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November Budget Bulletin



Introduction

It's been a week for the books in many ways, and whatever your political views or persuasion, the analysis suggests that the American election was won on the basis of the economy. The Democrats and their supporters have agonised over the impact of Kamala Harris' ethnicity and background, about abortion rights, and where their party went wrong on the campaign trail. The truth is likely to be a combination of factors, and the fact that President-Elect Trump has campaigned constantly for nine years. But it may also just be a case of the American people thinking that he's a better bet for lower immigration, a more affordable cost of living, and a US-first approach.

Last month, Gallup printed findings from a **September poll** which showed that more than half of Americans (52%) would say that they feel worse off today than they did four years ago. 39% say they are better off, and 9% feel about the same.

Closer to home, speculation around Chancellor Rachel Reeves' Autumn Budget had reached fever pitch by the time it was finally announced, with anxieties around possible tax rises, budgetary constraints and who would be affected. Now that the chatter has died down, it is likely that the success of this Budget will be measured by the very same test as the Gallup poll mentioned - how much better off people feel under the new Government. Newly elected Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch will be quick to capitalise on any perceived shortcomings. To date, criticism of the budget by the opposition has focused on the impact on farmers, and Ms Badenoch has described the budget as an "ideological" budget designed to "**milk the private sector**".

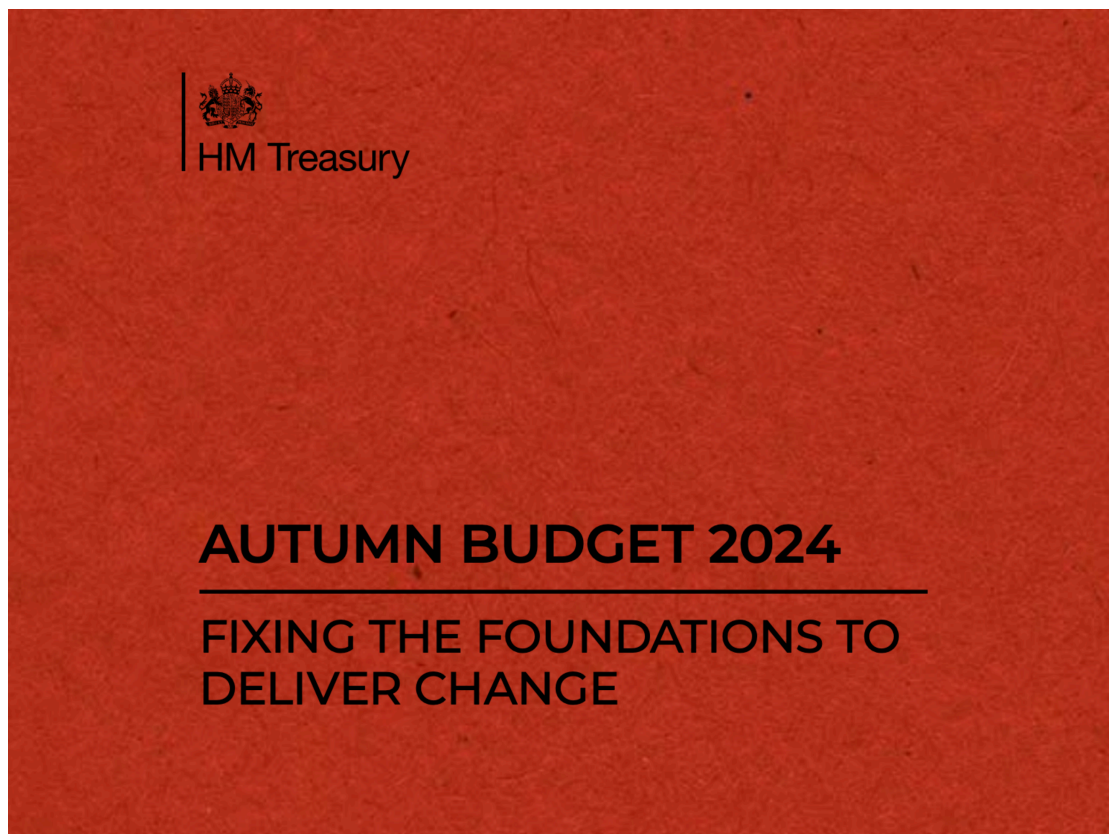
As in previous years, we have spent some time breaking down the budget. Do let us know if there's anything you would like further information on or for us to focus on in our next bulletin.

Economic Picture

Chancellor announced a commitment to growing day-to-day departmental spending at an average of 2.0% annually in real terms between 2023-4 and 2029-30, and a capital investment boost of over £100 billion in the next five years.

Headline Announcements

- From April 2025, the National Living Wage will increase from £11.44 to £12.21 an hour for workers 21 and over
- Maintenance of the State Pension Triple Lock
- A 1.5% increase in employers' National Insurance contributions



Justice in the Budget

No justice announcements were made during the Parliamentary reading of the Budget, but details have since been provided in the full written Budget, referring to the need to **'repair the justice system'**.

So, what did Justice get?

The MoJ's daily budget (referred to as the "Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit") will grow from:

- £10.4bn in 2023-4, to
- £11bn 2024-5, to

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This amounts to real terms growth of 4.3% over two years.

Capital spending (referred to as the "Capital Departmental Expenditure Limits"), likely triggered by the prisons crisis, will grow even more, with a rise from:

- £1.5bn in 2023-4, to
- £1.8bn in 2024-5, to
- £2bn in 2025-6

This amounts to a real terms increase of 14.9% over two years.

- "Thousands of new prison places" will be opened in the next two years, at a cost of £2.3 billion.
- A "minimum" of £500 million invested in prisons and probation, to recruit new staff, maintain safety of prisons and manage offenders in the community.
- 106,500 Crown Court sitting days in 2024-5 to manage backlogs and access to justice for Victims. The government has also pledged to discuss sitting days with the senior judiciary to determine 2025-6 capacity. Minister Alexander said that this was an increase of **500 days** over what the government had previously agreed. However, this is in fact a decline from the **107,700 sitting days** in 2023-4 after the uncapping of sitting days in order to clear the court backlog
- A new prison at HMP Millsike, just outside of York
- 1,000 new trainee probation officers by March 2025, and thousands of new electronic tags to monitor offenders in the community

As expected, prisons, reoffending and the parole system received the lion's share of attention and money in the Budget for justice. The government has also committed to an examination of "tough alternatives to custody". In subsequent justice tabled questions, Minister for Courts and Legal Services Heidi Alexander noted that **£177 million has been allocated for prisons and courts**. No details have been provided, however, on how this allocation will be divided between courts and prisons. The announcement of a Sentencing Review appears to be a positive update, **which will be led by former Lord Chancellor David Gauke**, and aims to "create a sustainable criminal justice system while modernising community punishment".

Good news? Potentially, particularly for a sector more accustomed to swingeing cuts, but the advertised real terms increase of 5.6% may be mitigated by the headline efficiency targets for each department of a 2% saving. The target will be based on efficiency analysis, the integration of technology and will be monitored over the course of the current Parliament by the 'Government Efficiency Framework'. It's unclear at the minute how this will manifest in the justice department, but it's something that the APPG will keep a close eye on.

It is worth noting that the 1.5% increase in employers' National Insurance contributions will hit legal aid firms hard. Profit margins are already very small in this sector (for further detail, read our bulletins around the Review on Civil Legal Aid and the Criminal Legal Aid Review) and these costs cannot be passed down to the consumer as legal aid

The Law Society praised the **"hefty real-terms spending increases"** for the MoJ in the next two years, but noted that neither the spoken or written editions of the Budget mentioned civil and criminal legal aid, or the physical condition of the court estate.

Bar Chair Sam Townend KC **welcomed** a budget which "recognises justice as a key public service", but noted that "there's still a way to go" and that "equally ambitious policy thinking, coupled with long-term resource and capital funding" is still required.



Other Budget News

Education / SEND

The Department for Education received a considerable funding uplift. In particular, £1 billion of the £2.3 billion increased funding for the core schools budget will be allocated towards supporting the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system. We know that this additional resourcing will be welcome news for SEND parents, teachers and local authorities, but will wait for more clarity as to how this money will be spent. Lack of funding currently drives a lot of the other issues with the system – e.g. concerns around "safety valve" agreements and whether these are lawful, a lack of accountability of SEND decisions made by local authorities and a lack of special school places in general.

Housing

The Labour Government has focused on improving housing affordability in its first few months. This is supported by several Budget allocations to promote housing market stability, and **"kickstart the biggest increase to social and affordable**

In order to deliver the promised 1.5 million homes, the government will provide:

- £500 million injection into the Affordable Homes Programme
- A consultation on a new long-term social housing rent settlement, of CPI +1%
- A reduction on Right to Buy discounts
- Over £1 billion investment in remediation in 2025-6 (funding allocated to improve housing quality in line with statutory requirements).

Immigration

The Budget announced little on immigration, aside from the combined MoJ and Home Office settlements of up to £74 million in 2025-6, designed to speed up the processing of asylum appeals in immigration tribunals.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

A portion of the Home Office settlement of £22.1 billion in 2025-6 will be dedicated to supporting the government's VAWG priorities. Raneem's Law will be implemented, putting domestic abuse specialists in 999 control rooms, but no other VAWG specific policies are mentioned or funded. In subsequent Parliamentary questions, Minister for Domestic Violence and Safeguarding Alex Davies-Jones has announced that £26 million has been provided to support victims. Plans have been announced to introduce free independent legal advocates from 2025 to support adult victims of rape across England and Wales, which the MOJ hopes will "**help victims understand their rights and ensure access to mobile phones and medical data is proportionate to the investigation**".

Oral Justice Questions

Our APPG Members were in Parliament last week **advocating for access to justice** and legal aid.

Warinder Juss (Labour) of Wolverhampton West asked Minister for Courts and Legal Services Heidi Alexander if the measures announced in the Budget will be sufficient to reduce the Crown Court backlog or if she anticipates further measures. She responded saying that legal aid is a vital part of the Justice system, and that the previous Government left the justice system in a poor state. The Government will publish its response to the Crime Lower consultation "shortly".

Abtisam Mohamed (Labour) of Sheffield Central asked Minister Alexander whether she plans to widen the scope of cases covered by legal aid, and whether the Government would consider restoring legal aid to pre-2010 levels, and review the bureaucracy of the Legal Aid Agency. Minister Alexander replied and noted that the Government is looking

The Minister will raise the bureaucracy issue with the LAA.

Justice Committee Chair Andy Slaughter (Labour) of Hammersmith and Chiswick asked Sentencing and Youth Justice Minister, Sir Nic Dakin if he is concerned at the number of young offenders. The Minister responded that it may be worthwhile for the select committee to investigate this area.

Jayne Kirkham (Labour) of Truro and Falmouth asked if measures could be provided to address the backlog in Crown Courts in her constituency. Responding, Minister Heidi Alexander said the Government was committed to reducing this backlog.

'Take Your MP To Work' Launch



On Monday 4 November, the APPG hosted our first public event of the new Parliament with the launch of the 'Take Your MP To Work' campaign alongside Migrants Organise, YLAL and LAPG. The project is designed to highlight the work of legal aid lawyers at the coalface and to build relationships between new MPs and the advice communities around them. To join the campaign, contact Rohini.Jana@lapg.co.uk, or frances@migrantsorganise.co.uk for further information.

Speakers included:

- Catherine Atkinson, Co-Chair of the APPG
- Andy Slaughter MP, Chair of the Justice Select Committee
- Tony Vaughan MP

- Nanou Thassinda, Lived Experience Consultant on UK Asylum

Young Legal Aid Lawyers co-chair Isaac Abraham, solicitor at Islington Law Centre, urged new MPs to travel to the 'legal aid coalface', stating that if you 'come to where I work on any given day, for example, and you will find lawyers providing vital representation to those experiencing the sharpest ends of our society. People fighting for their right to live in habitable home. Parents challenging the exclusion of their children from education. Individuals who have fled persecution trying to establish a new life for themselves.'



As you know, last year the APPG on Access to Justice was formed after the merger of the APPG on Legal Aid with the APPG on Pro Bono and Public Legal Education. The evening, taking part in **Pro Bono Week**, was also a celebration of the work that MPs, legal aid lawyers and their pro bono counterparts do to assist their constituents and their communities. To that end, we also launched our new **Casework and Your Constituents Guide** designed to assist MPs and caseworkers with their casework load, constituency office, and signposting constituents to sources of advice.

At the event, we handed out APPG on Access to Justice tote bags with resources for MPs and casework staff.

These included:

- Our Guide to Casework and your Constituents, endorsed by the Solicitor General Sarah Sackman, Catherine Atkinson and Andy Slaughter)
- The Pro Bono Signposting Guide for England and Wales
- JUSTICE's Law for Lawmakers Guide

Press about the event can be found [here](#).

Our congratulations to Andy Slaughter for his election as Chair of the Justice Select Committee. Consequently, we were delighted to elect Catherine Atkinson MP as our new APPG Co-Chair. Catherine has 17 years of legal experience as a barrister and is the Chair of the Society of Labour Lawyers.

We very much look forward to working alongside her and fellow Co-Chair Lord Bach.



APPG Prisons Meeting

We are delighted to host a meeting on Prisons on Wednesday 27 November from 10.30 am - 12 pm, in Committee Room 4 in the House of Lords, with Lord Timpson.

Other speakers include Andrea Coomber KC Hon, CEO of the Howard League and representatives from both the Association of Prisons Lawyers and the Prison Reform Trust. The Rt Hon David Gauke, Chair of the Sentencing Review, has also been invited.

If you'd like to attend, please email Rohini.Jana@lapg.co.uk.

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Rohini Jana
Director of Parliamentary Affairs
13 November 2024

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About the APPG on Access to Justice

We strive to highlight the importance of access to justice as a fundamental pillar of society, and to empower individuals to exercise their rights, challenge discrimination, and reduce social inequalities. We foster parliamentary and public understanding of access to justice by acting as a forum for discussion and debate, providing an interface between Government, Parliament, and the justice sector.

For more information contact:

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