Meetings transparency for Ministers, special advisers and permanent secretaries during the COVID-19 emergency

Current transparency publications focus on face-to-face ‘in-person’ meetings. It is anticipated that such in-person meetings will have significantly reduced, in line with Government requirements from 16th March 2020 onwards to reduce social interaction.

Departments should aim as far as possible for equivalence with previous quarterly meetings declarations (in accordance with cross-government guidance). Remote formal meetings using conferencing technology are assumed to have taken the place of in-person meetings from 16th March.

Whether a remote meeting is declared on a meetings return should be decided on a case-by-case basis. Audio calls should only be recorded where they take the place of a meeting (and in line with previous guidance). As such, unsolicited or informal phone calls would not normally be included.

Departments do not need to declare how a meeting took place, nor that a particular meeting took place remotely.

Departments should add the following to the bottom of their meetings returns:

*Meetings were conducted in line with Government requirements during the COVID-19 emergency. For larger meetings, a collective description may be applied.

The usual sections of the Ministerial or Special Advisers’ codes of conduct apply.