

Information campaign for would be models and entertainers – top tips

- If you want to be famous - BEWARE of anyone who promises they can make you a star overnight or makes extravagant claims - if it looks too good to be true, then it probably is.
- UNSCRUPULOUS people will tell you what you want to hear; “YOU ARE JUST WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR” - so you sign up and pay unnecessary/excessive fees.
- Beware of advertisements CLAIMING to provide artists for popular TV programmes like East Enders or Dr Who – directors for these programmes usually use agencies (and individuals) that they’ve used before.
- If the agency claims to supply a popular TV or film company with actors/models – try telephoning the TV company to ask if they use the agency. If in doubt, you could also ask the agency for references from recent clients.
- NEVER pay any money on the day. If you’re asked for money when first meeting or speaking to an agent, they are BREAKING THE LAW and you should walk away. Report their actions to BERR’s Employment Agency Standards Helpline on 0845 955 5105.
- NEVER sign anything on the day, especially if you are being pressured to - reputable agencies let you take paperwork away to read carefully at your leisure.
- MAKE SURE you understand all the terms and conditions of a contract before signing – or ask someone else for advice if you need to. If you are asked for money before or after you’ve signed a contract ask what you are getting for your money. Remember that agencies are only allowed to charge fees (other than commission from your earnings) in limited circumstances – generally in connection with a publication containing your details.
- CHECK out the agency before saying “YES” – look at their website, ask questions about the percentage of their clients in regular work. No agency can guarantee work for clients – this is a tough business – but a reputable agency will have no problem answering your questions. Again, ask the agency to provide contacts who can give you references.
- If you are asked for money to enter your details in a publication, ask to see a current copy, FIND OUT where your details will be circulated e.g. who do they send the publication to. Ask “how will getting my details into this publication help get me work?”
- WATCH OUT if you have paid for a set of photos/other services and then another agent calls, saying he can find you work but needs more pictures and more fees. Not everyone finds work even with reputable agencies, but beware of people who ask you for repeated fees.
- BEAR IN MIND any one can promise you success - question any claims that you

will be found work – it's your right to inform yourself and you should be suspicious of anyone who can't or won't provide clear answers.

- REPUTABLE agencies will tell you that the entertainment business is a very tough to get into and only a very small number of people have what it takes to succeed. There are lots of very good-looking people, models, lots of talented entertainers and actors who struggle to get enough work.

FINALLY – still fame struck? A REMINDER - Don't part with your money or sign on that dotted line until you have done your homework and found out as much as you can about the agency.

Background:

A number of agencies advertise casting sessions in local newspapers. There have been instances of hard selling techniques being used at these sort of casting sessions. Where hard selling techniques are used, the process is often typically as follows:

- First, you see an advertisement for a casting session advertised in your local paper. Often these will be held at hotels, sometimes over a weekend. The advertisement may well say that no experience is needed and that they are looking for models and extras of all ages (sometimes including children). The advert may offer a free test shot or free photos. All you have to do is turn up.
- If you do turn up (or bring your children along), certain agency representatives may tell you that you (or your children) are "just what we're looking for", take photographs and then try to persuade you to sign contracts and pay fees on the day. They may say that you have great prospects and offer you a full refund if you don't get any paid work as a model or an extra. While you probably have some idea of your own potential, unscrupulous agencies sometimes trade on the pride that parents have in their children and will tell all parents how suitable their child is for modelling.
- If you do sign a contract and pay fees to an unscrupulous agency, you may get a phone call from another agency a few days later, telling you that they have seen your photos and they also want to sign you up. But they want to take their own photos, and you will have to pay more money for these. In some cases, the two agencies may be connected and this is an attempt to get a second fee.
- Some people who sign up at casting sessions do get paid work. But this is a very competitive industry and even highly talented individuals working for legitimate agencies may not, despite an agency's best efforts and intentions, get much or even any work.

The Government is aware that this is essentially a very sensitive area, where some sharp practitioners operate. Following its consultation on protecting vulnerable agency workers, **important changes** have been made to the legislation governing the private recruitment industry, which include agencies supplying workers to the entertainment and modelling industries.

The law states that an entertainment/modelling agency can only charge fees to a worker from earnings from work carried out through that agency – known generally as commission. However, where an entertainment or modelling agency places details of a worker in a publication, such as a model book or a website, an agency can make a charge to a worker for the provision of this service, **under restricted circumstances**.

With effect from 6 April 2008, entertainment/modelling agencies can no longer take a fee from a work-seeker for entry into a publication **on the first day of contact or for 7 days afterwards**. The 7 day cooling off period applies in all cases where an agency offers to place a workers' details in a publication for a fee.

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