



Sharon Hiles
Senior Assistant Solicitor to the Inquiry
The Leveson Inquiry
c/o Royal Courts of Justice
Strand
London WC2A 2LL

By email only

26 January 2012

Dear Ms Hiles

Attendance at the Leveson Inquiry

I write further to your email dated 20 January 2012. My colleague, Mark Hughes, will attend the inquiry to give evidence on 2 February. Please would you confirm what time he should arrive and to whom he should report at the Royal Courts of Justice.

Mark Hughes is best placed to assist the Inquiry, as he is Head of Vodafone's Fraud, Risk & Security (FRS) function. He has worked in FRS since October 2006, and has been its Head since August 2011. He will be able to speak to my letter dated 12 October 2011 and the contents of this letter.

As part of our ongoing work to review our systems and processes in light of requests for assistance from Operation Weeling and the Inquiry, it has recently become clear that the security upgrade implemented in 2006 about which I wrote on 12 October 2011 was not implemented for a relatively small group of customers on a separate voicemail platform that was soon to be decommissioned. We have received no information from the police or any other source to suggest that the security of these customers' voicemail was breached. However, I thought it appropriate to bring this information to the Inquiry's attention, for the sake of completeness. I am writing in similar terms to the Home Affairs Select Committee, as the information below supplements that which Vodafone UK gave to the Committee as part of its inquiry.

Vodafone Mail

The voicemail platform concerned was known as Vodafone Mail. It operated alongside Vodafone's main voicemail platform. It was essentially a niche and pilot project aimed at business customers that anticipated, but was rapidly superseded by, social networking sites such as Facebook etc.

The service operated from October 2002 and was decommissioned from 2007. It comprised a combined voicemail, email and fax service for which customers could register through Vodafone's website. It allowed users to receive notification of new voicemails, emails and fax messages and to create and forward on messages using a personal inbox on the Vodafone website. Once a Vodafone Mail account was registered, the service automatically diverted messages from the main voicemail platform to a unique voicemail number supplied to each customer who signed up to Vodafone Mail. The service was only provided to those who chose to register for it.

Vodafone Limited

Legal & Government Affairs
Vodafone House, The Connection, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 2FN, England
T +44 (0)7788 584332 F +44 (0)1635 676197 www.vodafone.com

Registered Office: Vodafone House, The Connection, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 2FN, England. Registered in England No. 1471587

MOD100058541

Vodafone Mail customers were able to access their voicemails on the system by a variety of methods. First, they could dial "242" from their mobile phone handset to collect messages. Second, they could call their own mobile number and allow it to divert to voicemail or, third they could dial the unique voicemail number that they were given when they signed up for a Vodafone Mail account. The other option available to customers was to collect messages by logging on to the Vodafone website to open a voicemail attachment to an email in their inbox. As with the standard voicemail platform, if a customer dialled their own mobile number or their unique voicemail number they were only able to access their voicemail by using a PIN number.

As I mentioned in my letter dated 12 October 2011, when the concerns about phone hacking were first raised in 2006, Vodafone took steps to ensure that customer voicemail PIN numbers could not be accessed by front-line customer service staff. This step was taken to prevent the risk of unauthorised access to customer accounts through techniques such as "blagging" or "social engineering" with which the inquiry will be familiar.

However, these upgrades were not in fact made to the separate Vodafone Mail platform so it remained possible for customer service agents to reset a customer's Vodafone Mail PIN number until the service was withdrawn. This procedure would only be undertaken after a customer successfully completed the standard data protection checks to confirm their identity. It was usual practice for a customer service agent resetting a PIN number to advise the customer to change the number following the call by using their mobile handset. This ensured that the number was only known to the customer after the manual reset by a customer services agent.

Decommissioning of Vodafone Mail started when the Next Generation voicemail platform was launched by Vodafone in August 2007. The service remained in operation until June 2010 when the remaining customers were migrated on to the new voicemail platform. It is no longer in operation and only a very small number of Vodafone UK staff know about its operation which explains why we have only recently become aware that the security upgrades made to our systems in 2006 were not applied to this product.

At its peak, Vodafone Mail had 300,000 registered customers. In the context of Vodafone UK's 17 million customer base for which the security upgrades were implemented in 2006, it was a very small customer base. I am not aware of there being any other exceptions to the security upgrades that were implemented to Vodafone's main voicemail platform in 2006.

Redaction

I confirm that we have no objection to my letter of 12 October 2011 being published if the inquiry sees fit. I simply ask that personal details (my signature and telephone number) are redacted before publication.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Spooner

Lead Counsel
Legal & Government Affairs

Error Reference source not found.