



Partnership Bulletin



Welcome to a special edition of the partnership bulletin. These are extraordinary times, and we wanted to update you on how we have changed our way of working in response to the coronavirus pandemic and reinforce our commitment to protecting workers. You might also notice we've developed our bulletin to include a message from the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate (EAS) to provide a more comprehensive overview the approach towards labour exploitation at this time. We hope you find it useful - if you have any feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Simply email us at communications@gla.gov.uk.

GLAA 'ready to act and respond'



Here at the GLAA, we have a clear purpose around protecting workers from labour exploitation, and whilst there are now many people working from home, or sadly unable to work, we know there remain hundreds and thousands of workers busier than ever in sectors where there are risks of labour exploitation. That's why we're renewing our call for partners to be evermore vigilant in looking out for those signs of exploitation, and to report those concerns to us where they have them.

There's lots more [information on our website](#) on what to look out for and

how to refer concerns to us where you have them. Because we're absolutely here, ready to act and respond. We're continuing to work through our regime of inspecting the businesses we regulate to ensure they remain compliant, and carrying out investigations where we suspect there's criminal exploitation taking place. So please, watch out for it and please let us know where you have concerns about workers being exploited so that, together, we can ensure that during these difficult circumstances, workers are protected from labour exploitation, that we're able to support businesses to prevent the conditions in which exploitation can occur, and we're able to pursue those who are criminally exploiting workers and bring them to justice.

Thank you

Michael Rich, GLAA CEO



Gangmasters & Labour Abuse Authority

Helping business through the crisis



We've introduced a temporary licensing scheme to ensure critical food supply sectors continue to run as smoothly as possible. Temporary licences for food production will be granted to businesses operating within the wider labour supply industry and who wish to support labour providers who currently hold GLAA licences. Applications must be

sponsored by an existing GLAA licence holder who is expected to carry out due diligence checks in line with the authority's licensing standards. Decisions will be made by the GLAA on a case-by-case basis. All applications will undergo rigorous risk-based checks but the GLAA will aim to make decisions within five working days. Temporary licences will be issued for a period lasting up to three months, unless the coronavirus situation changes. There are currently no plans to impose an application or inspection fee for this scheme. If temporary licence holders wish to supply workers for a longer period, they must complete the licence application form and pay the application fee before the end of the three months. Certain activities are also excluded from needing a GLAA licence. This includes cases where a labour provider transfers their workers to another employer at no cost because there is no work for them. Guidance on this can be read [here](#).

'A difficult time for business'

GLAA Head of Regulation, Nicola Ray, said: "These are unprecedented times for us all and it is important that we recognise the need for greater flexibility in food processing and packaging while at the same time maintaining our core commitment to protect vulnerable and exploited workers. We realise this is a very difficult time for businesses. We are determined to support those who follow our licensing standards and have done so ever since they became licence holders. We will do all we can to help legitimate businesses as they continue to provide goods and services this country relies on. Labour providers are expected to continue to fully comply with our licensing standards during this period. We will investigate anyone who attempts to circumvent our licensing scheme and will not hesitate to revoke licences or prosecute businesses for unlicensed trading." [Read more here](#).

Pressures on farmers



We know that potential staff shortages in the agricultural and horticultural sectors can lead to labour exploitation taking place. It's clear that the current restrictions around travel create additional uncertainty as to the availability of foreign workers. We know Government is working through what this means for the sector, including how the Seasonal Workers Pilot will operate. Wherever possible, we will continue to provide advice and support as best we can.



Work continues despite pandemic

At the GLAA, we remain very much open for business. For example, in recent days we deployed officers to a car wash in the London area due to concerns over modern slavery. We also responded to a food processing plant in the Suffolk area over the treatment of workers, who were allegedly being left without food and protective equipment. We have also carried out compliance activity at a farm in Perthshire over allegations concerning the treatment of workers.



We will not hesitate to use our full range of powers to ensure businesses remain compliant and those criminals exploiting workers are pursued and brought to justice. Despite the lockdown, we continue to conduct investigations and inspections in order that workers are protected. We recently delivered some Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) to our people in the North West of the country to allow them to respond quickly if they believe a worker is at risk or in danger. We have a stock of PPE locally and are endeavouring to source more to ensure our important work continues.

Important information



We've issued several key updates in the last few weeks, covering the following topics:

- Guidance setting out the minimum charge rates to apply between a labour provider and labour user - [read here](#)
- The latest guidance on the sourcing of workers as a result of COVID 19 - [read here](#). You can also view some [FAQs in relation to this here](#)
- Guidance on the best practice for labour users in the GLAA-regulated sectors - [read here](#)
- Employment law changes, effective from 6 April 2020 - [read here](#)

Fine for unlicensed gangmasters

Two men who acted as unlicensed gangmasters for an eight-month period have been fined following an investigation by the GLAA. John Day and Mark Baker illegally supplied 18 workers to a food processing factory in Bedfordshire from late June 2016 until the start of March 2017. Both were both sentenced after previously pleading guilty to acting as unlicensed gangmasters. Day, 54, of Whittington Chase, Kingsmead, was fined £700, plus a victim surcharge of £70 and costs of £85. Baker, 42, of Nevill Close, Hanslope, received a fine of £240. He was also ordered to pay costs of £85 and a victim surcharge of £32. GLAA Senior Investigating Officer Jennifer Baines said: "Acting as an unlicensed gangmaster is a serious offence which can potentially leave some of the most vulnerable workers in society at risk of exploitation...We will continue to uphold our licensing regime and ensure that work in our GLAA sectors is fully regulated."



Employment Agency Standards (EAS) Inspectorate

Ben Bruten, head of the **EAS**, has issued a message in relation to the Covid-19 outbreak. [Read the full letter from Mr Bruten here](#). Here's an excerpt:



As your regulator, we are critically aware of the difficult times that the recruitment sector is currently going through. I am in regular contact with the sectors' trade bodies and other stakeholders. Together we have been considering how we may best help the recruitment sector through these challenging times. I recognise that these exceptional circumstances require an exceptional response from the Government. It is appropriate that in these circumstances EAS adjusts how it works with the recruitment sector, to help employment businesses and agencies through this challenging period. As a result, EAS is adjusting its enforcement approach to give the recruitment sector the space it needs to deliver its business, whilst still ensuring that agency workers' rights are respected.

'Together, we can get through this challenging period'

We are working closely with all the trade bodies and other stakeholders in the recruitment sector and I am keen to ensure we help in any way we can. During challenging times some recruitment businesses/agencies may feel compelled to compromise on compliance matters. EAS would strongly recommend against doing so and request that if you spot those seeking a competitive advantage by distorting the market to bring it to our attention either through your trade body or directly to eas@beis.gov.uk. I strongly believe the recruitment sector has a crucial role to play in rebuilding the UK economy, once this crisis will have passed. By working together, we can get through this challenging period. It is critically important that we continue to work together proactively in supporting innovation, creativity and ensuring we are all ready for the future challenge of rebuilding the country.

Kind Regards

Ben Bruten

Stay in touch

We want to hear from our partners about the challenges they might be facing in remaining compliant and preventing labour exploitation. That will help us to direct our response and inform our wider government partners about emerging risks. We are speaking with our stakeholders regularly to seek their views. So, if any themes or continuing issues develop during your conversations with stakeholders, please feed these back to our Head of Enforcement Ian Waterfield by emailing: ian.Waterfield@gla.gov.uk.

Immediate concerns about exploitation should be reported as usual by emailing intelligence@gla.gov.uk, visit our website at www.gla.gov.uk, or call 0800 432 0804 so we can take action.

