

Gas Worker Stole £45k of Customer Data

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— Categories: Crime



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A former British Gas employee faces a potential prison sentence after admitting to illegally obtaining and selling confidential customer data worth approximately £45,000.

Chintan Paidá, 37, appeared before Leicester Magistrates' Court on Thursday, 7 August, where he pleaded guilty to two separate offences under UK law. These included unauthorised obtaining of personal data, a breach of the Data Protection Act 2018, and theft by an employee, a criminal offence under the Theft Act 1968.

Paida, who resides on Greenwich Close in Heathley Park, Leicester, worked at British Gas when he accessed and stole sensitive customer information. He then sold the stolen data to external brokers for financial gain. Prosecutor Gabriella Orthodoxou told the court, “The defendant was employed by British Gas. He stole data worth £45,000 and sold it on to brokers.”

Due to the seriousness of the offences, magistrates declined to issue a sentence themselves, citing limited powers. Magistrates’ courts can impose a maximum custodial sentence of 12 months, but the bench concluded this case warranted a more severe punishment.

Chairman of the bench, Mary Elizabeth Crosskey, said: “We are going to commit this to be heard at the Crown Court because our sentencing powers don’t go far enough to allow us to make the sentence you’re likely to receive.”

Paida was granted unconditional bail but has been ordered to cooperate fully with the probation service as part of a pre-sentence report, which will be presented at his next court appearance. His sentencing is scheduled to take place at Leicester Crown Court next month.

This case highlights the growing concerns over data protection breaches in the UK. The unlawful selling of personal data not only violates an individual’s right to privacy but also increases their risk of fraud, scams, and identity theft.

Organisations are legally obligated under UK law to safeguard the information they collect. The Data Protection Act 2018 enforces rules around how businesses and their staff must handle such data, with criminal penalties for breaches.

In Paida’s case, the illegal sale of personal customer data to third-party brokers could have exposed victims to aggressive marketing, phishing attempts, and financial exploitation. No details have yet been released publicly regarding how the data was used or how the offence came to light, although the Crown Court proceedings may provide further clarity.

British Gas has not publicly commented on the case at this stage. However, data breaches of this nature are reputationally damaging and may prompt renewed scrutiny of internal data handling policies across the wider energy sector.

Cybersecurity and information governance experts stress that staff training, monitoring, and tight internal controls are essential for companies that handle large volumes of sensitive data.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the UK's data watchdog, has the authority to investigate such breaches and issue separate penalties, although it has not yet confirmed whether it is involved in this case.

As the case moves to Leicester Crown Court, Paidá could face a substantial custodial sentence, depending on aggravating factors such as the scale of the breach, financial motives, and the number of customers affected. Sentencing guidelines for theft and data offences allow judges discretion based on severity and harm caused.

Until the sentencing hearing takes place, Paidá remains on bail. The pre-sentence report, which evaluates his background and the circumstances of the offences, will assist the judge in determining the appropriate punishment.