

For a working lobbyist, a connection to a UK Cabinet Minister could be worth up to £112,000 a year.

Former Defence Secretary Liam Fox's resignation after his relationship with Adam Werritty came under scrutiny has raised serious questions about the influence of special friends, business and donors on policy making. After researching the lobbying industry in the US, [Mirko Draca](#) argues the UK needs to implement a lobbying disclosure regime to increase transparency and trust in government.



It is no secret that lobbyists play an increasingly important role in the political system of the UK, United States and other democracies. In the US alone, last year almost \$4 billion was spent on lobbying US federal officials- more than twice the amount spent ten years earlier. Our recent study of how former congressional staffers benefit from Washington's 'revolving door' looked at the revenues of US lobbyists who were previously employed by senators. These 'politically connected' lobbyists suffered a 24% fall in revenues when the Senator that they used to work for left office. This fall in revenue was worth about \$177,000 (£112,000) in business and represents the value of a connection to a sitting legislator.

We claim this figure can be used as a benchmark value for being connected to a serving UK cabinet minister, who, like senators, have a lot of strategic power in policy making and seem to be the main target of lobbying activity in the UK political system.

However, the UK government simply does not demand the registration and reporting of lobbying activity in the same way as in the United States. There is no equivalent of the US Lobbying Disclosure Act which was introduced in the US in 1995, meaning that there is no serious, publicly reported data on lobbying – this would make replicating our US research very hard in the UK.

This lack of information has allowed lobbying in Britain to take place in the form of a shadow economy, as demonstrated by the case of former Labour cabinet minister [Stephen Byers](#), who was secretly recorded offering himself to potential employers outside government as 'a sort of cab for hire' for up to £5,000 a day. Recently, there have been signs of change in Britain in the aftermath of the [MPs expenses scandal](#). The coalition government has pledged to reform current practices. But this ambition should be treated with some scepticism, particularly as the [Liam Fox scandal](#) continues to unfold. There are a lot of vested interests intent on keeping lobbying activity unreported, and so the 'new politics' (remember that?) could well end up being a lot like the old politics.

This post is a shortened version of our paper 'Revolving Door Lobbyists' available online [in full](#) and [in brief](#).