

Employment practices review

From:
Sent: 27 April 2017 16:01
To: Employment practices review
Cc:
Subject: Written Submissions to the Modern Employment Review

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear Sir / Madam

Following the cancellation of the regional event, I wanted to take the opportunity to submit evidence in writing.

Who are SAFERjobs?

SAFERjobs are a Community Interest Company started by the Metropolitan Police and support by both the House of Lords and House of Commons, and DWP and BEIS. SAFERjobs is wholly not-for-profit and provides a free service to job seekers and agency workers. As well as providing a free response to individuals, SAFERjobs use the intelligence to advise relevant law enforcement and government bodies where appropriate, thereby contributing to intelligence-based enforcement. SAFERjobs works by allowing job seekers and agency staff a say and holds organisations to account. By also sharing known illegitimate employers, scams, etc., this also allows members to protect their customers by cutting off the source of the issue. SAFERjobs is free for all.

Types of Abuse Witnessed by SAFERjobs

SAFERjobs receives around 8 reports a day. These cover a wide range of abuse including:

- Advance Fee Fraud: fraudsters posing as employers posting adverts on line charging money for employment 'services' eg police checks, CV writing, visas, fake SIA licences, insurance, travel, etc.,
- Recruitment agencies failing to pay agency staff for work completed (often the odd shift or day);
- Reports about umbrella companies not being clear on pay and charge rates leaving the agency worker underpaid;
- Modern slavery reports: usually non UK job seekers gaining 'work' through an agency and moving to the UK to find they are immediately indebted to the 'employer';
- Reports about fake or illegitimate recruitment companies;
- Reports about unethical recruiters (agencies, job boards, job platforms etc.,) supplying staff to work with the vulnerable having never met or vetted those individuals;
- Work from Home: this has a number of guises but includes facilitating money laundering, administration services which are never paid for, etc.,
- Data theft: job seekers tricked into sending bank details, personal identity details, etc., online in response to what they believe is a job offer;
- Premium Rate Phone Scams: fraudsters tricking job seekers into calling premium rate phone numbers believing they are having a job interview;
- Boiler Room Scams: job seekers duped into high pressure 'sales' environments targeting the vulnerable to elicit money for fake schemes (such as trading / carbon credit scams);
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Sadly, these cases affect both the out of work (financial or identity theft) and the currently employed who often resign from legitimate work only to find their new 'job' is fake. In the last 2 years we have seen a 300% rise in reports of this abuse. We know this is merely the tip of the iceberg, with an estimated 85% of issues going unreported. Currently, around 50,000 people per month visit the SAFERjobs site and we are advertised on 35 of the UK's top job boards and over 50 recruitment companies - all with a combined monthly web traffic of 120m.

Solutions

Security: The Online Threat & Preventing Abuse at the Earliest Stage

The nature of job seeking, being driven so much by technology, means 'fake job adverts', 'illegitimate recruitment organisations', and 'unethical employers' can spread a job advert across hundreds of job sites in just one day. This means a huge range of people can fall foul of this. We recommend all organisations who advertise jobs online should have to commit to the SAFERjobs Code of Conduct (or similar) to ensure due diligence and transparency. This is entirely free and asks organisations to run basic checks, provide information to SAFERjobs (who then share across all partners to stop the spread of the issue), commitment to investigate an issue reported by SAFERjobs.

<https://www.recruitmentgrapevine.com/article/news-2017-04-10-ben-howlett-mp-launches-new-saferjobs-framework>

The Future of Recruitment

Many organisations are developing 'apps' and other modern job matching technology whilst attempting to avoid the legislation and categorisation of either an employment business or agency. There is a large future threat here that a completely unregulated job finding industry would see a large increase in all of the above issues. We recommend a revision of the current Employment Agencies Act to broaden the scope, as well as the recommendation above. With the 'uberisation' of recruitment and the gig economy / portfolio society this is only set to intensify and continue.

Worker Rights and Responsibilities

SAFERjobs acts as a force to advise agency workers of their rights. Many are not aware, and therefore do not know how to report potential abuse or where to get help. Through ongoing education SAFERjobs hope to improve practices in the sector and raise the awareness amongst agency staff. We would recommend SAFERjobs being part of a central advice and guidance solution to help promote this issue and distribute reports to relevant bodies. Through our existing (ever expanding links) in the sector we have a very large reach. At no cost, this could be expanded even further through support in encouraging all recruitment organisations to advertise SAFERjobs as a free resource to job seekers and agency workers.

SAFERjobs aims to be a representative body for agency staff as well as supporting job seekers in general.

Umbrella Organisations

SAFERjobs see a large range of issues concerning umbrella organisations, and not limited to ones directly impacting workers. As well as the transparency of charges and the understanding of workers, SAFERjobs see various issues concerning inappropriate individuals being placed through recruitment organisations into clients which often lead to safeguarding issues. Umbrella organisations should be 'licensed' or regulated in some way to ensure workers are protected and practices are effective and safe, especially when placing workers into the education and healthcare sectors.

An "Association of Compliance Bodies"

There is great scope for improving the current enforcement regimes which often operate within distinct sectors through data sharing and joint working. For example, the Care Quality Commission regulate home care agencies and healthcare organisations, Ofsted inspect schools but not recruitment agencies, and the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate regulate the recruitment sector. SAFERjobs share intelligence with all these organisations as well as the Home Office, DBS, and others where relevant. By bringing together organisations that inspect and regulate employers and sharing relevant data across the board this allows organisations such as the above to implement intelligence-based enforcement with a richer source of information about employers. Also, as an example, given the size of the recruitment sector, this also helps to prioritise who to inspect with finite resources.

Under Represented Groups

Within the SAFERjobs Code, it asks all recruitment organisations to have specific practices around assisting under represented groups into work. The recruitment sector has a positive part to play in the solution of helping more under represented groups into work. Best practice guidance would help the recruitment sector implement successful practices in this area. In general this includes, but not limited to, people with convictions, people with disabilities, youth employability, and ex-military personnel.

I have intentionally attempted to keep the above brief, but of course would be happy to discuss any aspects in more detail.

Kind regards

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