

# War on Waste: Woke Whitehall

---

Darwin Friend  
May 2020



## Introduction

Wasting taxpayers' money on 'woke' campaigns is not a new phenomena, with civil servants in the past being sent on diversity training at a cost of £2,000 per person, including 'awareness workshops'.<sup>1</sup> But mandarins should take great care not to let the pursuit of sensitive social justice causes see money spent poorly, paying over the odds for things that are not required for officials to do their jobs.

Whitehall departments continue to misuse taxpayers' cash in this way, having spent more than £65,000 installing gender-neutral toilets, and purchasing LGBTQ lanyards, stationery and flags. Media reports have suggested that civil service staff do not even want to use the gender neutral loos.<sup>2</sup> Whether this be in the Ministry of Defence where almost £15,000 was spent on 13 toilets,<sup>3</sup> or the Home Office where the conversion costs were more than £36,000 for 10 toilets,<sup>4</sup> bureaucrats must take more care before blowing their budgets on right-on social causes.

## Key findings

- Between 2013-14 and 2018-19, **£57,467** was spent by at least three government departments to create gender-neutral toilets.
- The department with the largest costs associated with creating gender-neutral toilets was the **Home Office** spending **£36,963**, with more than **£8,000** spent on providing signage for the toilets.
- The department that created the most **gender-neutral toilets** between 2013-14 and 2018-19 was the **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**, which built 30.
- **£6,342** was spent by nine departments on **LGBT+ lanyards**. The cost per LGBT+ lanyard from the departments who responded ranged from **£3.53 to £0.49**. However, a plain lanyard costs from as little as **£0.13**.<sup>5</sup>
- The **Department for Work and Pensions** spent the most on LGBT+ lanyards with a total cost of **£2,391**. However, the department did not provide the number of lanyards this expenditure procured.
- More than **£1,533** was spent by eight departments on purchasing **LGBT+ flags** between 2014-15 and 2018-19.
- The **Cabinet Office** and **10 Downing Street** own the most LGBT+ flags, possessing four, compared to only three St. George's flags.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lea, M., *Anger after civil servants sent to lavish £2,000 retreat for 'irrelevant diversity training'*, Mail Online, 6 January 2009, [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1106462/Anger-civil-servants-sent-lavish-2-000-retreat-irrelevant-diversity-training.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1106462/Anger-civil-servants-sent-lavish-2-000-retreat-irrelevant-diversity-training.html), (accessed 3 January 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Wooding, D., *Defence chiefs blow £15,000 of taxpayers' money on gender-neutral loos that hardly anybody wants to use*, *The Sun*, 29 December 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Vine, S, *Nothing sums up the madness of the modern world better than the Home Office's gender neutral loos*, *Daily Mail*, 17 August 2018.

<sup>5</sup> *Lanyards Tomorrow, Lanyards ID Neck Strap with Loop Clip*, [www.lanyardstomorrow.co.uk/en/lanyards-id-neck-strap-with-loop-clip.html#.XIU4fmiTKM9](http://www.lanyardstomorrow.co.uk/en/lanyards-id-neck-strap-with-loop-clip.html#.XIU4fmiTKM9), (accessed 25 February 2020).

**Table 1: overall amount spent on LGBT+ lanyards, 2014-15 to 2018-19**

Department	Number of lanyards purchased	Cost of lanyards (£)	Cost per lanyard (£)	Notes
Department for Work and Pensions	Not given	2,391		Unable to provide London HQ figures but DWP LGBT+ Network figures provided
Department for Transport	1,300	1,211	0.93	
Department for Education	1,100	833	0.76	
Ministry of Justice	Not given	367		
Scotland Office	100	353	3.53	
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	110	239	2.17	
Department for International Development	350	230	0.66	200 lanyards bought in 17-18 costing £150, and 150 bought at a cost of £79.80
HM Treasury	100	194	1.94	
Department for Exiting the European Union	200	98	0.49	

**Table 2: total costs associated with creating gender-neutral toilets, 2013-14 to 2018-19**

Department	Total number of gender-neutral toilets in 2013-14	Total number of gender-neutral toilets in 2018-19	Cost of creating gender-neutral toilets (£)	Notes
Home Office	0	10	36,963	£8,071 of costs was for providing signage. The conversion costs associated with providing these toilets was £28,893
Ministry of Defence	0	13	14,887	
Department for International Development	0	2	5,617	

**Table 3: total amount spent on LGBT+ flags and the number of times the flag was flown, 2014-15 to 2018-19**

Department	Number of LGBT+ flags owned	Number of times LGBT+ flag has been flown	Cost of LGBT+ flags purchased (£)	Notes
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	6	6	687	Cost figures were for one flag in 2017-18 costing £155 and five flags in May 2018 at a total cost of £533
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	1	11	270	
HM Treasury	1	6	258	
Department for Education	1	Not held	120	Department does not keep a record of how many times the flag has been flown. The flag was a gift from the Government Equalities Office in 2016-17
Department for Health and Social Care	1	1	119	LGBT+ Pride flag was purchased in 2018-19 alongside a union flag and a St George's flag at a total cost of £357. The department did not disaggregate the cost so it has been divided by three
Department for Transport	3	5	39	Flag flown once a year for a 7 day period
Department for International Development	2	6	35	Cost figure was for one flag bought in 2015
Northern Ireland Office	1	3	5	Flag bought by department in 2018 and flown for one day
No. 10/ Cabinet Office	4	5	Not held	

**Table 4: total LGBT+, Union Jack, St. George, Scottish Saltire and flag of Wales flags owned by each department**

Department	Number of LGBT+ flags owned	Number of Union Jack flags owned	Number of St. George flags owned	Number of Scottish Saltire flags owned	Number of flag of Wales flags owned
Foreign and Commonwealth Office <sup>6</sup>	6				
Cabinet Office/ No. 10 Downing Street	4	29	3	4	2
Department for Transport	3	5	0	0	0
Department for International Development	2	9	2	4	0
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	1	11	1	1	1
Scotland Office	1	6	0	8	0
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	1	260	27	1	1
HM Treasury	1	2	1	1	0
Department for Education	1	1	1	1	1
Department for Health and Social Care	1	2	1	0	1
Northern Ireland Office	1	1	0	0	0
Department for International Trade	1	4	2	1	1
Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government <sup>7</sup>	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ministry of Justice	1	2	1	2	1
Wales Office	0	3	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>11</b>

<sup>6</sup> This relates to flags purchased by FCO in a two-year period. The FCO does not hold centrally how many LGBTQ flags it currently owns for its missions overseas.

<sup>7</sup> The Department's London headquarters is a shared building, which MHCLG jointly occupies with the Home Office and DEFRA. The Home Office manage the property and are responsible for the flying of flags on the property.

## Methodology

This research was fulfilled by issuing freedom of information (FOI) requests to all government departments. The requests asked the following:

### For LGBT+ flags:

*Please include the following information:*

- *The cost of rainbow (LGBTQ) flags that were purchased in 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19.*
- *How many rainbow (LGBTQ) flags the department currently owns.*
- *How many times the rainbow (LGBTQ) flag has been flown from the headquarters of your department in London in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019.*

Of the 21 departments contacted, 19 fulfilled the request by providing partial or full responses by 1 December 2019. Of these 18, however, the information supplied was inconsistent. Not every department provided the full range of data required. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act was referenced when information was not provided. This allows a public authority to refuse to deal with a request where it estimated that it would exceed the appropriate time or cost limit. Additionally, it is common for the departments to say that they do not hold any information relevant to this request.

Figures for the number of St George flags owned by the Cabinet Office were assembled primarily from parliamentary questions by Philip Davies MP. The question asked the following:

*To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) Union Jack, (b) St George, (c) Scottish Saltire and (d) Flag of Wales flags his Department owns.*

In their response, the Cabinet Office included the number of each flag also owned by 10 Downing Street, defining it as an integral part of the Cabinet Office.

### For LGBT+ lanyards and stationary:

*Please include the following information:*

- *How many rainbow (LGBTQ) lanyards have been purchased by the department, and at what cost in 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19?*
- *How many business cards for staff have been printed with the rainbow (LGBTQ) flag on them, and at what cost in 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19?*
- *How many other pieces of stationary have the rainbow (LGBTQ) flag on them that have been purchased by the department, and at what cost in 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19?*

*Other pieces of stationery includes, but is not limited to, pens, pencils, sheets of paper, rulers, rubbers and pencil sharpeners.*

Of the 21 departments contacted, 19 fulfilled the request providing partial or full responses by 1 December 2019. Of these 19, however, the information supplied was inconsistent. Not every department provided the full range of data required. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act was often referenced when information was not provided. This allows a public authority to refuse to deal with a request where it estimated that it would exceed the appropriate time or cost limit. Additionally, it is common for the departments to say that they do not hold any information relevant to this request.

**For gender-neutral toilets:**

*Please include the following information:*

- *The total number of gender neutral toilets in the entirety of the department's properties in 2018-19.*
- *The total number of gender neutral toilets in the entirety of the department's properties in 2013-14.*
- *The costs associated with creating gender neutral toilets between 2013-14 and 2018-19.*

*A gender neutral toilet is one that is not separated by gender or sex. This information request excludes those which are disabled toilets.*

Of the 21 departments contacted, 17 fulfilled the request providing partial or full responses by 1 December 2019. Of these 20, however, the information supplied was inconsistent. Not every department provided the full range of data required. Section 14 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act was referenced when information was not provided. This allows a public authority to refuse to deal with a request where it is similar to a previous request. Additionally, it is common for the departments to say that there were no costs associated with creating gender-neutral toilets.