

## **CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ON-LINE INTRODUCTION SERVICES**

This voluntary Code of Practice (COP) has been developed by WhichIntro Limited in conjunction with the Association of British Introduction Agencies and in consultation with some on-line services.

### **Aims**

The aims of the Code of Practice are:

To give clients or potential clients of on-line introduction services a standard against which to measure the services offered and supplied.

To create an industry performance standard to which reputable service providers may aspire.

### **Operation**

1. On-Line introduction services providers (OISP's) who wish to subscribe to this COP will pay an annual subscription.
2. Subscribers will state on the Home Page of their website that they adhere to the COP
3. The Home Page of WhichIntro Ltd's website ([www.whichintro.com](http://www.whichintro.com)) will have a hyperlink to a page listing the names of the OISP'S who adhere to the COP together with a page listing names of ABIA members.
4. This adherence will be demonstrated by a series of easily navigable hyperlinks on the OISP'S website.

### **The Code of Practice**

1. Before any client need make any payments, fees chargeable by an OISP must be clearly stated, together with a specification of the services offered and the period covered by them.
2. If an OISPS offers 'free' registration or suggests a free service, it must be clearly stated where other charges will occur e.g. 'Free Registration – Charges to contact potential candidates@ so as not to misrepresent itself for the sake of building up its database. If the 'free' offer is permanent it should not suggest for a limited time and vice-versa.
3. OISP's must ensure that any figure used quoting number of clients on-line should show a true and accurate figure representing current/active members only.
4. Any payment made by a client will be confirmed by e-mail together with a clear definition of the services purchased and their duration.
5. OISP'S must state their definition of eligibility for membership, and require clients to confirm that they meet these criteria. They must warn that if proven evidence comes to light that a client has given false information, they will assert their right to terminate membership.
6. OISP'S, which offer a measure of pre-selection, must state which criteria will be fully adhered to.
7. OISP'S must provide the ABIA with the name and address (not a PO Box or accommodation address), of a person who can be contacted if the need arises, and a business tel. no. (not a mobile number). None of these items of information will be passed on without the express consent of the OISP.
8. OISP'S must provide cautionary advice to clients (including a reminder that they are placing their personal data in the public domain) and guidance on what constitutes acceptable behaviour. They must state their right to terminate membership without giving a reason, but subject to a proportional refund of fees paid.

9. OISP'S must conform to all legal requirements applying to their business. In particular, they are required by law to register with the Data Protection Registrar, and must publish their registration number. They must also state how personal information supplied by clients is stored and how it may be used. On their website, they must give clients the right to refuse the passing on of information about them to other organisations of any kind.
10. OISP's must provide a means for clients to correct inaccurate data, and should allow clients to modify their personal profiles and preferences, though they must retain the right not to publish any material, which they judge to be distasteful or misleading.
11. Information disclosed about individual clients must not include telephone numbers; home addresses or e-mail addresses but can include information such as 'Sally from Bedford'.
12. If an OISP ceases to trade, it must not pass any details of any client to another OISP unless that client has been informed and has agreed to the transfer.
13. Subscribing OISP's must display an easily accessible proforma e-mail hyperlink to the ABIA site via which clients may make confidential complaints. Such complaints will be re-routed to the OISP, who will be required to respond within 5 working days. This response will be forwarded automatically via the ABIA to the complainant.
14. If the complaint cannot be settled by this means, either party may seek independent arbitration, the findings of which will be final and the costs borne by the party found against.
15. WhichIntro.Com together with the ABIA will periodically monitor the contents of the OISP's website. The OISP will be invited to rectify any shortcomings within 10 working days, failing which, the WhichIntro.com site will state that approval has been withdrawn, and make a statement for its reasons.
16. Advertising and promotion must conform to guidelines set down the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).
17. A statement that the OISP adheres to this COP must appear prominently on the OISP's home page together with an ABIA logo which is clearly visible and provides a hyperlink to the ABIA website.
18. E-mails regarding problems with the actual on-line service must be replied to within a 72-hour period, to allow for weekends and Bank Holidays. If the problem is a user issue, then a reasonable time should be quoted by the agency if a help line number is not available.

Dear Parag/Karen

At last final copy of COP. Need to move today on press release can forwarded by e-mail if you wish but having difficulty with my server at the present. Speak soon

Luv

Lyn