

# Whitehall Monitor #18

## Supplementary Analysis of 2012 Civil Service People Survey

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James Page

***“Despite all the day-to-day pressures – tough control of pay, increased pension contributions, reductions in staff of 15% since 2010, while delivering the Government's ambitious reform agenda, and the claims of a war in Whitehall – engagement in the Civil Service has held up well.”***

– Sir Bob Kerslake, Head of the Civil Service

The Civil Service People Survey (CSPS) is the largest employee attitude survey in the UK, covering 97 government organisations and inviting responses from nearly half-a-million civil servants. First run in 2009, the survey provides insights into employee engagement and staff attitudes in a comparable form. Whitehall Monitor #16 (November 2012) analysed the benchmark results for the civil service as a whole. This update provides supplementary analysis of (i) results for the main Whitehall departments and (ii) responses from senior civil servants.<sup>1</sup> This additional data was published by the Cabinet Office on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2013.<sup>2</sup>

### Summary

- Most (10 out of 17) of the main Whitehall departments saw an improvement in their overall engagement score from 2011, which is in line with the improvement in the benchmark engagement score for the Civil Service as a whole.
- However, there is significant variation: six departments saw a fall in their engagement scores while one remained unchanged.
- The biggest increases in engagement were in DWP (+4 percentage points) followed by DCLG and BIS (each +3 percentage points).
- Three of the departments which have cut staff furthest and fastest - DCLG, BIS and DfT - all saw increases in engagement.
- The biggest drop in engagement was in DCMS (-9 percentage points). This may reflect the timing of the survey, which was completed shortly after the Olympic and Paralympic Games and at a time when non-senior civil servants had recently been put at risk of compulsory redundancy.<sup>3</sup>
- This is the first time separate results have been published for senior civil servants, probably in response to the FDA union which claimed that senior civil servants were demoralised with two-thirds considering leaving the Civil Service.<sup>4</sup>
  - Contrary to the FDA results, the data shows that senior civil servants are more engaged than in 2009 and are much more engaged than the Civil Service average.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: data for the main Whitehall departments is for these 17 organisations only, while the senior civil service (SCS) responses apply to all 97 departments and agencies which took part in the survey

<sup>2</sup> Full data and the Cabinet Office's summary of findings can be found here:

<http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/about/improving/employee-engagement-in-the-civil-service/people-survey-2012>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.civilserviceworld.com/dcms-staff-at-risk-of-redundancy/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2013/jan/28/top-civil-servants-ready-quit>

- However, satisfaction with pay and benefits among senior civil servants has declined markedly since 2009.

James Page, Programme Director at IfG, said:

“These are positive results which demonstrate that, overall, Whitehall departments have maintained and even improved staff engagement through an historic set of changes. However, Whitehall is not a single entity and there are clear differences. Some departments have seen declining engagement scores, while others have shown it is possible to reverse substantial falls in previous years. There is also still a great deal more to do to improve staff views of how well change is led and managed in Whitehall, which is the single biggest driver of the engagement scores.”

## Analysis

### Staff engagement in Whitehall departments

The civil service Engagement Index provides an insight into how engaged civil servants feel. The index is based on a series of questions and is calculated from how positively or negatively staff respond (see Table 1). For further details on how it is calculated see Annex 3.

Table 1: Engagement Index - what the scores mean

Average response to Engagement questions is:	Engagement score is:
Strongly agree	100%
Agree	75%
Neither agree nor disagree	50%
Disagree	25%
Strongly disagree	0%

As we reported in Whitehall Monitor #16, the median civil service engagement index score has increased by 2 percentage points in the last year to 58%.<sup>5</sup> This puts it back on the same level as the first Civil Service People Survey in 2009.

Table 2: Engagement Index scores for 2009 - 2012

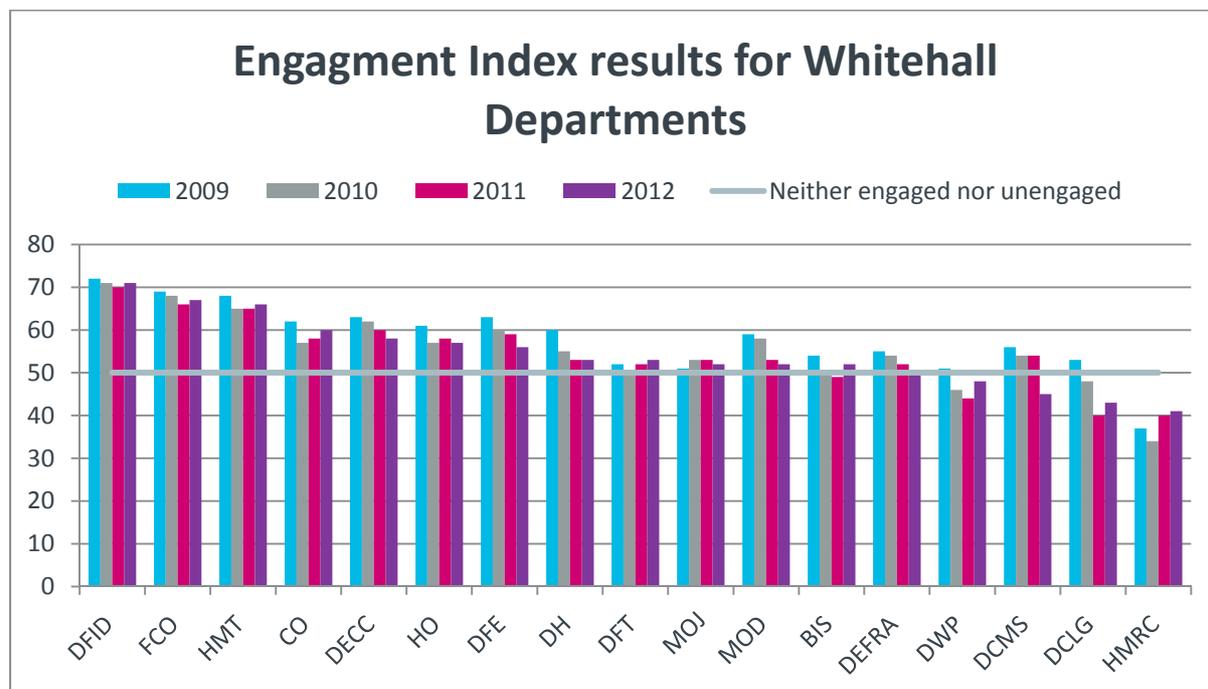
Engagement Index	CSPS 2009	CSPS 2010	CSPS 2011	CSPS 2012	Change in last year
Employee Engagement Index	58%	56%	56%	58%	↑ 2%

<sup>5</sup> The benchmark scores are not weighted by organisational size, as this would mean that the results of very large organisations like DWP, MoD & HMRC and the larger agencies would dominate. Instead this measure allows you to compare the performance of different organisations of varying size. The benchmark score is the median of participating organisations – so out of the 97 organisations taking part in 2012, the benchmark score is that of the organisation ranked 49<sup>th</sup>

A more detailed breakdown of this data was published by the Cabinet Office on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2013, which gave the full set of results for each of the 97 departments and agencies across the Civil Service which completed the survey. This analysis looks at the results for the 17 main Whitehall departments.

The engagement scores are shown by department in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Staff engagement index 2010 – 2012 for Whitehall departments<sup>6</sup>



The departments with the highest engagement scores are two international facing ones: DfID and FCO. This is followed by the two central departments: HMT and CO.

At the other end of the scale, DCLG has overtaken HMRC, though both improved on their 2011 scores.

In line with the overall increase in engagement across the Civil Service, 10 out of 17 Whitehall departments saw their engagement scores increase from 2011. The largest increases were:

- DWP up 4 percentage points
- DCLG and BIS – each up 3 percentage points.

We reported in Whitehall #17 that DCLG, BIS and DfT were among the departments to have cut staff numbers furthest and fastest. All three of these departments saw increases in their engagement scores. Defra had also cut staff numbers quickly and deeply but continued to see a fall in its engagement score. These four departments all remain among the less engaged in Whitehall.

Six departments saw their engagement scores fall. The largest decrease was in DCMS, which recorded the biggest fall in a single year (down 9 percentage points) since the survey began in 2009. The survey was completed shortly after the completion of the Olympic and

<sup>6</sup> NB: MoJ here refers to the “corporate results” for the department

Paralympic Games and at a time when non-senior civil servants had recently been put at risk of compulsory redundancy.<sup>7</sup> This is somewhat similar to DCLG which saw a slightly smaller drop in engagement in 2011 when it was in the midst of restructuring and downsizing.

Four departments have seen year-on-year falls in their engagement scores since 2009:

- DECC, which saw its permanent secretary, Moira Wallace, resign in July and the post remained vacant at the time the survey was completed
- DfE, which has recently published a ‘zero-based’ review outlining major reforms and further cuts to the core department<sup>8</sup>
- MoD
- Defra.

## Themes

The survey also asks more detailed questions related to engagement. These results are collated under ‘themes’. The scores given are based on the number of people responding positively<sup>9</sup> to the questions in that theme.

As we reported in Whitehall Monitor #16, the theme scores indicate that the Civil Service has seen improvement in its results in every theme area in 2012 except ‘pay and benefits’ (see Table 3).

Table 3: Theme scores 2009 - 2012 & what the scores mean

Percentage of positive responses to the theme	Themes	CSPS 2009	CSPS 2010	CSPS 2011	CSPS 2012	Change in last year
100%	My work	75%	71%	71%	73%	↑ 2%
75%	Organisational objectives and purpose	81%	81%	81%	82%	↔ 1%
50%	My manager	64%	64%	64%	66%	↑ 2%
25%	My team	76%	77%	77%	78%	↔ 1%
0%	Learning and development	50%	43%	43%	44%	↔ 1%
	Inclusion and fair treatment	74%	73%	73%	75%	↑ 2%
	Resources and workload	72%	73%	73%	74%	↔ 1%
	Pay and benefits	37%	37%	31%	30%	↓ -1%
	Leadership and managing change	38%	37%	38%	41%	↑ 3%

There are more detailed tables with a full breakdown for each theme by department in Annexes 1 and 2.

The Cabinet Office’s analysis shows that the top three themes which drive positive engagement scores in departments were: leadership and managing change, my work and my manager. DfID had the most positive response of any department on all three measures, with FCO second or third in each case. At the other end, MoD, HMRC, DCMS and DWP consistently had four of the five lowest scores across all three of these areas.

Pay and benefits was the next strongest driver of engagement. Strikingly, HMT had the lowest score of any department at just 18% (which reflects the analysis in the White review of HMT<sup>10</sup>) while DfE had the highest score at just 40%.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.civilserviceworld.com/dcms-staff-at-risk-of-redundancy/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/t/dfe%20review%20report-external.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> For example, those that respond: ‘Agree’ or ‘Strongly Agree’

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/review\\_fincrisis\\_response\\_290312.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/review_fincrisis_response_290312.pdf)

Looking by department, DWP had the most consistent improvement, with increases of at least 3 percentage points across all themes and 7 percentage points on leading and managing change and learning and development. DCLG also had very positive scores, more than reversing big decreases in 2011. In particular, DCLG recorded the only double digit increases: 14 percentage points on learning and development and 10 percentage points on organisational objectives and purpose.

The biggest declines came in DCMS on inclusion and fair treatment (-14 percentage points) and leadership and managing change (-11 percentage points). Again, this is likely to reflect the context set out above.

### Senior civil servants

The difference in responses from senior civil servants (SCS) and all civil servants is set out by theme below. The SCS are markedly more engaged than their colleagues, and the difference has increased marginally since 2009. Indeed, the SCS are more engaged than they were in 2009 – in contrast to the FDA Union claims that senior staff are demoralised with two-thirds considering leaving the Civil Service.<sup>11</sup>

The SCS are also more positive than other civil servants across all 9 themes. The biggest differences by theme were: leadership and managing change (25 percentage points); learning and development (22 percentage points) and my work (20 percentage points). The single biggest gap on any question was on perceptions of dealing effectively with poor performance: 71% of the SCS answered positively compared with 36% for all civil servants (see Figure 2).

Responses were closest between the SCS and all civil servants on resources and workload and pay and benefits. The gap has narrowed on both of these since 2009. As Figure 3 shows below, responses on resources and workload are unchanged among the SCS but have improved slightly across the Civil Service. Satisfaction with pay and benefits, on the other hand, has declined particularly sharply among the SCS – falling from 47% in 2009 to 32% in 2012.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2013/jan/28/top-civil-servants-ready-quit>

Figure 2 – Difference in theme scores between SCS and whole Civil Service, 2009-2012

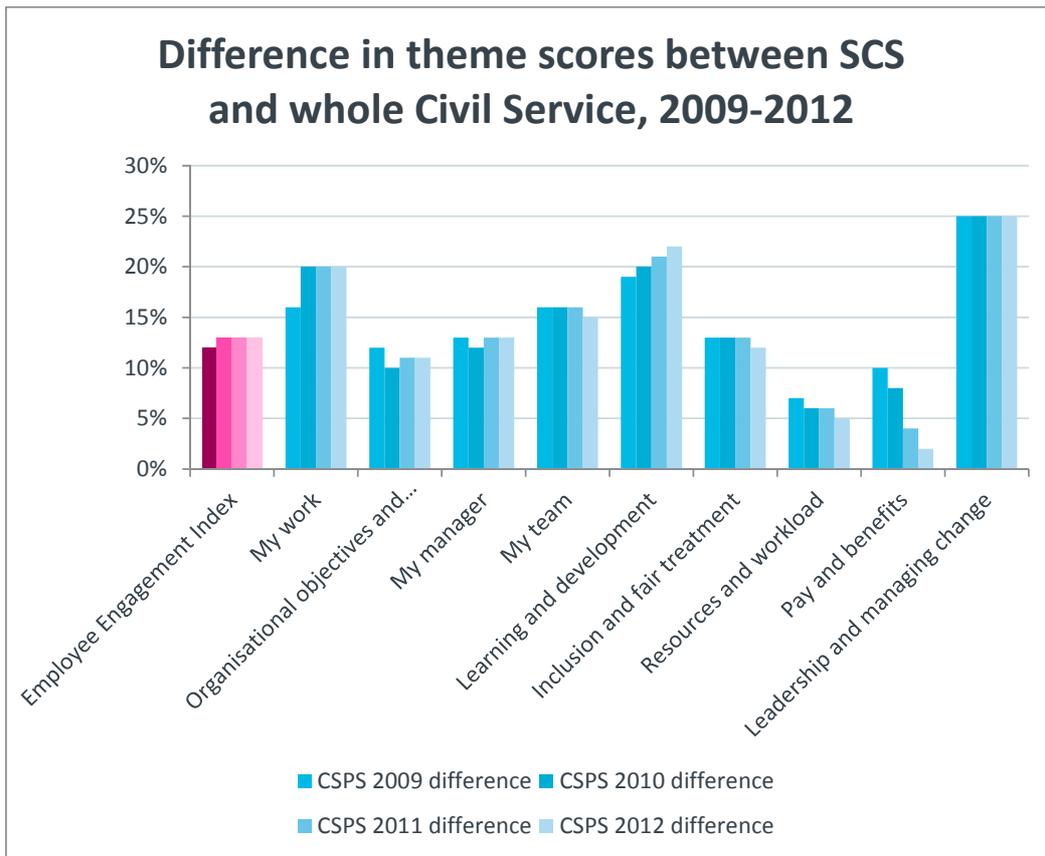
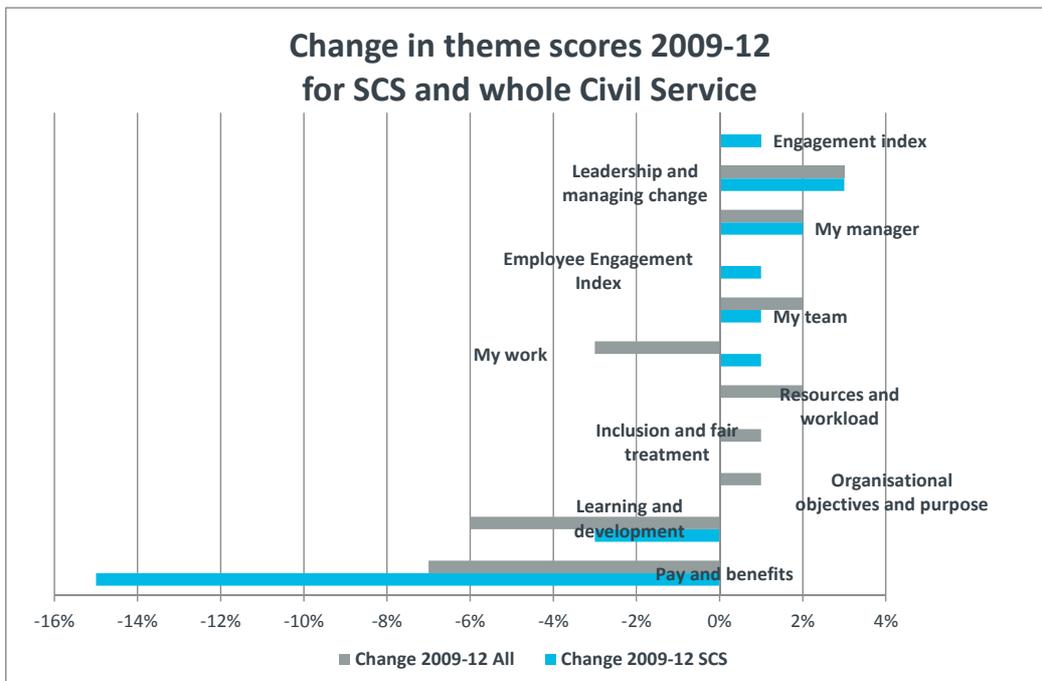


Figure 3 – Change in theme scores for SCS and all civil servants 2010 to 2012



## Next steps

The Civil Service People Survey provides high-quality data for understanding what civil servants think and feel and how this varies across different departments and over time. The Institute highlighted the importance of focusing on staff engagement during this period of rapid change in the Civil Service in our report [Transforming Whitehall](#). With Sir Bob Kerslake confirming that the staff survey is an important measure of departmental performance, it will be interesting to see whether these departmental results are reflected within permanent secretary appraisals and whether the improved scores for taking action in response to the survey results genuinely reflects greater use of the data inside Whitehall departments.

**Annex 1 – Civil Service People Survey – question level benchmarks 2009 - 2012<sup>12</sup>**

Organisation	Employee Engagement Index	Leadership and managing change	My work	My line manager	Pay and benefits	Learning and development	Resources and workload	Organisational objectives and purpose	My team	Inclusion and fair treatment
Civil Service Benchmark	58	41	73	66	30	44	74	82	78	75
DfID	71	56	80	71	36	59	75	92	80	79
FCO	67	50	78	71	31	57	78	82	81	78
HMT	66	55	78	67	18	49	73	82	79	76
CO	60	38	79	67	28	42	72	70	83	77
DECC	58	42	78	65	28	55	69	86	81	76
MOJ	58	43	73	68	38	47	75	77	80	77
HO	57	36	74	66	37	50	71	82	78	75
DfE	56	36	73	69	40	42	72	80	83	77
DH	53	32	73	67	34	39	72	66	78	76
DfT	53	41	76	67	35	49	72	78	81	77
MoD	52	22	70	59	28	44	66	76	71	70
BIS	52	38	74	66	28	47	69	78	79	75
Defra	50	31	74	65	28	36	69	73	79	75
DWP	48	29	62	64	24	39	69	78	76	70
DCMS	45	28	70	63	26	33	68	65	72	60
DCLG	43	32	69	67	32	38	67	67	76	70
HMRC	41	24	57	62	24	41	68	74	78	69

<sup>12</sup> NB: MoJ here refers to “ministerial department”, which explains why numbers are different on employee engagement index compared with Figure 1

**Annex 2 – Change in Engagement Index and Themes by Department from 2011 to 2012<sup>13</sup>**

Organisation	Employee Engagement Index	Leadership and managing change	My work	My line manager	Pay and benefits	Learning and development	Resources and workload	Organisational objectives and	My team	Inclusion and fair treatment
DfID	1	3	0	1	-2	2	0	0	-2	0
FCO	1	2	1	1	0	0	-1	0	0	1
HMT	1	4	0	3	0	5	2	0	0	3
CO	2	0	3	2	-1	4	3	0	2	3
DECC	-2	0	1	-1	-3	1	-2	-2	1	-1
MOJ	3	4	2	3	-1	4	3	2	1	3
HO	-1	-4	-2	-1	-2	0	0	0	-1	-2
DfE	-3	-6	-2	-1	-1	-3	-2	-3	-1	-3
DH	0	-2	0	-1	-6	-3	-1	-2	0	0
DfT	1	-2	1	0	3	6	2	2	0	-1
MoD	-1	0	0	-1	-4	-1	-4	0	-1	-1
BIS	3	5	0	1	1	4	1	4	-1	1
Defra	-2	-2	0	1	-3	1	-4	-1	-1	0
DWP	4	7	5	4	3	7	3	6	4	5
DCMS	-9	-11	-4	-3	-2	3	-2	-6	-6	-14
DCLG	3	6	4	4	-3	14	2	10	0	3
HMRC	1	1	3	1	0	5	0	2	1	2

<sup>13</sup> NB: MoJ here refers to “ministerial department”, which explains why numbers are different on employee engagement index compared with Figure 1

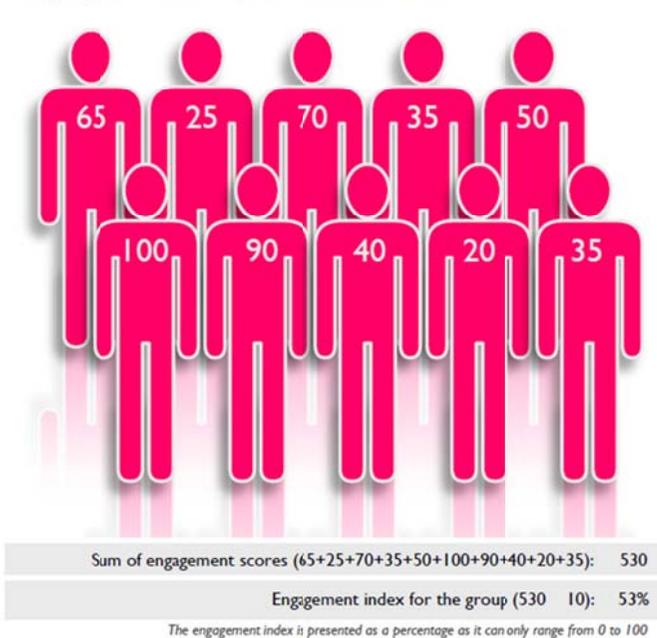
### Annex 3 – Engagement Index Calculation<sup>14</sup>

The engagement index is calculated as an equal-weighted average of responses to our five engagement questions

To calculate the index for each respondent an individual engagement score is calculated (as with all survey results this cannot be linked back to named individuals)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Score
Weight:	100	75	50	25	0	
I am proud when I tell others I am part of [my organisation]	✓					100
I would recommend [my organisation] as a great place to work		✓				75
I feel a strong personal attachment to [my organisation]		✓				75
[My organisation] inspires me to do the best in my job			✓			50
[My organisation] motivates me to help it achieve its objectives				✓		25
						Total: 325
						Respondent engagement score (total ÷ 5): 65

To calculate the Engagement Index for an organisation, team, or any other group of respondents, the average of the engagement scores of the group of selected respondents is calculated



<sup>14</sup> Source: Civil Service People Survey 2011 Summary of findings, Feb 2012 [http://resources.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/csps2011\\_externalsummary\\_final\\_20120201.pdf](http://resources.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/csps2011_externalsummary_final_20120201.pdf)

## Annex 4 – Departmental Acronyms

Acronym	Department Name
DFID	Department for International Development
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
HMT	Her Majesty's Treasury
DECC	Department for Energy and Climate Change
DFE	Department for Education
CO	Cabinet Office
HO	Home Office
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
MOD	Ministry of Defence
DH	Department of Health
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DFT	Department for Transport
BIS	Business, Innovation and Skills
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs