

Witness Name: Jill Minne

Statement No.: 001

Exhibits: N/A

Dated: 16 April 2024

UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF JILL MINNE

I, Jill Minne, of the Northern Ireland Civil Service ("NICS"), Department of Finance ("DoF"), People & Organisational Development, 2-4 Bruce Street, BT2 7JD, will say as follows:

1. My role within the NICS as at 17 May 2021 was Director of the centralised NICS Human Resources function ("NICSHR").
2. I write this statement in response to the letter from the Inquiry dated 4 April 2024 regarding the WhatsApp message sent by Dr Jenny Pyper to Dr Andrew McCormick on 17 May 2021, in which she stated:

[17/05/2021, 19:49:35] Jenny Pyper: On Jill's advice I have cleared out all my WhatsApp and Messages on this and my work phone. Scary conversation with Mark McLaughlin ! Deleting this now too.

3. My recollection is that I did not advise or instruct Dr Pyper or anyone in the NICS to delete messages from WhatsApp or any other informal communications messaging platforms.
4. I recall that Dr Pyper, on top of supporting Ministers in the response to the pandemic, was managing particularly challenging personnel issues, not concerned in any way with managing the pandemic. Dr Pyper took these and other HR, people and leadership matters very seriously and engaged with me, staff networks and trade unions regularly. She and I were often in contact by phone, and we had a weekly virtual meeting.
5. I recall having a conversation with Dr Pyper in which I advised her that while feelings may be running high in relation to these matters, senior staff should not send indelicate messages which could prove to be embarrassing. I cautioned that while

such messages might be sent with the intention of being humorous during a difficult period they could be interpreted as indiscrete and/or inappropriate.

6. My recollection is that it was during one of our regular virtual meetings about a range of HR matters, that I offered the advice about not being indelicate about colleagues/former colleagues in messaging apps with other colleagues. I did not make a record of the advice. I did not consider it formal HR advice, but rather a reminder of good practice between colleagues. It was not in any way related to the management of the pandemic.

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.

Signed:

Personal Data

Dated: 16 April 2024