

Funding the Future

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So, we have lockdown again.

I will ignore the staggering incompetence for now of saying schools must stay open on Sunday and insisting they shut on Monday night.

I will ignore too the fact that even now there are some absurd acts allowed under lockdown, such as communal worship, which seem like mass spreading events if ever there was something designed to be one.

Instead I will say what Starmer should have even saying, but did not, when he clearly knew this was coming.

I watched his Channel 4 interview. I did not hear the demand for extra business support.

Nor did I hear the demand for support now for all those who have so far been deeply unfairly denied it.

I did not hear the demand made that loans to business be turned into capital, or in the smallest cases into grants.

I did not hear the demand that threats of eviction must be removed.

I did not hear the request that mortgage holidays be extended.

Was there a mention of universal credit? I did not hear it.

Was access to the internet free of charge for all children learning online mentioned? Not that I heard.

Johnson covered the point on free school meals, but Starmer did not.

And where is the help with household heating and additional water costs when children are now at home, especially as it is the most expensive time in the year? Was that mentioned? I did not hear it.

Was there discussion on whether there had been advance in identifying those who might need help, and how? Again, I did not hear it. Not having the means to make quick settlement was a reason against a UBI last March, but should it be now? Why?

And where was the call for support for single parents, in particular, who without support networks will find this especially difficult, as will the children who suffer their stress?

Was there a demand that tax return deadlines be delayed so that HNRC can ensure help is provided instead to those who need it?

Where, this time, was the deferred VAT return arrangement, let alone payment arrangement, or the demand that both be provided to reduce stress in already over-stretched companies?

It's the job of Oppositions to call out government failings, but we have an position that now sits in front of flags and says it will provide the government with all the support it needs, when it's job is to demand something so much better, even in a time of crisis because if the Opposition does not do that then who will?

Johnson's performance was bad, to the point that I am baffled that anyone has any remaining belief in him, except for the fact that Starmer now seems very little better.

How did we get here?