

## Fear over India call centre fraud

**Better safeguards are needed to protect the personal data of British consumers held by call centres in India, MEPs have warned.**

The Amicus union group of Labour MEPs is challenging the European Commission to prevent unauthorised access to details when they are processed abroad.

The action follows reports criminals have tried to get hold of data.

But British companies which outsource to India say they have adequate security in place to prevent fraud.

### **Organised gangs**

The Evening Standard newspaper reported that organised gangs had offered a year in wages to call centre staff in return for access to UK credit card details.

And US credit card giant Capital One pulled out of India after unauthorised credit levels were offered by call centres.

MEPs are tabling a motion on Monday at the Employment and Social Affairs Committee calling for an investigation into the issue.

Bill Miller, MEP for Scotland, who is backing the motion, says action needs to be taken before attempts to get credit card details become more widespread.

**It is only a matter of time before a serious crime is committed, which ruins the reputation of the British financial services industry**  
David Fleming, Amicus national secretary for finance

"It is a worrying consequence of the trend towards outsourcing," he said.

Mr Miller says countries such as France are suffering from the same problem, and there are concerns that call centres in other parts of Asia are being targeted.

The concern comes at a time when an increasing number of call centre and business service jobs are being relocated out of the UK.

### **'Major failing'**

Amicus has predicted that 200,000 jobs will be exported by 2008, which will mean every banking and personal finance customer will be forced to allow their details out of the UK.

And a recent report by accountants Ernst & Young warned that "given the volume of offshoring

that is going on and the risks attached, there will be a major regulatory failing within five years".

The Data Protection Act requires only that companies maintain their server within EU boundaries despite the fact data is being processed thousands of miles away.

David Fleming, Amicus national secretary for finance, said: "Offshoring is an accident waiting to happen.

"It is only a matter of time before a serious crime is committed, which ruins the reputation of the British financial services industry.

### **'Closely monitored'**

British companies which outsource work to India say they have comprehensive checks in place to prevent fraud.

The UK insurance group Aviva, which owns Norwich Union, says its outsourced operations in India are closely monitored, and fully comply with data protection requirements.

"We have rigorous anti-fraud processes in place across Norwich Union to prevent fraud," said spokeswoman Liz Kennett.

HSBC says it only uses its own staff in India, and does not outsource the third parties.

"We are confident that all staff, whether here or in India, exercise the same levels of confidentiality and customer protection," said an HSBC spokeswoman.

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