

Summary of FOI Requests on Cancelled and Curtailed Research Projects since May 2010

(Prepared by Simon Tanner, first published on Radical Statistics blog 25th February 2011: <http://radstats.wordpress.com/reducedstatistics/>)

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This summary reports on the findings of Freedom of Information Requests made to four Central Government Departments in December 2010 requesting information on cancelled and curtailed research projects and statistical data collection since the election of the Coalition Government on 12th May 2010.

Each Department was sent a standardised request for information by email (or via their main website) in December 2010. The request took the following form:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to make a formal request for information under the Freedom of Information Act.

I would like to request the following information about BIS.

Since 12 May 2010 please identify the total number, contracted cost and project title of:

- 1) All planned and ongoing (projects that started prior to May 2010) research projects that have been cancelled.
- 2) All planned and ongoing (projects that started prior to May 2010) statistical data collections that have been cancelled
- 3) All ongoing (projects that started prior to May 2010) research projects that have been stopped before the full contracted research design was completed

For the curtailed projects in 3) above:

- 4) Identify the total difference in £s between the original contracted research costs and the total paid to contractors to the point of cancellation.

Table 1a: Summary of Cut in Research Spending by Government Department between May – December 2010 by Number of Projects

Department	Number of Projects Cancelled	Number of Statistical Data Collection Cancelled	Number of Projects Curtailed	Total number of cancelled and curtailed projects
Communities and Local Government	15	2	3	20
Business, Innovation and Skills	0	0	3	3
Education	13	7	14	34
Work and Pensions	6	1	6	13
Total	34	10	26	70

Sources: Freedom of Information Requests Dec 2010. Departmental Resource Accounts 2009/10

Table 1b: Summary of Cut in Research Spending by Government Department between May – December 2010 by Value (£ 000's)

Department	Projected Cut Due to Cancelled Projects (£ 000's)	Cut in Spend Due to Curtailed Projects (£ 000's) ¹	Spend on Curtailed Projects (£ 000's) ²
Communities and Local Government	Not supplied	177.3	Not supplied
Business, Innovation and Skills	0	192.5	103.5
Education	7,497.1	0	0
Work and Pensions	321.4	728.9	612.4
Total	7,818.5	1,098.8	715.9

Sources: Freedom of Information Requests Dec 2010. Departmental Resource Accounts 2009/10

¹ Difference between contracted cost and amount paid to contractor up to curtailment.

² Total amount paid to contractor up to curtailment of project.

Table 1c: Summary of Cut in Research Spending by Government Department between May – December 2010 as % of 2009/10 Research Spend

Department	Research Spend in 2008/09 (£ 000's)	Research Spend in 2009/10 (£ 000's)	Specified Total Cut in Research Spending (£ 000's)	Total Cut as % of Spend in 09/10
Communities and Local Government ³	23,117	30,581	177.3	0.6
Business, Innovation and Skills ⁴	1,323	3,341	192.5	5.8
Education ⁵	11,599	13,263	7,497.1	56.5
Work and Pensions ⁶	14,524	18,929	1,050.3	5.5
Total	50,563	66,114	8,917.4	13.5

Sources: Freedom of Information Requests Dec 2010. Departmental Resource Accounts 2009/10

Responses were received for each of the Government Departments shown in **Tables 1a – 1c** above (specific responses from each Department can be found at **Appendix 2, Appendix 1** contains an overall summary).

³ DCLG Resource Accounts 2009/10, p.82. Available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/corporate/pdf/1636736.pdf>

⁴ BIS Resources Accounts 2009/10, p.107. Available at: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/docs/b/10-p102-bis-resource-accounts-2009-10.pdf>

⁵ Education Resource Accounts 2009/10, p.53. Available at: <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/d/dcsf%20%20%20resource%20accounts%202009%2010.pdf>

⁶ Work and Pensions Resource Accounts 2009/10 p.95. Available at: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/resource-accs-2009-10.pdf>

The key points from analysis of these responses shows that:

- 70 individual research projects and statistical data collections have been cancelled or curtailed since May 2010;
- Over £8.9 million of research and statistical data collection spend has been cut since May 2010;
- 84 per cent of the cut (over £7.4million) has taken place at the Department for Education;
- This equates to over half (56.5 per cent) of all research and development spend made by the Department for Education in 2009/10;
- The Department for Education has cancelled projects including the Evaluation of Academies (£400k), TELLUS survey (£1.3 million), and Survey of Disabled Children's Services indicator (£2.8m);
- Overall these Departments have spent almost £750k (£715.9k) on research which has been curtailed before the full methodology has been completed;
- The Department for Education has curtailed the most projects, 14 in total, that include an evaluation of trust schools, secondary school admissions, and a systematic review of conduct of serious case reviews though they claim no payments have been made against the curtailment of these projects;
- The Department for Work and Pensions has curtailed the highest value of projects curtailing six projects in total valued at over £3.3million (if completed) with over £612k being spent on this incomplete work. Curtailed projects included Lone Parent Policy Evaluation (£1.9m original cost, £0 spent), Local Employment Provision Evaluation (£555k original cost, £246k spent up to cancellation), and JobCentre Plus Mystery Shopping (£325k original cost, £228k spent up to cancellation);
- Cancellation of research projects can be mitigated by the reuse of those funds on new studies but recent figures on Government spend on research post-May 2010 show that this potential recycling is variable across Departments. In Education research spend to Dec 2010 was at 78% of the 2009/10 level, whilst Business, Innovation and Skills had spent just 27% of the 2009/10 budget;
- Curtailed research presents a more serious issues as projects curtailed on non-methodological reasons could equate to wasted funds making results unusable or unpublished;

- Figures provided to us show that over £715k was spent of curtailed projects to Dec 2010 which is likely to underreport spend on these projects and figures do not include curtailed work on the recently curtailed TellUs or Citizenship surveys;
- Impacts could be severe on contractors who include non-profit organistaions and university departments, already facing potentially damaging cuts to other funding sources being denied in excess of £1.1 million from the curtailed projects
- It is critical that reasons for curtailment are provided on an individual project basis so full assessment of this activity can be undertaken.

Further Questions

The questions that arise from this analysis are as follows:

1. On what basis were decisions to cancel projects made?
2. On what basis were decisions to curtail projects prior to the completion of the agreed research design made?
3. Where has the money cut subsequently been utilised?
4. How much is expected to be spent by each Department on Research and Development activity in 2010/11?
5. What impact do Ministers expect these cuts to have on evidence based policy making within their Department?

Appendix 1: Departmental Summary

Department	Comments	Total No. of Research Projects Cancelled	Total No. of Statistical Data Collections Cancelled	Total No. Projects Curtailed	Key Points
Education	A question mark against the curtailed work previous Departmental policy was to pay a %age of the overall fee at commissioning . FOI response suggests this has changed.	13	7	14	<p>£7.49 million worth of research and statistical projects cancelled including Evaluation of Academies (£400k), TELLUS survey (£1.3 million), and Survey of Disabled Children’s Services indicator (£2.8m).</p> <p>Curtailed projects include evaluation of trust schools, secondary school admissions, and a systematic review of conduct of serious case reviews but it is claimed no spend on these contrary to my knowledge of Departmental procedures (though these may have changed).</p>

Department	Comments	Total No. of Research Projects Cancelled	Total No. of Statistical Data Collections Cancelled	Total No. Projects Curtailed	Key Points
BIS	BIS works on a devolved research function model with teams managing and administering work in individual directorates.	0	0	3	<p>Two Employment Relations research contracts pertaining to Insured Legal Advice were curtailed, with some of the planned work now being performed in-house. One element of this Insured Legal Advice research was scaled back from £44,000 to £17,500; and the external evaluation was scaled back from £44,000 to zero.</p> <p>In the Higher Education policy area one project that has been stopped. It is worth noting that this was due to a low response rate to survey and not for financial reasons. The project's title was: 'Amplifying the voice of Muslim students - BIS-FOSIS-NUS Muslim student survey 2009'. Its original project cost was £221,399 and this has been reduced to £144,393.</p>

Department	Comments	Total No. of Research Projects Cancelled	Total No. of Statistical Data Collections Cancelled	Total No. Projects Curtailed	Key Points
Communities and Local Government	Limited cost information provided	15	2	3	<p>£177,373 has been cut through curtailing research on Fire Service and Resilience research and Housing Option Trailblazers.</p> <p>Cancelled projects include: Evaluation of HIPs, Review of Gypsies and Travellers Accommodation Guidance, and Expert Panels for Housing, Planning and Regeneration.</p>
Work and Pensions		6	1	6	<p>£321,400 worth of projects cancelled since May 2010 including Progress2Work Link Up Evaluation, and DWP Tell Us Once Programme.</p> <p>Almost £3.3m worth of research has been curtailed before the completion of the full research design with £612,448 being spent on incomplete research. Projects included Lone Parent Policy Evaluation (£1.9m original cost, £0 spent), Local Employment Provision Evaluation (£555k original cost, £246k spent up to cancellation), and JobCentre Plus Mystery Shopping (£325k original cost, £228k spent up to cancellation).</p>

Appendix 2: Departmental Responses to FOI Requests

Department for Communities and Local Government Response

10 January 2011

Simon Tanner

By email

Our Ref: f0004312

Your Ref:

Dear Simon,

I am writing in response to your e-mail of 7 December 2010 requesting information from the Department of Communities and Local Government about details of cancelled research projects.

Your request has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Answers to your questions are as follows:

Response to Q1

- 1) All planned and ongoing (projects that started prior to May 2010) research projects that have been cancelled.

Project title
Maximising the utility of Fire and Resilience Data and Information
Evaluation of Part M(Access to and use of buildings) of the Building Regulations
Evaluation of Part P – Electrical Safety – of the Building Regulations
Evaluation of Part H – Drainage and Waste Disposal – of the Building Regulations
Evaluation of Part E – Resistance to the Passage of Sound – of the Building Regulations
Evaluation of Part K (protection from falling collision and impact) of the Building Regulations
Evaluation of Part N (Glazing-safety in relation to impact, opening and cleaning) of the Building Regulations
Building Regulations – Drivers for Change
Co-ordination of the Communications Strategy for the 2010 Evaluation of the Building Regulations
Review of G&T (Gypsies and travellers)Accommodation Assessment guidance (2 New) Expert Panels for: Housing & Planning and Regeneration
Policy Impact & Evaluation Expert Panel
Economic and Social Research Council/Cross-Government Subjective Wellbeing and Public Policy Research Centre.
Assessing the effectiveness of spatial transport planning policy and implementation
Evaluation of the effectiveness of Home Information Packs (HIPs)

Response to Q2

2) All planned and ongoing (projects that started prior to May 2010) statistical data collections that have been cancelled.

- The Place Survey
- The Local Authority Tenant Satisfaction Surveys (STATUS)

Response to Q3

3) All ongoing (projects that started prior to May 2010) research projects that have been stopped before the full contracted research design was completed.

Project title
Expert Panel for Fire and Resilience Directorate
Supporting Performance Improvement in the Fire and Rescue Service
Evaluation of Housing Option Trailblazers

Response to Q4

For the curtailed projects in 3) above:

4) Identify the total difference in £s between the original contracted research costs and the total paid to contractors to the point of cancellation.

Project title	Total difference between original contracted cost and total paid to contractor at point of cancellation
Expert Panel for Fire and Resilience Directorate	£47,500
Supporting Performance Improvement in the Fire and Rescue Service	£38,500
Evaluation of Housing Option Trailblazers	£91,373

Please note that:

- i) The information provided applies to projects and statistical data collections for the DCLG-centre.
- ii) It is centrally-held information on social research projects and statistical data collections.
- iii) With regard to question 1 (All planned and ongoing [projects that started prior to May 2010] research projects that have been cancelled) we have taken this to mean social research projects that have reached tender stage but have subsequently been cancelled before contract award.

Communities and Local Government as an organisation aims to be as helpful as possible in the way it deals with requests for information under the Freedom of

Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. If, however, you are not satisfied with the way in which your request has been handled or the outcome, you may request an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this letter. Information about the Department's review procedures and how to apply for an internal review of your case is contained on the Department's website at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/corporate/pdf/1384250.pdf>. This also explains your right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision in the event that you remain dissatisfied following the Department's review.

Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted this Department's Internal Review procedure. The Information Commissioner's address and contact details are set out in the above leaflet.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Mitch Smith
Procurement Adviser

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills Response

BIS Ref: 11/0057

10 February 2011

Dear Mr Tanner

Thank you for your Freedom of Information Request updated on 12 January 2011 which was received by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills on 13 January.

You have asked for information concerning cancelled or curtailed research projects commissioned or to be commissioned by BIS covering the areas of the Department's Economic and Social Research Strategy.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act'), you have the right to:

- know whether we hold the information you have requested and;
- be provided with that information (subject to any exemptions under the Act which may apply).

The Department does hold information relevant to your request and we are pleased to provide you with the following details.

BIS has identified three incidents of cancelled or curtailed research projects and/or statistical data collections thus far under the new coalition Government (since 12 May 2010).

Two Employment Relations research contracts pertaining to Insured Legal Advice were curtailed, with some of the planned work now being performed in-house. One element of this Insured Legal Advice research was scaled back from £44,000 to £17,500; and the external evaluation was scaled back from £44,000 to zero.

In the Higher Education policy area one project that has been stopped. It is worth noting that this was due to a low response rate to survey and not for financial reasons. The project's title was: 'Amplifying the voice of Muslim students - BIS-FOSIS-NUS Muslim student survey 2009'. Its original project cost was £221,399 and this has been reduced to £144,393.

Appeals Procedure

If you are unhappy with the result of your request for information, you may request an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this email. If you wish to request an internal review, please contact us.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioners Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane

Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Kind regards

Chris Bryant

Christopher Bryant
020 7215 1778

Department of Education Response

Dear Mr Tanner,

Thank you for your request for information, which was received on 26 November. You requested the total number, contracted cost and title of projects which, since 12 May 2010, were in the following categories:

- 1) All planned and ongoing (projects that started prior to May 2010) research projects that have been cancelled.
- 2) All planned and ongoing (projects that started prior to May 2010) statistical data collections that have been cancelled.
- 3) All ongoing (projects that started prior to May 2010) research projects that have been stopped before the full contracted research design was completed.

For the curtailed projects in 3) above:

- 4) Identify the total difference in £s between the original contracted research costs and the total paid to contractors to the point of cancellation.

I have dealt with your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

A copy of the information is enclosed.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are unhappy with the way your request has been handled, you should make a complaint to the Department by writing to me within two calendar months of the date of this letter. Your complaint will be considered by an independent review panel, who were not involved in the original consideration of your request.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint to the Department, you may then contact the Information Commissioner's Office.

Yours sincerely

Liz Smith

Analytical Management Team

2 St Paul's Place
 125 Norfolk Street
 Sheffield S1 2FJ
 Email: liz.smith@education.gsi.gov.uk
 Tel: 0114 2742238

1) Since 12 May 2010, the research projects which are planned and ongoing (that started prior to May 2010) and have been cancelled are listed below.

Ref No.	Title	Contracted cost
2008003	Evaluation To Assess The Impact Of The Programme Of Support For Schools And Financial Capability	£403,179.00
2008063	Evaluation of the Impact of the Languages Review At Key Stage 4	£326,055.50
2008086	Find Your Talent Programme: Evaluation	£675,440.00
2008090	TELLUS Survey	£1,331,562.00
2008100	Survey of disabled children's families to measure Disabled Children's Services Indicator	£2,849,026.00
2008149	Evaluation of the Open School for Languages	£173,589.00
2009036	Modern Foreign Languages - campaign awareness and message take out tracking	£96,500.00
2009037	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) campaign awareness and message take out tracking	£96,500.00
2009149	Evaluation of Academies	£400,045.00
2009193	Evaluation of the Children and Learner Strategic Adviser (CLSA) Service	£159,933.00
2009198	Customer Tracking Omnibus – Young People Division Communications Indicators	£28,140.00
2009222	Teachers Careers: The Behavioural Impact of Changes to the Economy	£185,030.00
2009227	Youth Community Action Evaluation	£425,542.50

2) Since 12 May 2010, the statistical data collections which are planned and ongoing (that started prior to May 2010) and have been cancelled are listed below.

Title	Contracted cost
Improving Information Sharing and Management Programme benefits survey	£11,000 per year
'Priority' schools absence data	Nil – all work was done in-house
Youth Taskforce project monitoring	Nil – all work was done in-house
Positive Activities for Young People (provision of)	Nil – all work was done in-house and used an existing system
Tellus	Nil – all work was done in-house
PE and Sport Survey	£335,650 in 2009/10; this was the last year of the survey
School and Local Authority Target Setting	Nil – all work was done in-house

3) Since 12 May 2010, the research projects which are ongoing (that started prior to May 2010) and have been stopped before the full contracted research design was completed are listed below.

Ref No.	Title
2009102	Investigating current trends in school practices in teaching, learning and assessment at key stage 3
2009106	A literature Review on the use of incentives and rewards
2009123	Longitudinal follow-up of children and young people segmentation
2009147	Evaluation of Trust Schools
2009219	Impact of two year old pilot on Foundation Stage Profile
2009226	An investigation into Assessment for Learning and the use of Assessing Pupils' Progress in schools
2009230	Employer Engagement Measurement
2009231	Evaluation of the 14-19 Prospectus and Common Application Process
2009239	Evaluation of the Transition Support Programme
2009240	Pupil-level school preferences and offers data for secondary school admissions
2010001	Home Education – A Feasibility Study of the Educational Experience and Attainment of Home Educated Children
2010002	Systematic Evaluation of Methodologies for undertaking Serious Case Reviews and other cases that present opportunities for learning
2010009	Tellus Survey 2011-2014
2010010	School-Level Survey Of Parents and Carers For The School Report Card: Feasibility Study

For the curtailed projects in the table above, no funds had been paid to contractors to the point of cancellation. All of the research projects in '3' above were cancelled before any contractor had been appointed.

Department for Work and Pensions Response

Simon Tanner
simon@research-as-evidence.co.uk

Your Reference:

Our Ref: FoI 3341

Date: 17 December 2010

Dear Mr Tanner

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request dated 26 November 2010. You asked:

Since 12 May 2010 please identify the total number, contracted cost and project title of:

1) All planned and ongoing (projects that started prior to May 2010) research projects that have been cancelled.

2) All planned and ongoing (projects that started prior to May 2010) statistical data collections that have been cancelled

3) All ongoing (projects that started prior to May 2010) research projects that have been stopped before the full contracted research design was completed

For the curtailed projects in 3) above:

4) Identify the total difference in £s between the original contracted research costs and the total paid to contractors to the point of cancellation

Planned and Ongoing Research Projects Cancellations

Background

At the beginning of each operational year, a planned programme of research is agreed with Ministers. A small number of projects are then approved in-year depending on emerging priorities. In the operational year 2010/11 plans were agreed in August due to the election and a new administration. In years without an election it is usually agreed by April. For the programme agreed for 2009/10, most of the projects began in 2009 or early 2010.

In the weeks between the general election being announced and the election being held, restrictions are imposed on the types of contract that the Department can let.

During this period, DWP only issues contracts that are essential to the running of the Department.

Planned Research Cancellations

The following table contains planned research projects that were on the original 2009/10 research programme or were approved in-year and then were due to be let during April and May 2010, but were put on hold due to the pre-election restrictions that came into force when the election was announced. The letting of these contracts was subsequently cancelled. As the contracts had not yet been let, the prices included in the table are what the Department anticipated the projects would have cost had they gone ahead. There were no costs associated with the cancellation of these planned research projects.

Planned Research Projects that were subsequently cancelled	Projected Cost
Progress2Work Link Up Evaluation	£100,000
DWP Lean Programme Stakeholder Support	£8,400
Baselining Adviser Flexibilities	£63,000
Customer Transition Project	£50,000
DWP Change Programme - "Third Party Review of Engagement"	£50,000
DWP Tell Us Once programme "Language/Planning/People Strengths Identification and Development"	£50,000

Ongoing Research Cancellations

For the purposes of answering questions 1 and 3 we are taking "ongoing projects that have been cancelled" and "projects stopped before the full contracted research design was completed" to mean the same thing. The following table shows the title of ongoing research projects that have been stopped since 12 May 2010, along with the original contract value, how much the contract will actually cost and the value of the saving.

In the majority of cases where contracts were cancelled, the Department's project managers negotiated with suppliers to ensure that outputs useful to the Department such as datasets and reports were still produced during the contract notice period.

Ongoing Research Projects that have been cancelled since 12 May 2010	Contracted Cost	Cost at Cancellation	Saving
Local Employment Provision Evaluation	£555,000	£246,000	£309,000
Balanced Score Card	£112,410.55	£17,923.10	£94,487.45
Jobsearch Project	£249,963.03	£102,031	£147,932.03
JobCentre Plus Mystery Shopping	£325,327	£228,084	£97,243
Lone Parent Policy Evaluation Research	£1,926,773	Negotiation ongoing	Negotiation ongoing
Customer Insight team - "Provision of DWP Key Drivers Customer Satisfaction Survey".	£98,750	£18,450	£80,300

Planned and Ongoing Statistical Data Collection Cancellations

Background

Most DWP statistical data is collected using internal administrative databases and systems rather than through external surveys. External suppliers of employment services also provide performance information as part of their contracts with the Department. As a result, only the following ongoing statistical data collection has been cancelled and there have been no planned statistical data collection cancellations.

Ongoing Statistical Data Collection Cancellations

The following table contains all planned statistical data collections that were cancelled after 12 May 2010.

Ongoing Statistical Data Collections that have been cancelled since 12 May 2010	Contracted Cost	Cost at Cancellation	Saving
Data for Jobcentre Plus business targets no longer reported against (already in public domain – see link)	No contract.	NA	NA

Yours sincerely

James Street
Social Research Framework Team

Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act

If you are not happy with this response you may request an internal review by e-mailing freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk. or by writing to DWP, Central FoI Team, 2nd Floor The Adelphi, 1-11, John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HT. Any review request should be submitted within two months of the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision. Generally the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted our own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF www.ico.gov.uk