

Witness Name: Jane Runeckles

Statement No: 2

Exhibits: 0

Dated: 15 December 2023

UK COVID-19 PUBLIC INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF JANE RUNECKLES, WELSH GOVERNMENT

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 25 October 2023 referenced **M2B-WG-05**.

I Jane Runeckles will say as follows:

1. I have previously provided a statement dated 20 October 2023 detailing my professional background and my role as head of the special adviser team in the Welsh Government during the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 May 2022.

Informal or private communications

2. My previous statement confirmed that the setting to delete iMessages after 30 days has been in place for a number of years prior to the beginning of the pandemic. Most of my bilateral exchanges took place through iMessage/text messages.

WhatsApp messages

3. In the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 May 2022, I used my personal mobile phone to send WhatsApp messages. I mainly used WhatsApp for group conversations as this facility was not available on iMessage. There were three groups which were used routinely: a Ministers WhatsApp group, a Special Adviser WhatsApp group and a group

with a small team of Welsh Government lawyers. Details of whether and when disappearing messages were put on these groups is given below.

4. Other groups were short-lived, for example to arrange a single meeting. I will have deleted many of these as part of routine admin. Those still on my personal phone are available to the Inquiry and details of whether and when disappearing messages were on them is included.
5. WhatsApp chats I have located on my personal phone have been disclosed to the Inquiry. I am aware that colleagues across Welsh Government have been asked to disclose messages. These are likely to include other conversations that I participated in that I no longer have access to.
6. I am unsure as to when WhatsApp made the facility for 7 day disappearing messages available. However, to the best of my recollection, as I became aware of it, I introduced it into some chats, but I did not routinely go through all WhatsApp chats in which I participated to activate 'disappearing messages'.
7. Although I changed my personal phone in January 2021, I believe that all of the information on my previous phone transferred to my new handset.

| Other party / parties to the chat | Date Disappearing Messages was introduced |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Colin McAllister | Disappearing Messages not introduced |
| Jake Stenner | Disappearing Messages not introduced |
| Legal Team Group Chat | Disappearing messages introduced by another 15/05/2021 |
| Liz Lloyd | Disappearing messages not introduced |
| Ministers Group Chat | Disappearing messages introduced by me on 25/11/2021 |
| SpAds Group Chat | Disappearing messages not introduced |
| Rob Fliss Reg Clare Jane | Disappearing messages not introduced (Chat used on 08/10/2020 to arrange a meeting) |

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Staying put.... | Disappearing messages not introduced (Chat for those Special Advisers remaining employed by Welsh Government during the pre-election period) |
| Let's talk about the FM | Disappearing messages not introduced (a group established by Madeleine Brindley for the period of the election campaign in 2021 to co-ordinate details for the FM while he was on the campaign trail) |

Private email communications

8. At no point from 1 January 2020, did I use private email to communicate with members of the Welsh Government or other officials about the Welsh Government's response to Covid-19.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Full name: Jane S Runeckles

Position or office held: Special Adviser

Signed:

Personal Data

Date: 15/12/2023