

Good practice tips for workplace PAs

As a workplace PA, you may be employed directly by the person you support, or you may be employed by the organisation they work for. In this document 'your manager' refers to the person you support.

Workplace PAs often work one-to-one with their manager so expect a close working relationship. This can take time to develop

- Make sure you develop a good understanding of your manager's work role and how your own role fits within it.
- Try not to make assumptions about what to do - always check.
- Keep asking for guidance, for example when new situations arise or whenever you are unsure of or struggling with an aspect of your role.

You need to have confidence and people skills to provide the best support

- There may be times when you need to arrange access to a venue for your manager, or take messages from colleagues. You will need to communicate clearly and confidently.

Professionalism: be aware that you are representing someone in their workplace

- Recognise that your competence and behaviour can influence colleagues' perceptions of the person you support.
- Keep your personal views private unless they are invited.
- Maintain confidentiality.

Respect and maintain role boundaries

- It is not your role to do your manager's job – try not to overstep.
- Your role is to support your manager. Be guided by them about doing any tasks for their colleagues.

Keep alert and be prepared to be available to your manager when needed

- Always listen and stay alert to what is going on and look for cues from your employer (for example in meetings) in case you are needed.
- Be prepared for times when you will not be needed to provide support, and discuss with your manager what is acceptable for you to do at these times. For instance is it appropriate for you to read a book or look at your phone?

Tips for line managers who have employees with PAs in their team

Consider writing a workplace PA policy

- Acknowledge the importance of the role.
- It is helpful to have a workplace PA policy. There is currently no national guidance around workplace PA support so you may need to develop your own policy.
- Clarify potential grey areas around having workplace PAs (who may not be employed directly by your organisation) on the premises.

Keep your managerial focus on your employee

- A workplace PA's work can impact on your employee's performance. If you have concerns you should raise these with your employee, who is responsible for their workplace PA's work.
- Be aware that a bright and interested workplace PA might step over the boundary into your employee's role. It is your job to draw your employee's attention to this and support them to maintain boundaries.
- Going directly to the workplace PA with any concerns disempowers your employee. Talk to your employee instead.
- In work conversations, always address your employee rather than their workplace PA. The role of a workplace PA is not the same as a regular 'office PA'.

Workplace PAs can feel isolated

- Think about ways to counter this risk by for instance offering an appropriate induction. You should discuss with your employee the best way to ensure that colleagues understand the role of the workplace PA.

If your organisation opts to employ the workplace PA directly (rather than them being employed directly by your employee), then some things will need careful consideration

- Who will have line management responsibilities for the PA? If it is not the person they support, ensure that the PA's line manager fully understands the nature of the role.
- The PA may have twin loyalties (to the person they support and the organisation). How will this be managed, for example if the organisation has a busy period?

Offer ongoing support to your employee to be a good PA employer

- Be aware that your employee may have training needs around supervision of their PA or managing difficult situations. Think about whether your organisation can meet these needs.