

Rogue emergency services publisher shut down

Harlequin Print Ltd was wound up in the public interest on 27 August 2020 in the High Court, Manchester, before District Judge Woodward. The Official Receiver has been appointed as liquidator of the company.

In considering the petitions, the court heard that Harlequin Print was a publishing company based in Liverpool. Trading from October 2018, Harlequin Print pitched to businesses, local authorities, schools, and sports and social clubs, to advertise in magazines the publisher produced.

Prospective clients were told that the publications covered the emergency services, including fire safety and crime prevention.

Complaints, however, were made about the company and the Insolvency Service carried out confidential enquiries into Harlequin Print.

Enquiries uncovered that the company made false and misleading statements. Clients were told that the magazines would be distributed to local businesses and schools. Investigators, however, found no evidence that the magazines were ever produced or distributed.

Sales staff falsely claimed to work for the emergency services or associated charities and inflated the numbers of magazines produced and distributed.

Harlequin Print's company records showed that 93 companies had been victim to the publisher's rogue activities between October 2018 until February 2020. Victims reported that the company used forceful and bullish sales tactics and some businesses were threatened with debt enforcement action to pay invoices they had not agreed.

Investigators found the company had minimal expenditure and the proceeds of sales were removed by the publisher's director. Harlequin Print did not make any financial contributions to the emergency services or associated charities they falsely claimed they were supporting.

During investigations, the company and its director failed to cooperate with enquiries, did not deliver accounting or trading records and broadly, traded with a lack of transparency.

David Hope , Chief Investigator, said:

Harlequin Print dishonestly targeted nearly 100 companies to advertise in magazines that did not support the emergency services or support charitable initiatives.

The courts have rightfully recognised the damage and harm Harlequin Print was causing and has wound-up the company in the public

interest to ensure no further business will become a victim of their unscrupulous conduct.

All public enquiries concerning the affairs of the companies should be made to: birkenhead.OR@insolvency.gov.uk quoting CIB57545.

Harlequin Print Ltd (Company number 11604295)

The petitions were presented on 13 July 2020 under s124A of the Insolvency Act 1986. The Official Receiver was appointed as liquidator of the companies on 27 August 2020 by District Judge Woodward

Company Investigations, part of the Insolvency Service, uses powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK on behalf of the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). [Information about how to complain about a live company.](#)

[Information about the work of the Insolvency Service.](#)

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on: