

LONDON FASHION WEEK

BEST PRACTICE GUIDE FOR MODEL AGENCIES

The British Fashion Council has developed the first edition of the *Best Practice Guide for Model Agencies*, to support model agencies in delivering world class partnerships for the UK's and the world's leading models.

This guide also helps models and aspiring models, to understand reasonable expectations from the agency they have chosen to partner with to develop their career.

This is the first edition of this Best Practice Guide, but we are open to developing this further. Should model agencies wish to contribute information for review please contact Stacey James (Stacey.james@britishfashioncouncil.com).

BEST PRACTICE GUIDE FOR MODEL AGENCIES

THE BEGINNING: THE SCOUTING PROCESS

Models join agencies via a direct, speculative approach or because they have been identified by an agency talent scout.

There are many criteria that make up the decision for models and agencies to work together. A partnership should be based on both agency and model feeling that they can develop a long-term, mutually financially beneficial working relationship.

All talent scouts should be DBS checked by the agencies that they work for. New faces bookers and anyone else within the agency that has contact with young talent should also be DBS checked.

Agencies should select and develop their talent scouts and new faces bookers to ensure that they are acting professionally and have the skills to communicate effectively and appropriately with the young people they are speaking to.

If someone is scouted under the age of 18, initial meetings should be held with parents or guardians to ensure that both the young person and

parent/guardian understands the industry and the obligations of the model if they sign a partnership agreement with the agency. That meeting should ensure clarity around what is expected from the model, what professionalism means, ensuring that they know how to register as self-employed and that they need to keep financial records of the work they agree to and that they will be required to file tax returns. Agencies should be clear regarding process and protocol if they wish to terminate an agreement with the model and vice versa.

It would be useful in these meetings to outline professional development support offered by the agency and encourage the model to actively participate.

Models aged 16-18 in the UK should work part-time and be in full time education.

Under the age of 16, it is mandatory that a parent or guardian accompanies the model when working. Under 16 models require a licence to work from the local council.

Models under the age of 16 are not permitted to work at London Fashion Week.

If models are scouted but have a contract with other agencies, it is best practice to agree a bridging contract with the existing agency should a new agency partnership be agreed.

The Association of Model Agencies is a good source of further information:
<http://www.associationofmodelagents.org>

WHEN A MODEL FIRST JOINS AN AGENCY

The process differs, depending on whether a model is a brand new face, an established model or international model and this is his/her first time in the UK.

With a brand new face there will be a meeting (or potentially series of meetings) with parents to discuss possible career strategy; how that would work around education; explaining the way the industry works – the agency's client base, castings & go-sees etc. Then it's a question of tailoring a

bespoke development plan to that model's situation – i.e.: coming in during holidays for testing etc.

When an established model joins the agency, the procedure includes:

- AMA agreement
 - Model details agreement & measurements
 - Meet the team including the accounts department
 - A get to know you meeting to discuss development strategy
- When an international model first comes into town, the procedure includes: Explaining the basics of getting around town and keeping safe. Downloading the City Map app, organising the mobile phone, accompanying the model to the tube station to get an Oyster Card and then to the agency apartment
- Meeting the accounts department
 - Ideally a chaperone will accompany the model on the first few days or they will be teamed up with other in-town models who are going on the same appointments / are living in the agency apartment

Reputable agencies work on a commission only basis so the model should not pay an upfront fee. The commission is discussed/explained at the 'signing on' meeting. Promotional costs (cards/website/portfolios/e-books) are paid for by the agency but personal costs (accommodation/food/transport) are paid for by the model. Sometimes the agency will advance these costs against a model's future earnings, models should know in advance charges and agreed fees. Equity can provide independent advice on this matter.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

Agencies may have a conversation with a model regarding ideal measurements. Agencies should be aware of the difference of getting in shape versus an un-attainable goal. If there is a need to 'get in shape', agencies should advise the model of a healthy eating and fitness programme that will assist the model to meet and retain the measurements discussed and actively discourage any unhealthy or extreme eating practices which may lead to health problems and yo-yo measurements.

This is the most sensitive and contentious part of the role of model agents and should be approached with care and consideration. If the model is unable to reach the measurements discussed or feels that those

measurements are unrealistic, a meeting to re-assess strategy with the model should review what opportunities are available for the model.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE AGENCY TEAM

Model agencies should invest in the development of their team, either through peer to peer or external training. Model agencies often deal with young people and therefore all of the team should be prepared to deal with the challenges that young models face and be able to offer feedback in a sensitive and constructive manner.

It is essential that models feel there is an open line of communication to the owners and founders of the agency should they feel that they aren't being treated well or that inappropriate language is used. This communication should be about ensuring behaviours in the agency are appropriate and the right culture is developed to support young talent.

Model agencies are partners in developing young people, and as such it is mutually beneficial to ensure that models have the tools and support to deal with issues that fall beyond professionalism at work, such as self-esteem, eating disorders or other mental health issues.

The Association of Model Agencies (AMA) host an annual workshop delivered by BEAT, the eating disorder charity. This workshop aims to empower bookers and those working in agencies to spot the signs of eating disorders and encourage models to seek help and support them where possible. The AMA is open to other agencies joining these sessions, please contact them directly.

Agencies should have access to a range of therapists should they feel a model is in need of additional support.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO MODELS

As self-employed individuals, often in first time-employment, models require support to develop their careers and modelling skills. Agencies should have an annual programme of training and development covering topics including managing finances, professional modelling, nutrition, health and fitness,

dealing with difficult situations, use of social media. In addition to this, most major agencies provide mentoring schemes with experienced and established models to help new models develop their confidence.

SUPPORTING MODELS AGED 16-18

In an ideal world models aged 16-18 should be accompanied by a parent or agency personnel when working or going to castings. When this isn't possible, bookers should ensure regular contact to check the welfare of the models when working.

SUPPORTING ALL MODELS

All agencies should aim to have strong working relationships with those they represent with regular and constructive communication.

Agencies are usually in contact at least twice a day to discuss assignments, go-sees & new opportunities. It is important that bookers get feedback from models directly after the jobs they have undertaken and get feedback from clients on the models. It is important to give immediate and constructive feedback to models based on conversations with the clients to assist them in developing their careers.

Agencies should be aware of changes in behaviour and make it known to the model that they are open and available to offer support. Any concerns regarding health issues should be referred to a professional doctor in agreement with the model.

If models aren't receiving regular assignments, agencies should ensure that they have an on-going dialogue and feedback from clients and photographers as to why this might be. If the process is established when signing a model then this dialogue will be easier to navigate.

COLLECTIVE DEVELOPMENT OF BEST PRACTICE

The British Fashion Council is committed to ongoing dialogue with model agencies to ensure the best in class treatment of models. They will host an

annual meeting of model agencies to discuss challenges, opportunities and share best practice.

To register your interest in participating in developing the Best Practice please contact Stacey James (Stacey.james@britishfashioncouncil.com).

Equity is contactable on: www.equity.org.uk/models

Tel: 02076700237

E: mail:models@equity.org.uk

Should models wish to contact the British Fashion Council during London Fashion Week, please email Models@britishfashioncouncil.com or call 07555 924737.

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