or vomiting, they should wear eye goggles.



You should get supplies of PPE before your PA returns to work so it is available for them straight away.

Please visit our Covid-19 section on our website www.penderelstrust.org.uk which has guides to putting on and taking off PPE safely.

If you have a regular supplier of PPE, you should continue to use that. If not, you should contact their local authority for supplies.

Hand Washing

Washing your hands properly (for 20 seconds) and frequently is still one of the most important things you can do to prevent the spread of Covid-19. You should make sure there is soap (it doesn't have to be anti-bacterial, regular soap is fine) and a separate hand towel for each person (or disposable hand towels). There should be a bin provided in the bathroom to dispose of hand towels, tissues etc.

Getting Tested

Anyone with symptoms can ask for a virus test. Essential workers take priority over the general population in getting a test. As an employer, you can refer your PA for a test via <https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test-essential-workers>. They can choose between attending a drive-in or walk-in centre or being sent a testing kit to use at home.

Hygiene Reminders

It is really important to follow a strict hygiene and cleaning routine to protect you and anyone who works for you.

- Cleaning areas with normal household disinfectant will reduce the risk of spreading germs.
- If someone is suspected of having coronavirus or showing symptoms, only use gloves (including washing up gloves)/aprons etc. once before throwing away. They should be double-bagged and put aside for 72 hours before being put in the dustbin.
- Use disposable cloths for cleaning. You can use regular household cleaning products. Remember frequently touched areas – handrails, doorknobs, toilet flushes and taps – must be cleaned very regularly.
- Avoid creating splashes when you clean.
- Wash clothes on the highest temperature they will allow (60°C if you can) and make sure they dry completely.
- Do not shake laundry; if the virus is present, it will spread into the air.
- Clean and disinfect anything that has been used to transport dirty laundry e.g. wash baskets.
- Items that have been heavily contaminated with bodily fluids and cannot be washed in the washing machine should be disposed of safely.
- Always use a tissue if you cough or sneeze and dispose of the tissue immediately.
- If your PA starts to show symptoms, they must stop work. You and your employer should have a contingency plan in place in case this happens.

Penderels Trust provides support to people who receive a direct payment. There is lots of information and advice on our website for direct payment users and the personal assistants who work for them. Please visit www.penderelstrust.org.uk and go to the Coronavirus box on our home page.