

# General Election 2010: Seven questions every freelancer can ask their candidate



**Seven questions every candidate should be able to answer,  
covering the key freelance topics this election**



The voice of freelancing

**Seven Potential Questions to ask Candidates**  
**in advance of the next General Election:**

***7 questions in 7minutes....***

*On the doorstep, in writing, or otherwise, asking a prospective parliamentary candidate a question provides an ideal opportunity to find out where they stand on the most important freelance issues. In addition to finding out the "party line" on an issue, PCG members can get a sense of a candidate's individual priorities, relevant experience, and pre existing knowledge on the top issues affecting them.*

*Asking candidates a question is also an excellent way of promoting an issue or informing them on a topic they may only be loosely familiar with. Parties often rely on feedback from candidates "on the doorstep", so this is an excellent "bottom up" way of letting a possible future Government know what issues it should take seriously.*

*Some questions you can ask your candidate are shown below. Relevant notes are provided so that when the doorbell rings, you're as well placed as possible to let your candidate know what matters to you.*

**You are unlikely to have the chance to ask all the questions (if so then you have a remarkably patient candidate!) so choose one or two you believe are most important to you.**

**1. What is your view on small business taxation? Do you think it needs review? What measures is your party taking to support growth for nanobusinesses like mine?**

Unfortunately, discussions on freelancing inevitably focus on taxation rather than on the benefits such workers bring to the economy. The unique status of freelance workers as neither employers nor employees has led to a lack of clarity, particularly regarding tax. PCG members are business in their own right, and the tax system should recognise this. This question tests candidate knowledge of the tax system and allows you to tell them about any issues you may have with it on a general level, without being too technical.

**2. How important is Britain's flexible labour market? What is your party doing to support this?**

OR

**Freelancing adds around £21bn to the UK economy, and for many is an excellent way of running their own business and selling their specialist skills on a flexible basis. How does your party intend to support people like me, who work in this way?**

Research by Kingston University in 2008 identified 1.4 million freelancers in the UK. Clearly they need to work in an unhindered way, and these questions provide a useful open opportunity for a candidate to explain the importance of this.

**3. Are you aware of the "IR35" legislation? If so what is your view on this? Does your party have any proposals to amend or abolish this legislation?**

PCG was founded in 1999 initially to protest against this legislation, and most if not all members will be aware of its impact on their businesses. This provides an excellent opportunity to find out where your candidate stands

**4. The Agency Workers Regulations are coming into force in October next year, and freelance contractors are out of scope. How will your party ensure that this exemption is as clear as possible for my business**

These regulations apply employment-like conditions on temporary agency workers after 12 weeks in post. Current proposals exclude contractors and freelancers working via a limited company route, but the regulations that do this are not as clear as they could be. In addition Umbrella workers are within the scope of the regulations

**5. I'm worried about the impact "Intra Company Transfer" workers are having on my business. Undercutting, abuse, and displacement are taking place. How will you address this?**

"Intra Company Transfers" are a type of work permit allowing multinational companies to fill UK posts with their workers from outside the European Economic Area. Whilst this is clearly a useful tool for businesses to have, PCG is concerned that lax rules and monitoring on this type of work permit have led to abuse of the rules

and subsequently displacement and undercutting of contractors in various roles, particularly at financial service institutions such as banks.

**6. In a recession, it is vital my business is allowed to flourish. What will your party be doing to help business? How will you stimulate growth in the market in which I operate?**

Unlike earlier questions, which alluded to taxation, and regulation, this question is purely about enterprise. For example, schemes such as the Government's late payment initiative, or the Conservative plans for National Insurance are all of interest. All candidates will have something to say about the recovery, this is their opportunity to make the case directly to you.

**7. Have you heard of PCG?**

PCG is the not for profit association representing the UK's 1.4 million freelance workers, including contractors, consultants, and interim managers across all sectors. With almost 20,000 members, it provides the main conduit for the views of freelancers and contractors to Government. PCG sent its manifesto "Fairness, Clarity and Recognition" to every Prospective Parliamentary Candidate in the country and to all members. We regularly engage with ministers, senior civil servants, opposition parties, and other key stakeholders.

This question helps "flush out" any initial awareness of freelancing, and should hopefully elicit a response to the manifesto PCG sent out to all prospective parliamentary candidates earlier in the year.

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**Professional Contractors Group Ltd**  
Heathrow Boulevard  
280 Bath Road, UB7 0DQ  
**T:** 0208 897 9970  
[www.pcg.org.uk](http://www.pcg.org.uk)