

# **INVESTIGATORY POWERS BILL: REQUEST FILTER**

## **What is it?**

The Request Filter is an important new safeguard, established and maintained by the Secretary of State and sitting between a communications service provider and the public authority which acquires communications data under Part 3 of the Bill. It specifically limits the communications data returned in response to a request to only that which is relevant, thereby safeguarding privacy.

Only once a designated senior officer has approved a request for communications data, and authorised the use of the request filter for that particular request, will the request filter be used.

The request filter will only accept communications data disclosed by communications service providers in response to specific requests from public authorities, each of which must be necessary and proportionate. It will automatically filter that communications data to ensure that only the communications data that is required to answer the request is provided. Any irrelevant data will be deleted and not made available to the public authority.

## **Why do we need it?**

Public authorities will sometimes need to make complex queries. For example, they may need to ask multiple communications service providers for data to identify an unknown person who is suspected of having committed a crime at three different places at different times.

Currently, public authorities might approach Communications Service Providers for location data to identify the mobile phones used in those three locations at the relevant times, in order to determine whether a particular phone (and a particular individual) is linked to the three offences. This means the public authority may acquire a significant amount of data relating to people who are not of interest.

The request filter will mean that when a public authority makes such a request, they will only see the data they need to. Any irrelevant data will be deleted and not made available to the public authority. The filter acts as a safeguard to minimise collateral intrusion.

## **What are the key provisions in the Bill?**

- **The Secretary of State will establish and maintain the request filter**
- **The operation of the request filter will be overseen by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner**
- **The filtering arrangements can only operate in response to a necessary and proportionate authorisation for the acquisition of communications data**