

DATA PROTECTION NOTICE: DPN 02/22

February 2022

Covid 19 – Retention of official documents

BACKGROUND

Data Protection Notices are issued as part of overall awareness and guidance to staff. They are issued by the Departmental Data Protection Officer (DPO) and contact details for any issues or questions can be found at the end of this document.

I am writing to ask all staff to consider what records they hold that reference or relate to the Department's response to the Covid 19 Pandemic.

It is anticipated that a public inquiry will commence shortly that will seek to review how Government Departments worked throughout what was, and continues to be, very difficult and challenging times.

No decision has been made as to the format of the inquiry and whether Northern Ireland will have its own, or will participate in a UK wide inquiry. It is imperative that we make sure we have our records in order whatever format the inquiry takes.

I am asking that you now look at the records you have that relates to how we operated during the pandemic, what decisions were made, by whom and how they were recorded and implemented etc. These records should now be made secure and saved into Content Manager (if they are not already) and clearly labelled for easy retrieval.

Can I remind you that the format or nature of a record can be varied but all must be captured; these include handwritten notes, e-mails sent between staff, colleagues and managers etc.

I know that a lot of teams set up WhatsApp groups to help keep in touch during the Pandemic. If you made decisions that impacted on the Department's delivery of service, how it operated, how it impacted customers etc you should take steps to have those discussions properly documented within Content Manager now.

No material of potential relevance should be omitted or destroyed. If you are not sure please seek guidance from your own line management or the Data Protection team.

Those branches with sponsorship responsibility should also consult with their ALBs to receive assurances that they will similarly protect relevant data that they hold.

If staff would like to discuss the content of this DPN please contact:

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