



## Structure of the Executive

	ROLE	EXAMPLE
<b>PRIME MINISTER</b>	Head of the executive; chairs the Cabinet; decides the agenda; appoints and dismisses ministers; uses royal prerogative powers.	Currently Keir Starmer (Labour) (2024–). Past examples: Theresa May calling the 2017 snap election; Boris Johnson using prerogative powers over foreign policy.
<b>THE CABINET</b>	20–25 senior ministers, usually Secretaries of State for key departments (e.g., Defence, Home Office, Foreign Office). Meets weekly; approves major decisions. Supported by the Cabinet Office, headed by the Cabinet Secretary.	The 2010 Coalition Cabinet included both Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. May’s 2018 Chequers Cabinet meeting debated her Brexit deal.
<b>GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS</b>	Each covers a policy area (e.g., Transport, Health, Energy). Headed by a Secretary of State, supported by junior ministers and the permanent civil service.	The Department for Transport oversees rail, roads, and air policy.
<b>EXECUTIVE AGENCIES</b>	Semi-independent bodies delivering services on behalf of departments.	The DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency), under the Department for Transport.
<b>CIVIL SERVICE</b>	Permanent, politically neutral officials who advise ministers and implement policy.	The Cabinet Secretary provides impartial advice and records Cabinet minutes.

## Roles of the Executive

### **Proposing legislation**

The Executive is responsible for **initiating new laws** or proposing amendments. Each parliamentary session begins with the King’s Speech, which outlines the government’s legislative programme. Although delivered by the monarch, it is written entirely by the government, signalling the Executive’s priorities for the year.

Sometimes governments must introduce laws **not included in their manifesto**. This is known as the “**doctor’s mandate**”. It allows the Executive to respond to urgent or unforeseen crises. For example, during the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the Johnson government introduced emergency public health legislation, lockdown laws, and furlough support. None had featured in the 2019 Conservative manifesto.

Before legislation is drafted, ministers usually consult pressure groups, charities, think tanks and professional bodies. The Health Department usually work with the British Medical Association (BMA) when drafting health-related legislation.

## Proposing the budget

The **Chancellor of the Exchequer**, supported by the Prime Minister and the Treasury, prepares the annual Budget. This sets out:

- Government plans for taxation.
- Levels of public spending.
- Economic priorities for the coming year.

The Budget is a major political moment as it determines the government's ability to deliver manifesto promises. A new government almost always delivers its **own budget** to reflect its different priorities. For example, after the 2024 change of government, the newly elected Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced a major change in economic policy, including adding VAT to private school fees and increasing NHS spending.



Chancellor Rachel Reeves.  
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Parliament can scrutinise the Budget, but in practice, the Executive dominates economic planning due to the Treasury's expertise and centrality to government.

## Making policy decisions

Beyond legislation, the Executive must shape and implement day-to-day policy across all areas of government responsibility. This involves turning political aims into practical outcomes.

- The 2010–15 Conservative–Liberal Democrat Coalition introduced **Universal Credit**, a major welfare reform combining multiple benefits into one system.
- In recent years, governments have set strategies on net-zero emissions, NHS backlog recovery, and AI regulation.

Policy-making is an ongoing process, often influenced by: political pressure from MPs, media, and the public; economic conditions, and external crises (such as the Ukraine conflict and COVID-19).

## Executive vs Parliament

There is common confusion between the roles of the Executive and the roles of Parliament. The Executive governs the nation by proposing laws, policies, and the budget. Parliament approves legislation, scrutinises, and holds the executive accountable.

EXECUTIVE	PARLIAMENT
Proposes new legislation	Passes or rejects laws
Proposes the budget	Grants money through taxation & approves spending
Sets policy direction	Scrutinises government via debates, select committees, and questions
Uses royal prerogative powers (foreign policy, military, appointments)	Represents the people & protects liberties