

Ministers reflect

Kitty Ussher

June 2016



Kitty Ussher – biographical details

Electoral History

2005-2010: Member of Parliament for Burnley

Parliamentary Career

June 2009: Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury

2008-2009: Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

2007-2008: Economic Secretary to the Treasury

Kitty Ussher was interviewed by Catherine Haddon and Ines Stelk on 16th June 2016 for the Institute for Government's Ministers Reflect Project.

Catherine Haddon (CH): Let's go back to when you first started as a minister, and reflect then on what sort of experience you had previously that helped you with it, but if you could talk us through first what was the experience of coming into government in the first instance? So you came first into the Treasury?

Kitty Ussher (KU): Yes. I suppose a lot of it is tied up with the experience of being appointed, which was a random phone call that I wasn't expecting and some amusing, slight confusion as to what my ministerial role was. There are plenty of anecdotes, I don't know if they're interesting! But there was some slight confusion as to what my actual job was, in that Gordon Brown rang me up – I was actually asleep, so I was a bit thrown! So I wasn't completely focused and he said something like – this is June 2007, so Gordon Brown had just become Prime Minister and he was leaving the Treasury – and I'm pretty sure what he said was, 'I'd like you to do the Cities job.' So I presumed – David Miliband had been doing it at the time, that was all in that team – but some kind of local government regeneration, as in you know, a northern cities-type job. He actually said 'City job' i.e. Economic Secretary to the Treasury, but it was a slight confusion! He clearly had a long list of calls to get through, so it was 'You'll have a wonderful time, you can go in straight away, it will be great working with Alistair' [Darling, then Chancellor of the Exchequer]. Alistair, Alistair... hang on! Then he said – this is all anecdote, but I think enough time has passed to put it on the record – he said some immortal words: 'I'm sorry there's not much policy in it, but it's a really important group of stakeholders.' So this was just before the financial crisis: within six months we were doing emergency legislation and suspending competition law and doing all sorts of things that were quite policy intensive. So that was quite interesting with hindsight, that nobody knew. Then it enters the slightly farcical thing, where the Prime Minister has told you 'You can immediately go into the office' and then some Private Secretary you've never met tells you not to go into the office, because they're not ready.

So the initial experience – I was obviously really excited and a little bit overwhelmed, I suppose, because although it's nothing you can't handle, but it is true that you are immediately plugged into a very well-resourced machine that has a very clear understanding of what its minister should do regardless of who that person actually is, you know, it begins with the list of appointments the very next day. It's one of those occasions in life where you have a very abrupt change to everything all at the same time. So it's not like a normal job, where you have an interview process and then more interviews with ten people and, sort of, sucking and seeing. Instead you're in there tomorrow and you're in Parliament and there's a list of appointments that have already been agreed to by your predecessor, many of whom might be with people who are rather irritated that they haven't got your predecessor, but are meeting with somebody else.

CH: So what previous experience did you have then and how far did that give you an idea of what the role of a minister was?

KU: I was quite lucky in that I had quite extensive experience having been a special adviser, I was Patricia Hewitt's policy special adviser when she was Secretary of State in what was then DTI [Department for Trade & Industry] and I was there from 2001 to 2004. So I was very comfortable with the machinery of government, and in fact I'd had experience of both the negotiations and tricky aspects and pace of taking decisions at the absolute highest level, although previously I was watching the minister doing it, or acting on behalf of the principal person. In fact, I probably saw more of relevance to the department, potentially, as a special adviser than as a junior minister in the team. But it was a completely different subject at a very different time. So yeah, I felt that I was back in, obviously in a different role, but I was back in a world that I fundamentally knew. There were some tensions and

4 Ministers reflect

pressures of being there that I was already familiar with and aware of. But what was different was, and this I think took some time for me to learn – others might have done it differently – but what was different was having to learn what my place in the team was. Because when you're a special adviser to a minister, it's very clear, they have interviewed you and appointed you, and you are there completely to defend their interests in the best way you can. But when you're part of a team of junior ministers, that has a secretary of state with their own special advisers, who might have appointed you for a multitude of different reasons, some of which they are in control of, and some of which they weren't and then the policy environment changes dramatically – you need to have a lot of self-awareness, I think, to work out what your role in that is and how you can best contribute. Particularly in my case, as we had a very fast moving, extremely serious situation unfolding and I was the least experienced minister, but technically responsible in a junior capacity for the subject matter under control. So that took a bit of working through. In summary I was prepared I think for quite a lot, and that there was a lot to learn as well.

Oh, and also I was lucky that I was technically prepared in that I had two degrees in economics and written about financial crises in other countries and been a macro forecaster and all that kind of stuff, so I felt technically competent, which was a huge advantage.

CH: We'll come back to the crash and your experience there, working with the team and so forth, but just continuing to focus on the early experience. You mentioned well-resourced machinery, how did you find the support coming in from private office, from the rest of the Treasury for you as a minister?

KU: I think I had a very good team and I don't know whether it's a Treasury thing, but I have huge respect for the civil servants in the Treasury. I think we built a good team. There was a transitional issue in some of my private office also moved roles in the reshuffle so the first few weeks was like 'Here's my team' but, 'Oh, actually hello, but I'm going to go!' But the Treasury is such that they were able to fix that and actually it meant that I was able to appoint my own Private Secretary who I got on really well with. So that was OK. But obviously, as I said, you are slotting into someone else's diary. I was very aware of that – I guess having been a backbench MP I had already made a choice about the extent to which I was going to control my own diary. I think I had been to training courses and seen other situations of politicians not being on top of their diaries, so I made it a priority to try and make it mine quite soon. And all the normal stresses and strains around how often you get your boxes, and the volume, I was very comfortable with all of that.

CH: So that being about establishing your priorities and then obviously there's only really a couple of months before the crash starts to hit, but in those early weeks and couple of months, what did you see as your new priorities and your brief, basically?

KU: I saw my brief as demonstrating that just because Gordon Brown's right hand man [Ed Balls] was no longer City Minister that did not mean that those relationships weren't really important. So I had a very clear stakeholder management role to do. Which I think was done effectively and I remember at the end of that year there was some little thing in the FT [Financial Times] round-up – so new year 2008, end of 2007 – where there was a review of the year, obviously the FT had come at this from a different view from the majority of the population in terms of relationship with the banking sector, but it had something about, 'We were worried that the relationship would weaken with Ed Balls moving, but that proved not to be the case.' That was just one little line and I felt that it had been my job to get that right. So at the start - before the crisis took hold - it was less policy, more relationship. Beyond that it was the business as usual stuff, it was picking up the initiatives that had been started by my predecessor – there were a few bits of legislation that we wanted to get ready to go, which we did. A few things I pushed a bit more than others, such as work on credit unions and cooperative societies, but I think to answer your question the early priority was demonstrating the relationships and also just getting on top of the business as usual.

CH: And what would you describe as the main duties of being a minister? You've mentioned a few of them, but there's also obviously being in the house as well.

KU: Yeah, which is all good fun. I very much liked Parliament. We can come on to this at the end but, when I reflect on the whole experience, particularly that first job in the Treasury, one of my main frustrations was that I prepared three bills that I never got to take through Parliament – that I really wanted to do, because it's great fun. So obviously there's the Parliament side to it. The finance bill – the finance bill is tough, because you're dealing with a lot of micro tax issues and the volume is enormous. So what was the question, what was your job? Well, you obviously have to provide policy direction, but do it in an inclusive way. You have to guard against impetuosity, I think. And work out – you've got positive responsibility, but you're not on your own. So you build the space for change. Work out what your role on the team is, to be a good team player in that sense. Obviously take responsibility for Parliament and there's a huge amount of responsibility, benign leadership responsibility, with your parliamentary colleagues and that's incredibly important. I mean, it plays out more in a crisis, it is more important in a crisis, but your colleagues have to feel they have access to you and that you care about them. That really matters for democracy and it also helps you in political management as well, because they are very important stakeholders, obviously.

So, an example in a crisis was one of the building societies got in trouble, I presume it was Bradford and Bingley, and so one of the most immediate priorities from the Treasury ministerial team was making sure that all the MPs that felt they had a constituency interest had somewhere to go and were being briefed. Because they were getting huge grass-roots pressure and so they had to know for their own sense of effectiveness that they could say, 'Yes, I'm talking to the minister about it and I'll raise your concerns' at the same time. You know if they start feeling violated, left out, then that's going to cause problems for the handling of the thing as well. So, there's a really important communication chain and responsibility there and also they should be your allies really. They're a channel to communicate with grass-roots stakeholders too. So that's all really important. Then obviously there's a joint role on policy development with the department, but they can't do the party-political handling in order to achieve change that needs to happen. Every party is different, but there are some stakeholders in the Labour party, who are sitting in the Labour movement as well as being valid stakeholders in their own right. So you can help with that. So the Co-op movement, trade unions, that kind of thing. And you have a right to initiate your own priorities. It's quite hard to do in a short space of time, but you can.

CH: In those early stages what was it like, the Treasury team working with Alistair Darling?

KU: It was in transition because Gordon had just left, so it was having to readjust in terms of how decisions were made. I'm not sure I felt it at the time, but I think on reflection what it was doing was actually reverting back to the more traditional Whitehall approach from the particular way that Gordon was comfortable working, so you had to transition from a very strong special adviser team to a more normalised special adviser team. And as part of that the role for junior ministers in the kind of pre-budget, pre-autumn statement process of decision making was quite weak when I went in and became stronger over the time I was there. But it was not an unhappy place.

CH: Did you see much of the relationship between Alistair Darling and the Permanent Secretary, Nick Macpherson, and how that went?

KU: There were many occasions when we were all in the same meeting. Alistair is very good at being very professional in a professional environment, so I just simply don't know about any emotional side of that relationship. But they are both competent and both able to work it out.

6 Ministers reflect

Ines Stelk (IS): So we've already touched on this a little bit in terms of controlling your diary and your briefing and everything. But thinking about the day-to-day reality of being a minister, how was most of your day spent?

KU: It was busy! Yeah. I mean, I remember having weekly sessions with my private office to work out how to create the time to do the more strategic work. It's possible, completely possible – because everyone wants a slice of you – it is quite possible to spend your whole time responding to other people's slices. And that includes the civil servants and your private office is slightly torn. Because they're there to make the machinery work – let's take an example, if they've got a noisy, but fundamentally low-priority part of the department desperate to have ministerial sign-off on something that's voluminous and not as important to the government as a whole load of other stuff, that puts them in a very difficult position, because their job is to get that thing signed-off, even if you're thinking, 'Why am I spending four hours focused on this, when there's something over there that's clearly crucial?' And so that needs to be managed. But I really don't want to paint a picture that it was all unbearably awful. The volume was high, I think, is the best way of describing it, so it required very effective time management. That is the same with any senior position, not to mention difficult front-line jobs such as teachers and nurses, so there's nothing special about that, it just requires a strategic brain.

IS: And how did you keep up with the competing demands of Parliament?

KU: I found that OK. It's funny, at one point I got some resource – I don't know if it was from the Institute for Government, but it would have been something similar – some kind of HR resource for ministers, and I was offered, not counselling, but some kind of bespoke support. The thing I asked for help on was managing the demands of my constituency office when I was in London. That's not to downplay the Parliament and Whitehall stuff, it's just I felt in control there, whereas if two of my members of staff in my constituency office fell out, or one of them had a tricky situation with an angry constituent or, you know, there was some kind of issue that needed resolving 250 miles away, or even a diary battle between my private office and the constituency office, I felt that only I could resolve that. Now that's obviously completely my own fault, because I should have had somebody very close to me who could have resolved all of that, but I didn't for a number of different reasons not least because when I had been a backbencher there was enough time to be on top of it. So when I was offered help, I took advice on the line management issues to get that working more smoothly. The help was invaluable actually and as a result it released more energy for my ministerial work. What we did in the end was to get the constituency team, one by one, to come and spend time in London and I got the private office team, one by one, to just shadow me round the constituency, so that they began to know each other really, really well and so basically if I said to my private office in London 'I've got a problem in Burnley Thursday night' they could help to resolve that and vice-versa as well and it stopped them competing with each other so much. In fact they took to it so well that my Treasury private secretary once borrowed a screwdriver and fixed a door in the constituency office, much to everyone's delight! So that's the thing I think I initially found the hardest.

IS: That brings us on to the next question which is if you could talk us through an occasion where an unexpected event or crisis came up, hit the department, and how you dealt with that?

KU: Hit the department?

CH: I guess the obvious one is the crash.

KU: It was, you know, it was so big that it wasn't my responsibility and put me in a very interesting position where Alistair Darling said to me – and I think it was the right thing to say – 'This is obviously a big thing and I'm handling it but there are some things that only a minister can do and I don't know what's going to happen, but there may be an occasion in the future where there's something only a

minister can do and I can't do it so you need to be ready to do it, like that, straight away, without anyone worrying about your capability of doing it.' So they took the view that I should be copied in and know everything.

CH: Was that very clear, very early on then?

KU: Yes, it felt like his decision, I don't know whether it was. That was very empowering, it meant that, and this is a very personal view as a junior minister in a crisis, it was a very good way of handling it because there were no blockages in the system to me knowing all the market sensitive information coming in and so on. What that meant in practical terms was that something would happen in Secretary of State/Chief Executive bank-solvency-crisis-land which meant there would be a meeting called at twenty minutes notice and I should be there. And so in terms of diary and in terms of the ability to plan your day, I felt totally out of control in that, but at the same time it was obviously right and I had no grudge if at half past six pm when I was on my way home suddenly I had to come back in. That just had to happen. It just complicated my personal situation because I had a toddler and a newborn— so a lot of money got spent on nannies, who had to be very flexible.

CH: Yeah definitely. It's another of the difficulties of the role is obviously managing personal life...

KU: Yeah and for me it was quite an extreme situation. I had everything that was great in my life all happening all at the same time, in a very time-intensive way. So that was a particular management issue and meant that I had to become incredibly focused on time management – it was crazy actually. I had to have every quarter of an hour accounted for. When I had a new born baby with its own routine that only mothers can deal with, it made it... I've never been as stretched as I was then, but it was all for good reason. It was very hard, but that's not a typical ministerial experience. I used to, actually, when the boxes used to arrive at the weekend in the constituency, I used to have this sort of joke image in my mind of the kind of [person] that the system was designed for. That imaginary person was a kind of stiff upper lip middle aged gentleman who would have Sunday lunch with his family and then his wife would take the children off to something or whatever and the minister would sit at their large oak panelled desk and their ministerial box... you know, I was doing mine at 1am. There was no desk or wife! [laughter] So but that was par for the course, but that was the image in my mind of what this system was supposed to be for. It would not be designed like that if you were starting again.

CH: What was your perspective on how well the department were adapting themselves to managing through that period?

KU: I think they were fine, but I think the timing was awful. It was really awful. There were a few issues, like at one point, they said 'Well we're going to have to appoint someone to cover for you', and I said, 'Don't you bloody dare', because they might take over when I come back, and that was listened and responded to and we took proper advice on how to make it work. I was only off for four months anyway, and one of those was parliamentary recess. Yvette Cooper had done it, Ruth Kelly had done it. And they managed it and offered me good advice. As a result we worked out that the way to do it was to keep your private office in place – it remains your private office. And all the submissions that would come to your private office and they then manage the process of who is going to make decisions that need to be made and when it's a really important decision I still made it, but they worked out how to enable me to make it by coming to my house or whatever. So then it's still Kitty's office, you're still basically there, because the infrastructure hasn't changed and that worked really well. There was then a problem though – when I came back, I got reshuffled and replaced by two men, when I didn't want to move, so I suspect there was a longer term effect that weakened my position, which was frustrating because of course I felt I was then able to actually properly do the job and then I was unable to do it.

8 Ministers reflect

CH: Perhaps we can turn to that before we go back to the overarching experiences. The experience of being reshuffled then. You say you wanted to stay in the role. What was it like then being moved on and going to a new department?

KU: For me it was devastating, but that was partly tied up with my personal circumstances – that I had to take maternity leave when I felt my career was at its peak, so I just couldn't wait to come back and do the job. But I probably, and I don't know, but I think it's also possible that the department that I then went to, the Secretary of State had sweetly asked for me to come. So that's flattering in a sense, but I think if I'd had my time again, I would have put more effort into making it clearer what I wanted. Because I think I missed an opportunity there. So for me personally, it was devastating, for other people it wasn't always. But I was very emotionally invested in something...

CH: How did you find the different role that you were doing there? Because you were then Parliamentary Under-Secretary?

KU: It's the same level.

CH: But was the role different, I mean, the experience of going to a different department, learning a new brief, all of that...

KU: Oh, it's completely different... The brief was much slower moving, but much more policy, in a sense that I was working on housing benefit and aspects of welfare reform. But in terms of being a sort of policy person generically, as opposed to an economist interested in a financial crisis, it was much more real and grounded. But fundamentally, I didn't want to be there. So I was making the most of a bad job, emotionally, in my mind. And then I put some work in to fix that problem and succeeded – I got back to the Treasury within nine months, but then I got attacked in the expenses stuff so it didn't last long!

CH: Let's move back to some positives then.

IS: Yes. So what do you feel was your greatest achievement while in office?

KU: I guess I'm talking about the Treasury. So working out my place in the team and when it was called upon, performing in a way that supported the team. I think in my case it was – there's one challenge which is coming to mind, so it must be this. There was an opposition day debate, initiated by the Liberal Democrats, at the end of 2007 and it was about Northern Rock. Now, the truth of the matter was that we were doing policy work on whether we should nationalise it but we weren't at the stage where we could make a decision, and the work stream itself was all market sensitive and highly confidential and so on. Then the Liberal Democrats, before we were ready to make a decision, forced a debate in Parliament on the future of Northern Rock, so this was highly policy sensitive. And so this was where I was able to do what Alistair wanted me to do, you know, the 'There are occasions where there are things that only ministers can do and I want you to be in a position to do it.' So my job was to get through this debate without it being interesting, so it was perfect to send the eight month pregnant junior minister to deal with this debate. And myself and [my colleague] Angela Eagle filibustered for hours and hours and hours. It was really interesting, because at the beginning the lobby was full of journalists, and then they just got bored and went off and had tea. There was only one moment when it got a little bit dodgy, when the Lib Dem shadow minister, or whoever, leapt up and intervened and said 'So have you ruled out renationalisation?', or something, and obviously I couldn't answer yes or no, so I had to talk round it and there was a little bit of 'Oh, she hasn't ruled it out!' but it kind of died away. And so playing my role in the team, enabling the policy process to continue, not going 'Oh yeah, we might be!' in a way that sparked a story, I think was the best, the moment I keep referring to in my head.

IS: And does that prompt some general reflections on the policy making process in government?

KU: I think we did it really well. We were in the middle of a crisis. Alistair said this, and I agree as well, it was really good that we had Northern Rock, because we were a bit slow but managed to just about get there, which meant we had a team in place to deal with the far more serious thing that came next year. I think there are some issues of timing round the summer of 2007, I'm getting into too much detail here, but some things could have been done faster than. But we shared joint responsibility for that and then the way, as a government, we handled the real crisis afterwards was textbook brilliant, I think.

IS: And anything that you found frustrating about being a minister?

KU: Well, the frustrations I've already articulated about being able to control your own career. I mean, I had a nice time really at DWP [Department for Work and Pensions], but I felt slightly under-employed in some ways. There was interesting policy, but you couldn't fix it in a few months. So I suppose impatience, I was impatient for change really. When you are trying to achieve change, you want to be able to have the idea, do the brainstorm, get the advice, come back the next day, 'Where are we now?', and so on, and if that's 'We'll commission some research and get back to you in three months...' – which is proper and right and anything else would have been highly destabilising, but I found it frustrating.

IS: And are there any kind of reflections on how government could be made more effective?

KU: I don't think there's much structurally. I think all the frustrations that I've articulated are probably due to sort of political issues, the ability to build your own networks and focus on the longer term. Yeah. I don't think there's a quick win out there. But advice to incoming ministers is 'Reach out to your colleagues all the time and be clear in where you're going and how you're going to get there.'

CH: And what about then the relationship with Number 10, Cabinet Office during all of that period. How did you find that?

KU: I had quite a lot of experience of it having been a special adviser and I understood the cabinet committee system really well. As a junior minister, I would be the Treasury person on a cabinet committee that was dealing with something completely different, which I found interesting and useful and worked OK. My own little bit of ministerial experience was so dominated by the fact that we were in a fast-moving crisis that there wasn't much personal time for reflection on that. I probably had more experience of it as a special adviser, because I would be routinely speaking to the special advisers in Number 10, but of course that was a different Prime Minister and a different team, different dynamic. So I think it probably depends more on the personalities and the way they want to run things than structural, really.

CH: Well, going to that more broadly, having been there 2001 to 2004 and later as minister, what were you seeing in terms of the changes that were going on in government at that time and the Labour government, or governments', approaches towards reforming public services, reforming the civil service and things like that. Were there changes that you could think of?

KU: Well, Tony Blair was better at getting a sense of momentum for change all the time, so people had to run to keep up with him. But I'm not sure that's your question – that's quite a political answer. I'm trying to think of any changes to public services. I'm struggling to answer probably because it wasn't what I was working on.

CH: There were things like the use of [the Prime Minister's] Delivery Unit, the use of public service agreements, there was a fair bit of stuff around modernisation of the Civil Service and the need to improve skills and so forth around that. But were any of that coming across your radar in the various jobs that you had?

10 Ministers reflect

KU: Yes. I mean everything you said is very familiar and it felt embedded and I knew what it was and that was all OK. But to answer your question, was there a change post 2007, it wasn't something that I was working on.

CH: OK, you touched on a couple of them, but given part of the reason for this is to talk to new ministers or to give reflections on what it's like to be a minister, what would you say are the definitions of being an effective minister?

KU: I'm taking some time to think this through. I think you need to have a very clear sense of what your priorities are. I think it probably helps to think 'I may only have a little bit of time, what can I do?' which sometimes leads ministers to be ineffective, because they do little tiny schemes they can point to and don't actually achieve much change. Take your stakeholders with you. Try and work as a ministerial team. I think the departments that had a strong sense of team were really powerful. In Parliament, be seen as approachable, because if you're a backbench MP, actually of any party, but particularly if your party is in government, and you have got to the stage where you've got to talk to a minister about something, it's probably really big and really matters. So it's quite anti-democratic not to allow that to happen, well, so it's worth investing in that. And of course your civil servants won't be interested in creating time for that, because it's not their job.

I'm trying to think whether ultimately it depends on outcome. Yeah. I think there's a balance between wanting to demonstrate that you've done something and actually contributing to the wider priorities of the department. Because you sometimes see ministers that are trying very hard to be effective and actually shooting themselves in the foot, by wanting to have their own little thing, in a kind of control freak way. My scheme, 'I've done this', and they can point to it, feel reassured that the 30 years they spent getting there paid off. And it's always good to have a bit of that, but if you're fundamentally not working with your secretary of state to work out how you can contribute to the wider priorities, then you're probably being less effective. So it's a different thing for the secretary of state, but as a junior minister you've only got partial sight, you've only got partial influence and actually sometimes, you just really need to understand what your role is in the team, I think. I think that's the most important thing.

CH: And when you say about the balance between being a team player and trying to carve out your own area, how do you think the incentives in the system work for that? And political advancements and things like that?

KU: I think a lot of it is about how the secretary of state decides to manage their team. Because fundamentally, you're in contact with your private office all the time, very senior officials, but fundamentally your team is the ministerial team. They are the people you've done your political career with, they are the people you're chucked in with, though they may or may not have appointed you. And I don't know whether the permanent secretary could worry about that, if they feel it's not effective and obviously it's in the interests of the permanent secretary to get it to work well, to stop tensions or ministers going off on one. You know, a minister can cause a lot of trouble if they are feeling undervalued. But ultimately, surely, it's the secretary of state's responsibility to do it. The permanent secretary, I suppose, can say 'Oi, fix', they've got every right to do that. But it's a management style issue I think.

CH: Were there any ways in which you would approach the role differently?

KU: If I did it again?

CH: Perhaps being a minister generally not just the specific ones that you did.

KU: I think what I realised from the experience of being reshuffled against my will when I came back, a few months after I came back from maternity leave, actually it was about six months, was the need to express quite clearly what I wanted to the people I had relationships with who had more power than I

had. And so I did that the second time. So that was a definite learning point. I think having the confidence to work out where you are at your best and what you want to do and what jobs you can turn down, I think. I was really young and I remember hearing about a colleague (friend, woman, generation above me), who had turned down a ministerial job and I initially found that totally incomprehensible – why they would do that? Because there was an underlying ‘Give me a job!’ neediness going round Parliament. But actually it demonstrated strength. So I think really feeling on top and in control of your trajectory and working out what your trade-offs are and what you would be prepared to do and what you would not be prepared to do. And having a strategic plan, which only you can do, a strategic plan to achieve your targets, is something I would spend more time on. But I don’t know whether you mean if I had more time again or if I went back in the future. Because I was still really young, and perceived as such, so I don’t think in reality I had many other options, really. And I think fight more when things get tough as well. Create political capital, so that you can use it when needed. And again that’s something that only you can do, its not really anything to do with the system.

Citations

This archive is an open resource and we encourage you to quote from it. Please ensure that you cite the Institute for Government correctly:

- In publications (e.g. academic articles, research or policy papers) you can footnote or endnote the interview you are quoting from as follows:
Transcript, [Name of Interviewee], [Date of Interview], Ministers Reflect Archive, Institute for Government, Online: [Web Address of Transcript], Accessed: [Download Date].
For example: Transcript, George Young, 21 July 2015, Ministers Reflect Archive, Institute for Government, Online: <http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/ministers-reflect/person/george-young> . Accessed: 15 December 2015
- On social media, please hyperlink to the site: www.instituteforgovernment.co.uk/ministers-reflect
You can also use #ministersreflect and mention us @instituteforgov if you are quoting from the archive on Twitter.
- Journalists wishing to quote from the archive are free to do so, but we do ask that you mention the Institute for Government as a source and link to the archive in online articles. Please direct any media enquiries to nicole.valentinuzzi@instituteforgovernment.org.uk

The Institute for Government is here to act as a catalyst for better government.

The Institute is an independent charity founded in 2008 to help make government more effective.

- We carry out research, look into the big governance challenges of the day and find ways to help government improve, rethink and sometimes see things differently.
- We offer unique insights and advice from experienced people who know what it's like to be inside government both in the UK and overseas.
- We provide inspirational learning and development for senior policy makers.

We do this through seminars, workshops, talks or interesting connections that invigorate and provide fresh ideas.

We are well placed for senior members of all parties and the Civil Service to discuss the challenges of making government work; and to seek and exchange practical insights from the leading thinkers, practitioners, public servants, academics and opinion-formers.

Copies of all the interviews undertaken as part of this project are available at:

www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/ministers-reflect

© Institute for Government 2016

2 Carlton Gardens
London SW1Y 5AA

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7747 0400

Fax: +44 (0) 20 7766 0700

Email: enquiries@instituteforgovernment.org.uk

www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk

@instituteforgov

The Institute is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England No. 6480524
Registered Charity No. 1123926