



Information Commissioner's Office
Promoting public access to official information
and protecting your personal information

Press Release

For immediate release

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Bogus data protection agencies: ringleaders sentenced to prison

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is today reminding businesses across the UK not to be misled by bogus agencies that send notices demanding money to register under the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA).

The warning comes after Liverpool Crown Court sentenced four men to prison today for their involvement in fake data protection agencies. Francis Boyd pleaded guilty to dishonestly obtaining £401,545 from businesses demanding a payment to register under the Data Protection Act between 1 December 2002 and 2 April 2004. Between 1 March 2004 and 17 March 2005 Michael Boyd, Paul Barton and Mark Deary worked together obtaining £206,596 in a similar fashion.

Francis Boyd was sentenced to two and half years in prison, Michael Boyd was sentenced to 8 months, Paul Barton 12 months and Mark Deary 18 months.

Passing sentence, the judge said this was 'a well planned and sophisticated enterprise.' It was a 'scam cloaked with the appearance of officialdom'.

Philip Taylor, Solicitor at the Information Commissioner's Office, said: "We are very pleased with this result. It sends out a very clear signal: if you run a bogus data protection agency you will be investigated and prosecuted. This conviction follows a successful multi-agency operation involving Merseyside Police, Tameside Trading Standards and staff at the ICO.

If a business receives a letter out of the blue demanding more than £35 to register under the DPA this will be a scam. Our simple message to businesses is to throw the letter in the bin and not to pay the fee demanded.

ENDS

If you need more information, please contact the Information Commissioner's press office on 020 7025 7580 or visit the website at: www.ico.gov.uk

Notes to Editors

1. The Information Commissioner promotes public access to official information and protects personal information. The ICO is an independent body with specific responsibilities set out in the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003.
2. For more information about the Information Commissioner's Office subscribe to our e-newsletter at www.ico.gov.uk
3. Anyone who processes personal information must comply with eight principles, which make sure that personal information is:
 - Fairly and lawfully processed
 - Processed for limited purposes
 - Adequate, relevant and not excessive
 - Accurate and up to date
 - Not kept for longer than is necessary
 - Processed in line with your rights
 - Secure
 - Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection