



**CABINET OFFICE**  
**LONDON SW1A 2AS**

Mr William Wragg  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

By email to:  
pacac@parliament.uk

Our reference: MC2020/04597

13 May 2020

**DATA HANDLING IN THE CABINET OFFICE**

Dear Mr Wragg,

Thank you for your letter of 17 April and your kind wishes for my new role, as well as your thoughts on the recent review of personal data handling in the Cabinet Office. I look forward to working with you on this and other areas of interest to the Committee.

I am enormously grateful to Adrian Joseph for his work on the review, which I believe takes a balanced approach in drawing out areas for improvement and existing good practice. I am determined that we do not lose momentum in addressing its findings. To this end, the report has already been considered by the Executive Committee and I have asked Nimisha Patel, the Cabinet Office's Chief Digital and Information Officer, to act as the Senior Responsible Owner for the programme to address the report's findings. This will be overseen by our Chief Operating Officer, Mike Parsons, as the Department's Executive Committee Sponsor, to ensure that the work is being led from the highest level of the department.

We have started work addressing the recommendations of the review and the Cabinet Office will soon review a draft programme plan and accompanying timetable. I would be pleased to share this with you once agreed. Given the acute nature of the honours breach, this plan will prioritise remediations relating directly to personal data, including improvements to our guidance, training and the consistent application of good practice. We are committed to implement the report's findings quickly and I plan to update you on this by the end of June, subject to the continuing impact from Covid-19.



I look forward to discussing this further with you when we meet.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Alex Chisholm'.

**Alex Chisholm**

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# PACAC (Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee)

House of Commons · London SW1A 0AA

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Alex Chisholm  
Permanent Secretary, Cabinet Office  
Via email

17<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Dear Mr Chisholm,

Congratulations on your recent appointment. I look forward to meeting you in person, and to you appearing before the Committee to give formal evidence in due course.

I have seen the recent report on data handling in the Cabinet Office and welcome its recommendations. It is disappointing that the leak of Honours data was assigned to human error where better Cabinet Office practices could have reduced the risk, and it is concerning as this could undermine public trust in wider Civil Service data handling. I was disappointed to note that the report found a lack of leadership at Executive Committee level, inconsistent practices, and a culture where some teams were not clear on their responsibilities for data handling. However, it is welcome to see that Cabinet Office has engaged with this review and I note some positive findings such as the pockets of best practice from which the Department could learn.

The Cabinet Office needs to handle more data as it takes on its new role in security clearance and I would expect it lead by example within the Civil Service. I would be very grateful if you could write to me to briefly outline your timetable for implementing the recommendations of the report, when you have had time to consider this in your new role.

The Committee will, of course, call you to appear before the Committee at some point in the future and it will use that opportunity to follow up on progress.

**William Wragg MP**  
**Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee**