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FROM: JAYNE BRADY
HEAD OF THE CIVIL SERVICE (HOCs)

TO: ALL PERMANENT SECRETARIES

DATE: 28 OCTOBER 2022

SSUB 117/22 - UK COVID-19 PUBLIC INQUIRY – RECORD RETENTION

Dear colleagues

I previously wrote to Departments in September 2021 and July 2022 (SSUB 76/22) to seek assurance that your department will be ready to meet its obligations to provide relevant records, information and data as requested. This includes ensuring that no material of potential relevance to the inquiry is destroyed, as well as ensuring that any public bodies and or Arms Length Bodies for which your department is responsible for are adhering to the same principles.

Secretary of the UK Covid Inquiry has written to Cabinet Office, requesting that government departments be reminded of the importance of retention of material of potential relevance to the Inquiry. Legal representatives for the Local Government Association (LGA) have since raised concerns with the Inquiry that this instruction may not have reached all local authorities.

Following on from a request by the Secretary to the Inquiry, Cabinet Office Director General for Propriety and Ethics, Darren Tierney has written to all Permanent Secretaries to ensure that all departments are taking the necessary steps to inform their Arms-Length Bodies and Local Authorities of the need to retain all records which may be of relevance to the UK-Wide Covid-19 Public Inquiry.

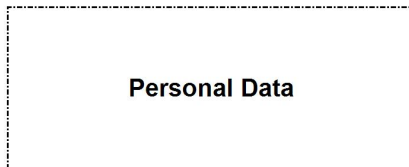
In order for the NI response to the pandemic to meet its obligations under the Inquiries Act and for the Devolved Government to be fully compliant with our responsibilities in respect of cooperation, transparency and accurate fact finding, it is important that

departments once again reinforce the need for all relevant records to be retained should they be required for disclosure to the Inquiry.

I have attached a copy of the letter from Cabinet Office at **Annex A** and now ask that you share this within your department and with all bodies for which your department has responsibility to ensure compliance with the requirements of responding to the Inquiry.

It would also be worthwhile to signpost all bodies to the UK Inquiry website <https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/> where the requirements of the Inquiry and regular updates are available.

Yours sincerely



JAYNE BRADY
Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service



Darren Tierney
Director General, Propriety & Ethics
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Permanent Secretary
Via email

20 October 2022

Dear Permanent Secretary,

UK INQUIRY INTO COVID-19 - RECORD RETENTION:

I wrote to you in June 2021 and again in February this year on the subject of the UK Inquiry into Covid-19 - and in particular to ask you to take steps to assure yourself that your Department will be ready to meet its obligations to provide relevant records, information and data as requested. As I set out, this includes ensuring that no material of potential relevance to the inquiry is destroyed - as well as ensuring that any public bodies for which your Department is responsible are adhering to the same principles. I know that in practice an enormous amount of preparatory work has already been done by a huge range of organisations - aimed at ensuring the Inquiry can operate successfully.

The Inquiry has now held its first preliminary hearing, at which the Local Government Association raised concerns about the extent to which the message about document retention has reached local authorities in particular. The Secretary to the Inquiry has therefore written to me - as attached - asking that I *"reiterate to government departments that they ensure the requirement to retain records is cascaded to all bodies within their ambit that exercise public functions, either directly by the department or via representative bodies where more appropriate."* In particular, he has asked that this *"... includes local authorities in all four nations of the UK."*

I am grateful for the continued support colleagues in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Devolved Governments have provided the Inquiry, particularly with engaging local authorities. I would like to ask that this message is further reinforced in the light of the Inquiry's request following the preliminary hearings.

Yours sincerely,

**Personal
Data**

Darren Tierney

Director General, Propriety & Ethics