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Crème



Career Clinic

I recently applied for a job as PA to a chief executive. I sent in my CV as normal, but I was then asked for a recent photograph. What does it matter what I look like so long as I'm qualified to do the job?

Unless there is a very good reason, companies should not request photographs from job applicants. Employers need to ask themselves what can be gained from a picture that cannot be gleaned from the CV.

There is no legislation specifically banning an employer from asking for a photograph, although it is illegal if the implications for doing so are deemed to be discriminatory. A candidate must be judged purely on his or her ability to do the job.

Candidates asked to provide a photograph are within their rights to refuse, without detriment to their application. If their application fails, the company must be ready to show that its decision was based purely on the candidate's abilities. Recruitment agencies may ask to take your photograph to assist them in recollecting your registration: this is fine, so long as they do not send your photograph to prospective employers and can show that the request (and it can be only a request) is necessary to the way they work.

A picture should be taken only once the application to register with an agency succeeds, and you are entitled not to have your photograph taken. In either case the agency would be in trouble if this were to have a negative bearing on your job search.

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