

Press release: Nuisance marketing calls lands company director 6-year ban

Shaun Harkin, 48 from Coventry, was the sole director of Easyleads Limited, a company that generated sales leads for other businesses through telephone marketing calls advertising their clients' services and products.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) first received complaints about automated calls from numbers used by Easyleads between October 2015 and July 2016.

Having previously advised Shaun Harkin in connection with a former company he ran about the regulations preventing unsolicited marketing calls to people registered with the Telephone Preference Service (TPS), the ICO warned him in January 2017 of their investigation into the new complaints.

Despite this warning, Shaun Harkin allowed Easyleads to start a brand new advertising campaign using automated calls and this resulted in the ICO receiving further complaints about Easyleads sales practices between January and June 2017.

By September 2017, the ICO notified Shaun Harkin they were issuing a £260,000 fine against Easyleads for making unsolicited marketing calls to people without their specific consent and failing to include a company name and contact details in the recorded message.

However, Easyleads failed to pay the debt and that led the ICO in February 2018 to issue a petition to the court to wind up the company.

Following the court ordering the shut down of Easyleads in March 2018, further investigations by the Insolvency Service found that the company had made around 16 million automated marketing calls to members of the public.

And more than 550 complaints were made to the ICO about Easyleads. Many were from people who said they received multiple calls, while others complained about being called in the early hours of the morning and in particular, there was a spike of calls over the May 2017 bank holiday weekend.

In June 2018, the Secretary of State accepted a disqualification undertaking from Shaun Harkin in which he did not dispute that between October 2015 and June 2017 he failed to ensure that Easyleads Limited complied with its statutory obligations to prevent calls being made to people registered with the TPS.

Effective from 13 July 2018, Shaun Harkin is now banned from directly or indirectly becoming involved, without the permission of the court, in the promotion, formation or management of a company for six years.

Andy Curry, who headed up the investigation team at the ICO, said:

Easyleads plagued people with calls and we brought them to account by fining them £260,000. When they failed to pay, we refused to give up.

Now Shaun Harkin has been put out of action for six years. We still have work to do but this ban sends a message to others that they will not get away with making nuisance calls.

David Brooks, Chief Investigator at the Insolvency Service, said:

Telephone marketing is a legitimate business endeavor but there are strict rules in place to protect those who do not want to be disturbed by nuisance sales calls.

This is a serious case where Shaun Harkin knowingly allowed the company to make unsolicited calls contrary to regulations and caused a great deal of distress for many people. The six-year ban reflects the seriousness of these actions and together with the ICO, we want to ensure this serves as a warning to others that we will seek redress should your conduct fall below accepted commercial standards.

Notes to editors

Shaun Harkin is of Coventry and his date of birth is 6 May 1970

Company Easyleads Limited (Company Reg no. 09811848)

On 22 June 2018, the Secretary of State accepted a disqualification undertaking from Shaun Harkin, after he did not dispute that between 22 October 2015 and 30 June 2017 he failed to ensure that Easyleads Limited complied with its statutory obligations under The Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003 to ensure that unsolicited marketing calls were not made to members of the public registered with the Telephone Preference Service who had not consented to such calls.

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership
- be a receiver of a company's property

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings.

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

The Insolvency Service administers the insolvency regime, investigating all compulsory liquidations and individual insolvencies (bankruptcies) through the Official Receiver to establish why they became insolvent. It may also use powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK. In addition, the agency deals with disqualification of directors in corporate failures, assesses and pays statutory entitlement to redundancy payments when an employer cannot or will not pay employees, provides banking and investment services for bankruptcy and liquidation estate funds and advises ministers and other government departments on insolvency law and practice.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

Contact Press Office

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 7674 6910 or 020 7596 6187

Press Office

The Insolvency Service

4 Abbey Orchard Street
London
SW1P 2HT

Email

press.office@insolvency.gsi.gov.uk

Media Manager

020 7596 6187

This service is for journalists only. For any other queries, please contact the Insolvency Enquiry line on 0300 678 0015.

For all media enquiries outside normal working hours, please contact the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Press Office on 020 7215 1000.

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

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[News story: National Apprenticeship Awards 2018 regional finalists announced](#)

Now in their 15th year, the National Apprenticeship Awards showcase the diverse and growing range of sectors engaged with apprenticeships, whilst celebrating outstanding apprentices, employers and individuals who go above and beyond to champion apprenticeships across England.

The awards were open to apprentices, individuals who promote apprenticeships and employers of all sizes from all sectors. The refreshed array of categories for 2018 has given additional opportunities for entrants to demonstrate the impact apprenticeships has made to individual's lives and their workplaces. Those shortlisted are apprenticeship exemplars, highlighting best practice across recruitment excellence, high quality training practices, diversity and career progression.

We have announced regional finalists in the following employer categories:

- The BAE Systems Award for SME Employer of the Year (for organisations with 1 to 249 employees)
- The Royal Navy Award for Large Employer of the Year (for organisations with 250 to 4,999 employees)
- Macro Employer of the Year (for organisations with 5,000+ employees)

We are recognising apprentices for their exceptional contribution to their workplace and have announced regional finalists in the following apprentice categories:

- The British Army Award for Intermediate Apprentice of the Year

- The Rolls Royce Award for Advanced Apprentice of the Year
- The Nuclear Decommissioning Site Licence Companies Award for Higher or Degree Apprentice of the Year

Finalists in the Royal Air Force Award for Apprenticeship Champion of the Year, recognising individuals who go 'above and beyond' to champion apprenticeships, have also been announced today, alongside finalists in the three new categories introduced for 2018:

- The PeoplePlus Award for Recruitment Excellence: the winner will be selected from the Employer of the Year award entries
- The Lloyds Banking Group Award for the Rising Star: awarded to apprentices who have made impressive progress in their career to date and who show the potential, through their apprenticeship, to make it to the very top of their chosen profession

We will be asking members of the public to vote on the overall winner for the Lloyds Banking Group Award for the Rising Star category.

Keith Smith, Director, Apprenticeships Group, ESFA said:

The National Apprenticeship Awards recognise excellence in businesses that grow their own talent with apprenticeships, and apprentices who have made, and keep making, a significant contribution to their workplaces and these awards enable both employers and individuals to showcase how apprenticeships have made a real difference to their organisation and career.

I am thrilled that so many outstanding applications were made – eclipsing the phenomenal number of entries we've had in the past. Judges have had a difficult time selecting the finalists as the applications were outstanding; highlighting perfectly the many benefits apprenticeships bring to the lives of individuals and to our employers.

I thank everyone for entering; thank judges for their time volunteering to assist with the process and I wish all finalists the very best of luck at the regional ceremony.

[National Apprenticeship Awards 2018 – regional employer of the year finalists](#)

(PDF, 338KB, 2 pages)

[National Apprenticeship Awards 2018 – regional apprentice, rising star and apprenticeship champion of the year finalists](#)

(PDF, 369KB, 4 pages)

For more information on the National Apprenticeship Awards 2018 visit:

<https://appawards.co.uk/>.

News story: Foreign Office Minister visits BVI to review hurricane preparedness

Foreign Office Minister of State for the Overseas Territories Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon visited the British Virgin Islands between 31 July and 1 August to discuss hurricane preparedness and to see the progress on recovery since last year's hurricanes.

During his visit, the Minister visited sites affected by last year's hurricanes, including a school, a hurricane shelter, the Fire Service headquarters and a police station. He saw how UK support is helping the islands' recovery efforts, and he handed over the purpose-built temporary Court House to the Government. This new UK-funded building will allow the Supreme Court and Magistrates' Court to function fully again whilst a permanent building is constructed.

Lord Ahmad visited RFA Mounts Bay, which will remain in the region throughout the hurricane season to provide rapid assistance to Caribbean islands if needed. He also met the board of the Recovery and Development Agency to hear how they plan to implement further vital recovery work.

Foreign Office Minister of State for the Overseas Territories, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

The UK has played a crucial role in assisting the region to recover from last year's unprecedented and devastating hurricanes, providing aid and support to help British Overseas Territories.

However, there is still more to be done before the islands fully recover and the UK stands ready to help. We are working with partners across the Caribbean to make sure that plans are being put in place to prepare for future hurricanes.

Lord Ahmad held talks with Premier Orlando Smith and the Cabinet to discuss their concerns about the UK's Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act as well as meeting members of the financial services industry to hear their views. The Minister also met with business and tourism representatives during his visit.

This visit to BVI follows an earlier tour of the region by the Minister in May to the Cayman Islands, Montserrat and Anguilla.

Further information

- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow Foreign Office Minister Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on Twitter [@tariqahmadbt](#)

Media enquiries

For journalists

Email

newsdesk@fco.gov.uk

Newsdesk

020 7008 3100

[News story: Important information for DVLA customers: DVLA services](#)

This means you will not be able to tax your vehicle online, by phone or at the Post Office. Vehicle tax is for the whole month, so if your tax will expire at the end of this month you'll still have time to tax your car when the service is back to normal on Monday morning.

Not all services are affected and you'll still be able to view and share your driving licence details with third parties including car hire companies. To avoid any disappointment it's best to [generate a check code](#) now as the codes are valid for 21 days. You can also renew your ten year photocard driving licence at the Post Office.

Remember, it's against the law to drive an untaxed vehicle on the road. If you buy a car during this weekend you won't be able to tax it until 6am on

Monday 20 August.

We're sorry for any inconvenience that this may cause. Follow us on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#) for the most up to date information.

[News story: Veterinary medicines – information about market access during the implementation period following EU exit](#)

The joint [guidance published on 6 August](#) outlines what it would mean for market access for medicines during the implementation period, including; licensing and packaging, batch release and testing, and the UK regulatory role.

It also covers other points relating to medicines and implementation plans related to EU legislation during the implementation period.