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Devon worst hit for 'dead' post

ADVICE is being offered to the bereaved after 660,000 items of junk mail were addressed to dead people in Devon last year.

Data management company **The REaD Group** says Devon is being targeted more than any other county in the South West and that the unwanted mail is giving a "disturbing new twist to the term life after death".

Adding further insult to injury, valuable personal information contained on post, including name, address and date of birth, is increasingly being intercepted by identity fraudsters – so much so that CIFAS, the UK's fraud prevention service, now lists Impersonation of the Dead (IOD) as Britain's fastest-growing identity crime, with reported cases increasing by an alarming 66 per cent since January.

This distressing statistic means that upwards of 70,000 families across the country are

experiencing the pain of having their deceased loved one's identity 'hijacked' by criminals.

"To lose someone close to us is upsetting enough, but to see their identity stolen by criminals is perhaps the ultimate indignity," said **The REaD Group's** chief executive **Mark Roy**.

"While the Ministry of Justice recently ignored Information Commissioner Richard Thomas' calls for tougher sentencing laws for perpetrators of IOD and data fraud in favour of unenforceable two-year jail terms, I'm calling on all Devon households to join together to help stop this upsetting and insidious crime wave."

You can control the amount of junk mail received by registering a deceased loved one's name with thebereavementregister.org.uk – a free service which removes the names and addresses of people who have died from

companies' mailing lists, telemarketing files and databases.

Other tips include: registering with a junk mail control service such as www.itsmypost.com or www.mpsonline.org.uk and displaying a 'No Junk Mail' sign on their letterbox or door.

"The onus isn't solely on householders however," added Mr Roy. "As only 42 per cent of UK companies have any form of data quality strategy in place, it's incumbent on every mailing organisation – businesses, charities, clubs and community groups – to regularly clean their databases of deceased name and address information, gone-aways (people who have moved house) and mail preference service registrants. Only by combining community and business efforts will we be able to stop junk mail abuse – to the benefit of consumers, the economy and the environment alike."

