

Government sector: 2025 predictions

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With key government announcements at the tail end of 2024 potentially having a profound impact on the organisation and powers of local authorities, this year could mark the beginning of significant change for the government sector.

In addition, there will be plenty of discussion around social care reform and how improvements to public infrastructure is financed over the coming 12 months.

Lawyers from the government team at Browne Jacobson share their predictions for 2025.

Adult social care reform

With the announcement of the Casey Commission, this Government has begun to map out where it will go on adult care.

The review must seek to build consensus between politicians and with the public to drive long-term, enduring change.

We will not see interim recommendations until 2026, but this should not prevent necessary foundational work, and a Commission in dialogue with government, providers and the public could contribute to change starting now – including changing mindsets and culture, both of which take time to shift.

Immediate announcements on technology and information-sharing are also important foundational work.

Boldness is needed to bring down barriers in the use of technology to monitor health and manage service user risk, to help people lead healthier and more independent lives, increase efficiency, and improve the ability of services to direct in-demand human resource where people add most value.

Change should also be about ensuring rewarding career paths for care staff, and proposals to allow care staff to deliver more support in relation to service users' health will contribute to this.

It must be ensured that staff can be appropriately recognised for the job they already do and the additional skills they will acquire.

A final thought for 2025 is the potential benefit to adult care of shifting the dial on the availability of a range of high-quality later living accommodation in all areas and for more people.

Addressing legal financial and cultural barriers to rightsizing in partnership with local authorities, healthcare agencies and later living providers could support longer, healthier independent living, with benefits in the health, social care and housing sectors alongside improved outcomes for older people.

James Arrowsmith, Partner

English devolution and local government reorganisation

There is no doubt that in England, the “devolution revolution” and local government reorganisation to remove two-tier local government reorms are going to be the biggest shows in town.

This is a fundamental restructuring of the way local and regional government works and will impact not just in 2025 but for years to come.

In Wales, we will continue to see the new corporate joint committees get underway and find their feet.

Their powers are wide-ranging and there is significant scope to drive regional development of the economy through them if they are bold and use their powers commercially.

Laura Hughes, Partner

Planning reform in England

This year is going to be a time of change both in relation to planning and the environment.

We ended 2024 with significant changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. Broadly, these changes are designed to encourage more active placemaking and also reduce the level of protection afforded to the green belt by introducing the concept of the grey belt.

Already this year, I have had a council withdraw from an appeal as it was no longer defensible. Over the course of 2025, I'm expecting to see a significant increase in development within the green belt and at least one important case at the High Court considering the scope of these changes (and the new wording within the NPPF).

The one thing I'd most like to see this year is the introduction of a robust Future Homes Standard.

This has been promised for many years. It is due to come into force this year and although it has been consulted upon, the final version has not yet been published.

In my opinion, it is long overdue – it makes no sense that we are continuing to build homes that are not net zero when we have all the technology to do so.

Ben Standing, Partner

Financing new public infrastructure

The event to watch out for in 2025 is the multi-year spending review due in the Spring. Around that time, the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA) should also be up and running.

Attention will be focused on the funding settlement for infrastructure projects over the period covering by the spending review, the practical impact of creating the NISTA, and steps that might be taken by government – including any new private finance model or project pipeline – to crowd private investment into infrastructure projects.

Craig Elder, Partner

What's in store for Wales?

After 2024 was a year which saw three First Ministers in post, Wales is hoping for a more settled 2025.

Like many regions across the UK, Wales faces challenges in fostering economic growth, particularly in its post-industrial areas.

The FM's Draft Budget has laid out the Welsh government's vision for what it believes will bring "a brighter future, delivering an extra £1.5bn for public services and priorities ... to serve as a blueprint for improving life in Wales for the next year, putting it firmly back on the path to growth."

Efforts to attract investment, improve infrastructure and support innovation must be welcomed, but they also must be delivered upon by maximising and harnessing the potential of Wales' natural assets – particularly the two freeports, which can drive new renewable energy production – transport infrastructure investment.

We are also looking forward to seeing the Welsh government deliver on Eluned Morgan's stated commitment to place Wales' people and their communities at the heart of the government's work programme: Iechyd Da – a Healthier Wales, jobs and green growth, opportunity for every family and connecting communities.

Tim Edds, Partner and Head of Cardiff

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