

# Software developer banned for abusing £850,000 of investments

Adam Alexander Valdemar Norton (35), from Salford, was the director of ANorton Holdings Limited and used the trading name 'Volution Fit'. The company was incorporated in September 2018 and provided virtual software and support to gyms and fitness clubs.

The company, however, went into administration in November 2020 before going into liquidation in August 2021 and triggering an investigation by the Insolvency Service.

Investigators uncovered that Adam Norton secured £849,999 worth of investments – provided in two tranches – to help develop a mobile application.

Adam Norton, however, received the investments into his personal bank account rather than into the company's. The software developer also provided false copies of bank statements to the investors, which incorrectly showed the bank account was held in the name of ANorton Holdings rather than his own.

On 22 August 2022, the Secretary of State accepted a 12-year disqualification undertaking from Adam Norton in which he did not dispute he caused ANorton Holdings Limited to provide incorrect bank details and false bank statements on 3 separate occasions, to an investment company for the purposes of obtaining funds.

Neil North, Deputy Head of Insolvent Investigations for the Insolvency Service, said:

This was a gross abuse of his investors' trust and Adam Norton has been removed from the corporate arena for a substantial amount of time.

The software developer's ban sends out a clear message that where a corporate vehicle is being used to facilitate actual or potential fraudulent activity, we will not hesitate to use our powers to remove dishonest or reckless directors from the business environment.

Director Adam Alexander Valdemar Norton is of Salford and his date of birth is July 1986.

Company ANorton Holdings Limited (Company Reg no. 11549441).

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](#).

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

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## **UK Defence cyber skills to be boosted through industry partnership**

- Defence personnel to be upskilled in tackling cyber threats
- Industry collaboration to increase UK's cyber resilience
- Work follows National Audit Office praise for the department's approach to conflict digitisation

The Ministry of Defence will collaborate with Immersive Labs, an industry leader in cyber resilience, to support the department's new Digital Skills for Defence programme to build stronger digital skills, and follows a successful trial by the British Army.

Tested against industry benchmarks, the collaboration will see personnel from the Army, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force, Strategic Command and Civil Service engaged, with access to 1,600 realistic simulations and hands-on cybersecurity labs to evaluate individual and teams in decision-making against the latest threats.

As the recent National Audit Office (NAO) [report on the MOD's Digital Strategy](#) noted, the Department is showing good practice when it comes to the challenge of modern conflict rapidly digitising, affecting Defence work and how the Armed Forces operate in the battlefield.

### **Minister for Defence Procurement, Alex Chalk said:**

The NAO has rightly highlighted our focus on remaining at the forefront of digital capability, which is crucial as the shape of the modern battlefield continues to change at unprecedented speed.

Utilising the best technology and brightest minds in industry will only serve to bolster the rank of cyber experts focused on protecting the UK.

Exploiting digital capabilities and data is fundamental to our success in modern military operations and to the effective running of Defence. Building on the feedback from the NAO report, the department is striving to build a workforce with the digital skills it needs to deliver the digital transformation of defence.

The report acknowledged positive progress being made by the department on bringing together and aligning such digital practitioners across Defence. However, with a shortfall of homegrown talent and a very competitive market across the public and private sectors, the collaboration with Immersive Labs will also help identify cybersecurity talent to fill open roles and bolster the ranks of UK cyber experts.

**Director of Functional Integration, Claire Fry said:**

The Digital Skills for Defence programme is crucial in our drive to provide the right digital skills and capabilities across Defence to take advantage of the opportunity brought about by the ever-increasing pace of technological change.

Immersive Labs is one of a number of organisations we are working with to deliver training that will upskill our workforce. This will enable us to champion our One Defence Mindset and create an environment where our digital skills can flourish in a unified, connected and digitally integrated way.

MOD established the Digital Skills for Defence programme to deliver critical digital skills for Defence Leaders, Digital Professionals, and the whole Military and Civilian workforce. The programme is fundamental in building and retaining operational and business advantage. MOD's ambition goes beyond education, seeking to transform to a learning culture where teams work collaboratively across the organisation.

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## **Human rights in Belarus: Joint statement to the OSCE**

Mr. Chair, I am delivering this statement on behalf of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, the United States, and my own country Canada.

Two years ago, on 5 November 2020, Professor Wolfgang Benedek presented the [independent report on the human rights situation in Belarus under the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism](#) to the Permanent Council. The conclusions were clear: The 9 August presidential election was neither free nor fair, and "massive and systematic" violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms had been committed by the Belarusian security forces.

One year ago, on 4 November 2021, as a response to the deteriorating human rights situation and the Belarusian authorities' failure to respond satisfactorily to the recommendations addressed to them in the Moscow Mechanism report, [a group of 35 OSCE participating States invoked the Vienna \(Human Dimension\) Mechanism requesting information on a number of serious concerns](#). Unfortunately, one year later, we today note with regret that the recommendations for Belarusian authorities in the Moscow Mechanism report remain unaddressed, and our concerns for the human rights situation in Belarus are more dire than ever.

Over the past two years, the authorities in Belarus have continued their brutal and unprecedented crackdown on defenders of democracy in Belarus, including civil society and independent voices. The exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association, is severely repressed, and those attempting to act on those rights and freedoms are systematically detained, abused, and subjected to other forms of intimidation and only harassment. According to credible reports, the number of political prisoners is now more than 1,350. This includes many ordinary Belarusians who simply protested in 2020; journalists, media actors, opposition figures, and human rights defenders, sentenced in some cases to well over a decade simply for exercising their fundamental rights. As a consequence, tens of thousands of Belarusians have been, and continue to be, forced to flee the country, to leave their homes and in some cases loved ones behind due to the untenable situation.

In addition, several credible, international reports have documented the continued pervasive use of torture and other ill-treatment. The Belarusian authorities have further increased harassment and intimidation efforts by widening of the scope of the death penalty to vaguely defined "attempted terrorist activities". This is an alarming step, the real objective of which is to further increase repression against defenders of democracy. Mr. Chair, In the initial letter invoking the Vienna Mechanism on 4 November 2021, we asked for information from the Belarusian authorities on a number of concerns, including on the credible reports on continuing unjust arrests and detentions, as well as the targeting of opposition figures. The Belarusian Delegation's reply did not acknowledge our legitimate concerns on any of these issues; for example, the Belarusian Delegation simply took exception to the term 'political prisoner'.

The inadequate responses we have continued to receive from the Belarusian authorities, combined with the deteriorating developments we have witnessed over the past year, clearly demonstrate there is no change in approach by the Belarusian authorities.

On the contrary, in recent months, the Belarusian authorities have intensified the brutal and unprecedented repression of the Belarusian people, and has on top of that been facilitating Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in violation of international law.

Mr. Chair,

Even as the human rights situation in Belarus has continued to deteriorate,

the Belarusian Delegation has often claimed to seek dialogue on these issues here in the Permanent Council. The Vienna Mechanism is a tool for such dialogue, but it requires the Belarusian authorities to engage substantially, realistically and honestly on the subject. It requires the Belarusian authorities to recognise our legitimate continuing concerns, which mirrors those of civil society, independent media, and human rights defenders.

Against this backdrop, we repeat our questions raised under the OSCE Vienna Mechanism in the Permanent Council. We encourage the Belarusian authorities to consider these questions carefully and to provide genuine answers to this Council, including a detailed explanation of their reactions to the recommendations contained in the 5 November 2020 report under the OSCE Moscow Mechanism.

Finally, we call for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners in Belarus. We urge the Belarusian authorities to fully implement their international obligations and OSCE commitments, and to make use of the OSCE's tools and mechanisms to help resolve the continuing human rights crisis.

Thank you.

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## [Wrong side signalling failure at Wingfield](#)

News story

Wrong side signalling failure at Wingfield, Derbyshire, 26 October 2022.



Signal DY586 and its signalling location cabinet

On the morning of 26 October 2022, a signal at Wingfield in Derbyshire (which had been disconnected and reconnected the previous night as part of planned

track maintenance work) was returned to service with a fault. This fault caused a wrong side failure, with the signal's red and yellow aspects being displayed incorrectly.

The fault initially caused a train to pass the signal at danger, which stopped in the track section beyond the signal. It later resulted in a second train being signalled at caution into the track section where the first train was still stopped. The second train was running at slow speed and being driven at caution, and came to a stop 75 metres from the first train. No damage or injury was caused by the incident.

We have undertaken a [preliminary examination](#) into the circumstances surrounding this incident. Having assessed the evidence which has been gathered to date, we have decided to publish a [safety digest](#).

The safety digest will be made available on our website in the near future.

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## [Construction and coaching bosses banned for Covid loan abuse](#)

Bosses of a London construction company and a Greater Manchester sports coaching firm have each been banned from running a business for 11 years after abusing Bounce Back Loans.

Lavinia-Larisa Mociar, 31, claimed £50,000 to support the Harrow-based construction business of which she was a director. However, the business had ceased trading when the application was made.

And Shafiqur Rahman, 26, and chair of a local charity, had exaggerated the turnover of his Manchester-based sports coaching business to claim £25,000

But the amount received by Aspire Sports Coaching & Partners Ltd was more than 11 times the money to which the business was entitled and Rahman spent £20,000 of it without being able to prove it had been used to support the company.

Under the rules of the scheme, businesses applying for the loan had to be actively trading by March 2020. Companies could apply for loans of up to 25% of their 2019 turnover, to a maximum of £50,000, to help keep their business afloat during the pandemic.

Lavinia-Larisa Mociar, originally from Romania, was the sole director of L&M Construct Ltd until the company went into liquidation in November 2021.

However L&M Construct Ltd had stopped trading in October 2019 – a year before Mociar applied for the Bounce Back Loan, which was meant to help support businesses through the pandemic.

Investigators discovered that not only had L&M Construct Ltd not been trading in 2020, but that Mociar had also exaggerated the company's turnover to claim the maximum £50,000. There had been less than £50 in the company's bank account when the loan was deposited in October 2020.

Mociar then withdrew more than £50,000 from the company account before the end of 2020 – a further abuse of the scheme, as the money was not being used for the economic benefit of the business.

The company went into liquidation owing around £50,000, including the full amount of the loan.

Manchester-based Shafiqur Rahman was director of Aspire Sports Coaching & Partners Ltd, which provided sport programmes and activities to primary schools and holiday clubs across Greater Manchester.

Rahman was also the founder and chair of Oldham Inspiring Youth, a charity which aimed to engage children through sports and education, and which had crowd-funded a yellow school bus to be used as a community educational space in Oldham.

He applied for a Bounce Back Loan of £25,000 in May 2020 to support Aspire Sports Coaching through the pandemic lockdowns, when most children were not in school. The business folded in May 2021, which triggered an investigation by the Insolvency Service.

Investigators found that, based on the company's actual turnover, Aspire Sports Coaching & Partners should only have been eligible for a Bounce Back Loan of £2,000, and the company had received £23,000 to which it hadn't been entitled.

Investigators also discovered that Rahman had paid £20,000 out of the company, and had given a false invoice for the amount to liquidators to try to account for the unexplained payment. The business closed with debts of £25,000 – the full amount of the loan money.

The Secretary of State accepted disqualification undertakings from both errant bosses, and they were each given bans of 11 years. Rahman's ban began on 11 October this year, and Mociar's started on 8 November 2022.

The disqualifications prevent the two former directors from directly, or indirectly, becoming involved in the promotion, formation or management of a company, without the permission of the court.

Tom Phillips, Assistant Director of Investigation and Enforcement Services for the Insolvency Service, said,

These directors blatantly abused the Government's Bounce Back Loan rescue scheme.

The lengthy disqualifications should serve as a reminder to others that the Insolvency Service will not shirk from its responsibility in taking action in order to protect the public and the taxpayer".

## **Notes to editors**

Lavinia-Larisa Mociar is of Harrow and her date of birth is July 1991.

L&M Construct Ltd (Company Reg no. 11346012).

Shafiqur Rahman is of Oldham and his date of birth is October 1996;

Aspire Sports Coaching & Partners Ltd (Company Reg no. 11179915).

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](<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/corporate-insolvency-effect-of-a-disqualification-order>).

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