

A guide for companies using recruitment agencies



This leaflet is produced by the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC), the association for the recruitment and staffing industry in the UK and describes how the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations 2003 ('the Conduct Regulations') affect you as a user of temporary or permanent staffing services.

Higher standards for the recruitment industry

The government has introduced the Conduct Regulations to raise standards within the recruitment industry. Drafted by the DTI, the Conduct Regulations stipulate how recruitment businesses should operate, providing added protection for job seekers and companies using the services of recruiters. In many respects the Conduct Regulations bring the law into line with the REC's own Code of Practice for its members.

Information to be supplied to you

According to the Conduct Regulations, as a client you must be given a contract by the agency or business supplying recruitment services which sets out their terms of business. The recruiter must also confirm the identity of the work-seeker, that the worker-seeker has the experience, training and qualifications that you expect for the position and they are willing to work in the position. Agencies and businesses are also required to obtain information about the proposed position from you including information on any risks to health and safety known to you and steps taken to prevent and control such risks.

Obligations to inform you if a work-seeker is unsuitable

The Regulations introduce a new obligation on recruitment agencies and businesses to notify you if they obtain information that means the work-seeker is or may be unsuitable. For businesses supplying temporary or contract staff this obligation to you is ongoing during the supply of a temporary worker. In the case of permanent recruiters, they are obliged to notify you if they obtain such information during the first three months after an introduction of a work-seeker.



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Restrictions on employment businesses charging temp to perm fees

Traditionally employment businesses charge a fee if you take a temporary worker on directly after a temporary assignment, known as a “temp to perm” fee. Under the new Conduct Regulations if you take a temporary worker on directly, you may still be liable to pay a transfer fee, provided the employment business gives you the option of an extended period of hire as an alternative to the fee. In addition the employment business may only charge you a fee, if you take on the temporary worker within a period of 8 weeks after the end of an assignment, or 14 weeks from the start of the assignment (whichever is the later).

Recruiters acting as employment agencies i.e. recruiters introducing permanent candidates, are not restricted in charging fees under the Regulations.

The Regulations dealing with temp to perm fees are complex and should you wish to obtain further information you should discuss the provisions with an REC member firm.

Incorporated work-seekers

The Conduct Regulations are to be extended to cover work-seekers who contract their services through a limited company from 6th July. However incorporated work-seekers are permitted to opt out of the scope of the Regulations if they give appropriate notice to an employment business.

VAT

Certain methods by which recruiters use to mitigate VAT for you, known as VAT “friendly schemes” are affected by the new Regulations. However, HM Customs and Excise have announced a new VAT concession that will run for 18 months commencing on 6th July 2004. This concession may enable recruiters to continue to mitigate VAT for you when they supply temporary staff, provided they re-structure the way they supply their workers from 6th July.

For more information

This note is not a definitive guide to the Regulations and further information can be obtained from the DTI. See link: <http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/agency/newregs.htm>. The Regulations are published by the DTI and are available from The Stationery Office on their website <http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/si/si2003/20033319.htm>

The REC

The REC is a not-for-profit trade association representing the recruitment and staffing industry in the UK. It has some 8,000 individual members and 6,000 offices in corporate membership, representing over 50% of the recruitment industry in the UK. Its members range from small independent businesses to multi-national organisations. The REC seeks to promote high professional standards and good practice within the industry.

In addition to the above obligations and restrictions REC members are required to adhere to the REC Code of Good Recruitment Practice which is available to view on our website www.rec.uk.com. The REC Code of Good Recruitment Practice has been created in consultation with industry stakeholders to ensure that all members of the REC conduct their business ethically and to the highest standards.



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