

[News story: Statement on targeting of opposition supporters in Zimbabwe](#)

Minister of State Harriett Baldwin said:

I am deeply concerned that the Zimbabwean security forces continue to target opposition supporters. I am following the case of Tendai Biti, a senior opposition figure who has been taken into custody by the Zimbabwean authorities and is facing criminal charges. The UK is watching closely how Mr Biti is treated and our Ambassador in Harare has made this clear to the government. We will continue to raise his case.

The government of Zimbabwe has the responsibility to ensure that the physical safety, and the human and constitutional rights of all of Zimbabwe's citizens are protected.

Once again, I urge all parties to ensure calm in the post-election period while any challenges to the result of the elections are resolved.

Further information

- Follow Foreign Office Minister Harriett Baldwin [@hbaldwin](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

Media enquiries

For journalists

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020 7008 3100

[News story: Warning: misleading invoices – don't be fooled](#)

Updated: Content updated.

Misleading mail

If you receive an unsolicited invitation, DO NOT PAY IT until you have checked what services are being offered and if it is from an official source.

Changes to the mailings

Following IPO's successful legal action against private organisations offering official-sounding trade mark renewal services, and upheld complaints to the Advertising Standards Authority, customer feedback has changed.

Customer feedback about misleading offers for trade mark renewal services has steadily declined over the past six months. However, the volume of customer feedback about misleading offers to enter trade marks on private official-sounding registers is increasing.

Entries in unofficial publications or 'registers'

The invitations look like official invoices and sometimes include a pre-paid reply envelope.

The two main private organisations that issue these 'registration' offers are currently:

- the World Organization for Trademarks (WOTRA)
- the Intellectual Property Organisation Service (IPOS)

You are under no obligation to pay them.

You should be aware, details of all UK applications and granted patents, registered trade marks and designs, are automatically entered onto our official registers:

- [patent information and document inspection service \(Ipsum\)](#)
- [trade mark databases](#)
- [designs databases](#)

The European Patent Office (EPO), World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) all operate similar official registers.

These automatically record all applications for granted patents, and registered trade marks and designs, either filed directly with them, or

through us.

WIPO has further information on [unsolicited invitations relating to international patent applications](#).

European Union trade mark filing

Some businesses, who are not regulated legal service providers, are contacting applicants of UK trade marks. They are offering to file a European Union Trade Mark application based on the data present in their UK application.

There is no obligation to file a European Union Trade Mark application to obtain protection in the UK. If however you decide to consider such an offer, you should check:

- whether the person is offering to represent you before EUIPO in the event of any problems with, or objections to, your application – not everyone can do this
- whether the fee quoted by the UK service provider includes the official fees for making a European Union Trade Mark application. If not, how these fees will be paid

What to do if you receive an unsolicited invitation

Check to see what services are being offered and if it is from an official source. You are NOT obliged to pay any fees. These companies are not linked to any government or EU institution.

If you receive a misleading invoice, [we would like to hear about it](#).

We would like you to include an electronic copy of both the invoice, and the envelope it was received with, in your email for our records. If you also received a pre-paid return envelope, please send a copy of that as well.

If you are in doubt about the mailing, check with your patent or trade mark attorney, solicitor, patent advisor or inventor-support organisation.

You can also contact the [Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys](#) or the [Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys](#) whose members provide general advice on patents, designs and trade marks.

Action Fraud

If you have received an invoice in relation to your trade mark, design or patent and were misled into paying the organisation, please also report it to Action Fraud.

For customers or representatives who have received a misleading invoice, please make an [Information Report to Action Fraud](#) via the online reporting tool.

For customers or representatives who have paid a misleading invoice, please make a [Crime Report to Action Fraud](#).

Action Fraud is the online reporting portal for all instances of fraud affecting UK citizens and businesses. It is operated by the City of London Police who are the UK lead Force for the investigation of fraud. Reports are collated and analysed by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB). Depending on a scoring matrix, together with an assessment of available evidence, they can be sent to an individual police force for investigation.

The NFIB also send out industry alerts when new methods or techniques to defraud companies are identified.

Whilst we cannot guarantee a response by law enforcement, it would be helpful if you kept the invoice and accompanying envelope(s) in a plastic sleeve and handle it as little as possible.

Thank you for your cooperation.

[News story: Apprenticeship service transition, acting on user feedback](#)

We had planned that all employers would be able to use the apprenticeship service to access apprenticeship funding from April 2019.

Having listened to feedback about the scale and pace of the apprenticeship reforms that we have introduced since May 2017, we want to make sure that future changes are introduced in a gradual, well-managed way. This is to give time for employers and training providers to prepare to take full advantage of the new approach and to keep stability in the marketplace.

To ensure a more gradual transition, we will extend current contracts for training providers delivering training for employers that do not pay the apprenticeship levy for 12 months, from April 2019 to March 2020.

Over the summer, we will work closely with employers and training providers to plan what a gradual transition should look like. We will provide further details in the autumn, including what this will mean for providers with existing contracts and plans to develop the apprenticeship service for all employers.

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

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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:

- [Twitter](#)
 - [LinkedIn](#)
 - [YouTube](#)
-

[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/>.