

# Tory DWP minister's staff 'drank into the night' amid Covid-19 lockdown

By National Newsdesk 5 hrs ago



DWP minister Theresa Coffey's staff

**STAFF and official at Tory minister Theresa Coffey's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) allegedly drank alcohol late into the night in her private office while hospitality and office parties were banned under Covid rules, according to a new report.**

According to the Sunday Mirror, staff and officials would “frequently” drink after work and order takeaway food in her Whitehall office.

"Meetings" were said to have "evolved" into the drinking sessions, rather than them being "organised".

The paper reported that while most DWP staff worked from home amid the coronavirus pandemic, a core team of private office staff remained in place, and that on one occasion Coffey handed out Christmas presents to her team.

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A DWP insider was quoted as saying there was a “constant flow of booze” in the office, with the “gatherings” an “open secret”.

A DWP spokesperson said: "Throughout the pandemic, DWP officials have followed government guidance while continuing to deliver vital services for millions of people.

“Staff worked from home where possible but a core team working directly to the Secretary of State regularly worked from the office, in accordance with the COVID-19 rules as they evolved.

“The team regularly worked late into the evening and on a number of occasions they ate takeaway food and drank some alcohol. No karaoke took place.

"On one occasion close to Christmas, the Secretary of State gave gifts to her core team, as she does every year."

Coffey has [faced criticism before for doing karaoke](#) to “I’ve Had The Time Of My Life” at Tory party conference as Universal Credit was slashed by her party.

The DWP report comes after it was revealed that Treasury staff who worked on the Autumn Spending Review last year had office drinks while England was in lockdown.

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The Times reported that around two dozen civil servants were present for the drinks on November 25, 2020.



A Treasury spokesperson said: "A number of [Treasury] staff came into the office to work on the Spending Review 2020. We have been made aware that a small number of staff had impromptu drinks around their desks after the event.

"The Treasury did not organise an in-person departmental party last Christmas."

At the time non-essential shops, leisure and entertainment venues were closed as well as pubs, bars and restaurants, and people were urged to stay at home except for limited reasons including work if it could not be done from home.

The Times said Chancellor Rishi Sunak was not at the event and that it is understood he was not aware of it at the time.

