



News Release:

Jailed managers ordered to pay back £560,000 to NHS after procurement fraud

Date: 20/09/2019

Three managers (one NHS employee and two contractors) who were imprisoned last year for fraud and are still behind bars have been ordered by the courts to pay back over £560,000 to the NHS (Swansea Crown Court, 19 September 2019).

This follows a financial investigation by NHS Counter Fraud Service (NHS CFS) Wales under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA).

Mark Evill (48, of Shirenewton, Chepstow), Robert Howells (66, of Sudbury, Chepstow) and Michael Cope (44, of Garden City, Merthyr Tydfil) were convicted of fraud and sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment between them in November 2018 after a fraud investigation, also led by NHS CFS Wales. It proved that Evill, who was contracted as a project manager by Powys Teaching Health Board (PTHB), awarded work to contractor "George Morgan Ltd", which he himself owned. Evill also made payments to Howells and Cope with the money he earned to buy their cooperation. The trio hit the headlines partly because they used fake names that were later revealed to be copying the real names of members of the rock band U2. Evill, Howells and Cope defrauded PTHB out of £822,236.22.

The court heard that the three must pay back the combined amount of £563,496.95 within their allotted amount of time or face extra time being added their prison sentences.

The figure could grow - NHS CFS Wales investigators will also seek to recover any future assets or money that becomes available to the fraudsters to go back into the NHS. They will periodically revisit their wealth to see if any further money can be recovered through POCA.

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Cheryl Hill, Deputy Operational Fraud Manager at NHS CFS Wales, said today:

“Today’s result sends out a clear message that those found to have defrauded the NHS will not only face prosecution, but that the money stolen will be pursued to ensure that it goes back where it belongs. Evill, Howells and Cope were greedy in their bid to re-direct NHS funds into their own pockets, so it is good to see the money being recovered so that it can be used for what it was intended for - patient care.”

Sue Frith, CEO of the NHS Counter Fraud Authority, added:

" I commend the Wales Counter Fraud Service for their work in the original fraud investigation and this very successful recovery. The court order enables the recovery of over half a million pounds to the NHS. Our organisations continue to work closely together to tackle fraud against the health service and procurement fraud is one of our priority action areas this year."

If you suspect that anyone is committing fraud or another economic crime against the NHS, tell NHSCFA about it – you can call our 24-hour, confidential reporting line 0800 028 40 60 or visit our main website to report online: www.cfa.nhs.uk

“NHS fraud. Spot it, report it, together we stop it”

For more information contact the NHSCFA press office on 020 7895 4519/4524

Notes to Editors

1. Mark Evill has a Confiscation Order in the amount of £549,688.75 to be paid as compensation to Powys Teaching Health Board within 3 months. Default of the order will result in a further 65 months imprisonment.
2. Robert Howells has a Confiscation Order in the amount of £13,248.24 to be paid as compensation to Powys Teaching Health Board within 3 months. Default of the order will result in a further 7 months imprisonment.
3. Michael Cope has a Confiscation Order in the amount of £559.96 to be paid as compensation to Powys Teaching Health Board within 3 months. Default of the order will result in a further 14 days imprisonment.
4. The NHS Counter Fraud Authority is a Special Health Authority established under the NHS Act 2006 as amended.
5. £1.27 billion was lost to fraud in the year 2017-18.
6. When NHSCFA uses the term ‘fraud’, we refer to a range of economic crimes, such as fraud, bribery, corruption or any other illegal acts committed by an individual or group of individuals to obtain a financial or professional gain.

7. NHSCFA also supports the work of the NHS Counter Fraud Service (Wales)
8. NHSCFA works closely with NHS Local Counter Fraud Specialists across the NHS in England to ensure that healthcare crime is tackled and a culture of fraud prevention and deterrence is in place.
9. NHSCFA works collaboratively with NHS Scotland Counter Fraud Services on fraud issues.
10. There are some 300 professionally trained and accredited Local Counter Fraud Specialists in place within health bodies across England and Wales