

## **DE/2026-055– Freedom of Information Request**

### **Request:**

I wish to request details of the use of of the messaging service WhatsApp by senior staff within your department.

I am particularly interested in the use of the 'disappearing messages' feature. More on this can be found here: <https://faq.whatsapp.com/673193694148537>

Please disclose the below information for each of the following staff (names redacted where appropriate if necessary):

- Permanent Secretary
- Deputy Secretaries

1. Does their department-owned mobile phone (i.e. their work phone) have WhatsApp downloaded onto it?
2. If so, have they enabled the 'disappearing messages' feature for any of their chats?

### **Department Response:**

I refer to your request under the above legislation for information:

*Under the Freedom of Information Act, I wish to request details of the use of the messaging service WhatsApp by senior staff within your department.*

*I am particularly interested in the use of the 'disappearing messages' feature. More on this can be found here: <https://faq.whatsapp.com/673193694148537>*

*Please disclose the below information for each of the following staff (names redacted where appropriate if necessary):*

- Permanent Secretary*
- Deputy Secretaries*

- 1.Does their department-owned mobile phone (i.e. their work phone) have WhatsAppdownloaded onto it?*
- 2.If so, have they enabled the 'disappearing messages' feature for any of their chats?*

I wish to advise you that following a search of our records the information you have requested is not held by the Department of Education (DE).

While senior staff work mobile phones have the facility to download WhatsApp for personal use, DE does not control what settings each individual applies on their devices.

However, senior staff with a work mobile phone must adhere to the NICS Mobile Device Policy, which stipulates

“At all times users must also comply with their own departmental policies and overall NICS policies.”

The NICS Policy on the Use of Non-Corporate Communications Channels (NCCCs) states: “Ministers, civil servants (including special advisers), and all individuals working in Non-Executive NICS roles (such as Non-Executive Board Members) must, when carrying out official business, only use approved corporate communication channels on official devices, and only use NCCCs when exceptional circumstances apply.”

DE’s Records Management Policy Statement also advises:

“Official information must not be held in non-corporate channels, such as Whatsapp, iMessage, SMS or any other informal messaging platforms, or personal email accounts. If this has occurred, due to business continuity measures, it must be transferred to Content Manager.”