

**MIKE PITT, employment, company and commercial law specialist, of Oldham's Pearson Hinchliffe, urges employers to be more rigorous in checking new employees.**

A GREAT way of measuring the strength of the Oldham economy is by the number of pages the *Evening Chronicle* devotes to job vacancies. The more jobs that are advertised, the more buoyant are local business conditions and the easier it is for people to find work. But as recruitment advertising falls, the job market becomes tougher and people have to try that much harder to find their ideal job.

Of course, job-hunters always want to present their qualifications and past experience with as positive a gloss as possible. But when getting a job becomes more difficult, candidates perhaps feel more pressure to turn to outright deception.

Statistics from the Risk Advisory Group indicate that almost two-thirds of CVs submitted in the last 12 months contained lies or inaccuracies, compared with just under half in the previous year. Women in their early 30s were, apparently, the worst offenders, with 77 per cent of their CVs containing some form of inaccuracy. Even among the most honest group, men in their early 20s, half of CVs contained discrepancies.

The most common distortions included bogus or exaggerated qualifications, changing the dates of employment to hide career gaps and exaggerating the pay received in a previous job. But there were also instances of applicants covering up criminal convictions, fraud against their previous employer and even terrorist links.

It seems that UK job-seekers are going to greater lengths of deception than ever. Most employers seem to have recognised the trend, but too few are taking the measures needed to combat the problem. While the majority of employers are likely to satisfy themselves about an employee's application by checking his or her most recent employment history, I advise companies to go to greater lengths.

It is relatively easy for firms to take up candidates' references and to check on academic qualifications. If these reveal any discrepancies with the candidate's CV claims, wider and more detailed investigations should be made.

If a job offer is made on the basis of details contained in a CV that the employer believes to be correct, he or she is legally entitled to withdraw the offer if it is later discovered that the CV contains false information.

Moreover, many organisations use the CV as a personal-history form and the basis for subsequent personnel records. Employees are required to tell the truth under the terms of their employment contract. Lies on a CV can therefore be a reason for dismissal.

Research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development reveals that a quarter of UK employers withdrew at least one job offer in the last year after discovering that someone had lied or otherwise misrepresented his or her application. And nearly as many (23 per cent) dismissed someone who was already in post, for the same offence.

The message to the candidate, then, is simple: be scrupulous about selling yourself truthfully. The cost of lying to a future employer can be much higher than the embarrassment of being found out.