

PCG gives further evidence to Home Office of FTV abuse

Submitted by: Webtastic

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The Professional Contractors Group has handed more than 100 actual examples of Fast Track Visa abuse to the Home Office to demonstrate the system doesn't work and is affecting the contracting sector adversely.

PCG asked contractors to send in details of their first hand experiences of FTV abuse after Home Office Minister, Lord Rooker, requested evidence from the PCG in a recent debate concerning the work permit system on the BBC's Today programme.

The system allows UK companies to import workers that possess skills the Government says are in shortage. However, PCG has demonstrated that the list of skills is inaccurate and so out-of-date as to be irrelevant.

Philip Ross, PCG Policy Advisor, and Gurdial Rai, a PCG member who has been actively campaigning on this issue, handed in a personal copy of the case-study dossier for Lord Rooker at the Home Office before attending the latest Skill Sector Panel meeting. (Photograph available of Philip and Gurdial outside the Home Office).

Philip Ross, PCG Policy Advisor, said: "Out of the high figure of UK contractors that are currently 'on the bench', many are proficient in the skills sets on Work Permit UK critical shortage list.

"The evidence we have handed to Lord Rooker shows many instances of UK contractors being replaced with cheaper 'permit' workers with inferior skills sets to those they are brought in to replace.

"Many of the reports we have received detail how UK contractors at client sites are told by clients to train 'permit' workers who are brought into the country on fast track visas in skills that the workers they have replaced were originally hired for."

To further demonstrate to the Government there is no skill shortage in specific areas, PCG worked with an agency to track the results of an advertisement it had placed.

The advertisement requested applicants experienced in: C/C++, XML, ASP, Business Analysis, Network Engineering and System Administration - the exact same skills sets listed on the Government's critical shortage list.

Within five minutes of the advert being published three contractors had responded and after one hour the figure had risen to 13. After five days the total had reached 86.

Mr Ross said: "This case study shows that UK contractors are waiting for projects to be advertised. It adds considerable weight to our mounting dossier of evidence that there is no skills shortage in IT workers in the UK."

Notes to Editors:

1. The Professional Contractors Group was formed in May 1999 to lobby against the Government's IR35 proposals. It is a non-party political group and its patrons are cross-bench peer, Lord Weatherill, former Speaker of the House of Commons; and industry guru Sir John Harvey-Jones. Since its formation it has evolved into the representative body for independent contractors from many disciplines including IT and engineering on many issues affecting the knowledge-based sector.

2. The PCG's aim is to work for proper recognition of independent contractors as a genuine and valuable sector of the economy, generating wealth and employment, providing industry with a flexible workforce. The Internet has been the PCG's primary resource, providing fast, effective communication. It has a membership of more than 14,000 small businesses in the knowledge-based sector, mainly IT and engineering.

3. PCG has been actively involved in the fast track visa campaign and represents the contractor community on the Government's Skill Sector Panel for IT. The fast track visa scheme permits companies to bring in overseas workers who possess skills which are deemed to be in short supply,

4. Work Permits UK is the government agency responsible for the issue of Work Permits and controls what skills are on the short occupation list. The full list is here:
<http://www.workpermits.gov.uk/default.asp?pageid=2595>

5. For further information about the PCG's position on fast track visas, see press notice 03/02
http://www.pcggroup.org.uk/press_pn0302.html

6. For further information about the PCG: <http://www.pcggroup.org.uk>

For media enquiries and a photograph of Philip Ross and Gurdial Rai from the PCG at the Home Office contact:

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