

Message

From: DG Corporate [/O=TSE/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=19E12FA2E8B54D559A66D55675753B36-DG CORPORATE]

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Subject: COVID-19 INDEPENDENT INQUIRY - RECORD RETENTION

Dear Colleagues,

COVID-19 INDEPENDENT INQUIRY - RECORD RETENTION

The First Minister has set out her commitment to a Scottish public inquiry in response to the pandemic in the Priorities of Government statement. The UK Government has also announced its commitment to a statutory public inquiry, but the scope and precise timings of these have not yet been announced.

Whilst the current focus, rightly, is on meeting the challenges the pandemic brings we need to assure ourselves that we will be ready to meet our obligations to provide relevant records, information and data to the inquiry/ies as they are requested. ET has recognised the need for this to be a collective effort across the organisation and are considering what more is needed to support this corporate task.

As neither inquiry's terms of reference have been set, it is a matter of judgement about what material will be relevant to the work of any inquiry. If in doubt, you should assume that material may be relevant and ensure that it is retained and is accessible in eRDM. This includes ensuring that no material of potential relevance to either inquiry is destroyed. You should also obtain similar assurances from any relevant arm's length bodies.

We know that well-established records management processes are in place across the Scottish Government and that all of you are aware of the need to keep a full and clear record of our part in responding to Covid-19 and our other work in eRDM. This includes the decisions we take, 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 both with COVID-19 information and with all other Scottish Government information.

The same principles apply to responding to more immediate forms of scrutiny, such as Freedom of Information requests which the Scottish Government responds to on an ongoing basis.

Work is already underway to establish a robust cross-organisation framework to support our response. This will be co-ordinated by Organisational Readiness Directorate and overseen by a programme board chaired by Ken Thomson, in his role co-ordinating advice to Ministers on the Scottish Government's Covid response.

If you need further advice on information management, please contact the iTECS Knowledge and Information Management branch, who will be able to help on matters including the use of eRDM and robust records management policy and procedures. You should contact the [Business Engagement and Education Team](#) or the [Records Management Team](#). The [HSC Covid-19 Response Information Governance](#) division are ready to help and guide colleagues on the work they have done to establish an evidence bank for decisions taken within DG HSC.

We know that some colleagues will also have questions about the eventual inquiry/ies and the support which will be available to colleagues who may be called upon to assist it, such as by providing written and/or oral evidence. The principles here are clear: as Civil Servants we may be called to give evidence in relation to events which occurred in the course of our duties. Past and present staff - of any grade - may be called to give

evidence in a variety of settings. Please be assured that if you are involved, the organisation will provide you with help and support to do that, in accordance with our normal rules and practice.

Once we have confirmation about the nature of the inquiry/ies, we will provide more information about that help and support. In the meantime, if you need further information at this stage, you can contact your People Advice and Wellbeing Manager in first instance, who will signpost to the relevant HR contacts.

Kind regards,

Lesley Fraser
Ken Thomson