

Bugging of phones by jealous partners 'rife': Campaign group warns women to guard against 'spyware' which tells a suspicious husband or boyfriend how they use device

- Spying on spouses through phone 'spyware' is rife, pressure groups say
- Bugging systems can tell suspicious partner how they are using phones
- Jealous spouses can spy on calls, texts and even track phone by its GPS
- Some devices are easily available to buy in Britain for less than £100

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Spying on spouses and partners through mobile phone bugging systems has reached epidemic proportions, according to pressure groups (picture posed by model)

Spying on spouses and partners through mobile phone bugging systems has reached epidemic proportions, according to pressure groups monitoring electronic abuse.

They warned women to guard against the growing use of 'spyware' which can tell a suspicious husband, boyfriend or former partner how they are using their phones.

Cheaply available software will allow an electronic shadower to hear phone conversations, monitor emails, texts and social media messages, and even track the phone's whereabouts using GPS tracking. The legitimate user of the phone can be left unaware that she or he is being followed and overheard.

Some devices are easily available in Britain for less than £100 and software marketed in the US can be installed for less than £50.

The Digital-Trust group said yesterday in the aftermath of Christmas – a time of year notorious for the high numbers of couples who break up: 'Women leaving abusive relationships and seeking refuge will often unwittingly lead abusers to their location via mobile phones.

'Mobiles can track the victim if the phone is registered to the abuser, if they have access to the victim's Google or iPhone online account, or surveillance software or app has been put on the phone.'

Polly Neate of the Women's Aid group told the Independent: 'We increasingly hear stories of abusers adding tracking software to phones, placing spyware on personal computers and using the internet to gather information about their partner.

'However, in many cases the police are not trained to recognise and understand the impact of online abuse, including tracking, and action is rarely taken against abusers.'

A number of laws governing communications offences appear to criminalise men or women who put a spyware app on a partner or target's phone and overhear messages and calls without their permission. However

one key piece of legislation, the 1998 Data Protection Act, sets the maximum penalty for spying offences as no more than a fine.

One device that can be used for spying marketed in Britain by the Maplin chain is the Cell Phone Recon system, which provides software which can be installed on a target phone. Buyers are told they can 'find out the whereabouts of your loved ones' and 'monitor employees.'



Women have been warned to guard against the growing use of 'spyware' which can tell a suspicious husband, boyfriend or former partner how they are using their phones

The system is described as 'cell phone backup software', which can be used for checking the use of your own phone and finding it if it is lost. However, following concern over the potential use of the software, Maplin has added a warning to those who want to 'check my partner's texts for the normal reasons to find out if he cheating'.

Buyers are told: 'This device is intended as a backup device for your messages, emails and calls or can be used to find the whereabouts of your loved ones, monitor employees or keep track of your children. This device

should not be used for any other purpose. The software/device must not be installed without prior permission from the owner of the device.'

Another easy-to-find system is the Flexispy, marketed from the US at under £45 a month under the slogan: 'Their cell phone will tell you what they won't.'

Advertised as a way to find out if your husband or wife is cheating, the system will, once installed on a spouse's phone, allow you to 'know for sure what your partner is really feeling, saying and doing when you are not there,' promoters say.

The Data Protection Act makes it an offence 'to knowingly or recklessly obtain, disclose or procure the disclosure of personal information without the consent of the data controller.' However the punishment for offences is no more than a fine.

A number of other laws may cover spyware, among them the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, 2000, which was used to prosecute newspaper phone hackers. However the law has never been used against a stalker or a suspicious spouse hacking the phone of a personal target.

Visit the ASP Website: <http://www.advancedsecurityprotection.com/services/technical-surveillance-countermeasures-tscm-debugging>