



Briefing 5 The Cost of Waiting

The Consequences of Inaction in Planning



In this briefing, I explain why time is one of the most important factors in inheritance tax planning and why delaying action can become one of the biggest financial mistakes a family ever makes. The longer people wait, the fewer planning options remain available, the more expensive solutions become, and the larger the inheritance tax problem quietly grows in the background.

THE COST OF WAITING

Why Delaying Estate Planning Can Become Extremely Expensive

One of the biggest misconceptions people have about inheritance tax planning is believing they can deal with it later.

Over the years, I have noticed that many families only begin seriously thinking about inheritance tax once they reach their late seventies or eighties. By that point, they finally recognise the size of the estate, they begin worrying about what their children may lose, and they start asking what can be done.

The problem is that inheritance tax planning takes time.

This is not a quick fix. Most meaningful planning strategies take years to work properly. Some structures may begin helping immediately, but in many cases the planning horizon is measured over two years, five years, seven years, or even longer. The government understands this perfectly well, which is exactly why many inheritance tax rules are designed around long-term timelines.

That is why waiting can become incredibly dangerous.

Time Can Be Your Friend Or Your Enemy

Time is one of the most powerful tools in estate planning.

If you act early enough, time works in your favour. It allows structures to mature properly. It allows gifting strategies to complete their timelines. It allows future growth to move outside the estate gradually and efficiently. It allows the family to plan calmly and strategically rather than emotionally and reactively.

But if you delay too long, time becomes your enemy.

The older somebody becomes, the fewer planning options are realistically available to them. Strategies that may have been simple and highly effective in somebody's fifties or sixties often become significantly harder, more restricted, or sometimes completely unavailable once somebody reaches their eighties or nineties.

That is one of the hardest conversations I sometimes have with families.

Because very often, by the time people finally realise how serious the inheritance tax problem has become, they no longer have enough time remaining to fully utilise many of the most effective planning opportunities.

Why Most People Never Feel Urgency

One of the reasons this problem becomes so severe is because inheritance tax is invisible.

It is not costing you money today in real time. Nobody sends you a monthly bill. Nothing visibly leaves your bank account each month. So naturally, people push it to the side and assume they can revisit it later.

And because most accountants, solicitors, and financial advisers are not inheritance tax specialists, the issue often never gets pushed strongly enough. It is not that they are doing anything wrong. It is simply not the primary focus of their role.

At the same time, the government has absolutely no incentive to remind people about the scale of the problem either.

As a result, many families drift into larger and larger inheritance tax exposure without ever truly recognising what is happening.

This is one of the reasons I created these briefings. My goal is to bring the future forward and help families understand now what the consequences may look like later if no action is taken.

The Government Is Already Tightening The Rules

What many people also fail to appreciate is that inheritance tax planning is becoming more difficult over time.



Since the Autumn Budget of 2024, the government has already begun tightening multiple areas connected to inheritance tax planning. We have seen proposed changes to Business Property Relief, Agricultural Property Relief, and growing discussions around pensions being included within the taxable estate from April 2027.

That pension change alone could be enormous for many families.

For decades, people viewed pensions as one of the safest and most tax-efficient places to hold wealth. Many families spent years building pension portfolios believing they would remain largely protected from inheritance tax. Now suddenly, many of those assumptions are being challenged.

At the same time, tax thresholds remain frozen until at least 2030, creating a stealth tax effect where asset values continue rising while allowances stand still.

In simple terms, many families are becoming wealthier on paper while simultaneously becoming more exposed to inheritance tax every year.

Planning Becomes Harder And More Expensive

One of the other realities people rarely consider is that planning itself becomes more expensive over time.

Ten years ago, inheritance tax planning was significantly easier and often far cheaper than it is today. Some strategies that were once straightforward are now heavily restricted, harder to implement, or require far more specialist coordination.

The longer governments focus on increasing tax revenue, the more likely it becomes that planning opportunities continue shrinking.

That is why I often say:
the best time to begin planning was years ago,
but the second best time is now.

Because the options available today may not exist in the same form even a few years from now.





Your Estate Is Growing Every Day

The final thing most people underestimate is how quickly their estate continues growing quietly in the background.

I once dealt with a client whose estate had reached approximately £28 million. By that stage, restructuring the estate became incredibly difficult because the scale of the problem had become so large. The irony is that decades earlier, his estate was much smaller and far easier to manage. But like many successful people, he focused heavily on growing wealth and very little on protecting it.

Now the family faces potentially losing millions in inheritance tax.

And that is exactly the danger.

Your estate does not stand still.

Whether you are in your forties, sixties, seventies, or eighties, your estate is continuing to grow every single year through property inflation, pensions, investments, businesses, and accumulated wealth. The sooner structures are implemented, the sooner future growth can potentially begin moving outside your personal estate.

That future growth is incredibly important because while it is often difficult to reverse decades of accumulated wealth retrospectively, it is much easier to begin protecting the future growth from today onwards.

Doing Nothing Is Still A Decision

One of the most important lessons I try to teach families is that doing nothing is still a decision.

Choosing not to act is itself a form of action.

And unfortunately, it is often the most expensive decision people ever make.





I do not blame people for not knowing what they were never taught. Most families were never properly educated about inheritance tax planning in the first place. But once you become aware of the problem, once you begin understanding the scale of the risk, and once you begin recognising how quickly time disappears, then responsibility changes.

At that point, ignoring the issue becomes a conscious choice.

And the cost of that choice can eventually become enormous for the family left behind.



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