

Building Services Engineering **EMPLOYMENT AGENCY ALLIANCE**



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Administered by **HVCA**

2 | KEY COMMITMENTS SUMMARY

In order to qualify for membership of the Building Services Engineering Employment Agency Alliance, agencies must be able to demonstrate that they conduct their business according to the *Key Commitments* – the principal elements of which are summarised below.

Commercial Standards

Financial standing. Accounting procedures must be appropriate to the size and complexity of the business.

Insurances. Appropriate public and employers' liability insurance cover must be in place.

Regulation. Organisations must comply fully with all relevant legislation.

Long-term commitment to training. Skills and qualification records, and plans for the future provision of a training budget, must be available for inspection.

Tax and NIC compliance standards. Arrangements must be in place which reflect the manner in which individual workers are let out to clients.

Business Standards

Business activity. Organisations must be engaged in the supply of skilled personnel within the building services engineering contracting sector, and/or related service and maintenance and facilities management/services sectors.

Customer relations. Organisations must be able to demonstrate clear, written terms of business.

Client confidentiality. Systems must be in place which ensure the confidentiality of client information.

Quality of workers provided. Procedures must be in place which will ensure

that the individual workers provided to clients fully meet their requirements.

Workers' performance standards. Procedures must be in place for reviewing and recording the standards of performance of individual workers.

Health and safety. A health and safety policy must be in place which requires the proactive assessment of risks at any workplace where individual workers are likely to be deployed.

Training records. Adequate training records must be in place for all agency staff.

Managing complaints. An effective customer complaints procedure must be in place, and in operation.

Employment Standards

Terms of engagement. All workers must be provided with full details of the work to which they are being assigned.

Equal opportunities. An appropriate equal opportunities policy must be in place – and must be applied in all personnel procedures relating to individual workers.

Worker confidentiality. Systems must be in place which ensure the confidentiality of information which relates to individual workers.

Other employment. There must be a commitment not to withhold information on workers previously placed.

Overseas workers. A system must be in place for the verification of the skills and qualifications of overseas workers, including their ability to understand English.

What is the Building Services Engineering Employment Agency Alliance?

The Building Services Engineering Employment Agency Alliance has been established by the Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association (HVCA) as a voluntary grouping of employment agencies which supply personnel to contractors across the building services engineering industry.

Formation of the Alliance recognises the increasingly important role employment agencies are playing in the sector's supply chain – along with a need for clear standards by which their performance can be judged.

The Alliance also facilitates strategic dialogue between contractors and their manpower

suppliers on a range of key issues. These include education and training, health and safety, workforce competence and relevant legislation.

What are the conditions of membership of the Alliance?

Compliance with recognised industry standards is a fundamental condition of Alliance membership.

Verification of such compliance involves regular auditing of an employment agency's business – undertaken by an independent auditor. This process is carried out every three years, with an annual compliance inspection in each intervening year.

The independent auditor selected to undertake audits on behalf of the Alliance is BM TRADA Certification Ltd, which has a long and distinguished

track record of service across the construction industry.

What standards are used for independently auditing members and prospective members?

The standards employed by the independent auditor – which have been developed jointly by HVCA and employment agencies – are contained in the *Key Commitments* document.

The principal elements of the *Key Commitments* are summarised on page 2, opposite.

Copies of the complete *Key Commitments* document can be downloaded from the Alliance's website at www.agencyalliance.org.uk.

What are the standards for?

The standards contained in the

Key Commitments can be used to establish whether an employment agency operates on a sound commercial footing, is appropriately regulated, and can demonstrate a commitment to the building services engineering sector.

The *Key Commitments* also provide reassurance to actual and potential contractor clients that the agencies in membership of the Alliance are professional, reputable and trustworthy organisations.

How does an employment agency apply to become an Alliance member?

All applicants for membership of the Alliance are required to complete an application form, and to pay a non-refundable fee for the first three-yearly audit. These must be forwarded to the Alliance secretariat at

the address which is provided on the application form.

How is an independent audit arranged?

Application forms are forwarded by the Alliance secretariat to the independent auditor, which will contact the employment agency to arrange to carry out the audit.

What happens after the independent audit has taken place?

Following completion of the audit, the auditor will provide a report to the Alliance secretariat, and make an appropriate recommendation based on its findings.

If this report confirms that the standards contained in the *Key Commitments* have been fully complied with, the employment agency concerned will be accepted into membership

of the Alliance – subject to the payment of the appropriate subscription.

In the event that the independent auditor identifies non-compliance(s) with the *Key Commitments*, the employment agency concerned will have a limited amount of time to rectify the non-compliance(s).

If the agency does not rectify the non-compliance(s) – to the satisfaction of the independent auditor – within the prescribed timetable, it must re-apply for membership (no less than six months later), at which time it will be subject to payment of a further (non-refundable) audit fee.

Which parts of an agency's business will be independently audited?

Where an employment agency

is active across a range of industry sectors, only that part of its business will be audited which is concerned with building services engineering (heating, ventilating, air conditioning and refrigeration and related trades; electrical contracting and related trades; and plumbing and related trades).

Where an agency works out of several offices, the head or main office will be the subject of the three-yearly audit.

However, during one of the annual compliance inspections that take place between the three-yearly audits, the auditor may visit at least one branch office.

How long does an independent audit last?

In most cases, an audit will

be completed within one working day.

What should an employment agency do to prepare for its independent audit?

Firstly, it should only apply for Alliance membership once it is reasonably certain that it conducts its business in line with the standards set out in the *Key Commitments*.

Secondly, it should ensure that those members of its staff who are likely to be involved in the audit understand the *Key Commitments*, and what the audit process is designed to achieve.

Thirdly, it should ensure that it is able to demonstrate that its business is conducted in a manner that is entirely consistent with the standards

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set out in the Alliance's *Key Commitments*.

Will there be regular meetings of the Alliance, and will members be able to attend?

All members will be invited to the Annual Meeting of the Alliance.

This will provide them with an opportunity to shape and influence the policies, strategies and activities of the Alliance.

These will then be taken forward during the year under the supervision of an Executive Committee comprising both Alliance members and contractor representatives.

What are the principal benefits of membership of the Building Services

Engineering Employment Agency Alliance?

The principal benefits of membership for employment agencies are:

- *independent auditing of compliance with an industry-relevant set of business standards as set out in the Alliance's Key Commitments, which represents a powerful marketing tool;*
- *issue of a membership certificate that certifies adherence to specific industry standards and best practice;*
- *a positive identity within the building services engineering sector;*
- *use of the distinctive Alliance logo as a badge of professionalism and respectability;*
- *opportunities for agency representatives to network with those of building*

services engineering contractors, and with each other;

- *collective lobbying and representation on legislative and other developments affecting the employment agency sector;*
- *opportunities to contribute to key industry developments in the manpower field;*
- *the direct business benefits that can result from the auditing process.*

What access do Alliance members have to the services provided by the HVCA to its contractor members?

While not actually members of the HVCA, Alliance members do benefit from:

- *access to the HVCA's regional, regional branch and specialist group networks, in order to arrange promotions, presentations,*

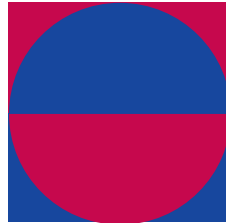
seminars and other joint activities on a locally agreed basis;

- *complimentary copies of regular HVCA publications, including HVCA Newslink (four editions per year) and The Specifier's Guide (published annually);*
- *listing in the Alliance's Directory of Members and on the Alliance website;*
- *purchase of HVCA technical and specialist publications at member-discounted rates;*
- *attendance on HVCA training and management courses at member rates.*



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Copies of the full Key Commitments document
can be downloaded from the Alliance website at
www.agencyalliance.org.uk.



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