

It is vital that the Prime Minister reflects on these guidelines and sets about building alliances and good faith with our EU partners – Starmer

Keir

Starmer MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, commenting to the

European Parliament vote on the negotiating guidelines for exiting the EU, said:

"It

is important that the European Parliament has reached agreed guidelines, and we

particularly welcome the emphasis that negotiations should be conducted in 'good faith and full transparency'.

"Labour

also strongly support the Parliament's insistence that a future EU-UK deal requires

the UK to retain international standards on human rights, climate change, social rights and the fight against tax evasion and avoidance. Labour's six tests for the final Brexit deal made clear that there can be no drop in EU-derived rights and protections.

"These

will be the most complex and important negotiations for decades and it is vital

that the Prime Minister reflects on these guidelines and sets about building alliances and good faith with our EU partners."

Today's productivity figures again confirm the Tories' abject failure on productivity growth – John McDonnell

John

McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, commenting on today's ONS productivity figures, said:

"Today's

productivity figures again confirm the Tories' abject failure on productivity growth, with growth slowing significantly over the last year and undershooting even the pessimistic forecasts from the Bank of England and others.

"Productivity growth, as an enabler of higher pay, is a crucial component of rising living standards. Today's figures are yet more worrying news for working people who face a slump in their standard of living under this Tory Government.

"The ONS today said there is 'little sign of an end to the UK's 'productivity puzzle' and there is no sign of the UK closing the record productivity gap with other G7 economies.

"Philip Hammond has previously admitted that the UK's productivity gap is 'shocking'. Yet the Tories lack a serious plan to tackle the problem.

"Only Labour has a serious plan to invest in our future to raise our productivity and deliver on jobs, prosperity and rising living standards."

Tories' promise to be "most family friendly Government we've ever had" lies in tatters: one third of Sure Start Children's Centres have been lost since 2010

Jeremy Corbyn will, on Wednesday 5 April, set out how Labour will stand up for working families. He will contrast Labour's commitment with new evidence that the Tories have broken their promise to support families, slashing Sure Start schemes nationwide.

The Tories famously pledged to be the "most family friendly Government we've ever had" before the 2010 election. As part of this claim they said they would protect Sure Start, the transformative early years programme introduced by Labour to give young children the best start in life. But new research, based on Freedom of Information requests to

councils, reveals the Tories have broken their promise. It shows:

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There are now over 1,240 fewer designated Sure Start children's centres than when the Tories took office – a fall of around 34 per cent since 2010.

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Over 230 have been lost in the last year alone.

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The North East and London have seen the biggest fall in numbers, with over 40 per cent of Sure Start Centres lost.

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Two local authorities, Swindon and Solihull, reported that they have no designated Children's Centres in their areas left.

Jeremy

Corbyn will highlight these figures as he sets out how Labour will stand up for

working families during a visit on Wednesday.

Angela

Rayner MP, Labour's Shadow Education Secretary, commenting on the closures, said:

"The Tories claim they're protecting Sure Start, but they're not. They use tricky accounting methods – like pointing to buildings which are still open but which are running much reduced services – to

try to pull the wool over people's eyes. But the facts speak for themselves.

On

the same measure that was used in 2010, Sure Start has been slashed.

"There are a third fewer designated

centres than there were when the Tories came to office. We know that because we

asked local authorities, those tasked with running these vital services, and that's what they told us.

"The Tories are taking us backwards. It's

a scandal that parents and children are paying the price."

Ends

Theresa May concedes it will take years to conclude a trade agreement with the EU – Paul Blomfield

In an interview this morning with Sky News, Theresa May said she hoped Britain will have been able to “look at” the future trade deal with the EU by the time Britain formally leaves the EU in March 2019.

“[L]et’s look at the whole question of the where we end up at the end of this negotiation. Have we looked, will we have looked at both withdrawal and the future relationship, that’s what’s important ... That’s what I’m asking for and that’s what I believe increasingly we will see.”

Theresa May, Sky News, 4 April 2017

She also conceded, for the first time, that the UK will have to sign the future trade deal with the EU as a third country. Given that the deal will be a ‘mixed agreement’, it will need to be ratified unanimously by all member states.

FI: Can you clarify that you accept what the European Council suggested which is that the final deal will be done as a third country status under a unanimous vote with everyone having a veto?

TM: There’s obviously a legal situation in terms of how the European Union can conduct trade negotiations.
Theresa May, Sky News, 4 April 2017

This is a significant retreat from what she and the Brexit secretary have previously said – in effect that Britain will be able to negotiate and finalise a new free trade agreement alongside the exit agreement by the end of the two year period. They have until now been adamant that any transitional period would be purely for “implementation” and “adjustment” of systems, rather than for negotiation of the terms of the future trade deal.

Responding,
Labour’s shadow Brexit minister Paul Blomfield said:

“It is less than a week since the Prime Minister triggered Article 50, and it seems every day brings another broken promise from the Government. First they said

immigration may go up after Brexit. Now they are backpedalling on trade deals.

"We will hold the Government to account on the pledges made to the British people during the referendum campaign and since. They promised a comprehensive free trade agreement with the EU giving the "exact same benefits" we have now. They said it would be ready for the day we leave, along with new trade deals with other countries.

"Now, as they face reality, they are trying to downplay expectations. They need to spell out the transitional deal that will be in place, to stop the economy falling off a cliff edge without new agreements in two years time."

Government must publish their post-Brexit strategy to protect jobs in the finance sector – McDonnell

John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, commenting on reports that 100,000 jobs in the City of London are at risk due to the failure of the Tories' Brexit negotiations, said:

"This threat to 100,000 jobs was all too predictable given the Tories' extreme approach to the Brexit negotiations. This is yet another major concern facing our country since Theresa May triggered Article 50, and yet Tory ministers appear stunned and unprepared when obvious issues arise.

"We need to know immediately from the Government what its strategy is to protect jobs in the finance sector, because all we have witnessed so far is silent bewilderment.

"Labour will fight for a Brexit that works for everyone, unlike the hard right Tory elite who want a low-wage, tax-haven bargain basement economy. Our six tests, including preserving existing benefits of membership, must be met before Labour will support any Brexit deal."

Ends