

HEAD OF THE CIVIL SERVICE
THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE
Jayne Brady
Room FD.34
Stormont Castle
BELFAST
BT4 3TT



Telephone: I&S

Email: hocsoffice@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

FROM: JAYNE BRADY
HOCS

Our Ref: SSUB 287/23

TO: NI PERMANENT SECRETARIES

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TECHNICAL EXAMINATION OF MOBILE DEVICES USED BY FORMER MINISTERS AND SPADS

Background

I wrote to you on 8 December 2023 requesting that you arrange for the mobile devices that were recovered during the course of the Fact-Finding Investigation by Internal Audit to be collected by your Covid Inquiry Team so they could be initially interrogated to determine if information could be accessed. I would be grateful if you could confirm that the devices allocated to your former Ministers and SpAds have been collected and interrogated as far as is internally possible to determine their status and if any information is potentially held on them, please.

At our PSS meeting last week it was agreed that we should take a consistent approach to extracting potentially relevant information from the devices for onward disclosure to the Inquiry.

At the Module 2C Preliminary Hearing, Senior Counsel for the NI Bereaved Families highlighted the need for third party examination of the devices. In order to respond effectively to this request and to provide a consistent approach, Neil Gibson has agreed that DoF will provide a centralised approach for the technical examination of the devices through the NICS contract in place with BT.

This approach will help provide assurance to the Inquiry and the Bereaved Families that we take this matter seriously and that it is important to us that they have that assurance.

Action required

Paul Duffy's team in DoF will arrange for the devices to be collected from your department this week. To facilitate that, I would be grateful if you could provide a point of contact to Paul as soon as possible so that the devices can be collected.

It is important that we collectively communicate this development to the Inquiry, and I intend to do so on behalf of TEO devices. I should be grateful if you would take a consistent line in your discussions with the Inquiry Legal Team namely: we are taking the next steps in an ongoing process to establish if any relevant material is held on and can be recovered from Ministers and Special Advisers devices.

Personal Data

JAYNE BRADY
Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service