



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

## **Press Release**

### **For immediate release**

Date: 12 June 2007

### **Jail sentences for data protection fraudsters**

The Information Commissioner's Office is again 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 Leeds Crown Court sentenced three men to prison on Friday 8 June for their involvement in fake data protection agencies. Bogus letters were sent to thousands of businesses demanding registration fees of £135 to register under the DPA in a mail scam which could have potentially netted up to £2 million for the fraudsters.

Neil Clark, prosecuting for the Crown, explained to the Court that £62,575 had already been banked by the fraudsters but the police had also found that thousands of printed bogus forms were ready to be posted to unsuspecting companies when they ended the operation.

Liaquat Khan, aged 33 of Leeds, admitted two charges of conspiracy to defraud and was jailed for two and a half years. Parminder Kaur Johal, aged 31, and Zahir Abbas Shah, aged 33, both from Bradford, also admitted two charges of conspiracy to defraud and were jailed for 13 months and 8 months respectively. A fourth person, Nosheen Sheridan, aged 27 from Bradford, admitted one charge of conspiracy and was given an 18 month supervision order with 50 hours unpaid work.

On passing sentence, Judge Roger Ibbotson said that they were involved in a substantial and systematic fraud. He commented: "You specifically targeted the owners of small businesses" and relied "on their wish to act lawfully and not commit any breach of the regulations".

After the case Detective Sergeant Lester Lee from West Yorkshire Police said: "The sentences passed today show that the courts take this kind of crime seriously. Anyone thinking of getting involved in such an offence should take note that we painstakingly investigate these crimes until we are able to put the offenders before the courts".

Simon Entwisle, Chief Operating Officer at the Information Commissioner's Office, said: "We are delighted with this result. Once again it sends out a very clear message: if you run a bogus data protection agency you will be investigated and prosecuted". He added: "If a business receives a letter out of the blue demanding more than £35 to register under the DPA then this will be a scam. Our simple message to businesses is to disregard the letter and do not pay the fee demanded."

These convictions follow a successful multi-agency operation involving West Yorkshire Police, West Yorkshire Trading Standards, the Health and Safety Executive and staff at the Information Commissioner's Office.

## **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](http://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](http://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