

Trade Body highlights crucial role of education recruiters following campaign from NASUWT

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Dangerous campaign could lead to safeguarding issues

Following the recent 'Better Deal for Supply Teachers' campaign by the NASUWT, The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) has hit back at what it describes as totally unfair claims, highlighting the crucial role that education recruiters have played during the pandemic. The campaign, which included a letter to the Governing Boards of Maintained Schools, encourages the direct employment of supply teachers and alleges that education recruitment firms are levying charges of 40% commission fees, transfer fees in excess of £10,000 and 'aggressive supply agency tactics.

APSCo maintains that the fee levels quoted by the NASUWT are totally unrepresentative of the sector. "It is a pity that the NASUWT did not engage with us as a professional trade body for recruitment, as we could have clarified a number of issues," says Samantha Hurley, Operations Director at APSCo. "There are substantial costs associated with hiring both a supply teacher or a permanent teacher, costs that are borne by recruitment firms and so it is totally misleading to suggest that recruitment fees are simply profit."

APSCo says that a recent survey of its education recruitment members shows just how much support they have been giving to both schools and supply teachers during the pandemic – a far cry from exploitation for profit.

"We furloughed 100% of all eligible agency workers", said one respondent, "and extended the scheme until the end of August despite the financial impact. We continued to offer free CPD courses and training online and remained fully operational to ensure that teachers were able to help schools teach key worker children and the most vulnerable during lockdown."

Another education recruitment firm said that they run a training and development department which offers free weekly courses and support to teachers. "Throughout lockdown we were inundated with teachers undertaking our free courses and wellbeing support. This is run at a significant cost to us and is something the unions do not offer."

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APSCo also points out that the call for direct employment of supply teachers by schools, without a support framework, will lead to extremely serious safeguarding issues.

"Education recruiters bring immense value to the supply chain not least through onerous compliance requirements including safeguarding right to work checks and referencing," adds Samantha Hurley.

"The trend towards reduction in permanent headcount and a reliance on supply staff, together with the fragmented nature of the client base and a need for extremely high compliance standards, led us to launch Compliance+ an audited best practice standard which helps to safeguard children and benchmark recruitment

firms against the best possible service. This was developed by APSCo in consultation with external stakeholders such as the Crown Commercial Service, the National Association of Head Teachers, VOICE. SGOSS (the Governors Association), the Association of School and College Leaders and the National Association of School Business Managers. As one of our members pointed out:

“We actually had a school tell one of our teachers on a long-term contract that they could work despite being told to self-isolate – we told that teacher they could not work and pulled them from the contract for the school’s safety. This demonstrates clearly that we prioritise professionalism and safety over profit.”

APSCo has written to Patrick Roach, General Secretary of the NASUWT urging him to engage appropriately with stakeholders such as themselves so that they can better understand the supply teacher chain before making any other broad brush and unrepresentative claims. They are yet to receive a substantive response.

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