

Dame Chi Onwurah MP
Chair
Science, Innovation and Technology Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Our reference: 20260428/PA/LET0019
By email to: commonssitc@parliament.uk /
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28 April 2026

Dear Chair,

Following reports in the media and online over the weekend, I wanted to write to the Committee to provide reassurance around the governance and leadership arrangements at the ICO during the Information Commissioner's extended period of absence.

As you may now be aware, the Information Commissioner, John Edwards, voluntarily stepped back from his duties on 26 February. This is to enable an independent workplace investigation which relates to him. This investigation will produce a report with recommendations for the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) to decide next steps.

As you will appreciate, to protect all parties involved and maintain the integrity of the investigation, we did not consider it appropriate to reveal the nature of the Commissioner's absence, but staff and relevant stakeholders were informed of his absence. This changed following events over the weekend.

During this period, John Edwards has and will continue to remain as the Commissioner and is available should his input or oversight be needed to discharge our regulatory duties. Given the nature of John's position,

neither the ICO nor DSIT can require him not to undertake his role; this is reserved for Parliament and His Majesty. However, he has agreed to step back from all contact with ICO staff, with the exception of myself and his private office; will not enter ICO offices; and will not represent the ICO publicly during this period. DSIT have been kept fully aware of these arrangements from the outset.

However, I can assure you that the board, myself as chief executive and the executive team continue to lead the ICO, making decisions in accordance with the scheme of delegation, to ensure continuity in our leadership and regulatory work.

I recognise that the Committee might have questions about the above arrangements during this period and my office therefore stands ready to arrange a conversation if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Paul Arnold". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Paul Arnold MBE

Chief Executive Officer- Information Commissioner's Office