

# BRITISH FASHION COUNCIL

## **Best Practice Guide for Model Agencies**

The British Fashion Council has developed 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 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 [models@britishfashioncouncil.com](mailto:models@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.

Under the age of 16, it is mandatory that a parent or guardian accompanies the model when working. 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.

### **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:

- BFMA 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:

- BFMA agreement
- Model details agreement & measurements
- Explaining the basics of getting around town and keeping safe.  
Downloading the City Mapper 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.

### **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 methods such as purging or fasting 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 at measurements they have attained following the healthy eating and fitness programme.

### **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.

Agencies should have access to a range of therapists should they feel a model needs 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 between 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. They should get to know the models that they work with, their friends, their support group and their family.

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.