

9th November 2015

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about the draft Investigatory Powers Bill.

The draft Bill, which will be subject to scrutiny by a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament, will be a landmark piece of legislation which will ensure that law enforcement and security agencies have the powers they need to keep us safe, while at the same time providing world-leading oversight arrangements.

The draft Bill includes provisions on each of the key capabilities available to the intelligence agencies and others: communications data; interception; and equipment interference. It provides for the retention of internet connection records (ICR) - although access to the data will be tightly controlled. It is important to make clear that an ICR is a record of the communications services a person or device has connected to. It is the internet equivalent of a phone bill – it is not a person's full internet browsing history.

Law enforcement access to the information would be on a case-by-case basis, where it is necessary and proportionate, limited to three rigidly defined purposes. These are to identify what device had sent an online communication, establish what online communications services a known individual had accessed or identify whether a known individual had accessed illegal services online.

I do appreciate your concern on this vital area of national security, but let me assure you that there have been three independent reviews on investigatory powers – by David Anderson, the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, and the Royal United Services Institute – and all agreed that the agencies should have the power to acquire and use data in bulk. This draft Bill sets out, in clear detail, existing powers for the security and intelligence agencies to do this, whilst subjecting them to stricter safeguards.

Similarly I am particularly glad that on the question of who, in future, should authorise interception warrants, the Home Secretary has announced that there will be a 'double-lock' authorisation process. This will mean that warrants for the most intrusive powers available to the agencies, such as the interception of communications, will be subject to a 'double-lock', requiring approval by a judge as well as by the Secretary of State.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP