

Fact Finding Interview Record

Date / Time: 08/11/2023, 3.00pm

Location: Stormont Castle

Staff member name: Deirdre Griffith

Grade: Gd5

Grade / role at time of mobile equipment handover: Gd5 Principal Private Secretary to First Minister (FM) from June/July 2020 to date. Private Secretary to FM January 2020 to June/July 2020.

Interviewing Officer: NR

Note Taker: N/A

1. Who from the ministerial team returned electronic devices to you?

I (or team members) received a number of devices from Ministers and SPADs across the period May 2020 to May 2022. These devices were used by Ministers Arlene Foster (AF) and Paul Givan (PG), Junior Ministers Gary Middleton (GM) and Gordon Lyons (GL) as well as SPADS Philip Weir (PW), Emma Little Pengelly (ELP), Kim Ashton (KA), Lee Reynolds (LR) and Richard Bullick (RB).

2. What devices were they?

AF returned an iPhone. She retained an iPad. iPhone reallocated within the team.
PG returned an iPhone and iPad.
GM and GL used the same equipment and an iPhone and iPad were returned.
Philip Weir returned an iPhone and iPad.
ELP shared devices with RB. iPhone and iPad returned. 2nd iPhone used earlier in the mandate reallocated within team.
KA and LR shared equipment. iPhone and iPad returned and iPhone reallocated within team.

3. What date were they handed to you?

AF iPhone. Sometime summer/autumn 2021 calendar year.
PG iPhone and iPad. Soon after resignation as FM in February 2022.
GM and GL iPhone and iPad. May 2022
ELP and RB iPhone and iPad returned. February 2022.
KA and LR iPhone and iPad. June 2021.

4. What did you do with the devices / if held in office, where were they stored?

Held in a secure cupboard, unless reallocated.

5. Do you have login details for the devices?

No.

6. Did you attempt to switch on / use devices after they were returned?

iPhones and iPads were switched on as part of the reallocation process.

7. Did you retain any documentary evidence of this process?

There is an email trail at February 2022 regarding equipment return and April 2022 where I provided assurance to TEO Perm Sec that all equipment due to be returned at that time had been returned. There is also an Email from one adviser (Feb 2022) confirming return of devices and status.

8. What procedures did you follow when undertaking this process?

Custom and practice.

9. Prior to the collapse of the NI Executive were you aware of any guidance about identifying and retaining relevant information in relation to the upcoming NI Covid Inquiry?

I can't remember at what point I became aware of any specific piece of guidance, however our general standard of record keeping was very high. Furthermore, given the joint nature of the FM / dFM offices with all decisions being made jointly drove the culture of retaining all relevant documentation on Knowledge Network or Content Manager.

10. Did you take any action to identify and/or retain relevant information on the mobile devices?

No. Devices were retained in secure cupboard if not repurposed.