

10 Questions to Ask Any Staffing Agency Before You Sign

The questions that separate a reliable continuity partner from a CV-forwarding broker.

Any agency can promise to fill your shifts. The difference shows in what they'll put in writing. Ask these ten questions before you sign, and ask for the answers in writing. Most brokers can't answer half of them clearly, which tells you everything about where the risk will sit once a shift goes unfilled.

01 Are your workers directly employed on PAYE, or self-employed?

PAYE employment means tax, National Insurance, holiday pay and liability sit with the agency, not with you. Self-employed models can leave gaps in cover and accountability.

<p>✓ Green flag All workers are PAYE employees of the agency.</p>	<p>✗ Red flag "They're self-employed / on an umbrella", or a vague answer.</p>
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02 Can you send the full compliance file before the worker arrives?

Inspectors hold your home responsible for any missing record on an agency worker. The file should exist before first shift, not be assembled on request.

<p>✓ Green flag Complete, dated file sent in advance, every time.</p>	<p>✗ Red flag "We can get that to you", or paperwork chased after the shift.</p>
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03 What is your fill rate, and what happens when you can't fill a confirmed shift?

A promise of "best efforts" transfers the risk back to you. A genuine partner stands behind a confirmed booking financially.

<p>✓ Green flag A stated fill rate and a written remedy when a shift goes unfilled.</p>	<p>✗ Red flag No figure offered, and no consequence for leaving you short.</p>
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04 How deep is your bench of available workers?

One sick call shouldn't collapse your cover. Depth, not just a list of names, is what keeps shifts filled.

<p>✓ Green flag</p>	<p>✗ Red flag</p>
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A clear ratio of available workers to live placements.	"We'll find someone" with no sense of who or how many.
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05 Will I get the same workers back, or whoever is free?

Continuity of faces matters for the children and for your inspection narrative. A rotating cast of strangers is a quality and safeguarding concern.

<p>✓ Green flag</p> <p>A named core team matched to your home wherever possible.</p>	<p>✗ Red flag</p> <p>Whoever happens to be available on the day.</p>
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06 Do you carry vicarious liability cover for workers on my premises?

If an agency worker causes harm in your home, you need certainty about whose insurance responds. Many standard policies exclude this.

<p>✓ Green flag</p> <p>Specialist cover, including vicarious liability, evidenced on request.</p>	<p>✗ Red flag</p> <p>Uncertainty about the policy, or no written confirmation.</p>
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07 What induction do your workers complete before they reach me?

Agency induction (employment, conduct, policies) should be done before placement. Your team should only need to cover your home's specific procedures.

<p>✓ Green flag</p> <p>A documented agency induction, separate from your care induction.</p>	<p>✗ Red flag</p> <p>"You'll induct them", leaving the full burden on your staff.</p>
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08 What are your payment terms, and are your rates fixed in writing?

Clear terms and a held rate signal a business that runs on discipline, not one that will renegotiate or surprise you on the invoice.

<p>✓ Green flag</p> <p>Rates fixed in the agreement, terms stated up front.</p>	<p>✗ Red flag</p> <p>Rates that "depend", or shift between quote and invoice.</p>
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09 How quickly do you respond to an emergency request, out of hours?

Cover gaps rarely happen at convenient times. A real response standard is the difference between a partner and a 9-to-5 supplier.

<p>✓ Green flag A stated response time, including evenings and weekends.</p>	<p>✗ Red flag Office-hours only, or no commitment on timing.</p>
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10 What happens if I'm not satisfied with a placed worker?

A confident agency has a clear, fast process to replace a worker who isn't right, without argument or delay.

<p>✓ Green flag A named process and timeframe for raising and resolving concerns.</p>	<p>✗ Red flag Defensiveness, or no process beyond "let us know".</p>
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One test that cuts through all ten

Ask the agency to put their answers in an email. A genuine continuity partner does it the same day, because the answers are already true and already documented. A broker stalls, hedges, or sends a brochure. The willingness to commit in writing is the single clearest signal of who carries the risk in the relationship.

Happy to answer all ten in writing for your home. admin@sureshiftcare.com

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