

# Model Agency Campaigning for a Change in the Law to Clean up the Industry

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Model Agency Sapphires Model Management is calling on models and industry professionals to help propose a significant change in the UK law to tackle bullying, poaching and corruption in the industry.

The UK modelling industry employs young people from across the world, but other than minimal regulations covering employment agencies there are no legal obligations for agencies to protect them. Sapphires strongly believe if any other industry were employing young, impressionable people living away from home there would be safeguards in place to stop their exploitation, but without specific legislation, model agencies can avoid responsibility to do so.

Neely Reyes, the founder of Sapphires Model Management, is spearheading the proposals.

"The entire industry needs an overhaul from the way models are treated right through to how agencies operate," she explains. "The Modelling Industry contributes hugely to the economy but is run in a shockingly unprofessional and unethical manner. Although the Employment Agencies Act technically regulates the industry, this law doesn't cover the specific issues models and agencies face. Bullying and poaching by larger agencies is fierce, and mistreatment of models is rife."

Although the Competition and Marketing Authority recently fined five modelling agencies 1.5 million GBP for price fixing, still nothing has been done to regulate their behaviour. As the fine showed; the industry is primarily controlled by several large agencies who feel they can bully their clients, their models and other agencies to stay on top, and regardless of the financial penalty nothing has changed.

Caryn Franklin, Fashion and Identity Commentator and Professor of Diversity at Kingston School of Art welcome the plans. "In my time, I have met agents who deny the pressures and harassment of young models experience to absolve themselves from responsibility and due diligence," she says. "A change in the law aimed at making these people more attentive to the issues would certainly help."

The proposal is also supported by Steven Saxby, Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for the Cities of London and Westminster, the location of most UK. Steven's outlook and values are ethical with a view to creating a better tomorrow, and he is very keen to support small to medium size businesses.

Sapphires would be interested in hearing from anyone with experience of the modelling industry who feels there are ways to improve the way it operates.

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