

A Short Guide to the **Foreign & Commonwealth Office**

June 2015



National Audit Office



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The National Audit Office scrutinises public spending for Parliament and is independent of government. The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Sir Amyas Morse KCB, is an Officer of the House of Commons and leads the NAO, which employs some 810 people. The C&AG certifies the accounts of all government departments and many other public sector bodies. He has statutory authority to examine and report to Parliament on whether departments and the bodies they fund have used their resources efficiently, effectively, and with economy. Our studies evaluate the value for money of public spending, nationally and locally. Our recommendations and reports on good practice help government improve public services, and our work led to audited savings of £1.15 billion in 2014.


This Short Guide summarises what the Foreign & Commonwealth Office does, how much it costs, recent and planned changes and what to look out for across its main business areas and services.

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Interactive

For full iPad interactivity, please view this PDF in iBooks or GoodReader

Key facts 

About the Foreign & Commonwealth Office



£1.3 billion
the budget for 2014-15, down from £1.5 billion in 2013-14



14,000
the approximate number of FCO staff, based in around 270 locations across the world

Key trends

Department spending



£511 billion
the value of UK exports of goods and services in 2013, up from £501 billion in 2012



17,517
the number of cases where the FCO provided consular support to British citizens abroad in 2013-14

Changes to the way the FCO works

Staff and pay

Staff attitudes and engagement



£343 million
the FCO's contribution to UK aid spend. This is a provisional estimate for 2014 and is a 120% increase on the £156 million contribution in 2010



67%
employee engagement score at the FCO in 2014, 8 points above the civil service average

Major programmes and developments

Key themes from NAO reports

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37 crises
the number of crises the FCO responded to from 2012 to 2014, including the Arab Spring and the terrorist attack in Nairobi



67%
of FCO staff overseas are locally engaged, rather than UK civil servants (as of September 2014)

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The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) leads on efforts to promote and protect UK values and interests overseas. In doing so the FCO operates globally and has the following foreign policy priorities:

- [Britain's national security](#);
- [Britain's prosperity](#); and
- [Supporting British citizens overseas](#).

These are underpinned by a set of activities to support, enable and influence (referred to as 'Our Purpose' by the FCO in its reports).

Key terms

Mission/post: Locations where the Department has a presence, such as an embassy, consulate or high commission

Embassy: An official office in another country's capital city as part of a permanent diplomatic mission.

Consulate: A smaller official office that provides a presence in important cities outside a country's capital.

Consulate general: A larger consulate office that may offer a greater range of services.

High commission and deputy high commission: The terms for an embassy and a consulate located in a commonwealth country.

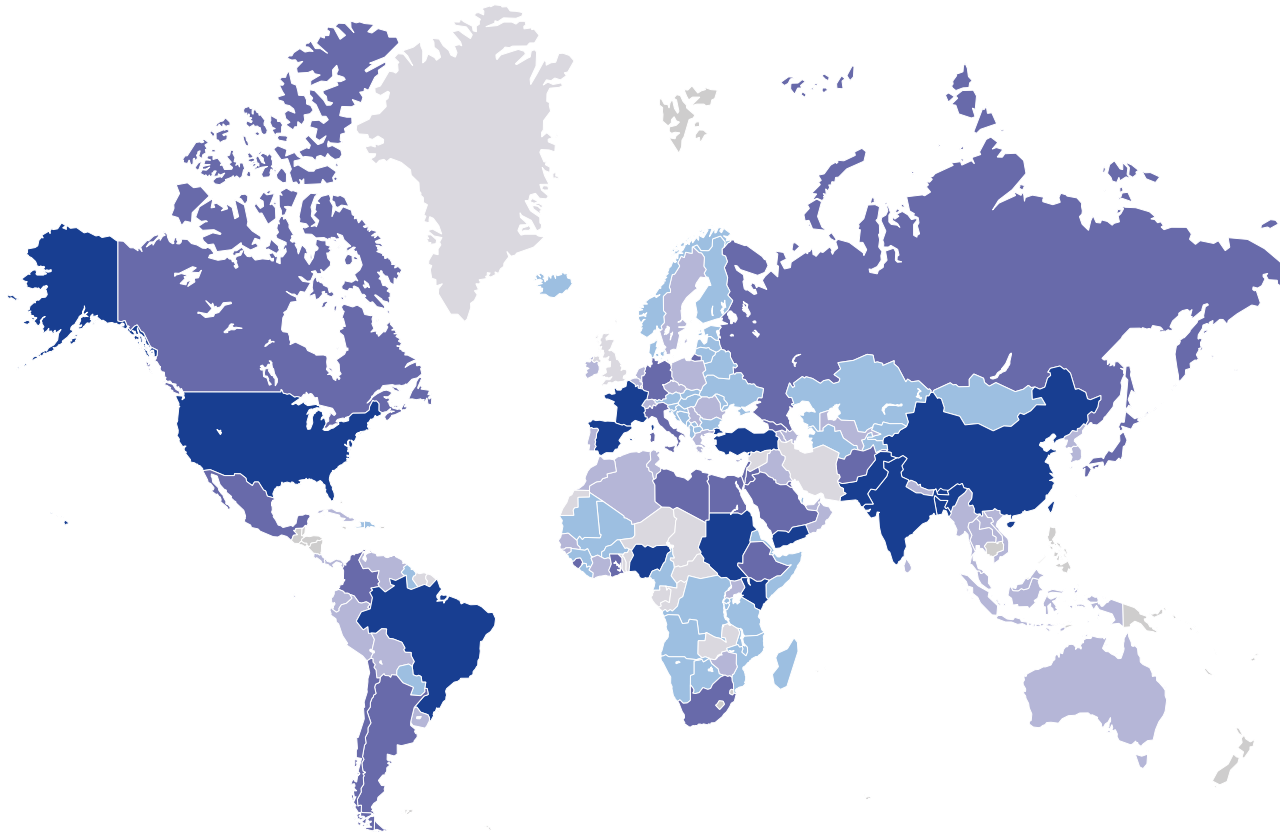
Locally engaged staff: FCO staff of any nationality (including British) who are employed overseas in their country of residence on local terms and conditions.

About the Foreign & Commonwealth Office

The FCO operates from embassies, consulates and high commissions in almost 270 overseas locations. Its global network provides a platform for 42 other UK public bodies.

Numbers of staff overseas (numbers of locations)

- 175 to 1,000 (15)
- 100 to 175 (16)
- 50 to 100 (40)
- 15 to 50 (57)
- 1 to 15 (31)
- 0 to 1 (110)



Notes

- 1 FCO offices range from a large scale presence to a small number of people.
- 2 Numbers include both UK-based and locally employed staff as at 31 March 2014.
- 3 These numbers include UK Trade & Investment staff. From 2014-15, UKTI will not be reported on as part of the FCO.

Source: PQ 2282052 – www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-03-18/228205/

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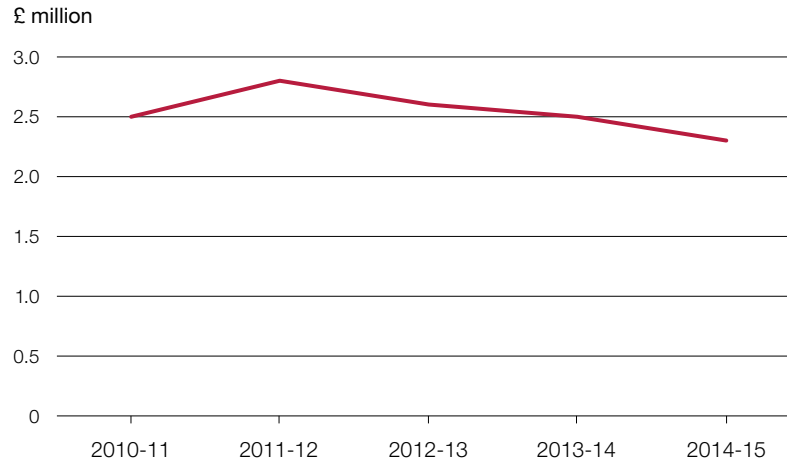
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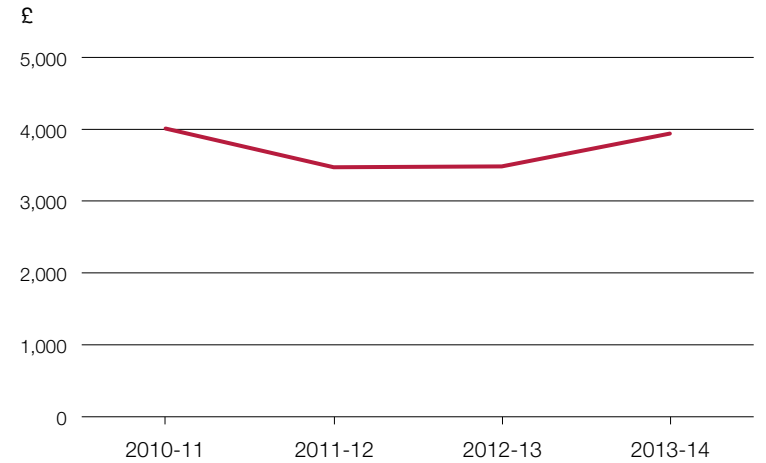
Appendix

Key trends in the FCO's operations and environment.

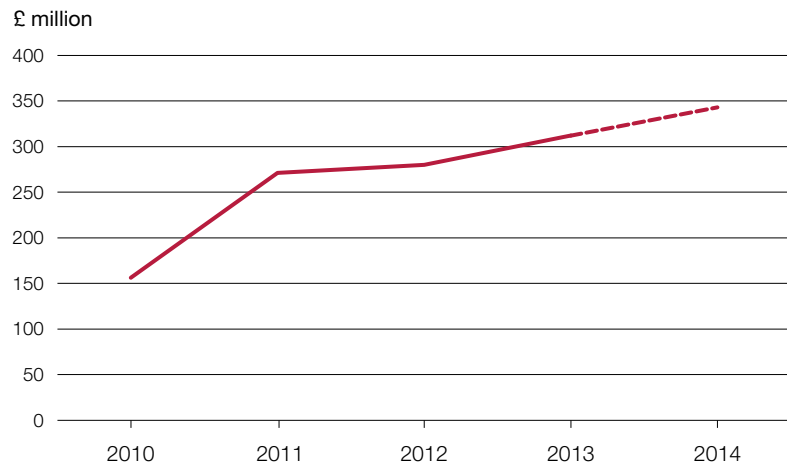
Average cost of an embassy



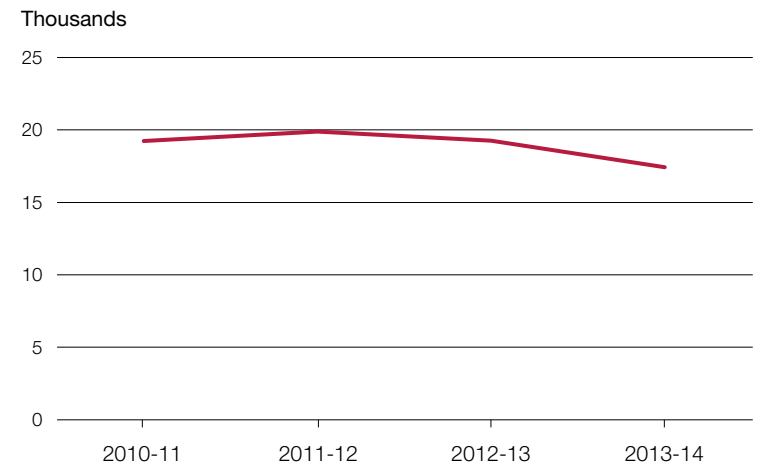
Average cost per consular assistance case



FCO contribution to UK aid spend



FCO consular assistance cases



— Cost - - - Spend target

— Cases

Source: Foreign & Commonwealth Office annual reports and Foreign & Commonwealth Office British Behaviour Abroad report 2014

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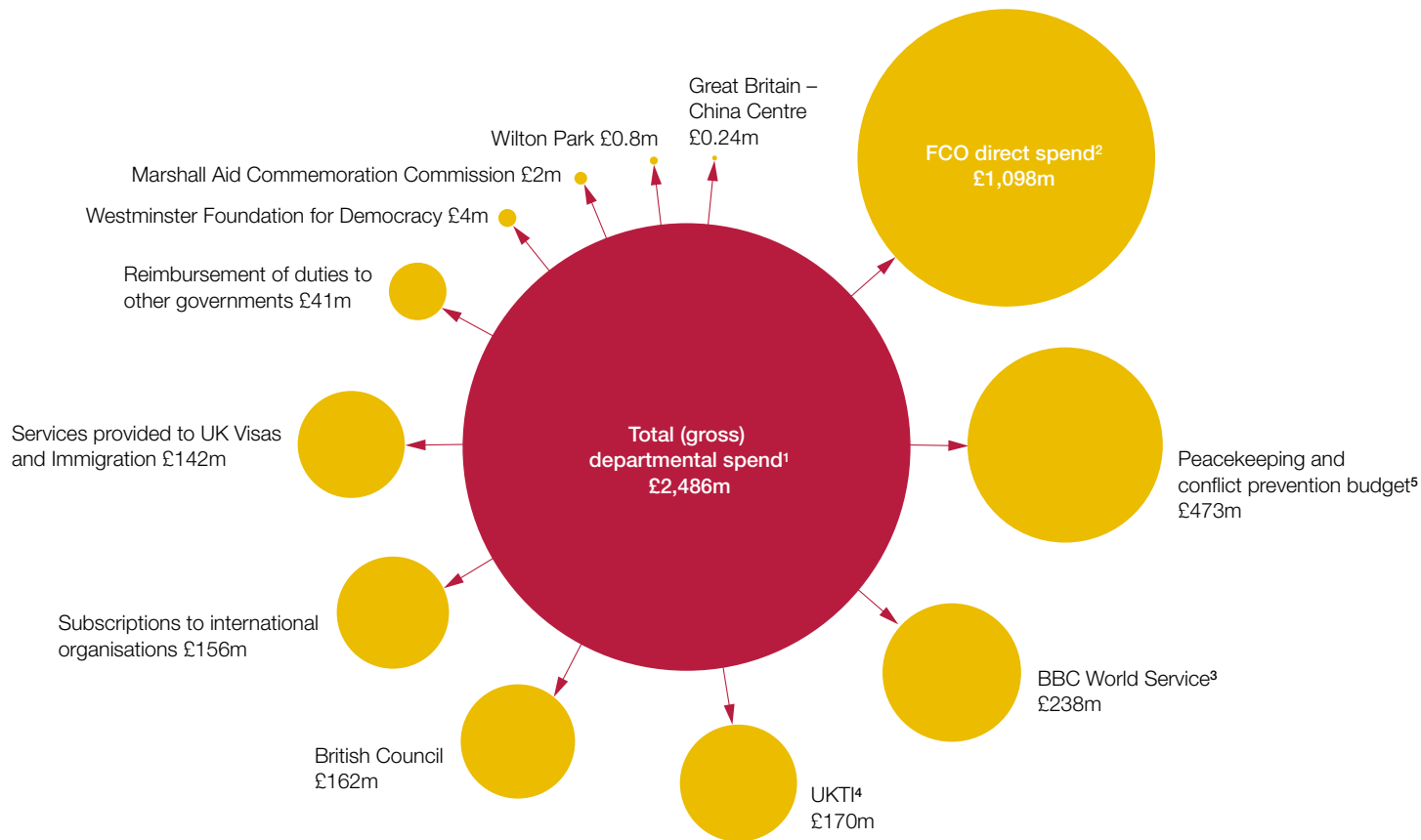
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Based on the FCO accounts (2013-14).



Notes

- This analysis is gross resource expenditure only and excludes capital expenditure and income.
- The Department's direct expenditure mainly comprises of staff and other costs associated with front-line service delivery, expenditure on programmes and consular operations.
- BBC World Service will not be included in the FCO's accounts from 2014-15.
- UKTI will be treated differently in the accounts from 2014-15 as a result of the creation of a single UKTI budget.
- The peacekeeping budget pays for the government's international obligations to United Nations, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and EU peacekeeping missions.
- Figures may not add up due to rounding.


Source: Foreign & Commonwealth Office *Annual Report and Accounts 2013-14*

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Overall savings programme

The FCO's budget decreased in 2014-15 by £0.2 billion to reflect the fact that the FCO no longer funds the BBC World Service (whose costs will be met out of the Licence Fee). At the 2010 spending review, the FCO committed to making £100 million of efficiency savings by 2015. At the end of September 2014, the FCO reported that it had achieved around **£92 million** in savings, and had identified how to save the remainder. The FCO has made efficiencies through:

Human resources

Reshaping the workforce to make greater use of local staff. The FCO reported savings of **£12.9 million** in 2013-14.

Corporate services

Consolidating some finance, human resources and procurement functions into global or regional hubs. The FCO reported savings of **£33.6 million** in 2013-14.

Estates

Restructuring the FCO's UK and overseas estate to reduce costs of office and residential accommodation, the FCO reported savings of **£17.4 million** in 2013-14.

Procurement

Through increased use of central government buying arrangements and implementing a central procurement strategy approval board, the FCO reported savings of **£5.2 million** in 2013-14.

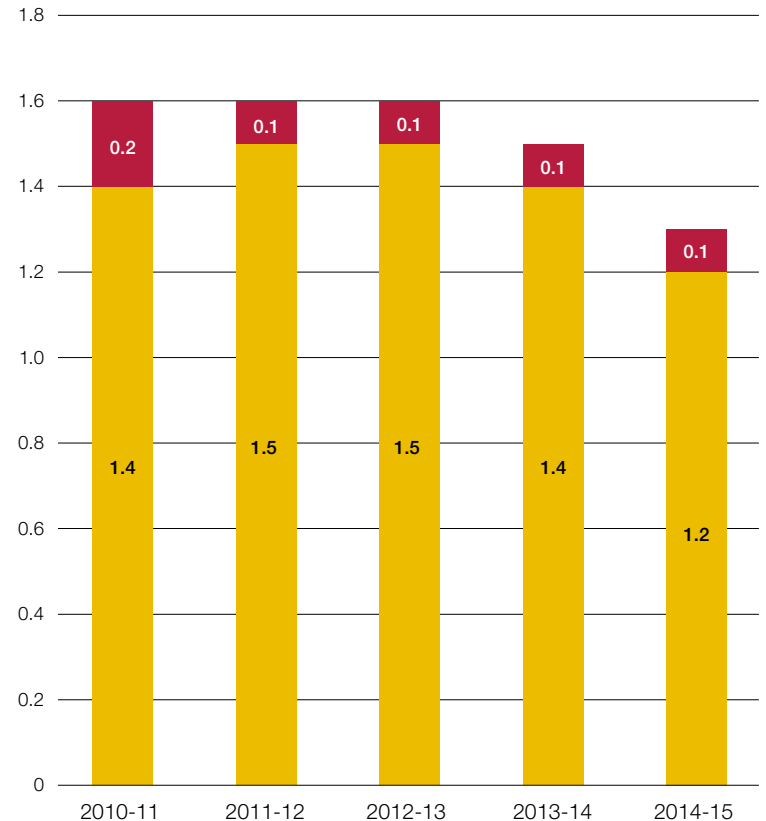
'Working differently' programme

Adjusting rules and procedures, making greater use of locally engaged staff, maximising information and automation technologies, and a new Regional Technical Support Service supplied by FCO Services. The FCO estimates annual savings of around **£23 million** by end of 2015.

Departmental expenditure limits (DEL) for the FCO

(excludes Annually Managed Expenditure and in year budget adjustments from the supplementary estimates) from the 2010 spending review and the 2013 spending round

£ billion



■ Capital DEL
■ Resource DEL

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The proportion of locally engaged staff in the FCO's workforce has slowly increased – from an average of 65% between 2010-11 and 2013-14, to 67% by September 2014. The FCO expects this to reach 70% during 2015.

About 68% of the FCO's staff are aged between 30 and 49 years. The average age of the civil service fast-stream cohort that joined the FCO in 2013 was 26 years, with a gender balance of 50% male to 50% female. This compares to an overall gender profile within the FCO of 57% male to 43% female.

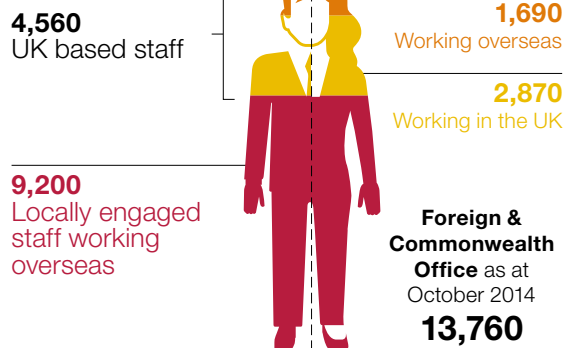
In April 2014, the FCO published its diversity and equality report which found that the Department has not met its representation targets for women, black and ethnic minority staff and staff with disabilities in the senior management grades. The Department's management board has re-committed to working towards these targets and set new targets to appoint 24 additional female Heads of Mission overseas (a 62% increase) over the next four years and 50% of external senior management recruits to be women.

Following the Hutton review of fair pay, departments are required to disclose the ratio between the median and the highest remuneration.

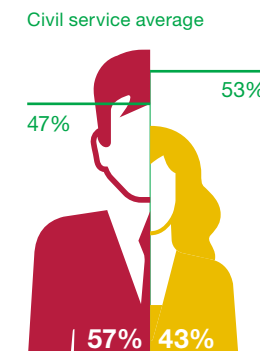
The ratio of highest to median pay at the FCO ranged from 5.7 to 6.3 for the past four financial years.

Foreign & Commonwealth Office staff

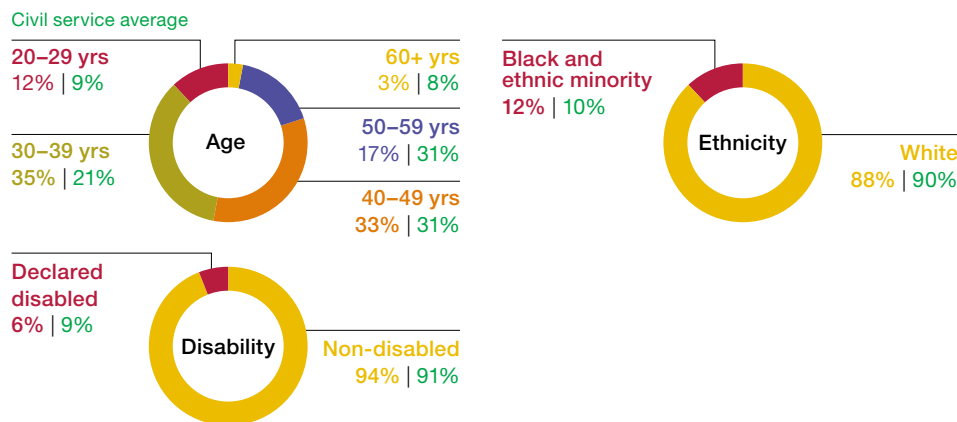
Division of UK and overseas staff¹



Division of staff by gender²



Division of staff by Age, Ethnicity and Declared Disability²



Pay median of directors¹

	£	£	£	£
Ratio	6.0	5.7	6.3	5.9
Highest remuneration	£187,500	£182,500	£202,500	£202,500
Median	£31,275	£31,972	£32,285	£34,090
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14

Sources: **1** Foreign & Commonwealth Office Annual Report and Accounts; **2** Foreign & Commonwealth Office Diversity and Equality Report 2014 – All data presented represents a snapshot of the FCO as at 31 December 2013

Key facts

The government has conducted its annual civil service people survey for the past five years. The most recent survey was carried out in October 2014.

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The FCO results are above the civil service benchmark on all criteria except for organisational objectives and purpose, and pay and benefits, which are both just below the benchmark.


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The only significant change from 2013 is in the attitude towards pay and benefits, for which the positive response has dropped from 30% to 27%, reflecting the declining trend across the civil service generally. There were also small decreases in organisational objectives and purpose, attitudes towards learning and development, resources and workload as well as leadership and managing change.

Changes to the way the FCO works

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The main measure from the people survey is the employee engagement index, which measures an employee's emotional response to working for their organisation.

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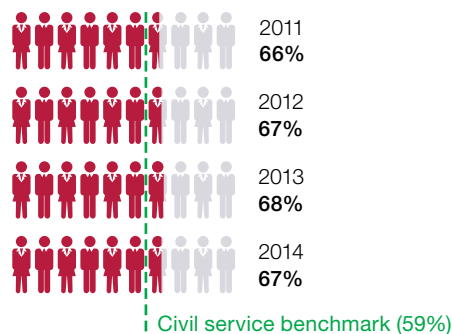
The employee engagement index score for the FCO is 67%, which is 8 points above the civil service average, but 1% below the previous years' results.

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Attitudes of staff in 2014 compared with 2013 – FCO



Engagement index



Sources: Civil Service People Survey 2013 and 2014

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One HMG Overseas

One HMG Overseas' agenda aims to remove barriers to joint working, so that all staff working for the UK government overseas can deliver the UK's objectives more effectively and efficiently. Around 5,400 staff from 42 other UK public bodies co-locate on FCO premises overseas. One HMG aims to improve collaboration, co-location, consolidation and regionalisation of corporate services teams and harmonisation of terms and conditions of service.

Diplomatic excellence

Diplomatic excellence is the FCO's reform and improvement agenda for 2011–2015 which encompasses all elements of the UK's diplomatic service. The diplomatic excellence agenda aims to ensure the UK's diplomatic network is balanced with the right people in the right places and that these people have the capability to deliver policy outcomes that advance the UK's national interests. The FCO has opened a new in-house language training centre and on 10 February 2015 it opened a new Diplomatic Academy for learning and development.

Major estates projects

There are a number of estates projects including:

- Abuja, new office and residence, cost £39 million
- Jakarta, new Embassy, cost £29.5 million
- The UK estate reform programme consolidates core activities into the main building on King Charles Street and releases Old Admiralty Building for use by another government department, provides a more modern working environment for FCO staff and introduces a new High Classification IT system by 2014, which involves making part of the King Charles Street building secure at a cost £82 million

Triennial reviews

In 2011, the Cabinet Office announced that all non-departmental public bodies would have to undergo a review every three years to confirm the continuing need for individual bodies. Subsequent reviews on the British Council, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the Great Britain China Centre and the Marshall Aid Commission all recommended retaining these bodies. The British Council review, conducted in 2014, concluded that it should be retained as the UK's cultural diplomacy body but it proposed changes to its structure and governance because of concerns about transparency, accountability and clarity of purpose.

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Exploiting the UK brand overseas (published June 2015)

- The £113.5 million GREAT Britain campaign, formally launched in February 2012, is the government's major branding campaign to promote the UK as a destination for tourists, trade and investment and students, in order to secure economic growth.
- Our report found that the campaign team has produced high quality communication materials and teams overseas are, for the most part, making good use of them and adhering to brand discipline.
- The partners' delivery of the campaign varies and is improving as the campaign matures. There is a process for prioritising countries and determining the level of funding to them. This has become increasingly evidence-driven. However, the Cabinet Office does not adequately assess the capacity of partners to spend the funding allocated to them.

One HMG overseas (published March 2015)

- In March 2015, we reported that there had been good progress regarding co-location on the FCO's compounds, and the regionalisation of finance, procurement and HR services, and reasonable progress on the consolidation of remaining support functions into a single service for UK government partners.
- However, we found that there had been less progress on the harmonisation of terms and conditions and collaborative working between government bodies overseas.

Supporting UK exporters overseas (published October 2013)

- Since 2010 the government has been committed to supporting UK exporters overseas and in 2012 set a challenging ambition to double UK exports to £1 trillion by 2020. Our report examined how the Department and UKTI were helping British businesses to export more and contribute to the government's export target.
- We found that exports would need to grow by 10% year-on-year for the UK to meet the £1 trillion target and that the respective contributions of different government departments to meeting the £1 trillion ambition were not defined.
- We also found that the FCO must improve how it evaluates its impact to show that spending on support to exporters provides value for money.

Britain's national security

Activity, cost and performance

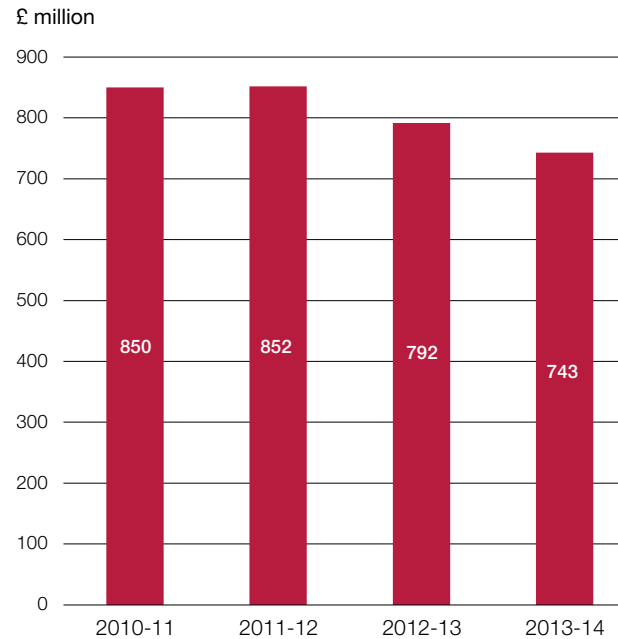
The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) aims to safeguard Britain's national security by countering terrorism and weapons proliferation, and working to reduce conflict.

Staff

The FCO's headcount data does not split the numbers of FTE staff working on its foreign policy priorities but it calculated that in 2013-14 an average of 1,500 (10%) of the FCO's employees worked on safeguarding the UK's national security. Of these, 20.5% were locally engaged staff (325).

The average numbers of FCO staff working on security has declined from just under 2,000 in 2012-13. There is also a decrease in expenditure in this area, from £850 million in 2010-11 to £743 million in 2013-14.

FCO's expenditure on national security



Britain's national security

Activity, cost and performance

Britain's national security 2013-14 priority outcomes		FCO self-assessed performance
Afghanistan	Afghan peace process; stabilise border regions; long-term strategic partnership between Afghanistan and Pakistan.	Partially Met
Syria	Accelerate political transition; prevent chemical and biological weapon proliferation; provide humanitarian support.	Not Met
Iran	Work with partners to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, through diplomacy and international pressure.	Partially Met
Middle East	United States led peace initiative; support transition countries to strengthen their economies and democratic institutions.	Not Met
Somalia and the Sahel	Reduce the risk to the UK from terrorism; host a conference to help improve security and public financial management.	Partially Met
Falklands	Protect the Falkland Islanders' right to determine their political future and develop their economy, and build international support for this.	Met
Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative	Develop a new International Protocol on sexual violence in conflict.	Met
UN Arms Trade Treaty	Achieve the adoption of a UN Arms Trade Treaty and campaign for at least 30 ratifications.	Met

Britain's national security

FCO priorities for 2014-15 and new developments

As set out by the FCO in its [2014-15 Foreign Policy Priority outcomes](#)

Things to look out for

The UK is part of the global coalition working together to counter the threat of ISIL. The FCO is supporting the UK's military response and provision of humanitarian aid in the region.

Along with its partners, the UK has agreed the framework for a comprehensive deal on Iran's nuclear programme. Diplomats are expected to finalise the detail in summer 2015.

With guidance from the National Security Council a new £1 billion Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (jointly managed by the FCO, Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development) replaced the Conflict Pool in April 2015. This aims to address the short-term impacts of conflict while building political, economic and security institutions to bring longer-term stability.

Safeguard Britain's national security by countering terrorism and weapons proliferation and working to reduce conflict

Afghanistan	A successful political transition, credible presidential elections and continuing international support for Afghan security and development. Reduced terrorist threat to the UK.
Syria	Progress on political transition which reduces violence and improves humanitarian access. Eradication of Syria's chemical weapons. No major regional spill-over of the conflict and a reduced terrorist threat to the UK.
Iran	A comprehensive nuclear agreement with Iran, a more constructive Iranian role in the region and a more substantial bilateral relationship.
Middle East	A strong UK contribution to a comprehensive Middle East Peace agreement, based on a two state solution.
Africa	Active UK engagement to reduce the risk of conflict, particularly in East and Central Africa and the Sahel. Reduced terrorist threat to the UK, particularly from East Africa.
Security and conflict	A successful Wales NATO Summit, which strengthens the Alliance, its role in European and International security and in Afghanistan's transition.
Russia	More stable relations between Russia and Ukraine, and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all Russia's neighbours. Continuing Russian contribution to international security.

Britain's prosperity

Activity, cost and performance

The FCO aims to build Britain's prosperity by supporting efforts to increase exports and investment, opening markets, ensuring access to resources and promoting sustainable global growth.

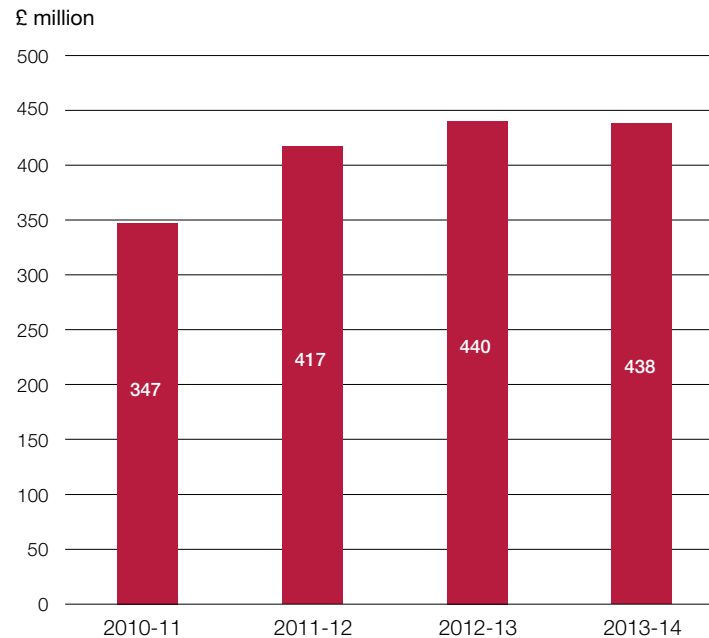
Staff

The FCO calculated that in 2013-14 an average of 4,963 (32%) of the FCO's employees worked on the foreign policy priority of increasing Britain's prosperity. Of these, 82% were locally engaged staff.

Numbers of staff working on prosperity have changed little since 2012-13 when 4,930 staff worked on the prosperity priority.

Staff numbers within the prosperity priority include UKTI staff overseas who are employed through the FCO.

FCO expenditure on prosperity



Britain's prosperity

Activity, cost and performance

Britain's prosperity 2013-14 priority outcomes**FCO self-assessed performance**

Government trade and investment targets: Measurable progress towards the targets including strengthening UK Chambers of Commerce, reducing trade barriers and improved understanding of the UK visa regime.

Partially Met

Widen the EU single market: Remove unnecessary EU regulations and secure EU free trade agreements with Canada and India, and negotiations with USA.

Partially Met

Foreign Policy Report: Input into the government's review of the balance of competences within the EU, including the foreign policy report.

Met

Olympic and Paralympic legacy: Use this and the GREAT campaign to promote the UK's values and increase trade, tourism and investment.

Met

Post-Kyoto Regime: Open substantive negotiations by the 2013 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Warsaw.

Partially Met

Britain's prosperity

Priorities for 2014-15 and new developments

As set out by the FCO in its [2014-15 Foreign Policy Priority outcomes](#).

Things to look out for

Through its prosperity agenda, the FCO aims to support the government's ambition for exports to reach £1 trillion a year by 2020.

Exports of goods and services increased by around £7 billion between 2012 and 2014. However, the global economic backdrop remains challenging due to stagnation in the Eurozone and political and security issues affecting some of the UK's major overseas markets like Russia.

The FCO is involved in the ongoing Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations between the EU and the USA. This is estimated to be the biggest bilateral free trade agreement, reportedly accounting for some 46% of global output. It is hoped that this could add almost £100 billion annually to Europe's GDP, including £10 billion to the UK's economy.

The FCO is a partner in the GREAT campaign which promotes the UK as a destination for business, tourism and study. In 2013-14, GREAT was used in over 250 FCO offices in 140 countries.

Build Britain's prosperity by increasing exports and investment, opening markets, ensuring access to resources and promoting sustainable global growth

Asia Pacific	Growth in UK export share in the East Asian market above 1.5%. UK's inward investment stock from the region exceeds £60 billion. Stronger UK engagement contributes to more effective management of regional security.
EU	EU Commission and Parliament programmes support UK reform priorities. Progress on competitiveness, regulation, the single market and free trade agreements, in particular with the US; stronger roles for member states and national parliaments; a fair relationship between those inside and outside the Eurozone; tackling abuse of free movement. Greater stability and better governance in the EU's neighbourhood, in particular in the Balkans and Ukraine.
Economic Diplomacy	Creation of new opportunities for UK business through FCO work on promoting an open global economy; tackling corruption and barriers to trade; delivery of the UK's G8 agenda; science and innovation cooperation; and stronger partnerships with emerging powers. A stronger cross-government approach, especially with UKTI and on visa services.
Energy and Climate	Enhanced UK energy security through more inward investment in UK energy infrastructure. UK/EU access to new, affordable sources of supply and support for functioning, open, global energy markets. UK/EU climate leadership advances global action at the UN Secretary General's Climate Summit.

Supporting British citizens overseas

What FCO does and how much it costs

The FCO supports British nationals around the world through its consular service. This support includes providing:

- travel advice;
- emergency travel documents;
- documentary services such as birth or death registration or marriage documents;
- help for British nationals who are the victim or cause of crime or who fall sick; and
- assistance during crises.

Staff

In 2013-14, an average of 1,820 (12%) of the FCO's employees worked toward supporting British citizens. Of these 1,387 (76%) were locally engaged staff. This is an increase compared to 2012-13 when 1,275 (71%) were locally engaged staff.

Overall there was a 2% increase in average staff numbers supporting British citizens from 1,787 to 1,820 from 2012-13 to 2013-14.

Consular services are part funded by passport fees (collected by the Passport Office and passed to FCO by HM Treasury in a single payment – £70.9 million in 2013-14) and by fees charged by FCO consular teams for services including:

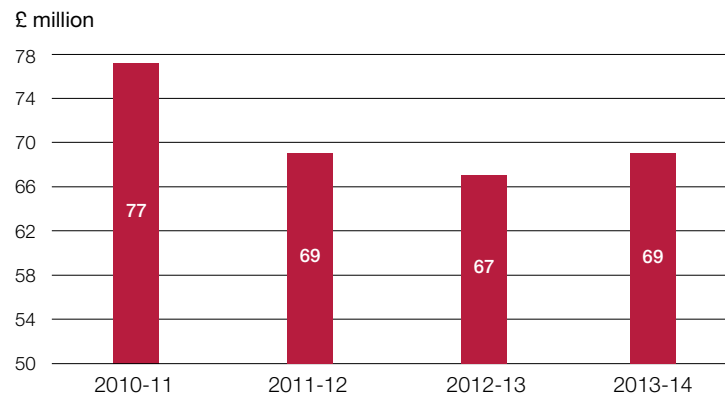
- legalising signatures;
- notarial services (such as administering an oath);
- services relating to birth, marriage, civil partnership and death; and
- providing emergency travel documents.

In 2013-14, the FCO received £21.7 million income from consular fees for its services.

In recent years net expenditure on supporting British citizens has been relatively stable, at around £69 million.

There has been a decrease in consular cases but this is largely due to how the FCO categorises death cases.

Supporting British citizens – net expenditure



Supporting British citizens overseas

Recent and future developments

Crisis

The FCO launched its crisis centre in 2012. It is designed to allow the FCO to handle two large scale events simultaneously by operating a centralised command structure and bringing different departments together. Since 2012 it has managed 37 crises up to the end of 2014, with 12 managed throughout 2014.

The FCO has implemented a crisis decision-making structure based on the gold-silver-bronze system used by emergency services.

The FCO introduced a new crisis IT system that went live in 2013. It is designed to allow British nationals to ask for help via phone, text message, online form or in person. It has since been used multiple times, including in response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

Overseas passports

In March 2014, the Home Office assumed full responsibility for passport applications, decisions and document issuance.

This transfer has provided efficiencies and enabled the price paid by British nationals for replacing or renewing passports overseas to drop by 35%.

In June 2014, there were delays in issuing passports. To help deal with problems issuing passports for UK citizens overseas, the FCO extended passports by 12 months and began to issue emergency travel documents to children for the first time.

Method of service delivery

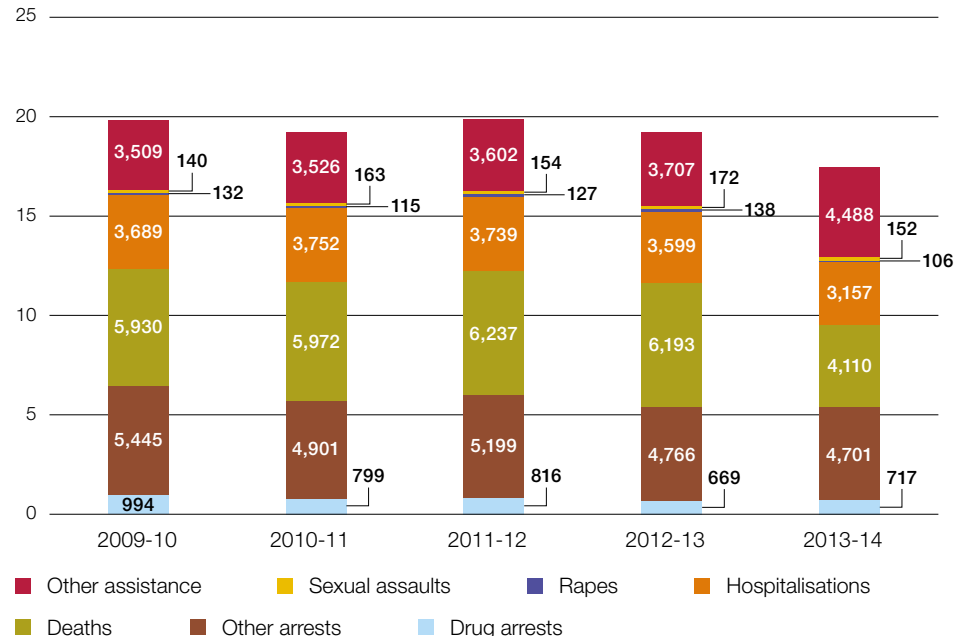
As part of the government's 'digital by default' agenda the FCO identified in its digital strategy the scope for digital provision of consular services. The FCO is also trying to make increased use of social media to respond to concerns directly.

The FCO has established three contact centres in Malaga, Hong Kong and Ottawa as a first point of contact to handle simple consular enquiries in order to free consular officers for front-line work.

In response to customer feedback and previous Foreign Affairs Committee concern the FCO is working on the process for redirecting calls and 'assisted digital' support for British nationals who are unable to access the internet.

Consular assistance cases by type, 2009-2014

Number of cases (000)



Supporting British citizens overseas

Things to look out for

In April 2013, the FCO launched its new consular strategy. This aims to:



Change assistance services to meet customer needs



Offer more specialised services through partners



Remove unnecessary bureaucracy and unhelpful processes



Streamline notarial and documentary services



Raise awareness of problems British citizens can face overseas

Reported progress so far includes withdrawing some notarial services where the private sector offers comparable and trusted alternatives.

Supporting, enabling and influencing

Overview

In addition to its three foreign policy priorities, the FCO also reports on what it calls 'Our Purpose'. This is an overarching function including pursuit of an activist foreign policy and strengthening the international system in support of UK values and interests. Examples include strengthening relationships with emerging powers and delivering more effective and modernised international institutions.

'Our Purpose' is further broken down into:

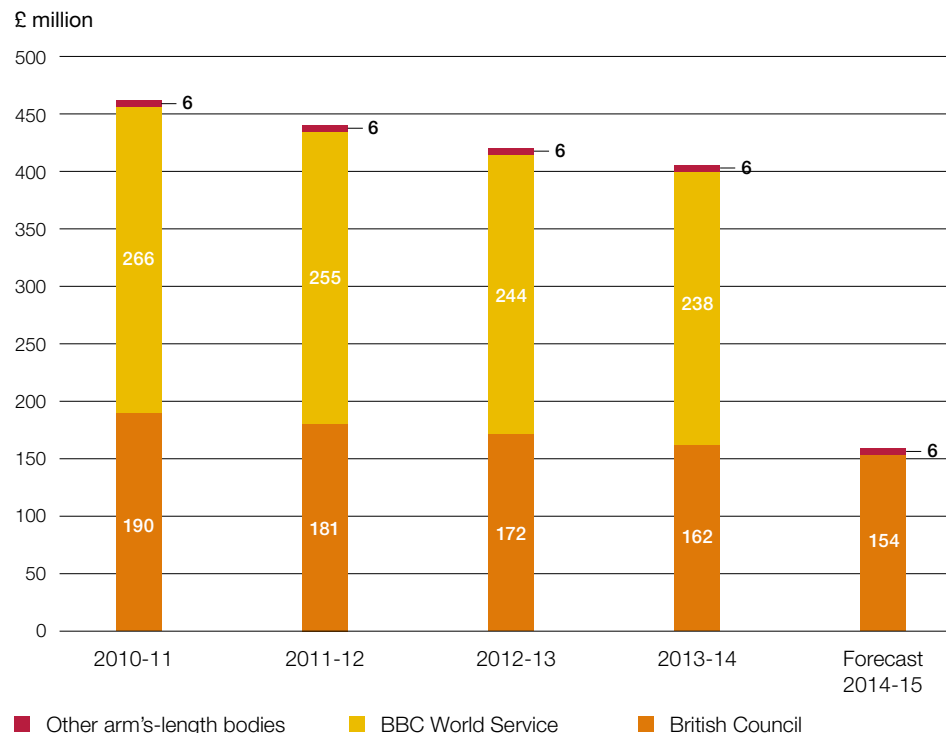
- International institutions and soft power; and
- Grant-in-aid to BBC World Service and British Council

In 2013-14, an average of 7,161 (46%) of the FCO's employees worked on the FCO's 'Our Purpose' business area. Of these 3,125 (44%) were locally engaged staff. This number is higher when compared to 2012-13, when the average headcount was 6,467 (39%).

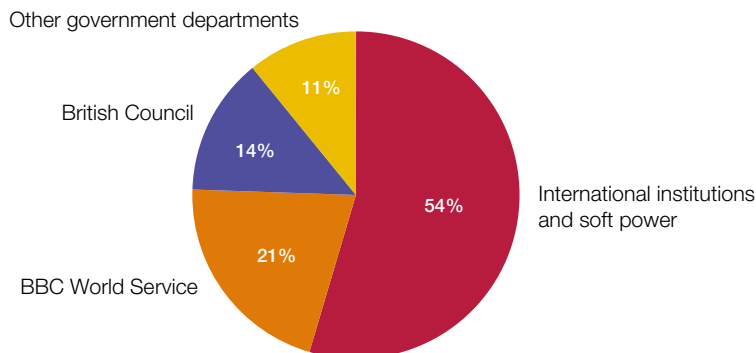
In 2013-14, total expenditure was £1,194 million, the majority of which related to international institutions and soft power. Of this £156 million was spent on subscriptions to international organisations including the United Nations (£85.3 million), Council of Europe (£26.5 million) and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (£19.7 million). From 2014-15, the BBC World Service will be funded by the BBC licence fee and not by grant-in-aid from the FCO. However, the objectives, priorities and targets of the BBC World Service were agreed with the Foreign Secretary and will be reported annually. Grant-in-aid to the British Council has decreased by 19% since 2010-11.

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. It is located in over 100 countries, operating programmes and services in the areas of English language, the arts, education and society. More than two-thirds of its income is generated from teaching English, administering exams overseas and from partnerships and contracts. The remainder comes from FCO as grant-in-aid.

Grant-in-aid given by FCO 2010-2014



Gross expenditure on supporting, enabling and influencing 2013-14



Appendix One

Sponsored bodies

