

# Insolvency Service joins forces with Crimestoppers to crack down on rogue directors

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## Partnership aims to boost tip-offs about banned directors still operating in the shadows.

- The Insolvency Service disqualifies more than 1,000 directors every year for misconduct including not paying tax and using company money for personal benefit
- There are currently more than 11,000 people serving disqualification bans in the UK - acting as a director while banned is a criminal offence
- Members of the public are now being urged to report suspected breaches anonymously through Crimestoppers

The Insolvency Service has partnered with Crimestoppers to increase the number of reports from the public about company directors illegally operating while disqualified or bankrupt.

Director disqualifications exist to protect the public, creditors and legitimate businesses from individuals who have proven themselves unfit to run companies.

Bans can last up to 15 years and are issued for a wide range of misconduct, from failing to pay tax and not keeping proper accounting records, to using company money for personal gain or allowing a business to keep trading when it cannot pay some or all of its debts.

Despite this, some banned directors continue to operate, and the Insolvency Service believes many cases go unreported.

The new partnership with Crimestoppers, which allows members of the public to pass on information 100% anonymously, is designed to change that.

Reporting concerns about disqualified directors helps the Insolvency Service use its full range of enforcement powers, including criminal prosecutions and confiscation of assets under the Proceeds of Crime Act.

Dave Magrath, Director of Investigation and Enforcement Services at the Insolvency Service, said:

Every year we disqualify more than 1,000 directors because they have shown themselves to be unfit to run a company. Those bans exist to protect the public, creditors and honest businesses from people who have already caused serious harm.

We know that not every breach of a disqualification comes to our attention through official channels. The public often sees things we don't such as a banned director running a business, or someone using a new company to walk away from old debts.

Directors who ignore a disqualification rarely stop there too. Time and again we see banned directors go on to commit fraud and cause even greater harm than before.

This partnership with Crimestoppers gives people a simple, anonymous way to report

their concerns so we can put a stop to these criminal actions.

Rogue directors rely on people staying silent. We're asking the public to help us change that.

Kate Johnston, Director of Business Development at Crimestoppers, said:

Disqualified directors who continue to operate aren't just breaking the law, they're putting honest businesses, employees and the public at risk.

We know people may have concerns but feel unsure about speaking up. That's why Crimestoppers is here. You can tell us what you know, 100% anonymously, and your information could make a real difference in stopping further harm.

If something doesn't feel right, trust your instincts and pass it on. You won't be asked who you are, only what you know.

## **What we want the public to look out for**

We are asking anyone with information about the following to come forward:

- Anyone acting as a director while disqualified or an undischarged bankrupt. This is a criminal offence on its own carrying up to two years in prison
- Disqualified directors committing fraud
- Disqualified directors repeatedly using companies to avoid paying debts, known as abusive phoenixism

To report concerns, contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111 or visit their website. The charity guarantees complete anonymity. IP addresses are never traced, calls are never recorded, and there is no caller ID or 1471 facility.

The information below is of particular use when making a report:

- Full name of the person you're reporting, and any aliases
- Their company name(s), past and present
- Their address or place of business
- What role they appear to be playing in the company
- Any relevant dates (so when you first noticed the activity)
- Names of anyone helping them conceal their involvement
- Any financial information you're aware of

Crimestoppers is an independent charity and its Contact Centre is open 24/7, 365 days a year.

## **Further information**

- Individuals subject to a disqualification order or undertaking are bound by a range of restrictions
- To find out if someone is currently disqualified as a company director, search the Companies House register of disqualifications
- Directors can find information about their obligations and responsibilities at the Insolvency

Service's Director Information Hub

- Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/insolvency-service-joins-forces-with-crimestoppers-to-crack-down-on-rogue-directors>