

Mr Lee Jefferson

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Single Investigation Service
Lesley Exchange 1
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Email: xxxxx.xxxxxxxxxx@xxxxx.xxx.xxx.xx

Your reference: Request 376233

Our reference: DfC/2016-0220

Dear Mr Jefferson

Date: 09 January 2017

Freedom of Information Act 2000

I am writing to confirm that the Department has now completed its search for the information which you requested on 9 December. You requested information which explains why the “department needs access to the data gathered in the Investigatory Powers Act 2016”.

The Department for Communities needs access to the data gathered in the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 as its Single Investigation Service makes use of communications data in the investigation of benefit fraud cases.

Communications data is obtained using Fraud Act powers contained within the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 – which provides the basis for the investigation of social security benefit fraud. In utilising these powers, fraud officers may request information which is defined as communications data.

The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 brings together all of the powers already available to obtain communications data under the one legislative power. The access to, and use of, information will be subject to the type of controls and requirements in place for other investigatory powers such as the use of surveillance provided for under the Regulations of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

As the new Act repeals existing provisions contained within the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992, the Department will be required to use the new powers for the purposes of benefit fraud investigations.

If you are unhappy with the level of service you have received in relation to your request, you may ask for an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this letter. You may write to the Departmental Information Manager, Department for Communities Lighthouse Building, 1 Cromac Place, Gasworks Business Park, Ormeau Road, BELFAST, BT7 2JB, or send an email to xxx@xxxxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx if you wish to make a complaint.

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 review of our original decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours Sincerely

Carol McCleery
Local Information Officer
Single Investigation Service **(By e-mail)**