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Labour: Mission-led Government

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Labour's missions

After a landslide win in July 2024, six months later Labour's victory has swiftly turned sour. The party's return to government continues to be hounded by inherited fiscal issues such as stunted economic growth, under-investment in public services and large-scale public debt. Polling [consistently ranks Labour from first to third place](#) within the margin of error. By the beginning of 2026, the government will be around half-way through their usable time in power before the next election. Its progress in alleviating these pressures throughout 2025 [will be critical to its chances of re-election](#). To do this, it has set out long-term ambitions (through five key missions) and medium-term milestones (through the [Plan for Change](#)), in an attempt to emphasise its focus on stability – and in the hope of sharply drawing contrast with the previous 14 years of Conservative leadership.

The delivery of [five key missions](#) is at the heart of Labour's approach to government. They are: **kickstart economic growth; make Britain a clean energy superpower; build an NHS fit for the future; break down the barriers to opportunity; and take back our streets**. Outlined in 2023, they became the backbone of the party's general election manifesto. Now, they are each a “north star” that guides Labour's political project.

Why mission-led government?

Cross-departmental government that is truly effective has long been considered the holy grail of Whitehall. Traditional structures give secretaries of state broad and wide-ranging powers by which they occupy their own fiefdoms, reflected in the binary questions put to them in the Commons on their department's work. But efficient delivery requires working across multiple departments, and almost always through the Treasury. Labour's missions, led by ministerial boards, are a way to join departments towards goals that are tightly controlled by the centre.

Internal dynamics matter. For example, the relationship between the Chief of Staff and their colleagues sets the tone for the work at hand. In the case of Sue Gray, unpopular decisions on appointments and pay led to a lack of confidence, briefings against her in the media and her ultimate departure from Downing Street. Without the centre working well, governing can be uncoordinated and internally competitive.

Mission boards could achieve departmental cohesion through a wider re-organisation of Whitehall. This is not unheard of; when in government, the Conservatives chopped and changed departments and responsibilities, particularly post-2016. Such significant shifts in governance are formally known as “machinery of government” changes and involve moving responsibilities from one department to another or making a whole new department. Informal changes to the way of doing things can be implemented more subtly. The mission boards have historical precedents, too. In the mid-1970s, Harold Wilson created the Downing Street Policy Unit, which gives secondary advice separate from the civil service, while earlier on, Winston Churchill established (and later abolished) cross-departmental Cabinet “overlords”.

Making structures more accountable and strengthening central control and coordination are more manageable methods than a broad restructuring of Whitehall. Labour's changes will be made by ministers and civil servants who have a view on how to control the levers of power, rather than by innovative disruptors like Dominic Cummings; however, both share an ambition of improving government policy-making and delivery.

What are mission boards?

Each mission is a long-term ambition, and each mission has a board, to coordinate the progress towards that ambition across departments. The concept at the heart of the Labour government was pioneered by Professor Mariana Mazzucato, from UCL's Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose. Both her and the Institution have been highly influential on Keir Starmer.

There is no blueprint, but mission boards (wherever they are applied) tend to prioritise private investment and involvement. They are used to avoid short-term and reactive decision-making, known as "crisis-cash-repeat". The challenge will be in maintaining collaboration across levels of government, the private sector and the public, and in ensuring accountability.

Structure

Labour's missions are each led by a ministerial panel, chaired by the Prime Minister who (alongside his aides) will provide overall direction. He is advised by key mandarins at the very top of government. Morgan McSweeney, his Chief of Staff, will oversee delivery from inside 10 Downing Street. The Cabinet Secretary, Sir Chris Wormald, assists the Prime Minister to deliver the government's mission-driven programme. The pioneer of "deliverology" and delivery units in the civil service, Sir Michael Barber, is the Prime Minister's Adviser on Effective Delivery, working specifically on the five missions, and previously served as head of Tony Blair's Delivery Unit from 2001 to 2005.

A mission delivery unit, an "executive Cabinet", has been established that would make the "most important strategic decisions", including setting spending priorities, ahead of presenting them to Cabinet. The unit is headed by Clare Swinson, former DHSC Director General, and consists of the "gang of four": the Prime Minister, the Chancellor, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The Cabinet Office has confirmed that civil service appointments to the unit and boards are overseen by the Civil Service Commission.

Labour's pre-election publication "[A 'mission-driven' government to end 'sticking plaster' politics](#)" explored how the missions could rethink government structures.

1. **Organising government around a shared vision:** This could mean new structures and ways of working to facilitate collaboration, including replacing some of the cabinet committees with new delivery focused cross-cutting mission boards.
2. **Focusing on real-world impact:** This could be done by putting citizens centre stage from the outset, making sure policy is built around meeting people's needs.
3. **Focusing on the ends, with flexibility and innovation on the means:** This could mean creating the conditions for innovation to thrive and technology to be harnessed for the public good, boosted by our industrial strategy focus on data and life sciences, and reviewing the institutional landscape of how we identify innovative practice and scale it up.
4. **Devolving decision-making away from Westminster to those with the experience, knowledge and expertise:** This could mean handing powers to local leaders to deliver the improvements they want to see, and letting local people make the big calls about what affects them and not leaving everything to decision-makers in Whitehall.

5. **Injecting more accountability into government:** This could mean new statutory obligations to report to Parliament on progress and requiring departments and providers to publish the measures and data against which success will be judged.
6. **Approaching problems with a long-term, preventative approach:** This could mean providing long-term, integrated funding settlements to local leaders to provide greater financial certainty for local areas, where they have the capacity and accountability to manage it.

Key people

In speeches and at events, Cabinet ministers have consistently referred to the almost totemistic mission boards. However, the nature of these boards can be nebulous. As far as there are memberships, their exact composition is [kept out of the public domain](#). The central leadership is top-level:

Prime Minister **Keir Starmer** pm.post.ext@no10.gov.uk

Deputy Prime Minister **Angela Rayner** PSAngelaRayner@communities.gov.uk

Chancellor **Rachel Reeves** action.chancellors@hmtreasury.gov.uk

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster **Pat McFadden** psmcfadden@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Minister without Portfolio **Ellie Reeves** pselliereeves@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Chief of Staff **Morgan McSweeney** MMcSweeney@no10.gov.uk

Deputy Chief of Staff **Vidhya Alakeson** VALakeson@no10.gov.uk

Deputy Chief of Staff **Jill Cuthbertson** JCuthbertson@No10.gov.uk

Cabinet Secretary **Sir Chris Wormald** cabinet.secretary@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Principle Private Secretary **Nin Pandit** NPandit@no10.gov.uk

Head of Mission Delivery Unity **Clare Swinson** psclaraswinson@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Director of Policy Delivery and Innovation **Liz Lloyd** LLoyd@No10.gov.uk

Lead Non-Executive Member to the Board of DHSC **Alan Milburn** n/a

Prime Minister's Adviser on Effective Delivery **Sir Michael Barber** n/a

Kickstart economic growth

The Plan for Change highlighted that “[economic growth is the number one mission of the government](#)”. In the wake of the estimated £22 billion black hole in public services left by the previous government, Chancellor Rachel Reeves' first Budget in October 2024 was (to put it lightly) [unpopular across the country](#). In the Budget, she announced [tax rises worth £40 billion](#) in order to fund the NHS and other public services. The government also set out their seven pillars of the growth mission, which are as follows:

- Economic and fiscal stability – macroeconomic and financial stability, fiscal sustainability and policy certainty
- Investment, infrastructure and planning – higher public and private investment, improved infrastructure like transport, and planning reform

- Place – regional growth through investment, devolution and reform, and support for house building
- People – more people in good jobs and improved employment prospects, skills and productivity
- Industrial strategy and trade – an industrial strategy and trade to bolster growth-driving sectors and free, open trade
- Innovation – support for scientific breakthroughs, research and development, and the diffusion of technologies including AI
- Net zero – net zero delivered in a way that supports growth and captures economic opportunities

Using their current growth mission, the government has pledged to deliver a milestone of higher living standards across the UK by the end of this Parliament, to be measured using higher Real Household Disposable Income per person, and Gross Domestic Product per capita.

Their other missions for this Parliament include:

- Delivering growth by working in partnership with businesses
- Ensuring every nation and region realises its full potential
- Driving innovation, investment and the adoption of technology to seize opportunities of a future economy
- Helping people get jobs, stay in work and progress in their careers

Bodies	Detail	Stakeholders with responsibility
Mission Delivery Board	National Growth Mission Delivery Champion.	Dan Tomlinson MP (National Mission Champion for Growth).
New Towns Taskforce	The government's new towns programme will include large-scale new communities built on greenfield land and separated from other nearby settlements. Urban extensions and regeneration schemes will also be included. Each settlement will contain at least 10,000 homes. The New Towns Taskforce advises ministers on housing growth locations.	Chair: Sir Michael Lyons; Deputy Chair: Dame Kate Barker.
AI Opportunities Unit	Created within DSIT to accelerate AI implementation. Pools expertise to seize AI benefits and advance national strategies.	Led by Matt Clifford (ARIA Chair); overseen by DSIT. Leads the AI Opportunities Action Plan; DSIT implements proposals.
Office for Investment	Expanded to improve the government's ability to land investments by originating deals, clearing barriers, and working with local leaders to develop propositions.	Jointly overseen by HMT-DBT Minister for Investment.
Digital Centre of Government	Focuses on driving a renewed strategy for digital transformation across public sectors.	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Science and Innovation Secretary, and Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA)	Established to support infrastructure delivery, validate business cases and enhance project oversight.	To be operational by 2025; linked to Treasury funding and infrastructure strategy.
Office for Value for Money (OVfM)	Evaluates spending efficiency and makes recommendations for systemic reform.	Chaired by David Goldstone.
Regulatory Innovation Office (RIO)	Supports regulators in updating and streamlining regulatory processes. Ensures cross-department collaboration on innovation.	Operates under the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.
Planning Systems Changes	Introduces mandatory housing targets for 1.5 million homes. Conducts reviews of greenbelt and grey-belt lands for housing needs.	Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner oversees policy enforcement.

Make Britain a clean energy superpower

Since taking office, Ed Miliband has moved quickly to implement Labour's clean energy agenda, with the establishment of [Great British Energy](#), a publicly owned company to drive clean power generation, boost energy security and create jobs. The government has lifted the ban on [onshore wind](#), approved a considerable number of solar projects and set a funding commitment of £21.7 billion in [carbon capture and storage](#). Alongside these efforts, the [Warm Homes Plan](#) is being rolled out in a bid to improve energy efficiency and cut bills.

Labour's milestone for this Parliament is to secure the UK's energy supply with home-grown, clean power. To reach this goal, the government is aiming to achieve at least 95% of low carbon generation by 2030. The newly formed [Clean Power 2030 taskforce](#), led by Chris Stark, is accelerating progress by removing barriers to clean energy projects, with a forthcoming Clean Power 2030 Action Plan set to outline reforms to planning and grid infrastructure. Great British Energy will, once set up, be a publicly owned company focusing on clean power generation.

The government's other aims include:

- Ensuring the economic benefits of clean energy and net zero are felt by workers and billpayers
- Working in partnership with businesses to provide long-term certainty and public investment
- Improving energy infrastructure across the country
- Harnessing cutting-edge clean power technology

Bodies	Detail	Stakeholders with responsibility
Mission Delivery Board	National Energy Mission Delivery Champion.	Tom Hayes MP (National Mission Champion for Energy).

		Chris Stark, former chief executive of the Climate Change Committee, has been appointed to lead the control centre
GB Energy	Investment vehicle to support renewable energy projects. Distributes grants for community-led clean energy. Focuses on energy independence, job creation and bill relief.	Chaired by Juergen Maier.
Solar Taskforce	Relaunched to deliver a solar roadmap for 2030.	Co-chaired by Ed Miliband and Chris Hewett (Solar Energy CEO).
Wind Taskforce	Focuses on accelerating onshore wind deployment across the UK. Addresses barriers to implementation.	Co-chaired by Ed Miliband and Matthieu Hue (EDF Renewables CEO). Supported by Deputy Chairs Michael Shanks MP, Minister for Energy Security and Net Zero, Sarah Redwood, Director of Renewable Electricity Directorate, DESNZ, and a core membership made up of expert representatives from the onshore wind industry.
National Wealth Fund	Manages £7.3 billion for investments in gigafactories, carbon capture, and clean steel. Attracts private investment with a 3:1 match ratio target.	Chaired by Green Finance Institute CEO Dr Rhian-Mari Thomas.

Build an NHS fit for the future

In the face of Lord Darzi's [findings in his independent investigation](#) that the NHS is in a "critical condition", the government has pledged to "build an NHS fit for the future" with earlier diagnosis and treatment and a focus on early intervention to tackle NHS waiting lists.

By the end of this Parliament, the government's mission is to [meet the NHS standard so that 92% of patients should wait no longer than 18 weeks](#) from referral to the start of consultant-led treatment of non-urgent health conditions.

Their other missions include:

- Transforming how elective care is delivered
- Transforming patients' experience of care
- Transforming the model of care to make it more sustainable

Bodies	Detail	Stakeholders with responsibility
Mission Delivery Board	National Health Mission Delivery Champion.	Laura Kyrke-Smith MP (National Mission Champion for Health).
10-Year Turnaround Plan	Addresses NHS operational challenges identified in Lord Darzi's independent investigation. Pledges a transformative	Responsibility of Laura Kyrke-Smith MP.

	approach to healthcare infrastructure and delivery.	
Care Quality Commission (CQC) Reform	Enhances oversight of healthcare inspections and streamlines systems.	Independent review led by Dr Penny Dash; implementation by Sir Mike Richards.
Changes to the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme	Expands funding eligibility to newly qualified GPs. Increases specialist availability within NHS multi-disciplinary teams.	Policy approved by Health Secretary Wes Streeting.

Breaking down the barriers to opportunity

In terms of education, the government's first aim is to ensure that a record proportion of children [starting school are ready to learn](#). This progress will be measured by 75% of five-year-olds reaching a good level of development in the early years foundation stage assessment by 2028. If achieved, this would mean that an additional 40,000 to 45,000 children would hit these developmental goals a year.

The government's next steps for reaching this goal are to:

- Roll out government-funded childcare support to improve access to childcare
- Work in partnership with the childcare sector to reform training and support for the workforce
- Strengthen and join up family service in order to support families through pregnancy and early childhood

Bodies	Detail	Stakeholders with responsibility
Mission Delivery Board	National Opportunity Mission Champion.	Sarah Smith MP.
Skills England	Oversees post-16 education strategy to address skill gaps and ensure value for money. Manages transition from apprenticeship levy to the Growth and Skills Levy.	Interim Chair: Richard Pennycook; under Department for Education.
Curriculum and Assessment Review	Introduces a standardised curriculum required by all schools for students up to age 16.	Led by Becky Francis CBE.
Child Poverty Strategy	Establishes a taskforce to address root causes of child poverty and coordinates interdepartmental efforts.	Co-led by Work & Pensions Secretary Liz Kendall and Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson.

Take back our streets

The [safer street mission](#) aims to ensure that police are visible in every community, that public confidence in policing is increased and to reduce serious harm. In this Parliament, the government is aiming to place an additional 13,000 police officers, PCSOs and special constables into neighbourhood policing roles. This will mean that every neighbourhood will have a named, contactable office to help deal with local issues and reduce anti-social behaviour across the country.

The government is aiming to:

- Halve violence against women and girls
- Halve knife crime
- Build confidence in policing
- Build confidence in the criminal justice system

Bodies	Detail	Stakeholders with responsibility
Mission Delivery Board	National Safer Streets Delivery Champion.	Linsey Farnsworth MP (National Mission Champion for Crime).
Crime and Policing Bill	Expands police powers and introduces neighbourhood policing measures. Includes penalties for shopworker assault and retail crime.	Home Secretary Yvette Cooper leads cross-department efforts.
Raneem's Law	Embeds domestic abuse specialists in emergency control rooms and introduces stricter offender sanctions. Launches pilot Domestic Abuse Protection Orders.	Overseen by Home Secretary Yvette Cooper and Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls Jess Phillips.
Prison Capacity Changes	Expands early release schemes to alleviate prison overcrowding. Reduces custodial sentence proportions from 50% to 40%.	Managed by Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood.

For further information, please email team@randallsmonitoring.co.uk

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