Important: Please Read Carefully - Your Safety is Your Responsibility

UKCOA Jobs is an open platform designed to connect job seekers and clients directly. **It is crucial to understand that UKCOA Jobs does NOT actively moderate user interactions, verify user identities, or screen job postings in real-time.**

Your safety and security depend heavily on your own vigilance and precautions.

This guide is essential reading for all users, especially job seekers looking for work. It outlines the significant risks associated with using open online platforms like UKCOA Jobs and provides actionable steps you **must** take to protect yourself from scams, fraud, and potential harm.

This is NOT a substitute for common sense. Always prioritise your safety and be extremely cautious in all online and offline interactions related to work opportunities found on UKCOA Jobs.

Section 1: Understanding the Risks on Free Platforms

- **Unverified Users:** UKCOA Jobs does not verify the identities of job posters or job seekers. Anyone can create an account, potentially using false information.
- **Risk of Scams and Fraud:** Open platforms are targeted by scammers looking to exploit job seekers.
- **Potential for Dangerous Individuals:** There is a risk of encountering individuals with malicious intent, especially for in-person work or meetings.
- **No Platform Moderation:** UKCOA Jobs does not actively moderate content in real-time. You are responsible for your own safety, and preventative measures are essential.

Section 2: Staying Safe Seeking Work - Protect Yourself from Scams and Harm

- **Treat Every Offer with Initial Scepticism:** Do not assume any job is legitimate until you have thoroughly verified it.

- **"Too Good To Be True" = Red Flag:** If a job promises unusually high pay for little effort, it is almost certainly a scam.

- **Research the Job Posters Background Before Making Contact:**

    - **Google Search:** Look for legitimate websites, LinkedIn profiles, and reviews.

    - **Social Media Presence:** Established social media presence is a good sign; lack of it can be a red flag.

- **Use a Temporary Email for Initial Contact:**

    - **Enhanced Privacy:** Keeps your personal email address secure.

    - **Reduced Spam Risk:** If the job is a scam, your main inbox remains protected.

    - **Suggested Services:** Temp-Mail (temp-mail.org), Maildrop (maildrop.cc), Guerrilla Mail (guerrillamail.com).

- **Avoid Rushing to Share Your Personal Contact Details:** Be cautious if a client pushes you to personal messaging apps before you have a chance to properly check into them.

- **Never Share Sensitive Personal or Financial Information Early:** Do not provide addresses, bank details, passport scans, etc., until absolutely necessary.

- **Never Pay Money Upfront to Secure a Job:** Legitimate clients **pay you**, not the other way around.

- **Beware of "Cash-in-Hand" or Unofficial Payment Arrangements:** These offer no protection if you are not paid.

- **Trust Your Instincts:** If something feels off, walk away.

- **Vague Work Requirements = Warning Sign:** Legitimate clients have clear work expectations.

- **In-Person Meetings - Exercise Extreme Caution:**

    - **Meet in Public Places:** Well-lit, busy locations only.

    - **Inform Someone:** Tell a friend or family member about the meeting.

- **Take a Friend:** If possible, bring someone with you.

- **Leave if Uncomfortable:** If anything feels unsafe, leave immediately.

Section 3: Staying Safe When Posting a "Work Wanted" Ad

If you choose to post a "Work Wanted" advertisement on UKCOA Jobs to promote your services, please be aware that this will be visible to all users of the platform. While this can be a good way to attract opportunities, it also means you need to take extra precautions to protect your privacy and safety.

Follow these guidelines when creating and posting your "Work Wanted" ad:

- **AVOID Personal Information in Your Ad:** Do NOT include highly personal or sensitive information directly in your "Work Wanted" ad that is publicly visible. Specifically AVOID including:

  - **Your Home Address:** Absolutely unnecessary and a significant privacy risk.

  - **Your Date of Birth:** No legitimate client needs this in an initial "Work Wanted" ad.

  - **Your National Identification Number or Passport Details:** Never include these in an advertisement.

  - **Highly Specific Personal Details:** Avoid overly personal details in your ad that could be used to identify or track you outside of a professional context.

- **Use a Privacy-Enhancing Contact Method in Your Ad:** Since you need to provide a way for users to contact you, use a method that protects your primary personal contact details, especially for your publicly visible "Work Wanted" ad. Consider these options for your contact information in the ad:

  - **Recommended: Temporary Email Address:** As discussed in Section 2, using a temporary, disposable email address for your "Work Wanted" ad is highly recommended to stay safe in the beginning. This allows interested clients to contact you without you revealing your personal email address upfront. You can then scrutinise the contact you

receive through the temporary email and decide which conversations to continue using a dedicated, less personal email or other methods later.

- **Include in your ad:** "Contact me by email: *your chosen temporary email address - create a new one specifically for your ad*"

- **Good Alternative: Dedicated, Less Personal Email Address:** If you prefer a slightly more persistent email address (but still separate from your main personal email), use a dedicated, less personal email address (as also recommended in Section 2). This is still better than using your primary personal email in a public ad.

  - **Include in your ad:** "Contact me by email: *your dedicated, personal email address*"

- **Monitor Responses Carefully:** Regularly check the contact method you have included in your "Work Wanted" ad. Be vigilant and apply all the safety precautions outlined in Section 2 ("Staying Safe Seeking Work") when responding to inquiries received through your ad. Do not assume that because someone contacted you in response to your ad that they are necessarily legitimate or safe.

- **Remove Your Ad When You Are No Longer Actively Seeking Work:** Once you have found a job or are no longer actively seeking work through UKCOA Jobs, promptly remove your "Work Wanted" ad from the platform. Leaving it active when you are not available increases the risk of unwanted or irrelevant contact.

By following these guidelines, you can utilise "Work Wanted" ads on UKCOA Jobs to promote your services while significantly minimising the risks to your privacy and safety. Remember that **being proactive about protecting your personal information is essential when advertising your services online, especially on free platforms.**

Section 4: Staying Safe as a Job Poster

- **Provide Clear and Detailed Job Postings:** Transparent listings attract serious workers.

- **Verify Users Background:** Check online presence and social media profiles.

- **Maintain Professional Communication:** Clear and respectful communication builds trust.

- **Be Clear About Payment Terms:** Outline terms, methods, and schedules clearly.

- **Be Wary of Large Upfront Payment Requests:** Especially for short projects.

- **Respect User Privacy:** Only ask for necessary details.

- **Report Suspicious User Behaviour:** If you suspect a fake profile or scam, report it.

Section 5: General Safety Advice for All Users

- **Protect Your Account:** Use a strong password and be cautious of phishing attempts.

- **Monitor Account Activity:** Regularly check for unusual activity.

- **Beware of Phishing Emails:** Always verify sender addresses and website URLs.

- **Report Suspicious Activity:** Use the contact form on ukcoa.co.uk/jobs

- **Keep Devices Secure:** Use up-to-date security software.

Section 6: Reporting Safety Concerns to UKCOA Jobs

If you encounter anything suspicious or unsafe, report it immediately.

To Report Safety Concerns:

1. **Visit the UKCOA Jobs Website:** ukcoa.co.uk/jobs

2. **Use the Contact Form:** Use "Safety/Security Concern" in the Subject field.

3. **Provide Detailed Information:** Include usernames, job titles, and any relevant evidence.

We will review all reports and take appropriate action within our capabilities.

Conclusion: Your Vigilance is Key

UKCOA Jobs provides a platform to connect individuals for work opportunities, but **safety on an open platform is primarily your responsibility.**

By staying informed, cautious, and proactive, you can significantly reduce your risk and have a more secure experience.

Always prioritise your personal safety and financial security. If you are ever unsure, it is always better to err on the side of caution.