

Using taskforces to drive public value: insights from the UK's Office for Value for Money

Ben Paxton

Institute for Government, UK

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About the Institute for Government

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GOVERNMENT

- Think tank - independent, non-partisan, funded by Gatsby Foundation charity
- Based in London
- Our mission is to **make government work well for the people of the UK**
 - Research and analysis
 - Create space for discussion
 - Inform public debate

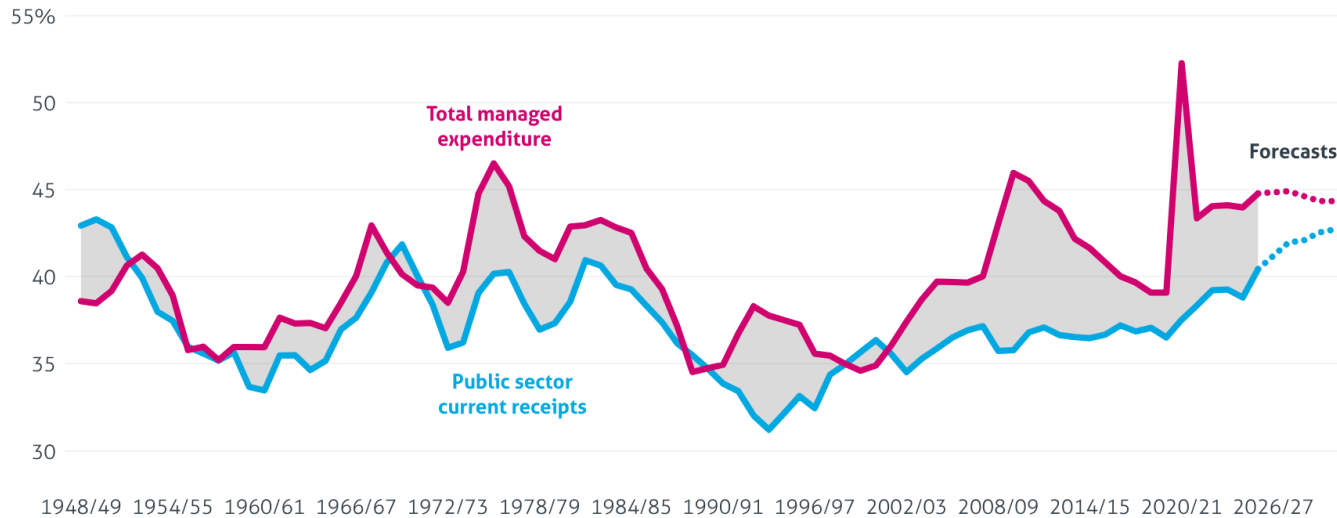


UK's fiscal context

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Total UK government spending and receipts as a share of GDP, 1948/49–2030/31

IfG

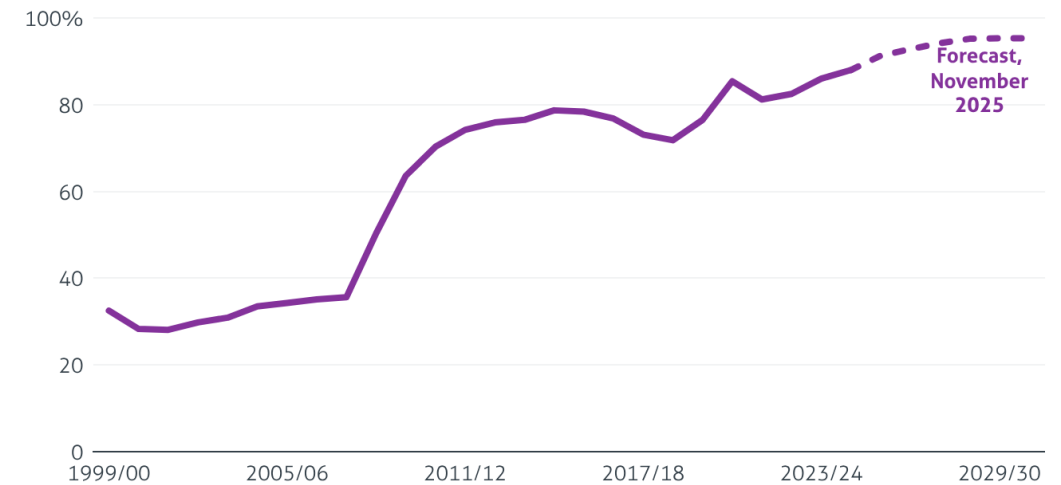


Source: Institute for Government analysis of Office for Budget Responsibility, *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*, March 2026.

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Public Sector Net Debt (PSND ex BoE), as a percentage of GDP, 1999/2000–2030/31

IfG



Source: Institute for Government analysis of Office for Budget Responsibility, *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*, November 2025.

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Background to the Office for Value for Money

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Image of Rachel Reeves, as
shadow chancellor at Labour
Party Conference in 2021

Opposition shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, announces plans for an Office for Value for Money

2021



As chancellor, Rachel Reeves sets up the OVfM at her first budget as a one-year unit

2024

Image of Rachel Reeves, as chancellor
in 2025

OVfM closes down and publishes final report

2025

Office for Value for Money's remit

1. to make targeted interventions at Spending Review 2025
2. to develop recommendations for system reform to improve government efficiency and the value for money of public spending

1 year

Small team (~15 people)

Independent chair

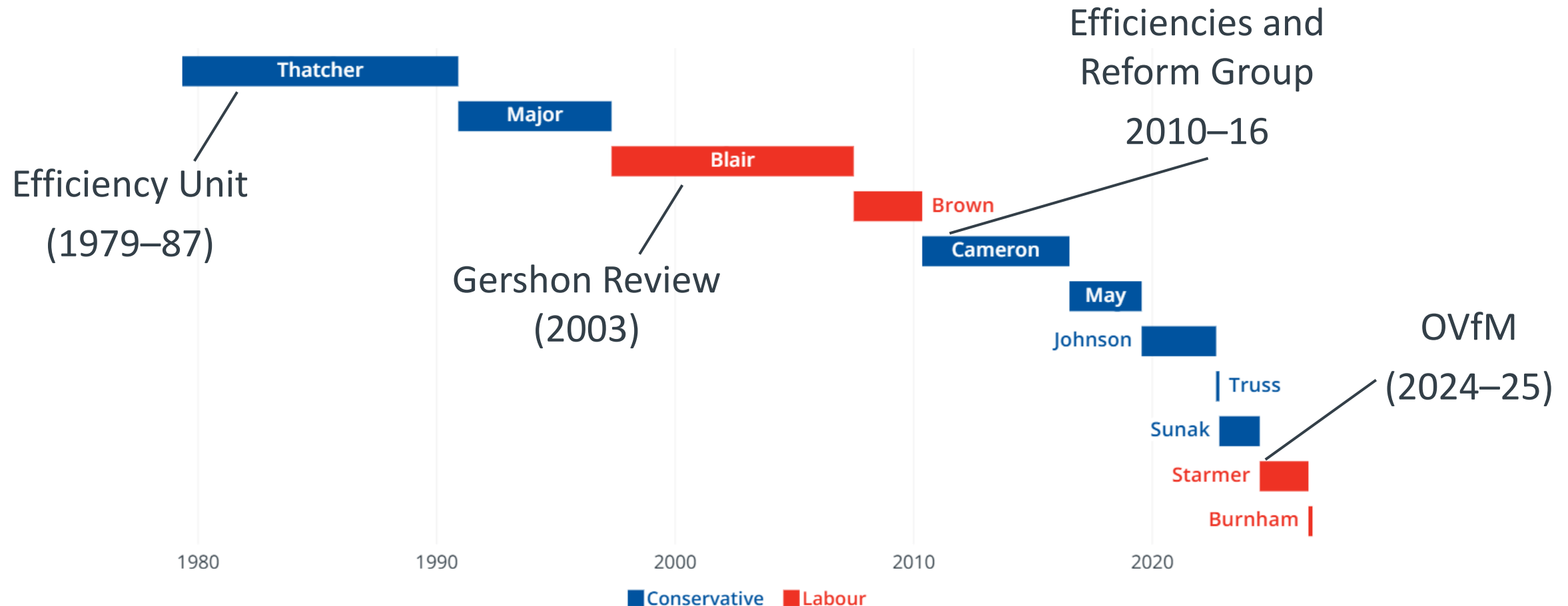


History of value for money units or reviews

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Prime Minister, 1979–

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OVfM outputs

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OVfM FIRST RECOMMENDATION ON SYSTEM REFORM: INTRODUCING THEMATIC VALUE FOR MONEY (VfM) REVIEWS

Office for Value for Money (OVfM)

Value for money study: governance and budgeting arrangements for mega projects

Office for Value for Money (OVfM):
procuring short-term residential
accommodation



HM Treasury

Spending Review 2025:
Departmental Efficiency
Plans



Office for Value
for Money

10 Year Efficiency Projections

Office for Value for Money

**Reforming the spending
control and accountability
framework**

What can we learn from the OVfM taskforce model?

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*A **taskforce** usually refers to a group of civil servants in the centre of government led by a high-ranking minister or official, and given a limited amount of time to coordinate work on a government priority for which no single department is responsible*

Taskforces cannot be the answer to every problem...

Government taskforces are not a long-term solution for the problems facing the state

Darren Jones needs a plan for long-term reforms, as well as short-term delivery.

21 JAN 2026

HANNAH KEENAN



Scope

*to make targeted interventions at Spending Review 2025,
and develop **recommendations for system reform** to
improve government efficiency and the value for money of
public spending*

- System reform is important – but often deprioritised
- Right balance of specificity and flexibility

- Specific policy interventions are less likely to be successful...



Political backing and quasi-independence

- Backing (and political commitment) from a powerful chancellor
- Treasury civil servants working inside the system
- Independent chair – reporting to the chancellor

Image of Rachel Reeves, as shadow chancellor at Labour Party Conference in 2021

- An external perspective is not sufficient



Time-limited

- Explicit one-year life-span galvanised internal work and external engagement

Risks:

- People don't meaningfully engage
- Recommendations not adopted



People

Experienced independent chair

Talented team

Small – 15 people

- Treasury insiders
- Functional experts
- Non-Treasury civil servants
- National Audit Office

Image of David Goldstone,
Chair of the OVfM

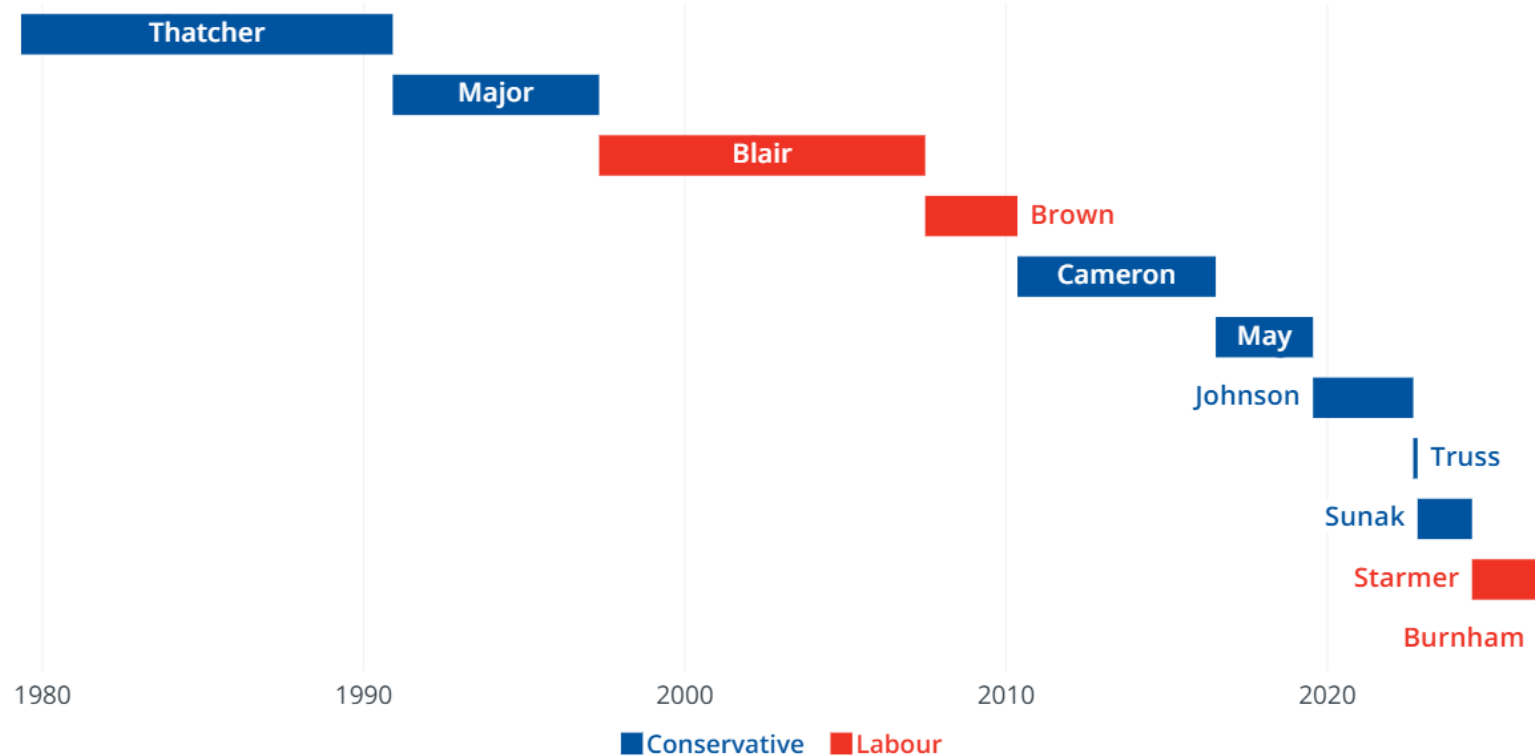


The opportunity of a new government

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Prime Minister, 1979–

IfG



Source: Institute for Government analysis of IfG Ministers Database, www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/ministers-database.

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The future of value for money taskforces

- Implementation of recommendations
- Ongoing 'thematic value for money reviews'
- Subject specific value for money taskforce – e.g. **defence**



Thank you

Ben Paxton

ben.paxton@instituteforgovernment.org.uk