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Permanent Secretary  
Via email

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### **COVID-19 INQUIRY - RECORD RETENTION**

Dear Permanent Secretary,

You will be aware that the Prime Minister has appointed the Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett as chair of the upcoming public inquiry into Covid-19, which is due to formally begin in the spring.

I wrote to you in June last year to ask that - ahead of the inquiry - you take steps to assure yourself that your Department will be ready to meet its obligations to provide relevant records, information and data as requested. As I set out, this includes ensuring that no material of potential relevance to the inquiry is destroyed - as well as ensuring that any relevant arms length bodies for which your Department is responsible are adhering to the same principles. The inquiry's Director of Inquiry Set-up has now written to me to ask that I reiterate that message following Baroness Hallett's appointment, and to remind departments of their obligations under the Inquiries Act.

Well-established records management processes are in place across government and all government organisations are aware of the need to keep a full and clear record of their part in events. As you know, this includes the decisions taken, the process by which those decisions were reached, the reasons for those decisions and the evidence and data used to support them, and applies whatever the format in which that information is held and on whatever device or system. Please do continue to follow these important processes.

Since the inquiry's terms of reference are not yet set, it is necessarily a matter of judgement as to whether material is likely to be relevant to its work. As I set out in my earlier letter, where there is doubt, you should assume that material may be relevant and ensure that it is retained and is accessible.

I will write again when the inquiry's terms of reference have been published.

Yours sincerely,

**PD**

**Darren Tierney**

**Director General, Propriety & Ethics**