



How to Look for Homework and Not Lose Money



Supported by



The National Group on Homeworking

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'Guidance on How to Look for Homework and Not Lose Money' (First Published October 1998)

To the best of our knowledge, the information contained in this booklet is correct at the time of publication.

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NGH will endeavour to deal with your employment rights enquiries promptly and accurately and will treat all information given as confidential. If you require a copy of our complaints and confidentiality procedures, please contact the NGH office:

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National Group on Homeworking is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales, company number 2467693.

Who We Are & What We Do

The National Group on Homeworking (NGH) is a campaign and lobbying organisation. We are a national non-governmental organisation (NGO), we are a membership organisation, employing a small team of workers, currently funded by the Big Lottery Fund and Comic Relief.

NGH is the only national organisation in the UK working solely on homeworking issues. In addition to campaigning for improvements in the pay and conditions of existing homeworkers, we can also provide employment rights advice and can also offer representation service to NGH homework members.

What We Don't Do

NGH is not an Employment Agency and so we are not in a position to find homework for people. We do not hold lists of legitimate companies who use homeworkers and we **cannot** put you in touch with employers who employ homeworkers. **To the best of our knowledge there is no such thing as a directory of companies offering genuine homeworking opportunities.**

The Purpose of this Book

Although NGH is not an employment agency, we are still contacted by 100's of people enquiring about where they could find work to do at home. When looking for homework (also known as outwork) it is very important to be able to distinguish between genuine offers of work and misleading adverts for bogus homeworking schemes, otherwise known as 'scams'. If you want to report the loss of money sent to an unscrupulous company advertising so-called homeworking opportunities you need to contact Consumer Direct or Trading Standards on 0845 04 05 06.

This book is intended as a guide to help you look for homework and avoid losing money in the process!

BEWARE!!! BEWARE!!! BEWARE!!!

Looking for Homework - What to AVOID

Having decided that you want to look for work to do at home, you may have gathered that finding genuine homework can be difficult and time consuming. It may be tempting to reply to advertisements for homework that you see in the press, in shop windows, unsolicited mail and on the internet. A typical advertisement might look like this:

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	WORK FROM HOME Earn £50 per 100 mailing envelopes, send SAE to Mr Bloggs 2 The Street, The Town, TT4 1ST.	
	EARN UP TO £1000 PER MONTH MAILING COMMISSION CIRCULARS	
	1 TRAINEE MANAGERS required. No experience necessary. Full training will be given to success	B

Recruitment Schemes

Advertisements for recruitment schemes are often found in newsagents and Post Offices. The advertisement will ask you to send off a stamped addressed envelope (SAE) for more details. In return you will receive a request for a "registration" fee, to deter time wasters or to cover "administration costs", typically £15.00. Once you have sent the fee, you will receive instructions to place adverts, like the one that you replied to, in other shop windows, often using your own address for replies. You will then have to mail out

the SAE's sent in response to your adverts, containing a letter from the scheme organiser requesting a fee from other potential homeworkers. The scheme organiser will pay you about 30p per enquiry that you forward onto them. This means that at least 50 people would have to send £15.00 to the scheme organiser before you even earned back your initial fee.

This is a typical example of a bogus homeworking scheme in that there is no product to be made and the only way that you can make any money is by becoming involved in the scheme yourself. NGH would always advise that you never send money to a recruitment scheme.

Envelope Addressing

Like the recruitment scheme you will be asked to send a fee. You will be expected to address envelopes, by hand, using address lists provided (these may be copies of pages from telephone directories). This work is often rejected for failing quality standards which are very difficult, if not impossible, to meet. In these cases you will not get paid and won't be able to get a refund on your initial outlay.

Other Misleading Homeworking Schemes

There are a number of other misleading homeworking schemes being advertised in both the local and national press and in shop windows all over the UK. Most common are directory schemes and kit schemes.

Directory Schemes

These ask you to send a fee (usually £15) in return for a list of companies offering work to homeworkers. You are encouraged to believe that the companies are reputable and are offering genuine work. What you actually receive for your money is just a list of photocopied sheets, or a booklet of names, addresses or adverts for homework, each asking for a registration fee of anywhere between £10 and £200. **To our knowledge there is no such thing as a directory of companies offering genuine homeworking opportunities.**

Kit Schemes

These are schemes designed to attract people who enjoy making things and often have an 'arts & crafts' emphasis, such as making lampshades or hand painting pictures, wall plaques or miniature clay cottages. You are invited to send money to a company in return for a kit. The kit is supposed to contain the necessary materials from which you can make a product which the company say they will buy from you once completed. When the kit arrives it may have good materials in it, but no instructions on how to assemble the item, or it might contain inadequate or insufficient materials with which to make the product. Either way it makes little difference because, whatever you send back to the company, the item is likely to be rejected on the basis that you

have failed their quality standards and you will not be paid. Again you can not get a refund on your initial outlay, because you have used the kit

Many of these schemes can appear genuine. Their literature can look very professional and the rates of pay on offer can be very tempting. However, as with trying to find other kinds of work, **you should never have to pay to get homework.** If a company is asking you for money up-front for homework, NGH would always advise you **never to send any money** and have nothing to do with this type of scheme.

Remember - NGH has not come across any person who has obtained genuine homework as a result of applying to schemes such as these. Bogus homeworking schemes are run by unscrupulous individuals who exploit your need to work from home.

For Further Information

If you are in any doubt about the genuine nature of a particular homeworking scheme or company and you would like to find out more, there a number of things you can do.

Contact the Companies House Contact Centre in Cardiff

Tel: 0870 333 3636

For a small fee they can send you a named limited company's registration and incorporation details. However, this is no guarantee that the offer of homework is genuine, only that the company does exist. However, not all companies register.

Check whether the company is listed in your local telephone directory or try Directory Enquiries. A genuine company will be listed, and will be taking calls at its premises, in order to attract customers for its products or services.

Avoid replying to companies who use PO Box numbers. You have no way of finding out where the company is actually located. If the company gives an address and it is local to you, try to visit the premises and see if it appears to be a genuine going concern. Many of the schemes advertised, operate well away from where the adverts are placed, so this may not always be possible - but this is another possible sign that

the company is not genuine - check with Directory Enquiries in the town given in the address. Most genuine homework will be found within 2 or 3 miles of the company's premises in order to make the delivery and collection of work easier. If the company address is in a different part of the country to where you are, ask yourself why they are recruiting in your area rather than their own.

What to do if things go wrong

If you think you have lost money to a bogus homeworking scheme you should contact the Trading Standards local to the company. You can find the number in the phone book or at www.tradingstandards.gov.uk.

Trading Standards now have increased powers of enforcement against companies who breach legislation and harm the collective interests of consumers. If enough evidence is gathered against a company, Trading Standards can take out a court order against the company if they continue to breach legislation after a consultation process.

If you have kept all the paperwork, including the advertisement etc, you can send these to your local Trading Standards office so that they can collect evidence against companies; if possible, make photocopies for your own records.

Telephone Consumer Direct to report your problem on:

08454 04 05 06

Trading Standards have the powers to investigate any allegations.

Please note - NGH does not get involved in individual casework and cannot help you to get your money back. Please be aware that it is often very difficult to get your money refunded.

Some Facts about Homeworking

Misleading adverts for homework, which often state that you can earn large amounts of money working in your own home, as and when you choose, often give the wrong impression about what doing genuine homework is actually like. Homeworkers who contact NGH and local homeworking projects often report that;



- they have to work very long hours to earn a decent income
- the supply of work is irregular with sometimes too much work to cope with, but more often too little for them to earn a decent income
- most have very little control over when they do their work as the timescales are set by the supplier and are often very tight
- many are incorrectly classified as self-employed which restricts their entitlement to benefits, such as Job Seekers Allowance, maternity and sickness benefits and redundancy payments, if the work ceases
- many report significant health and safety risks with their work
- many report other difficulties such as feelings of isolation, problems with the delivery and collection of work and hidden costs (such as the use of their own power supply) for which they are not compensated by the supplier of the work
- homeworkers are entitled to be paid at the full level of the National Minimum Wage (from October 2005 this is £5.05 per hour for workers aged 22 years and over, £4.25 for workers aged 18-21.)

Although there are genuine homeworking opportunities to be found,

before looking for homework consider whether it is really what you want. New legislation, such as the National Minimum Wage Act and the Employment Relations Bill should help to improve the pay and working conditions of homeworkers. However, working from home is never likely to provide the flexibility and income levels that advertisements lead people to believe they can expect.

More Facts about Homeworking

In most cases it is perfectly legal to work at home, providing that you are not causing a nuisance to your neighbours. Possible exceptions to this are that some mortgage lenders, or housing tenancy agreements, may prohibit you from working at home, so it is worth checking the relevant documents before you start.

There are a wide variety of jobs that can be done in the home. Many people do not realise how many products are assembled, packaged or processed by homeworkers, for example; academic gowns, Aran sweaters, bicycle parts, Christmas crackers, computer leads, draught excluders, data input, embroidery, felt tip pens, horse blankets, jodhpurs, leggings, leaflets, medical supplies, pop socks, rag dolls, selling financial services, soldering wires, stringing labels, typing, umbrellas and word processing.



These are just a few examples of many items made, and types of work done, by homeworkers in the UK.

Remember - homeworkers are used by firms to do specific types of work or to provide extra flexibility during busy periods. Firms will usually only recruit homeworkers who live within 2 or 3 miles of where the firm is based to allow for the easy delivery and collection of work. You may be able to get work from a company or firm a little further away if you are prepared to deliver and collect the work yourself.

How to Find Genuine Homework

Finding homework can be difficult. You will rarely see homeworking jobs advertised in the Job Centres, or in 'Jobs Vacant' columns of newspapers. Quite often, the only way you will hear about homework is from other people who are already doing this kind of work. Somebody you know, may know of a firm using homeworkers in your area. **As most homework vacancies are passed on by word of mouth, it's always worth asking around.** Ask your friends, neighbours or people you meet at the school gate or other places in your local community.

You could identify companies in your local area which might put work out to homeworkers. They will be listed in your local Yellow Pages, Business Pages or Thompson Directory. A copy of Business Pages can be obtained free of charge by telephoning 0800 671 444. **The companies will not mention "homeworking" in their listing, but will be listed under the product or service they provide.** For example:-

Type of Company	How Homeworkers Might be Employed
Contract Packing	Packing and hand finishing
Greetings Card Manufacture	Packing and assembly
Printers or Print Finishers	Packing, inserts, assembly
Novelty or Carnival Goods, Promotional Goods	Assembly of keyrings, promotional pens and other novelty items
Clothing or Knitwear Manufacture	These companies would want skilled workers and may want you to have your own industrial sewing machine
Hosiery or Tights	Packing of tights, stockings or footsies
Printed Boards or other Electronic Components	Soldering of components

These are only a few examples and there are many other goods which can be made, assembled, processed or packaged at home.

What to Do Next

Once you have identified a company near to where you live:-

- ➡ Contact them and ask whether they ever employ homeworkers. The company should not charge you for this information
- ➡ If they say “yes”, ask if they have any work at the moment.
- ➡ If they haven’t, ask them whether they might have work in the future and whether you can go on a waiting list.
- ➡ Tell them about any relevant experience you may have.
- ➡ If the company does not employ homeworkers, ask if they know of other companies in the area that do.

Teleworking

Telework is the term usually used to describe using information and/or communications technology (eg computers) to work from home or another non-traditional workplace.

A number of companies operate telework systems, some data processing, operating out of hours telephone services, mostly in industries providing services such as banking, insurance and other financial services. Additionally, some local authorities and government departments are operating, or considering operating, telework systems in some areas of their work. Some companies currently only operate telework systems for existing on-site workers who have relocated their workplace to the home. Some companies may also require that you use your own computer equipment and telephone line whilst others may provide the necessary equipment.

You may also wish to contact:

The Telework Association (formerly known as the TCA)
WREN Telecottage
Stoneleigh Park
Kenilworth
Warwickshire
CV8 2RR

Freephone number: 0800 616 008
website: www.tca.org.uk

The TCA cannot provide teleworking opportunities, but may be able to advise on teleworking in general. They also provide membership services and a comprehensive handbook for a membership fee.

The European Teleworking Organisation at www.eto.org.uk

Learn Direct has information on a range of courses to help people start their own businesses. Contact 0800 100 900 (in England, Northern Ireland or Wales) or 0808 100 9000 in Scotland. For information about courses on line contact www.learndirect.co.uk

Self Employment

➞ In England, you should also contact your local Business Link for information and advice on running a business by phone 0845 600 9006 or website www.Businesslink.gov.uk OR www.businessadviceonline.org

➞ In Northern Ireland, www.investni.com (Invest Northern Ireland) on 02890 491031 will direct people to their local unit or www.ledu-ni.gov.uk

➞ In Scotland you can contact the Small Business Gateway on 0845 609 6611. Websites: www.sbgateway.com if you live in Lowlands or www.bis.uk.com if you live in Highlands.

➡ In Wales, get in touch with Business Connect Wales on 0845 7969 798 or website www.businessconnect.org.uk.

If you have skills, experience or qualifications that you could use to work from home, you may find that you have more success through self-promotion than through replying to advertisements for homework. Many companies, particularly new, small or expanding firms, may have the periodic need for specialised skills (such as book-keeping, accounts, computer software or hardware maintenance and/or development) or for more routine administrative or clerical work than their core workforce can deal with during busy periods. At such times, these firms may buy in the skills that they need or may use temping agencies to supplement their workforce. They may not have thought of using homeworkers and may be receptive to the idea of the additional flexibility for fewer overheads that this approach can

Other Possibilities

Some people who are currently employed would like to continue to do their present job, but re-locate to the home environment. If you are in this position, you may like to contact:

New Ways to Work
26 Shacklewell Lane
Dalston
London E8 2EZ

Helpline: 0207 503 3578
website: www.new-ways.co.uk

New Ways to Work cannot help people to find homework, but may be able to help if you are seeking to negotiate working from home with your current employer.

Information and Advice for Homeworkers

If you are successful in getting work to do at home and require information and/or advice relating to your work, please contact the NGH free on 0800 174 095 and ask for a 'Homeworkers Factpack'.

This leaflet contains up-to-date information on homeworkers legal entitlements such as the National Minimum Wage Regulations as well as other employment rights issues and details of current tax and benefit levels.

NGH also produces a Guide to Health & Safety for homeworkers. Both of these publications are FREE to homeworkers.

Additionally, there are a few local homeworking projects which can offer advice and guidance to homeworkers in their area. A list of local homeworking projects can be found below. If you live in one of the areas covered by a local homeworking project, please contact the relevant project directly for more information on the service that they can provide.

Bolton Homeworking Project - 01204 333 880

Bury Homeworking Advice and Support - 0161 253 5935

Health Works in Newham - 02081 557 6161
(Health & Safety Project)

Greater Manchesteere Homework Development Project
(incorporating Rochdale Borough Council, Wigan, Bury, Manchester and Oldham -Telephone 01706 864 377 for more information about Homeworkers Support Service

West Yorkshire Homeworking Unit - 01924 439 618

Other Helpful Organisations

In areas where there is no homeworking project, the following organisations may be of help:

**Greater Manchester Pay & Employment Rights Advice Service
0161 953 4024**

Scottish Low Pay Unit - 0141 221 4491

Yorkshire - Pay and Employment Rights Service, 01924 439 381

REMEMBER:

NEVER send money to a company advertising a homeworking scheme - you should not pay a deposit, fee or any money to get employment - if they ask for money it is probably a 'scam'.

ASK around, friends, neighbours or relatives to find out if any local companies use homeworkers in your area. You can ring companies directly and ask if they put work out to homeworkers- they may not have vacancies but you could ask them to put your name on a waiting list

