

Outsourced Amazon

Investigating conditions for warehouse workers who have been recruited and hired via agencies

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Legal warning: We are in the process of looking into complaints and allegations. When we have done our research we will present the findings to any companies we plan to name to give them a chance to respond. You should not publish anything that cannot be proven, nor should you publish without including the response from any named company or individual.

Overview

At a time when the UK is experiencing rising unemployment and insecure work, there is one company doing very well and advertising for jobs across the country.

Amazon is rapidly growing in the UK. It increased its direct hire employees by 10,000 people in 2020, and brought in a further 25,000 seasonal workers – these are hired directly through Amazon but also via agencies. It announced the opening of at least three permanent and three “pop-up” fulfilment centres since May 2020 and took up a third of all warehouse space let in the UK this summer.

Amazon publicly says it will provide – or else pay for – 20 hours’ minimum work for all staff, including agency workers, but the Bureau found agency workers complaining of regularly losing shifts and being offered far less than the 20 hours promised. And while Amazon pays more than minimum wage, many agency staff say they have seen hundreds of pounds’ worth of wages go missing or arrive late.

We are setting out to explore the experiences of those brought in to work for Amazon by agencies.

Our findings

[Access our findings docs](#) for evidence, case studies, quotes and comment.

Our data and what we've found so far

We've pulled down 8,742 ads for Amazon warehouse jobs in the run-up to Christmas (4 Oct-19 Dec), all of which were posted through just two employment agencies: PMP Recruitment and Adecco.

In fact, these ads (for Amazon via the two agencies) make up more than half (54%) of all warehouse jobs ads across the UK (advertised on Reed.co.uk at that time).

All of the Adecco ads and 87% of the PMP Recruitment ads suggested that the roles in the warehouses could be full-time.

[Access the full dataset here.](#)

We have spoken to several warehouse workers employed through PMP Recruitment and Adecco, and have analysed reviews and complaints made online.

We have been hearing some of the following complaints:

- Some people complain that they did not get enough hours to make the job viable, despite thinking or hoping it would be full-time
- Some complained that shifts would be cancelled with just a few hours' notice
- Some people said their wages had not been processed correctly – that they had been paid at the wrong rate or that they had not been paid for holidays
- Many alleged that it was hard to get in touch with the agencies to get their complaints dealt with
- Some were left unsure as to how long they would be working at an Amazon warehouse and were surprised when they were given their two weeks' notice
- Others said they went through all the application process including the supposedly paid-for training day only to never get any shifts or hear from the agency again

We will continue to talk to people and can give you a greater insight into what we have heard at a later date.

The only job in town?

An analysis of job ads posted on Reed.co.uk in the lead-up to Christmas shows that, in some areas, jobs at the Amazon warehouse that were managed through these agencies constituted up to 58% of all the vacancies advertised.

In 40 local authority areas, Amazon warehouse job ads made up 10% or more of all jobs advertised in the period.

- In West Lothian – home of the Bathgate Amazon warehouse – 58% of all job ads were for Amazon warehouse jobs. ([There has recently been a Covid-19 outbreak among workers at this site](#)).
- In Neath Port Talbot, 39% of all jobs advertised were Amazon warehouse jobs
- 92% of all warehouse jobs advertised in Scotland were for Amazon warehouses, 89% in Wales and 46% in England

What you can do now

1. Find out which agency was advertising for Amazon in your area – PMP Recruitment or Adecco – by [digging into our dataset](#).

Go to the tab *Local data - Lead-up to Christmas*:

- a. Look for your **local authority** in Column B. If you'd rather, you can filter on Column C to find all the data for your **region**.
- b. Then look at how many ads are logged in Column F (Amazon jobs advertised directly by Amazon), Column G (Amazon jobs advertised by Adecco) and Column H (Amazon jobs advertised by PMP Recruitment). This will tell you who was advertising in your area. Even if you don't have an Amazon warehouse in your local authority area, it is possible these agencies were targeting their ads to towns or cities near you, to find workers for a nearby site.
- c. You can also look across to Column L to find out what percentage of all the jobs advertised were Amazon **warehouse jobs**.

2. Take a closer look at the type of ads posted.

Go to the tab *Adecco Ads* or *PMP Ads*, depending on which agency you are interested in. You can filter on Column H: Local Authority.

- a. Column N shows you when the agency indicated that the job could be **full-time**. Note: they often tick both full-time and part-time. Look at what percentage of ads mentioned "full-time" work and look at the **contract type** (Column O) and **what is promised** in the job ad (Column L). These are helpful bits of information that can be used when interviewing people.
- b. **Minimum and maximum salary** columns (H and I) are also useful to get an idea of pay.

3. Speak to people who work/worked for Amazon via these agencies

Once you know the agency working in your area, can you find anyone who worked with them at an Amazon warehouse? You might want to try local community group Facebook pages or you could search to see if the agency has a localised social media presence (eg [PMP Recruitment - Yorkshire and Humber Facebook page](#)). You might also want to try local law centres, migrant rights groups or worker's advice organisations. Find out how many hours they are working and what they are being paid. Did people apply thinking the role was full-time only to get fewer hours? Did they have any issues with being paid correctly and on time? Have they had issues getting in contact with the agency? (You might want to use prompts from this [record log](#) – explained below). **Note -**

be careful not to identify individual workers by name or by their details, without their consent.

4. Share your findings with us and the collaborative network

We would love it if you could share the testimonies you get with us, so we can look for nationwide trends. When these findings are shared with collaborators, their reporting and yours can be strengthened. [Record experiences here](#).

5. Get more context.

Find out more about your local Amazon warehouse – is it permanent or a pop-up centre? Can you make contact to find out how many permanent and agency staff it brings in each year? What are the unemployment figures like in your area? What is it like working there? How are workers getting there and how far are they coming from?

Caveats to the data - *please read*

Our data pulls together job ads posted on Reed.co.uk between 4 October and 23 January, for locations all across the UK. We have focused our analysis on the pre-Christmas period of 4 October-19 December. Other websites might have posted different ads in this period. Reed.co.uk does not appear to post many ads for Northern Ireland compared with the other UK countries.

When uploading adverts to Reed.co.uk the employer will log the location they want to target. We then mapped these locations against local authority and regional boundaries. There were some ads that we were not able to match to local authorities (roughly 5%).

It is worth looking at the ad breakdowns to find the Location column, which will tell you which area the employer specified. We have spotted that the employers appear to have made mistakes when uploading the text of the job ads. In some cases they have set adverts to locations in Wales but the job description describes the job as being in Scotland. Be careful to check the wording of job ads in your area before drawing any conclusions. Since they tend to post the same job description for multiple ads at different locations, it is likely that they forgot to change the description field when advertising the same type of job in different locations.

When providing percentages, we only calculate on figures equal to or over 50, to avoid misinterpretation of small sample sizes. If an area had less than 50 ads we have put a * where the percentage calculation would be.

What is still to come

In mid-February we will provide you with our Findings Document, which will include:

- An outline of what we have found
- Quotes from people we've spoke to across the UK (people who have worked in Amazon warehouses through Adecco or PMP Recruitment)

- Quotes from trade bodies and ministers
- Response from any companies we plan to name in our write-up

Additional resources/ information

Previous reporting

Adecco

[Dunfermline Press reported](#) the complaints of an Adecco worker in an Amazon warehouse who said they had been called to a crowded meeting, risking Covid-19 infection.

[Cornwall Live reported](#) that Adecco workers at Amazon were being ignored when they enquired about wages. One person, who complained to their manager about his missing wages was sent a photo of a tiny violin and was told to stop whining.

PMP Recruitment

[Wigan Today reported](#) that a PMP Recruitment worker, assigned to the Heinz factory in Wigan, spoke out complaining that shifts would be cancelled at short notice and wages would be issued incorrectly.

[openDemocracy reported](#) on a case where a worker took PMP Recruitment to an employment tribunal because of unpaid wages. The worker won the case.

The [Worcester News reported](#) on a man who complained that he had been threatened with dismissal by PMP Recruitment if did not work a New Year's Day shift.

In 2017 the [Mirror reported](#) that a teenager had found a note about PMP in an advent calendar ordered from Amazon.