

## **Freedom of Information: Right to know request**

Thank you for your request for information which has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act').

On 1 March, in reference to the Investigatory Powers Act 2016, you requested "All memos and briefs concerning, about, or relating to "equipment interference" from January 2014 to the date of this request". On 14 March 2017, you clarified that the request was concerned with "covert communications data capture" in the context of jamming technologies, such as those used in prisons for example.

We understand from your emails that you are requesting information relating to the interference of and gaining of access to equipment (such as computers or mobile phones) for the purpose of covertly obtaining information from the equipment. Equipment interference may be deployed by police forces and security and intelligence agencies, for example, to investigate criminal activity.

The information you have requested is not held by Ofcom.

By way of background, Ofcom is responsible for ensuring that radio spectrum is used in the most effective way. This includes granting rights of use of spectrum through licences and licence exemptions. The use of any radio transmitting device in the UK is required to be either licensed or specifically exempted from licensing under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006 (the WTA). It is a criminal offence to use a device without a licence or authorisation. It is also a criminal offence under the WTA to cause interference.

Your request referred to jamming technology. Jammers are devices which are intended to prevent radio equipment from receiving and transmitting signals, and so would cause interference. Ofcom does not license jammers. Notwithstanding the above, jamming technologies may be deployed in prisons in specific circumstances under certain legislative powers, and it is the responsibility of the user to ensure that they are operating in compliance with the law.

In the context of your request regarding equipment interference, however, jammers block or disrupt radio signals but do not obtain information about the sender, recipient or content of calls or messages.

Ofcom has considered prison jammers as part of its spectrum management work, and you may find the previous requests for information on this topic of interest:

[https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0028/19648/imsi\\_catchers.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0028/19648/imsi_catchers.pdf)

[https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/28352/imsi\\_catchers\\_bundle.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0020/28352/imsi_catchers_bundle.pdf)

[https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0025/16846/prisons\\_foi.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/16846/prisons_foi.pdf)

I hope you find this information helpful.

Timing

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for undertaking internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact:

Steve Gettings  
The Secretary to the Corporation  
Ofcom  
Riverside House  
2a Southwark Bridge Road  
London SE1 9HA

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF