



Information Commissioner's Office
Promoting public access to official information
and protecting your personal information

Press Release

For immediate release

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ICO to investigate Barclays Bank

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has launched an investigation into Barclays Bank following the recent BBC Whistleblower programme which exposed alleged breaches of customer privacy at the high street bank.

The programme revealed the findings of a nine month investigation conducted by two undercover BBC journalists and focused particularly on working practices adopted by management and staff in Barclays' customer call centres.

The ICO's investigation will establish if Barclays has breached the Data Protection Act and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR). The ICO has requested the following information from the bank:

- the results of Barclays' internal inquiry into matters raised by the BBC
- a copy of Barclays' policies and procedures with regard to telephone sales protocols
- an explanation outlining why Barclays' policies and procedures - in respect of direct marketing and access to customers' accounts - appear to have been deliberately flouted by call centre staff

A number of issues raised in the programme are of concern to the Information Commissioner's Office. One staff trainer told employees to ignore the wishes of customers who had stated that they did not wish to receive sales information or be contacted by telephone. Call centre marketing staff were told to identify themselves as 'account consultants' when speaking to customers, rather than use their normal

title of 'sales adviser'. The film also showed call centre staff accessing customers' accounts without a valid reason.

Mick Gorrill, Head of the Regulatory Action Division at the ICO, said: "Organisations which process customers' personal information have a duty to follow the eight principles of the Data Protection Act and comply with the PECR. The ICO takes breaches of people's privacy extremely seriously. For instance, making sales calls to people, who have expressly asked not to be contacted, is totally unacceptable. We have asked Barclays Bank to provide a range of information to help with our investigation. We will report publicly on this investigation once it is completed."

ENDS

If you need more information, please contact the Information Commissioner's press office on 020 7025 7580 or visit the website at: www.ico.gov.uk

Notes to Editors

1. The Information Commissioner promotes public access to official information and protects personal information. The ICO is an independent body with specific responsibilities set out in the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003.
2. For more information about the Information Commissioner's Office subscribe to our e-newsletter at www.ico.gov.uk
3. The ICO's investigation into Barclays Bank follows evidence supplied by BBC Whistleblower
4. Anyone who processes personal information must comply with eight principles, which make sure that personal information is:
 - Fairly and lawfully processed
 - Processed for limited purposes
 - Adequate, relevant and not excessive
 - Accurate and up to date
 - Not kept for longer than is necessary
 - Processed in line with your rights
 - Secure
 - Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection
5. The ICO has a range of enforcement powers. It can - and does - prosecute people for breaches of the Data Protection Act. The maximum fine that a Magistrates' Court can impose is £5,000.
6. Barclays Bank recently signed an undertaking to comply with the Data Protection Act following the ICO's investigation into the disposal of customers' personal information.

7. Regulation 21 of the PECR states: A person shall neither use, nor instigate the use of, a public electronic communications service for the purpose of making unsolicited calls for direct marketing where –
 - (a) the called line is that of a subscriber who has previously notified the caller that such calls should not for the time being be made on that line;
 - or
 - (b) the number allocated to a subscriber in respect of the called line is one listed in the register kept under regulation 26 (Telephone Preference Service).