



Department
for Work &
Pensions

From the Permanent Secretary

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Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

7 April 2020

Dear Secretary of State

As you know the Department is fully committed to tackling Covid-19 as our top priority.

Consistent with the Chancellor's statements in the Budget, the approach we have been taking is to ensure that any potential uncertainty about the availability of funding does not prevent the right and necessary actions being taken at pace. The Department's response to Covid-19 has mobilised significant additional activity at pace and as we complete the process to close the financial year we cannot be certain that new Covid-19 expenditure can be contained within the Departmental Expenditure Limits authorised by Parliament for 2019-20 through the Estimates process. Exceeding those controls would be a breach of Managing Public Money on regularity and propriety grounds.

To ensure that the Department's Expenditure Limits authorised by Parliament for 2019-20 do not prevent the Department effectively responding to Covid-19, this letter therefore serves as a formal request for a Direction from you that the Department should continue to act at pace and continue to approve expenditure as needed to respond to Covid-19 even if this means a breach of Parliamentary Financial Control Totals.

Let me assure you that nothing in this request in any way undermines our determination to support as fully as we can the work of the Government in providing excellent service to the public, processing claims and making payments, whilst also protecting our workforce at this time.

I am copying this letter to the Cabinet Secretary (CO), the Comptroller and Auditor General (NAO) and to the Treasury Officer of Accounts (TOA).

Yours Peter

Peter Schofield CB