

Briefing: quango database

September 2025

Key findings

- In 2023-24, **438 quangos** collectively accounted for **£391 billion** in public expenditure. This is equivalent to **32 per cent of total managed expenditure** in 2023-24.¹
- Quangos **received £411 billion** in total income in 2023-24. Of this, **£376 billion was government funded income**.
- In 2023-24, there were **almost 500,000** staff members working in quangos.
- **Gordon Brown** was the prime minister that created the most quangos per year, at almost **13 for each year he was in office**.
- **Tony Blair** created the most quangos of any prime minister at **92** in total, equivalent to **9 each year** he was in office. Blair is followed by **John Major with 55** and **David Cameron with 54**. A total of **30 prime ministers** have created at least **one quango**. The last prime minister, in office for a full year, who **did not create** a new quango was **Sir Anthony Eden** who was in office from 1955-57.
- The **Department for Culture, Media and Sport** sponsors the **most quangos** of any department in 2023-24, at **41**. It is followed by the **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs at 38** and the **Ministry of Justice at 35**.

Background

A quango is a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation. They are founded by the government and typically operate at 'arms-length' from it. The Cabinet Office classifies many but not all quangos as arms-length bodies or non-ministerial departments. This note uses data from the Cabinet Office 'ALB Landscape Analysis 2023-24, as well as freedom of information requests, to compile the TaxPayers' Alliance quango database.²

Quangos are taking an increasingly central role in the governance of the UK, reflected by the expansion of both their staffing numbers and budgets. Often operating beyond the initial scope of their brief at creation, quangos are frequently cited as a reason for the lack of accountability from governments and ministers.

This note and the quango database provides a detailed breakdown of the role of each quango, their funding and expenditure, their sponsoring department and their staff headcount. The database also provides information on the quango's founding year and the prime minister at creation.

Data

Table 1: ten quangos receiving the largest sum of government funded income, 2023-24

Quango	Sponsoring department	Government funded income
NHS England	Department of Health and Social Care	175,000,000,000
Education and Skills Funding	Department for Education	72,368,726,000
HM Revenue & Customs	HM Revenue & Customs	40,757,815,000
Network Rail	Department for Transport	17,644,897,000

¹ Office for Budget Responsibility, *Public finances databank – August 2025*, 21 August 2025, www.obr.uk/data/ (accessed 12 September 2025).

² Cabinet Office, *ALB Landscape Analysis 2023/24*, https://co-public-bodies.github.io/ALB_Landscape_Analysis_2023_24/ (accessed 11 August 2025).

Quango	Sponsoring department	Government funded income
UK Research and Innovation	Department for Science, Innovation and Technology	10,268,053,903
High Speed Two (HS2) Limited	Department for Transport	7,276,793,000
HM Prison and Probation Service	Ministry of Justice	5,558,501,000
National Highways	Department for Transport	5,008,000,000
Nuclear Decommissioning Authority	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero	3,005,000,000
Homes England	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	2,914,168,000

Table 2: ten quangos receiving the largest sum of non-government income, 2023-24

Quango name	Sponsoring department	Other income
NHS England	Department of Health and Social Care	5,879,423,000
BBC	Department for Culture, Media and Sport	5,277,000,000
Network Rail	Department for Transport	4,035,388,255
NHS Resolution	Department of Health and Social Care	2,725,600,000
Nuclear Decommissioning Authority	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero	992,000,000
Homes England	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	824,915,000
British Council	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office	778,900,000
HM Courts and Tribunals Service	Ministry of Justice	777,787,025
Financial Conduct Authority	HM Treasury	731,000,000
Government Property Agency	Cabinet Office	561,900,000

Table 3: ten quangos employing the largest number of staff, 2023-24

Quango name	Sponsoring department	Number of staff
HM Prison and Probation Service	Ministry of Justice	64,920
HM Revenue & Customs	HM Revenue & Customs	61,185
Network Rail	Department for Transport	40,026
BBC	Department for Culture, Media and Sport	21,795
HM Courts and Tribunals Service	Ministry of Justice	14,728
NHS England	Department of Health and Social Care	14,599
Environment Agency	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	12,093
Defence Equipment and Support	Ministry of Defence	12,018
Sellafield Ltd	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority	11,038
Police Service of Northern Ireland	Northern Irish government	8,975

Table 4: ten prime ministers with most quangos created as of 2023-24

Prime minister	Number of quangos created	Quangos created per year in office
Tony Blair	92	9.2
John Major	55	9.2
David Cameron	54	9
Gordon Brown	38	12.7
Margaret Thatcher	37	3.4
Theresa May	27	9
Harold Wilson	19	2.4
Boris Johnson	17	5.7
Edward Heath	14	3.5
David Lloyd George	8	1.3

Table 5: ten Whitehall departments sponsoring the most quangos as of 2023-24

Department	Number of quangos sponsored
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	41
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	38
Ministry of Justice	35
Home Office	29
Ministry of Defence	25
Department for Transport	24
Department of Health and Social Care	23
Cabinet Office	23
Department for Business and Trade	23
Department for Education	19

Methodology

To compile this dataset, the Cabinet Office 'ALB Landscape Analysis 2023-24' has been used to collate information on funding, expenditure, number of staff and year founded.³ For those quangos not included in the Cabinet Office data a freedom of information request was sent to obtain the information. Often the organisations would respond with their annual accounts rather than specific figures. When this is the case the most relevant figures in their accounts have been taken.

When possible, expenditure is taken as a total expenditure figure. If total expenditure was unavailable, then total operating expenditure is used. Usually, government funding is disclosed in annual accounts as 'grant-in-aid' although the name can vary, this figure has been used for those quangos not included in the Cabinet Office report. Other income was often not available for quangos not listed in the Cabinet Office data, as it was unclear what constituted this figure. When this is the case the total income figure will only account for government funded income. Number of staff uses full time equivalent (FTE) when possible and total headcount when not. The year founded is given as the earliest possible creation date, sometimes this is from the act of parliament that created it. The sponsoring department is usually listed in the annual accounts, government website or quangos website.

³ Cabinet Office, *ALB Landscape Analysis 2023/24*, https://co-public-bodies.github.io/ALB_Landscape_Analysis_2023_24/ (accessed 11 August 2025).