

From: DFE Covid-19 Inquiry [redacted] I&S
on behalf of [redacted] I&S
[redacted] I&S
Sent: 17/11/2023 10:44:58
To: All DFE Staff Grade 7 [alldfestaffgrade7@nigov.net]; All DFE Staff Grade 6 [alldfestaffgrade6@nigov.net]; All DFE Staff Grade 5 [alldfestaffgrade5@nigov.net]; All DFE Staff Grade 3 [alldfestaffgrade3@nigov.net]
CC: DfE Permanent Secretary Support [permanent.secretarysupport@economy-ni.gov.uk]
Subject: UK Covid-19 Inquiry - Note from HOCS on Record Retention
Attachments: 14.11.23 - UK Covid 19 Public Inquiry - Record Retention.tr5

FAO All Staff Grade 7 - Grade 3

HOCS has written to all Departments as a reminder to retain records which may be of potential relevance to the Covid-19 Public Inquiry. This follows on from earlier correspondence to all staff from both DfE's SIRO and IMU on the requirement for good record keeping and the retention of information that may be of potential relevance to the Inquiry.

Retention of potentially relevant information

In the correspondence, HOCS sets out a range of formats and devices on which information may be held and that needs to be retained. These include:

- Notepads & paper
- Text messages
- Material saved on desktops and in shared drives
- Electronic documents
- Social media (including WhatsApp)
- Material saved on cloud-based system (such as Teams)
- Emails
- Audio and visual recordings
- Material contained on Content Manager and Knowledge Network
- Personal diaries / calendars

This list is not exhaustive but demonstrates the breadth of the information that may inform the Inquiry's investigations.

Retention of mobile devices

I would also draw to your attention to the final paragraph of HOCS letter which references the retention of mobile phones - this is applicable to mobile devices including mobile phones and I-pads / tablets.

The [NICS Mobile Device Security Policy](#) states that *"Where a mobile device is no longer required by its original recipient, it must be returned to IT Assist for secure erasure, reloading of software, re-encryption and redeployment."*

However, officials who may have relevant information on mobile devices should not return their devices to IT Assist to be wiped but instead retain these and store them in a secure location for the duration of the Inquiry. If you have been reallocated a mobile phone that previously belonged to another member of staff within DfE that may have had involvement in the response to the pandemic, these phones should also be retained. If you are in any doubt as to whether information you hold may be of potential relevance, please retain the mobile device securely.

I would be grateful if you could ensure that all staff within your business area are aware of the requirement to retain information and mobile devices as set out within HOCS letter.

Thanks,

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NR

DfE Covid-19 Inquiry Manager
Department for the Economy

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