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Up to £1 where sold

No immunity for CoVid vaccination thief

18 August 2022



A Tadworth man who stole empty CoVid vaccination vials and sold them on Ebay gets a suspended prison sentence. What do you do when you get given one of those proof of postage receipts in your local post office? Crumple it up and stuff it in the bottom of your bag? Pop it in the recycling pile by the back door when you get home? Diligently file it away somewhere safe?

Luckily for our investigators convicted thief and fraudster **Steven Flint** took the last approach, but unluckily for him, his neat and tidy admin was eventually his downfall.

Flint was working as a contract security guard at three vaccination sites in the county during the peak of the Covid vaccination roll-out in January and February 2021 when he stole a large quantity of empty Covid vaccine vials to sell them on eBay.

Investigators initially used Post Office CCTV footage and eBay account details to connect Flint to the crimes and he was arrested on suspicion of theft and fraud at one of the sites he worked at in February 2021. Flint had completed 13 shifts before he was arrested.

During a subsequent search of his house, police officers found empty vaccine vials and multiple receipts for packages posted to Flint's eBay buyers.

Surrey Police detectives also discovered that Flint had fraudulently used the details of an acquaintance to set up a new eBay account to cover his tracks.

Steven Flint, 34 of Bidhams Crescent, Tadworth was found guilty of theft on 19 July at **Staines Magistrates Court**. He had previously pleaded guilty to fraud by false representation. He was sentenced to one year imprisonment, suspended for 18 months, at Staines Magistrates Court on **Wednesday, 17 August.**

Flint was also ordered to complete 150 hours of unpaid work.

Detective Inspector Paul Gordon from Surrey Police's proactive investigation team said: "Covid vaccine vials remain the property of the NHS. Due to their sensitive medical nature, this ownership is maintained before, during and after the vials are used. Taking these items could only have been theft.

"Flint's crimes took place when the very successful national vaccine programme was in its infancy and any actions which jeopardised public confidence in the vaccine roll-out were treated with the utmost seriousness. We, along with our health service partners and the vaccine manufacturers, reacted extremely quickly to the situation, working together to identify and arrest Flint."

Lorna Hart, Surrey Heartlands Covid Vaccination Programme Director said: "The NHS will never charge for a Covid-19 vaccination and patients should only ever accept a vaccine from an NHS vaccination service.

"Thanks to the success of our NHS vaccination programme, frontline teams have done an incredible job, delivering over 2.2 million Covid-19 vaccines to people across Surrey Heartlands.

"As part of the autumn booster programme many people, including everyone aged 50 and over, will be offered a Covid-19 booster, as well as a flu jab, to help increase people's protection against respiratory viruses ahead of winter so we would encourage anyone who is invited to get vaccinated. We also continue to offer the Covid-19 vaccine to anyone who is eligible."

Written by Karen Parker of Surrey Police

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