



Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs)

22nd January 2025

Briefing by PoliMonitor

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With President Donald Trump now officially sworn in, today's PMQs saw inevitable focus on the UK's relationship with its closest ally. The Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, faced questions about how his government plans to navigate the "special relationship" amidst President Trump's flurry of executive orders. Recognisable Conservative MPs were spotted donning MAGA hats on social media and former Prime Minister Boris Johnson notably attended the inauguration. Meanwhile, Sir Ed Davey, Leader of the Liberal Democrats, pressed Starmer on the values underpinning this partnership, urging caution in aligning too closely with the new administration's initial policies particularly around trade deals and protecting British farmers.

The domestic agenda, however, proved equally challenging for the Prime Minister. Borrowing figures published this morning revealed a sharper-than-expected rise in debt, piling further pressure on the government ahead of the Spending Review on 26th March. With Chancellor Rachel Reeves attending Davos this week to promote Labour's economic ambitions, criticism has been levelled at the government's perceived lack of focus on immediate economic concerns. The Chancellor has also come under fire for signalling potential support for a third runway at Heathrow, a stance strongly opposed by Labour London Mayor Sadiq Khan, who has threatened legal action if the government advances the proposal. Meanwhile, internal tensions reportedly persist within Labour, with tomorrow marking six months since the seven MPs who lost the whip following their support for the SNP tabled amendment to scrap the two-child benefit cap - a situation that continues to raise questions about party cohesion.

The Prime Minister this week has turned attention to public safety, a pressing issue following the guilty plea in murders of the young children in Southport. Writing in [The Sun](#), the Prime Minister reiterated his commitment to tightening regulations on online knife sales and expanding age-verification measures, building on Home Secretary Yvette Cooper's Parliamentary announcement yesterday of a national inquiry into protecting young people from violent crime. However, these announcements prompted scrutiny from Kemi Badenoch, Leader of the Opposition, who raised concerns about the government's handling of counter-terrorism measures under the PREVENT programme. Badenoch pointed to the failures that allowed the Southport killer to evade intervention despite multiple referrals, demanding clarity on how the government plans to address systemic shortcomings.

Today's PMQs opened on a sombre note as Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer addressed the horrific Southport tragedy, reaffirming his government's commitment to protecting children through fundamental reforms. Starmer reiterated that the forthcoming public inquiry would hold all organisations accountable, while also highlighting plans for a National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre following his visit to Auschwitz. Turning to the Middle East, he welcomed the release of hostages from Gaza, urging full implementation of the ceasefire and increased humanitarian aid. He also emphasised his commitment to ensuring the most serious offenders

attend sentencing hearings, referencing the presence of Cheryl Corbell, whose daughter Olivia was tragically murdered.

Leader of the Opposition Kemi Badenoch began her response by echoing the PM's condemnation of the Southport killings and welcoming the release of hostages in Gaza. Badenoch then shifted focus to the Children's Wellbeing and School's Bill, accusing Labour of reversing years of cross-party progress in education. Citing OECD data, she noted that under Conservative reforms, UK children had risen in global rankings for maths and reading. Criticising the Bill as "educational vandalism," Badenoch questioned why school leaders are broadly opposing it. Starmer defended the Bill, arguing that it raises standards while providing vital protections for children, including measures to establish breakfast clubs, reduce school uniform costs, and enhance safeguarding. He accused Badenoch of directing her MPs to vote against these measures while failing to offer credible alternatives.

Badenoch countered by accusing the government of neglecting educational reforms, pointing to declining outcomes in Labour-led Wales as an example. She warned that the Bill would harm deprived children and criticised the government for capping teachers' pay, citing clause 45 of the legislation. Starmer responded by highlighting an amendment introduced this morning to address concerns, accusing Badenoch of spreading inaccuracies. He framed the Bill as urgently needed to tackle post-Covid educational gaps and safeguard children at risk of abuse.

The debate intensified as Badenoch questioned restrictions on alternative teaching qualifications, arguing that they undermine schools' ability to hire talented staff. Starmer dismissed this, emphasising the importance of qualified teachers for all students and reiterating his government's focus on raising educational standards. The exchanges closed with Badenoch accusing Labour of being overly influenced by trade unions, alleging that the Bill prioritises union demands over children's needs. Starmer, in turn, underscored the Bill's benefits for vulnerable families and dismissed Badenoch's claims as misrepresenting its core objectives.

You can read the full exchange and all the questions asked during PMQs below. Thanks, as always, for using PoliMonitor.

Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition

- The Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, began questions today saying that the senseless and barbaric murder in Southport of three young girls was devastating, and that the families and victims must see a fundamental change in how Britain and its citizens protect its children. The public inquiry will not see any organisation skipping being held to account, he said. He also noted that it was Holocaust Memorial Day next Monday and stated that visiting Auschwitz last week had only strengthened his resolve to build a National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre. He also welcomed the release of Emily Domari and other hostages from Gaza. He said that they must now see the ceasefire deal implemented in full, the release of the remaining hostages and a surge in the aid being sent into Gaza for citizens there. He also welcomed Cheryl Korbell to the House viewing gallery, whose young daughter Olivia was murdered in Liverpool as a result of drug-related violence. He said that they will change the law so that the most serious offenders must attend their sentencing hearings.
- The Leader of the Opposition, Kemi Badenoch, welcomed the release of the hostages in the middle east also. Badenoch also went on to say her thoughts are with those victims of the Southport killings. Badenoch continued by saying that between 2009 and 2022, OECD data showed that children in England rose up global league tables in maths, reading and science, and that Conservative action means that UK children top the Western world at maths and reading. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill is being voted on in committee this week and Badenoch accused the Bill of reversing the improvements made by the previous Government. This is an act of vandalism, she said, and wrecking cross party consensus that has been built over years. She asked the Prime Minister why he thinks so many school leaders are criticising this Bill.
- The PM said that the government is committed to drive up standards and ensure that children are protected better. He noted that Badenoch had instructed all of her MPs to vote against the Bill.
- The Leader of the Opposition pointed to the fact the PM didn't even bother voting. Badenoch said it is not about safeguarding, it is about the reforms that are being changed by the Bill. Badenoch highlighted an example of the reforms in Wales, which has been under Labour control for two decades and where Welsh educational outcomes have tumbled down international league tables. Poor children in England now do better than wealthier children in Wales, she claimed. Badenoch said that the Bill denies children the guarantee that their schools will be turned into better schools. This bill is the worst of socialism, she said. She asked whether the PM realised that it is deprived children in England who will pay the price.
- The PM said that they are driving standards up. This Bill is important, he declared, because it also sets up breakfast clubs, limits expenses of school uniforms and brings in

vital protections for children. He asked her point blank why she instructed all of her MPs to vote against it.

- The Leader of the Opposition said that this is not about breakfast clubs and school uniforms. Even his own MPs may not realise it but the Bill cuts pay for teachers, she claimed. She noted that his Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson, had said there is no ceiling for pay but that Clause 45 of the Bill means that their pay will be capped. She asked the PM whether he knew this.
- The PM said that flexibility is needed, and that if she “hopped off social media” for a while she would see the amendment laid just this morning. He raised the example of a young child who was taken out of school by an abuser and subsequently. This bill closes that gap, he said. He said that there have been children who have not gone back to school since Covid, and this bill also closes that gap. The PM said that they can debate academies but to vote against the Bill is a disgrace to all of them on the Conservative benches.
- The Leader of the Opposition said that the amendment does not address the criticisms. She continued by saying that like every other parent, she wants to ensure that all children should have the best teachers. Apart from cutting their pay, the headteacher of the ‘most successful school in the country’, Badenoch claimed, has said that with Labour’s new roles they would never have been able to hire their head of year 11 who is a veteran. The bill implies that doctors are not sufficiently capable to teach biology, Badenoch pointed out, asking the PM why he is closing routes into teaching when he should be opening more.
- The PM accused Badenoch of knowing that was inaccurate. He continued by saying that having qualified teachers should not be extraordinary and reiterated the government’s want for every single child to have a good education.
- The Leader of the Opposition said that standards went up under the Tories. ‘Who is benefiting from these changes?’ she asked, noting that it wasn’t teachers, parents or children, but the trade unions. She claimed that the National Education Union sent out a tick list proving that they are finally getting their way to their members. Badenoch asked the PM why the unions were running the Department and ruining education.
- The PM said that the Bill benefits children who need breakfast, the families who cannot afford uniforms, who are out of school and benefits those at risk of abuse. These are vital provisions, he said.
- The Leader of the Opposition said that the PM needs to get out more and speak to schools, speaking to a recent visit of hers to the Harris academy who told her the Bill reverses two decades of progress. Badenoch called the Bill “pure educational vandalism”, ending with the “same old labour” line that she has often deployed, and saying that the government was only delivering bad outcomes for all children.

- The PM said that the government is committed to including parents and teachers. He said that they are committed to standards and continue to do this. The PM said that the Leader of the Opposition has “nerve” to make the accusations given the questions from her own benches around SEND support across the country. He finished up his exchange with Badenoch by declaring that the government is going to fix this mess, the same as they are with everything else.

Questions from the House

1. David Reed MP, Conservative, Exmouth and Exeter East
 - **Question:** Before Christmas I received hand written letters from secondary school children advocating for greater support to tackle mental health services. What steps is the government taking to enhance mental health support nationwide?
 - **Answer:** We are recruiting an additional 8,500 staff to deal with children and adult mental health services and rolling out our Young Future hubs in every community.

2. Markus Campbell-Savours MP, Labour, Penrith and Solway
 - **Question:** With recent outbreaks of foot and mouth outbreaks, are all government departments on high alert and vigilant on places of entry to avoid the disaster this would bring to UK farmers.
 - **Answer:** We will do whatever we can to support and protect UK farmers. We will not hesitate to restrict imports from additional countries if the situation needs it.

3. Chris Bloore MP, Labour, Redditch
 - **Question:** Parents should be confident that when their child is sick, they can take them to their local hospital to be treated but that was not the case for me last year due to a temporary closure of Alexandra Hospital in Redditch since 2016 which has never been reinstated. What is the government doing to reopen hospitals and ensure this care is always available?
 - **Answer:** We are putting a record £25bn investment in the NHS as part of our plan for change building an NHS fit for the future. While responsibility rests with the NHS Commissioner, I will ensure he gets a meeting.

Sir Ed Davey MP, Liberal Democrats, Kingston and Surbiton, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party

- **Question:** I urged the PM to speed up the Social Care Commission last week so we can get the changes implemented this year. The very next day, it was announced the Chair of the Social Care Commission was also going to chair another important inquiry into grooming gangs. So the PM says that the job of chairing the Social Care Commission is so enormous it's not possible to complete it in three years yet he also says that the chair of the Commission, Baroness Casey, has got enough free time to chair another inquiry. Can the PM explain how both those things can be true?
- **Answer:** Baroness Casey is well placed to conduct the audit into the grooming gangs given her hard hitting report on exploitation in Rotherham. It does not affect her work on the independent commission on adult social care which begins in April. We will deliver recommendations as we receive them.

- **Question:** Turning to the United States, can the PM guarantee that he will not sell out Britain's fantastic farmers to Donald Trump in a trade deal that undermines our high food and animal welfare standards in the way the Conservative sold them out?
 - **Answer:** We will work with the US to agree a partnership but we will never lower our standards.
4. Darren Paffery MP, Labour, Southampton Itchen
- **Question:** Thousands of constituents have put up with years of misery because of unsafe fire protection in their own homes with developers dragging their feet and leaseholders footing the bill. Does the PM agree that enough is enough and it's time for developers to make homes safe?
 - **Answer:** Too many buildings are still unsafe and the speed of delivery has been far too slow. Our action plan sets out measures to identify buildings at risk and fix them faster. Funding is there to fix and there's no excuse not to deliver for residents.
5. Adrian Ramsay MP, Green Party, Waveney Valley
- **Question:** A third runway at Heathrow would be incredibly irresponsible in the midst of the climate emergency and flying in the face of the Climate Change Committee's advice. Can the PM confirm his position now?
 - **Answer:** I am not commenting on speculation, we are committed to growth and the aviation sector and our climate obligations. Will not take lectures from members who talk about climate change but oppose vital renewable energy infrastructure in their own constituencies.
6. Will Stone MP, Labour, Swindon North
- **Question:** In my constituency, we have the Panatone Park development, one of the largest employment developments in Europe with massive potential for growth. Will the PM come to visit and set out this government's commitment to growth.
 - **Answer:** TAt the heart of our Plan for Change is growth. To fund our public services, create good jobs and raise living standards across the country. He's right to champion one of the largest brownfield sites in the UK which would create over 11,000 jobs on site and add £1.2bn to the economy underlining the importance of bringing economic stability by creating the National Wealth Fund and driving up growth.
7. Luke Taylor MP, Liberal Democrat, Sutton and Cheam
- **Question:** On Monday the government confirmed that St Hellier Hospital will not receive funding. If there are any more delays to fixing the foundations of the Hospital, people will die and the NHS staff will break. Will he apologise to my constituents who have had to wait so many years and come to visit the dire situation?

- **Answer:** This government is committed to fixing the major issues left behind by the last Conservative government. The commitment of building 40 new hospitals under Boris Johnson was always a work of fiction.
8. Jo Platt MP, Labour, Leigh and Atherton
- **Question:** Alongside MPs from Greater Manchester, I have met constituents who shared distressing accounts of malpractice by a spinal surgeon in the region. Will the PM arrange a meeting with the group to ensure those affected get the justice they deserve?
 - **Answer:** I will ensure the relevant Health Minister meets with the group asap.
9. Sir Bernard Jenkin MP, Conservative, Harwich and North Essex
- **Question:** When it comes to the Budget which raised taxes, raised borrowing and raised public spending as a strategy for economic growth, when is the PM going to accept the words to obtain sustained economic growth by cutting taxes and cutting regulation?
 - **Answer:** This government is focused on delivering for the people and growth for the economy. Wages are up but inflation is down and that's after just six months.
10. Rosie Wrighting MP, Labour, Kettering
- **Question:** Kettering General Hospital has the maternity ward partially closed because of RAC and after giving birth, people are being transported outside through the car park to receive postnatal care. Will the PM visit to discuss how we can support services while we await the rebuild?
 - **Answer:** The delay to the works is because of the failure to have a plan by the opposite party. While we implement our affordable and deliverable plan to build a new hospital, I can reassure her the Hospital will have their RAC fixed through the National RAC Programme.
11. Mike Martin MP, Liberal Democrat, Tunbridge Wells
- **Question:** Before Christmas, Lord Robertson who led the Strategic Defence Review came before the Defence Select Committee and told us that he couldn't guarantee that the strategic outcomes from the review would be fully funded. Recently we've also heard media reports that the review might be delayed until the Autumn. What can the PM say on this?
 - **Answer:** The last time we spent 2.5% of GDP on defence was under the last Labour government and that shows the difference between this government and those of the past.
12. Harpreet Uppal MP, Labour, Huddersfield
- **Question:** The PM has committed to reducing the number on waiting lists for NHS services. Will the PM join me in paying tribute to the NHS staff in my local hospital who have learnt from approaches to cut waiting lists already?

- **Answer:** Thank the achievements of the hard-working staff at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary proving that you can bring down wait times through our Plan for Change.

13. Andrew Snowden MP, Conservative, Fylde

- **Question:** In what is supposed to be a honeymoon period for a new government, the PM has sacked his Chief of Staff, forced his City Minister and Transport Secretary to resign, whilst No10 has been briefing against the Pension Secretary, Home Secretary and Education Secretary. Is it not time, PM, to accept that the root causes at the heart of government are with him, not them?
- **Answer:** We just won a landslide victory and we've got a massive majority and are getting on with the job. We all saw the sheer number of ministers that they got through on a yearly basis, causing instability in every conceivable department.

14. Paul Davies MP, Labour, Colne Valley

- **Question:** In 2016, I was diagnosed with colon cancer and had excellent treatment at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary. I was one of the lucky ones in the fight against cancer. What assurances can the PM make that the offer to Colne Valley residents will address the issues we have locally with our hospitals?
- **Answer:** Wish him a speedy recovery and thanks to those who treated him. Under the previous government there was no progress made on diagnosing cancer at stage one and two between 2013 and 2021, an appalling inheritance. We are spending £1.5bn on new surgical hubs and diagnostic scanners to ensure cancer patients get the care they need.

15. Wera Hobhouse MP, Liberal Democrat, Bath

- **Question:** Eating disorders are the mental health disorders with the highest mortality rate. Today the Eating Disorder APPG is publishing its report on how to make eating disorder services fit for purpose. Can I ask the PM to read it?
- **Answer:** The Online Safety Act will prevent children from encountering harmful content that promotes eating disorders to services and we will look carefully at the report.

16. Sarah Owen MP, Labour, Luton North

- **Question:** Luton has seen a huge number of stabbings in the last week. Does the PM agree that proper police funding is essential to keep people safe?
- **Answer:** We are taking urgent action to ban zombie-style knives and regulating the online sale of knives. It is unacceptable that these murder weapons can be bought with two clicks. Technology is there to stop it and we are taking action.

17. Iqbal Mohamed MP, Independent, Dewsbury and Batley

- **Question:** Since the ceasefire in Gaza came into effect, Israeli forces have placed the whole of the West Bank under strict military inspection as part of the Iron Wall of operation. The IDF has launched a large-scale offensive operation in

the City of Jenin with numerous drone strikes on the infrastructure and a military raised by IDF troops and special forces in the occupied West Bank. At least nine people have been killed by Israeli forces and 40 people injured, including health care workers. What steps is the government taking to urgently protect Palestinians, including health care workers and to prevent atrocities in the West Bank and will he outline the UK's response to the ICJ advisory opinion on Israel's unlawful occupation?

- **Answer:** I am deeply concerned by what is happening in the West Bank and we have raised it a number of times in the various exchanges that we have had but I am deeply concerned about it and we are doing everything we can to improve the situation.

18. Sarah Edwards MP, Labour, Tamworth

- **Question:** Tamworth Castle was recently added to the Heritage at Risk Register following my campaign and needs repairs. Will the PM come and visit to see how the castle is providing learning opportunities?
- **Answer:** I particularly enjoyed Tamworth's recent FA Cup heroics against Tottenham and welcome the work being done on the educational opportunities locally.

19. Alison Bennett MP, Liberal Democrat, Mid Sussex

- **Question:** Across England, there are around 95,000 students who attend non-academised sixth form colleges. Of those, 32 are currently on strike because the government did not settle the funding for them back in the summer. Could the PM tell me whether he intended to create a two tier education system for sixth forms students who are the victims of the covid crisis?
- **Answer:** We have put money in college and it's really for them to deal with these disputes.

20. Leigh Ingham MP, Labour, Stafford

- **Question:** My constituents are sick and tired of having their properties and businesses devastated by flooding. The last government did not invest enough. Can the PM assure my constituents that he will prioritise flood prevention investment?
- **Answer:** Far too many are experiencing terrible flooding. We inherited flood defence in their worst condition on record. We are investing £2.4m in flood defence and committed £60m to better protect communities and to support farmers impacted by extreme weather.

21. Rebecca Smith MP, Conservative, South West Devon

- **Question:** Two year mortgages have hit 5%. Borrowing is billions above forecast. Does the PM still believe the Chancellor is doing a good job?
- **Answer:** I thought she was just reading out their last record

22. Matt Turmaine MP, Labour, Watford

- **Question:** Before the last election, the conservatives promised to deliver a new Watford hospital something they failed to achieve. Does the PM share my frustration and ensure that a new hospital for Watford is paid for properly?
- **Answer:** We have an affordable plan to deliver and build new hospitals and that includes Watford General.

Please contact the PoliMonitor team at info@polimonitor.com for more information

