

SOUTH YORKSHIRE POLICE 'WE MUST TO WORK TOGETHER TO PROTECT OUR IDENTITIES'

Local police join calls for greater awareness of identity fraud as 79% of Britons continue to throw away their identities

South Yorkshire Police have issued calls to all residents and businesses in South Yorkshire to work together with the authorities to protect their identities.

The calls come as part of the National Identity Fraud Prevention Week campaign which aims to educate consumers and businesses as to the dangers of identity fraud, and the preventative steps that could – and should – be taken.

This year's campaign is supported by an unprecedented group of partners including the Metropolitan Police, the Identity and Passport Service, Royal Mail, CIFAS – The UK's Fraud Prevention Service, Fellowes, Callcredit, Equifax, Experian, HM Revenue and Customs, the Federation for Small Businesses, The Home Office, the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), the DVLA, The City of London Police, the BBA, APACS, the FSA, the BSIA and politicians from across the political divide as well as your police force.

Despite continuing efforts to combat identity fraud – still one of the UK's fastest growing crimes – a Populus poll commissioned for this campaign** shows that three quarters of UK adults have now been personally affected, or have friends and family who have been affected, by identity fraud. Furthermore, 80% of Britons fear having their identity stolen. National bin-raiding research*, commissioned by Fellowes, reveals why: not enough is being done to keep identity thieves at bay.

- Over 19 million households regularly place sensitive materials in their waste and recycling bins
- 11% throw away whole credit/debit card numbers – a combination of a complete card number with its associated expiry date and owner's signature was found in the waste and recycling of 13% of households
- A third of us are still throwing away everything a fraudster needs to steal a person's identity, including passports, driving licences, CVs, phone and utility bills

Calling on residents and businesses in South Yorkshire to ensure they are protecting themselves, DCI Gary Blinkhorn said: "Identity fraud is a serious and growing problem which affects all our communities. From experience, we know that the best way to safeguard our personal information is through strong preventative measures, whether you're shopping online, or throwing out your bills.

"We are delighted to work alongside all the campaign partners who are campaigning hard to raise awareness of identity fraud. coalition of groups that have worked hard to highlight the very real problem of identify fraud in our communities.

"We have a personal responsibility to protect our identities, and I hope the people of South Yorkshire will join with us in partnering with National Identity Fraud Prevention Week to stamp out identity fraud"

Exclusive research carried out by Experian for National Identity Fraud Prevention Week*** shows that the wealthiest and most creditworthy sections of society are at the greatest risk, with fraudsters increasingly launching premeditated and

sophisticated attacks. However, while wealth and lifestyle can make top-salaried and affluent individuals more likely to be targeted, those renting are also at high risk. Graduates and young professionals are among those most at risk, as are council tenants.

Research conducted for last year's campaign showed that 97% of households regularly placed sensitive materials in their waste and recycling bins. The 18% decrease this year shows the impact that campaigns such as this are having in educating consumers about the dangers of identity fraud, and the preventative steps that could and should be taken. There is light at the end of the tunnel and National Identity Fraud Prevention Week 2007 aims to continue this positive trend.

Notes to editors:

For more information, or to make an interview request, please contact DS Phil Toyne of South Yorkshire Police at:

0114 2963586

You can also contact the National Identity Fraud Prevention Week press office:

Sam Phillips – Tel: 020 7395 7016 or samantha.phillips@fleishmaneuropa.com

Jenna Steff – Tel: 020 7395 7167 or jenna.steff@fleishmaneuropa.com

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Steps the public can take to protect themselves include:

- Keep your personal and confidential documents secure
- Always shred, using a cross cut shredder, before disposing of documentation – bank and credit card statements, utility bills, receipts, direct mail containing any personal information, mortgage applications etc
- Regularly check your bank and credit card accounts for unusual transactions
- Regularly obtain a copy of your credit report from credit reference agencies Callcredit, Equifax or Experian, and monitor it for discrepancies
- When you move home, redirect your mail from your old address to your new address for at least a year. You can now apply online 24/7, visit: www.royalmail.com/redirection for more information
- Going away? If you're planning to be away from home, you'll want to make sure you don't leave any obvious clues, like a pile of mail on your doormat, contact Royal Mail about their 'Keepsafe' service which will hold your mail for up to two months, and deliver it on your return. For more information visit www.royalmail.com
- Regularly check your bank and credit card accounts for unusual transactions
- Never give out any personal information to unidentified individuals or organisations who contact you by phone, email or face-to-face
- Visit www.met.police.uk/fraudalert/ for information on different types of fraud.
- Never respond to e-mails asking for personal or financial information. Be especially careful when sending personal information over the internet.
- If you receive an email that warns, with little or no notice, that an account will be shut down unless you reconfirm billing or security information, you should not reply or click on the link in the email. Instead, contact the institution cited in the email using a telephone number or web site address you know to be genuine.
- Use up-to-date anti-virus software and a personal firewall and, if your computer uses the Microsoft Windows operating system, keep it updated from the Microsoft website. Be extra careful if using Internet cafes or any PC which is not your own and over which you have no control. If in doubt, a good place to get help and guidance on how to stay safe online is

your bank's website. Check regularly for specific information and guidance on protecting your PC and yourself online.

- Avoid emailing personal and financial information. Before submitting financial information through a web site, look for the 'lock' icon on the browser's status bar. It signals that personal information is secure during transmission.
- Never give personal information to people calling from companies you have not dealt with before. Always check the identity of these people by calling them back. Obtain their office number from directory enquiries and then confirm their position with the switchboard before speaking to them
- If you have been a victim of identity fraud involving the use of plastic cards, online banking or cheques, the matter should be reported direct to the financial institution concerned. They will then be responsible for further investigation and, where appropriate, onward reporting to the police. Other incidents should be reported to the relevant organisation and, dependent on their advice, to your local police station

There are several ways ID fraudsters may potentially target consumers. These include: good old fashioned theft of personal documents or security information; stealing post from communal hallways; using mail which has not been redirected after someone has moved; duping consumers to disclose personal details online; or bin raiding.

ID fraudsters need more than one single piece of information or documentation to steal an identity. Whilst an address, postcode, driving licence, passport, national insurance number or even a utility bill are not necessarily useful to a fraudster in isolation, collectively they are as valuable as cash to the ID fraudster, so they need to be stored securely or disposed with care.

Further information on how to protect yourself, and how to cope if you are a victim of identity fraud, visit www.stop-idfraud.co.uk, or call freephone 00800 1810 1810 to get a copy of the guide.

Independent bin-raiding research was conducted by Waste Works. The research found that:

- 79% of households regularly place sensitive materials in their waste and recycling bins
- 11% throw away whole credit/debit card numbers – a combination of a complete card number with its associated expiry date and owner's signature was found in the waste and recycling of 13% of households
- 37% of households – more than one in three of us – are still throwing away everything a fraudster needs to steal a person's identity, including passports, driving licences, CVs, phone and utility bills

Documents featuring personal details are valuable to identity fraudsters who use the stolen identities to apply for credit cards, mobile phone contracts, and in some circumstances, higher level fraudulent activities e.g. opening bank accounts. These documents are also vital in helping offenders to 'prove' their stolen identity.

Populus polling commissioned for the campaign showed that three quarters of UK adults have now been personally affected, or have friends and family who have been affected, by identity fraud. Furthermore, 80% of Britons fear having their identity stolen.

Populus, commissioned by Fellowes, CallCredit, Experian and Equifax, interviewed a random sample of 1005 adults aged 18+ by telephone between September 21st and 23rd 2007. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results have been weighted to be representative of all adults. Populus is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. For more details go to www.populuslimited.com.