

Thank you for your email of 7 June 2011 requesting information about the Department's use of government procurement cards (GPC). Your request has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Regarding your first question, details of all spending on the Department's GPCs since April 2008 have already been published on our website here: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/foi/disclosure-log/disclosurelog2011/may2011/gpc200811/>

Regarding your second question, there are currently 36 GPC cards on issue within the Department. They are issued directly to specific members of staff who are advised to store the cards in a secure place. I cannot provide you with the card numbers as this is secure information. Nor can I provide you with the names of the cardholders as the Department considers that the names of staff issued with GPCs are exempt from disclosure under section 40(2) of the FOI Act.

There are processes in place regarding the authorisation to use the cards, details of which are contained in the Cardholders Manual, a copy of which is enclosed. This manual is in the process of being updated and a revised version is expected to be in use before the end of July 2011.

Total spending through the GPC has halved between 2008-09 and 2010-11. The Department has reduced the amount of cards it holds in the past Financial Year from 73 to 36 and has reduced both transaction and overall credit limits to manage spend more effectively.

As recommended by Sir Philip Green's report into Government efficiency, the Department is putting in place more robust checks and balances over the use of the Government Procurement Card. All spend is subject to approval by line management and monitored centrally to ensure it is justified. The Department is committed to transparency in the use of the Government Procurement Card.