

## **Identity fraud continues to rise with 4 million victims in UK alone - Yet consumers continue to be complacent with their identities**

*Partners of National Identity Fraud Prevention Week issue a stark warning to public: individuals could be risking up to £9,000 as a result of an ID fraud incident*

London, 17 October 2011 – National Identity Fraud Prevention Week (NIDFPW) starts today to alert consumers and businesses to the threat of identity fraud at home and at work. For the seventh year running, NIDFPW brings together partners from both the private and public sector, providing a broad range of expertise and resources to help consumers and businesses protect themselves against identity fraud.

According to research commissioned by Fellowes exclusively for the campaign, although 95% of the UK population are now aware of the threat and risks of identity fraud, the number of victims is still rising as people continue to be careless with their identities. 7% of the UK population have been victims of identity fraud, equating to over 4 million people. The average cost of these incidents to each victim is £1,190, but some individuals have lost up to £9,000.

Statistics from CIFAS, the UK's Fraud Prevention Service, reported that the number of identity fraud cases declared to the authorities in the UK continue to rise, with over 80,000 reported in the UK so far this year. Research shows us that as the risk is rising, UK citizens are not taking enough care of their personal details:

- A quarter of us (25%) are still not taking simple yet key precautions such as shredding bills and bank statements before putting them in the bin
- Only 57% of those surveyed verify emails or calls from organisations before responding
- 46% wouldn't report a lost driving license or passport straight away
- 59% do not follow up when mail fails to arrive and just 13% regularly check their credit rating
- Encouragingly, 83% of the UK public check for unfamiliar transactions on bills and statements and 86% have security software on their home computer so in some areas consumers are being more vigilant

Complacency extends to online activities as well, with 88% of people who use social networking sites having shared information that could be used to commit identity fraud such as their address or date of birth. Furthermore, only 18% of those interviewed said they were concerned about sharing information on or the security risk of social networking sites, with 10% sharing information about others that could then be used to assume their identities.

When it comes to identity fraud, prevention is always key. Some easy ways for individuals to protect themselves include:

- Always checking for unfamiliar transactions on bank statements

- Shredding all documents containing sensitive information using a cross-cut shredder before throwing them away
- Looking into mail that goes missing
- Carrying out regular personal credit report checks
- Redirecting post for at least six months when moving house
- Limiting the amount of information shared when using social networking sites

Andrea Davis, spokesperson from campaign partner, Fellowes, said:

“No-one can afford to be complacent about ID fraud, everyone is at risk, whether young or old. It is important to ensure that you are not delivering your information straight into the hands of fraudsters. The risk is very real – both off and online - and we should all be taking steps to protect our identities. It is worrying that one in four people may be literally throwing their identities away and a huge number of people are sharing sensitive information on line. Simple steps like shredding sensitive information, being careful about the information you share online and generally being cautious about giving out your personal details will help to keep your identity safe.”

Jamey Johnson, head of Action Fraud, the national fraud reporting and advice centre, said:

“Stealing an identity is just the beginning for a fraudster. With few details, accounts can be taken over, loans can be applied for and purchases can be made, all without the consent or knowledge of the individual, potentially costing the victim substantial sums of money. Last month alone (September) Action Fraud saw over £245,000 worth of loss due to identity theft. The worrying part is that this figure was generated from a limited amount of reports, suggesting the amount lost to ID theft would be much higher if more people were reporting.

“It is important to report a loss to Action Fraud, but it is more important to protect yourself from it happening in the first place. Limiting access to your personal information is the key to safety from ID fraud. Remember, personal details are as valuable as cash to a fraudster.”

Simon Ellson, Norton by Symantec’s internet security expert, said:

“This year the internet and its ever-evolving nature has continued to inspire criminals who commit ID fraud. Just as technology evolves, so too do the methods of cybercriminals. In the last 12 months in particular, we’ve seen more opportunist criminals take advantage of ‘starter kits’ that allow them to carry out sophisticated attacks with relatively little tech know-how.

“According to the Norton Cybercrime Report 2011, the largest piece of consumer research conducted into cybercrime worldwide, online credit card fraud is one of the top three cybercrimes and accounts for 10% of all cybercrime in the UK.”

For more tips and advice on how to prevent identity fraud, visit the campaign’s website, [www.stop-idfraud.co.uk](http://www.stop-idfraud.co.uk). The website contains a downloadable advice pack for consumers as well as a business guide.

This year's campaign is supported by the Metropolitan Police, City of London Police, Fellowes, Norton, the National Fraud Authority, IFCAG, Equifax, CIFAS - The UK's Fraud Prevention Service, Scottish Business Crime Centre, e-Crime Scotland, the Home Office and the Royal Mail.

## **ENDS**

### **Notes to editors:**

The research was commissioned by Fellowes and carried out by Dynamic Markets Limited. For this report, quantitative research was carried out with 2002 Great British adults aged 18+ as part of an online consumer omnibus survey. Fieldwork took place between 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> September 2011. During the omnibus research process, questions are posed to consumers and data is collected until various pre-defined sampling quotas are reached. The sample is then demographically weighted to make it representative of the GB population aged 18+ to overcome any sampling deficiencies and / or Internet bias.

For more information, or to request an interview, please contact the National Identity Fraud Prevention Week press office:

Orna Joseph  
[orna.joseph@attorneygeneral.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:orna.joseph@attorneygeneral.gsi.gov.uk)  
020 3356 1035

Georgina Miller  
[Georgina.miller@fleishmaneuropa.com](mailto:Georgina.miller@fleishmaneuropa.com)  
0207 395 7081

High resolution images are available for the media to view and download free of charge from [www.stop-idfraud.co.uk](http://www.stop-idfraud.co.uk)

Additional tips can be found in the "Mind Your Own Business" guide or by visiting [www.stop-idfraud.co.uk](http://www.stop-idfraud.co.uk)