

Thank you for your email of 28 June 2011 where you requested information about expenditure on catering within the Department.

The provision of food and drink at meetings for staff is treated as hospitality. This includes sandwiches and teas/coffees and soft drinks provided for official functions

The table below shows what the Department has spent on hospitality in the last financial year, 2010-11.

April	£56,819.50
May	£47,093.70
June	£26,688.82
July	£21,291.93
August	£3,655.78
September	£26,850.78
October	£9,262.61
November	£2,625.81
December	£2,293.52
January	£4,056.01
February	£2,523.29
March	£2,592.35
Total	£205,754.10

These figures have been drawn from the Department's finance system as spend with the Department's in house supplier and external suppliers. It also includes expenditure on food and drink through the Government Procurement Card.

It would only be possible to identify the expenditure on 'sandwiches' as a sub set of these figures at excessive cost as it would involve examining individual invoices. I estimate the cost of locating and retrieving this information would significantly exceed £600. The Department is not obliged, by virtue of s.12 (1) of the FOI Act, to comply with a request where the appropriate limit of £600 would be exceeded.

The new administration has taken a series of steps to cut spending in this area. As an illustration, as Ministers have informed Parliament, the comparative spending on hospitality in 2009-10 under the last Government was £456,142.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm110201/text/110201w0003.htm#11020175000750>