



Prime Minister's Questions

Standard Note: SN/PC/05183

Last updated: 9 February 2015

Author: Richard Kelly

Section Parliament and Constitution Centre

Parliamentary questions can be used by Members of Parliament to seek information, to press for action and to hold the Government to account. Questions for oral answer are directed to Ministers in the Chamber of the House of Commons. In addition to ministers, questions are answered on behalf of the Church Commissioners, the Public Accounts Commission, the House of Commons and the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, by backbench MPs.

This note outlines the procedures for the tabling of questions for and answering of questions at Prime Minister's Question Time. It also looks at the history of the Prime Minister facing questions in the Chamber of the House of Commons, the changes to Prime Minister's Questions, and current arrangements.

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. It should not be relied upon as being up to date; the law or policies may have changed since it was last updated; and it should not be relied upon as legal or professional advice or as a substitute for it. A suitably qualified professional should be consulted if specific advice or information is required.

This information is provided subject to [our general terms and conditions](#) which are available online or may be provided on request in hard copy. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing with Members and their staff, but not with the general public.

Contents

1	Current procedure	3
1.1	The shuffle	3
1.2	Question time	3
1.3	Unasked questions	3
2	Assessments of PMQs	4
2.1	Public attitudes	4
2.2	Comparative analysis	6
3	Historical background	7
3.1	Pre-1961	7
3.2	1961 changes	8
3.3	1961-1997	8
3.4	1997 onwards	10
	Changes	10
	Criticism of holding Prime Minister's Questions once a week	11
4	Further information	11
4.1	Absence of a Prime Minister	11
4.2	Cancellation of Prime Minister's Questions	12

1 Current procedure

The Prime Minister answers questions in the Chamber of the House of Commons on every sitting Wednesday, from midday, for half an hour. In the absence of the Prime Minister, another Minister will answer.

1.1 The shuffle

Each Member may table one question for each session of Prime Minister's Questions. The shuffle is a lottery, randomly choosing 15 Members whose name will go on the Order Paper to ask questions to the Prime Minister. Every Member who has tabled a question before the shuffle is run (usually the Thursday before Prime Minister's Questions) will have their question included in the shuffle. This question can simply be an 'Engagements' question, to ask the Prime Minister about their engagements for the day, which will allow the Member to ask a question without notice on the day;¹ or it could be a 'substantive' question, giving the Prime Minister notice of the question they wish to ask.² The names of the Members who have been successful in the shuffle are listed in Wednesday's Order Paper, along with any substantive questions.

1.2 Question time

During Prime Minister's Question Time, questions are asked in the order shown on the Order Paper, although the Speaker may call other Members not on the Order Paper to ask supplementary questions.

The first Member on the Order Paper begins the process by saying 'Number One' (the question number). The Member does not read out the tabled question, although it is printed in Hansard. If it is an engagements question, the Prime Minister lists his engagements and then the Member asking the question is given the opportunity to ask a supplementary question. Subsequent Members, who have tabled engagements questions, are called only to ask their supplementary question. In the case of a Member asking a substantive question on another subject: they announce the question number, after being called by the Speaker, and receive an answer to that question, from the Prime Minister; and are then called to ask a supplementary question.

The Leader of the Opposition is allowed to ask six supplementary questions and, until the 2010 general election, the leader of the next largest opposition party was allocated two.

A Member may not rise to ask a question in the name of another Member.

1.3 Unasked questions

Although 15 Members will have their names printed in the Order Paper to ask a question to the Prime Minister, this number was rarely reached in Parliaments during the 1990s and 2000s. However, Speaker Bercow, in his own words ""Establish[ed] a brisker style of dealing

¹ Technically, the question asked by the Member is a supplementary or follow-up question to the Engagements question. However, in practice, the Member (unless the first to be called) only asks their supplementary question

² For example, on 12 February 2014, Andy Sawford asked: "If he will review the Government's policy not to disclose the identity of companies that are made to pay penalties in respect of non-payment of the minimum wage" [[HC Deb 12 February 2014 c843](#)].

with Oral Questions to bring more backbenchers into this vital part of the House's work",³ and he has usually called every Member whose name appeared on the Order Paper.⁴

Generally, Members who table questions for oral answer that are not reached in the Question Time session, receive a written answer. In the case of Prime Minister's Questions, Members who tabled engagements questions but were not called to put their questions receive no written answers. However, if a Member tabled a substantive question that was not reached, a written answer would be provided.

2 Assessments of PMQs

2.1 Public attitudes

On 11 February 2014, the Hansard Society published *Tuned in or Turned off? Public attitudes to Prime Minister's Questions*. Its report examined public attitudes to PMQs and asks whether PMQs is a 'cue' for wider negative perceptions of Parliament. In a press release, the Hansard Society outlined its key findings:

PMQs is the best known aspect of Parliament's work, famous throughout the world for its combative, adversarial atmosphere. It is the bit of Parliament's work that the public are most aware of and have likely seen on the television news. But while politicians and journalists have strong views about the value of PMQs, there is a scarcity of substantive evidence as to the public's opinions.

Our focus group evidence indicates that heightened awareness of PMQs should not be mistaken for approval – the most common words associated with it are 'noisy', 'childish', 'over the top' and 'pointless'.

Supporters of PMQs in its current form argue that it is great parliamentary drama, envied by citizens in other countries whose leaders are rarely held to account in public. But our focus group research shows that the drama and theatre of the event is not appreciated in a positive way. In the dismissive words of one participant, 'this was noise and bluster and showing off – theatrical but not good'.

Tuned in or Turned off? Public attitudes to Prime Minister's Questions tested the focus group findings as part of our annual Audit of Political Engagement polling. Key results are:

- 67% of respondents agree that 'there is too much party political point-scoring instead of answering the question' – 5% disagree
- 47% agree that PMQs 'is too noisy and aggressive' – 15% disagree
- 40% agree 'it deals with the important issues facing the country' – 20% disagree
- 36% agree it is 'informative' – 22% disagree
- 33% agree 'it puts me off politics' – 27% disagree
- 20% agree that 'it's exciting to watch' – 44% disagree
- 16% agree that 'MPs behave professionally' at PMQs – 48% disagree
- 12% agree that PMQs 'makes me proud of our Parliament' – 45% disagree⁵

³ House of Commons, *Parliamentary Reform*, speech by the Speaker to the Hansard Society, 24 September 2009

⁴ For example, between 18 December 2013 and 14 March 2014, every Member whose name was on the Order Paper to ask a question at PMQs was called by the Speaker

⁵ Hansard Society News, *Tuned in or Turned off? Public attitudes to Prime Minister's Questions*, 11 February 2014

The full report is available to download from the Hansard Society's website.⁶

Following the publication of the report, the *Independent* reported that

Commons Speaker John Bercow has written to David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg seeking talks on how Prime Ministers' Questions (PMQs) can be improved in the wake of mounting concern that its boisterous barracking and partisan exchanges are seriously alienating the public.⁷

The *Independent* subsequently reported that:

Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg have backed reform of Prime Minister's Questions after a warning from the Commons Speaker, John Bercow, that sessions sometimes degenerate into "yobbery and public school twittishness".

However, some backbenchers were angry at Mr Bercow's comments in an interview in *The Independent* yesterday, when he disclosed he had written to the three main party leaders asking for talks on how to improve PMQs.

Mr Bercow's intervention came after a Hansard Society report revealed widespread public dismay over the barracking and abuse. Mr Miliband, the Labour leader, said: "I don't think it's a great advert for politics or Parliament and I think most people would agree ... I welcome any initiative by the Speaker or others to look at these issues."

A spokesman for Mr Clegg said the Liberal Democrat leader favoured a new approach. He said the Deputy Prime Minister believed the way the Commons operated was "totally off-putting" and reform is needed to make it "look and feel more modern".

David Cameron gave a guarded welcome to the suggestion of reform. A Downing Street spokesman said: "These are interesting ideas and the Prime Minister will study them carefully He believes Prime Minister's Questions should be a useful opportunity to analyse and explain the Government's long-term economic plan and other policies."

The paper also reported there were supporters and opponents of change on the back benches.⁸

The case for PMQs in its current form was also made in comment pieces in some newspapers. For example, Anne Perkins wrote that "Calls for reform of PMQs miss the point. The weekly clash reminds us of the essential nature of politics, and that opposing views are worth fighting for".⁹ While accepting that there were "problems with PMQs", David Shariatmadari argued that:

Around the world millions would relish seeing their unaccountable, insulated leaders exposed to something harsher than a sycophantic press conference. Only a handful of countries make heads of government face their harshest critics, shorn of spin doctors and autocue, week in, week out.

[...]

⁶ Hansard Society, [Tuned in or Turned off? Public attitudes to Prime Minister's Questions](#), 2014

⁷ Donald Macintyre, "Commons Speaker John Bercow attacks 'sexist, snobbish, yobbish' PMQs and says he favours radical reform", *Independent*, 18 February 2014

⁸ Nigel Morris, "Miliband and Clegg back PMQs reform; MPs attack Bercow after his comments on 'yobbish' PMQs", *Independent*, 19 March 2014

⁹ Anne Perkins, "[Prime minister's questions is a great British export we need more of, not less](#)", *guardian.co.uk*, 26 February 2014

Of course there are problems with PMQs. Though microphones pick up mostly the main speakers for TV viewers, lots of MPs can't hear what is going on because of the din. Planted questions represent the encroachment of scripted PR - the antithesis of PMQs at its best. And the spectacle is often grotesque: barracking, sneering, humiliation and contempt. Posh blokes throwing their weight around. Women and minorities feel intimidated.

These aspects are deeply unpleasant. But they may be the price we pay for this uniquely visible holding-to-account. And, crucially, I don't think PMQs itself is to blame (though I don't doubt there's room for a bit of procedural improvement). The real problem is with how the House of Commons looks in general. If most of your MPs went to public school, then a lively session will inevitably contain many moments of public school twittishness. If most are men, then it will likely be unfriendly to women. These problems need much larger solutions, and PMQs shouldn't become the whipping boy for them.

The last word - a compelling endorsement - can be left to Tony Blair. He described PMQs as "the most nerve-racking, discombobulating, nail-biting, bowel-moving, terror-inspiring, courage-draining experience" of his career. If this is the means by which our representatives can make the powerful squirm, then long may it continue.¹⁰

2.2 Comparative analysis

In 2012, *Parliamentary Affairs* published an article that reported the results of a comparative study of PMQs for the last five Prime Ministers (Margaret Thatcher, John Major, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and David Cameron). The authors sought to test "a general perception that PMQs has become increasingly a focal point for shallow political point scoring rather than serious prime ministerial scrutiny". Their conclusions were summarised in the abstract of the article:

Our data appear to confirm that PMQs has become both rowdier and increasingly dominated by the main party leaders. It also indicates that Prime Ministers are increasingly expected to be able to respond to a wider range of questions, female MPs are as likely to ask helpful questions but less likely to ask unanswerable questions than male counterparts, and MPs are less likely to ask helpful questions and more likely to ask unanswerable questions the longer their parliamentary tenure. More surprisingly perhaps, our findings also suggest that, at the beginning of their premierships at least, Thatcher and Brown appear the most accomplished in terms of the fullness of their answers, and Blair and Cameron the least accomplished.¹¹

A paragraph from Philip Giddings and Helen Irwin's chapter "Objects and Questions", in *The Future of Parliament*, contrasts Prime Minister's Questions in 1964 and 2004:

In 2004 the number of questions receiving an oral answer was less than half that in 1964, mainly because answers, and crucially, supplementary questions were much briefer in 1964 and the Speaker only very infrequently called opposition frontbenchers to ask supplementary questions, something that is now routine at every Question Time. This applied even to questions to the Prime Minister: during that week in 1964 the Leader of the Opposition (Harold Wilson) was called only once, on the Thursday. In 1964 Prime Minister's question time took place twice in the week, for fifteen minutes each Tuesday and Thursday. Since 1997 the Prime Minister has answered once each

¹⁰ David Shariatmadari, "Comment: Three cheers for PMQs: It may be ugly. But around the world millions would love to see their leaders put on the spot like ours", *Guardian*, 27 February 2014

¹¹ Stephen R Bates, Peter Kerr, Christopher Byrne and Liam Stanley, "Questions to the Prime Minister: A Comparative Study of PMQs from Thatcher to Cameron", *Parliamentary Affairs* [advance access], 6 August 2012. The article was published in *Parliamentary Affairs*, Volume 67, NO 2, April 2014, pp253-280

week, for half an hour on Wednesdays and it has become the pattern that during that half hour the Leader of the Opposition is called to put up to six questions to the Prime Minister, all without notice. The Leader of the Liberal Democrats gets two questions and if they are present, leaders of other parties may get called too.¹²

3 Historical background

Before the 1880s questions to the Prime Minister were treated no differently from questions to other Ministers.

Until then questions were asked of ministers, without notice, on days on which ministers were present (usually Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays), in whatever order Members rose to ask them. Public business could not commence until all questions had been answered. Changes were made in 1881 that affected questions to the Prime Minister, “when as a courtesy to Mr Gladstone, then aged 72, questions to the prime minister were placed last on the day’s list to allow him to come in late”.¹³

Since July 1961, a fixed amount of time each week has been allocated for Questions to the Prime Minister. In his review “The Prime Minister and Parliamentary Questions”, GW Jones outlined those early procedures and explained how questions to the Prime Minister changed before two fifteen minute slots of questions to the Prime Minister, each week, were first established in 1961.¹⁴

3.1 Pre-1961

In 1902, 40 minutes was allowed for questions. This increased to 55 minutes in 1906. However, increasing numbers of questions and the asking of more supplementary questions meant that questions to the Prime Minister were rarely reached. In March 1904, they were placed to begin no later than question number 51. But still only about half the questions to the Prime Minister were reached, so from June 1904, they began no later than question number 45. This continued until 1953.¹⁵

GW Jones then explains why Prime Ministers Questions became restricted to Tuesdays and Thursdays:

From 1953, the ailing Sir Winston Churchill normally answered only on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and what was accepted as a mark of respect to him became a convention continued by Sir Anthony Eden and Mr Macmillan. Questions continued to be put to the Prime Minister for Mondays and Wednesdays and, if number 45 was reached they were usually taken by the Lord President of the Council.¹⁶

In 1959, the Procedure Committee recommended that Prime Minister’s Questions should be taken during a fixed quarter of an hour on Tuesdays and Thursdays, on other days, questions to the Prime Minister would continue to begin at question number 45.

¹² Philip Giddings and Helen Irwin’s, “Objects and Questions”, in Philip Giddings (ed), *The Future of Parliament – Issues for a New Century*, 2005, pp72-73

¹³ GW Jones, “The Prime Minister and Parliamentary Questions”, *Parliamentary Affairs*, Volume 26, 1972-73, pp260-273

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ In a brief interlude from 1919 to 1922, questions to the Prime Minister began not later than question number 25

¹⁶ GW Jones, *op cit*, p261

3.2 1961 changes

In February 1960, the House of Commons accepted a proposal from RA Butler, Home Secretary and the Leader of the House of Commons, to begin Prime Minister's Question at number 40 (rather than number 45), in place of the Procedure Committee's recommendation. But GW Jones commented that "it was still not early enough, and in July 1961 the House accepted the committee's recommendation".¹⁷

The Speaker introduced the first occasion on which Prime Minister's Questions were taken at 3.15pm on Tuesday 18 July 1961 in the following way:

The House will have observed that the Order Paper today indicates that the Prime Minister will answer his Questions at 3.15 p.m. The Prime Minister has informed me that he is at the service of the House in this matter and is willing to try this experiment for the remainder of the Session, if that be the wish of the House, as I understand it is.¹⁸

On 25 October 1961, *The Times* reported that the arrangement was to be made permanent.¹⁹ It reported the Speaker's statement at Prime Minister's Questions on the previous day:

When on 18th July I announced new arrangements for dealing with Questions to the Prime Minister, I told the House that the Prime Minister was willing to try the experiment of answering his Questions on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 3.15 p.m.

I am told that this arrangement has worked for the general convenience of the House and that in these circumstances the Prime Minister is willing that it should be continued. I am also told that it has been further agreed that it would be reasonable to implement the rest of the relevant recommendation of the Select Committee on Procedure, namely, that Questions to the Prime Minister should be limited to Tuesdays and Thursdays. I therefore propose that we should continue the arrangement with this limitation.²⁰

3.3 1961-1997

The twice-weekly sessions of Prime Minister's Questions continued until 1997, however, some changes were made in the intervening period. Philip Norton provided a brief review of these developments:

Initially questions tabled to the Prime Minister covered substantive issues, especially foreign affairs. In the 1970s, the practice developed of asking 'open' questions. These did not ask about a specific policy but rather asked the Prime Minister if he would pay an official visit to a particular area or when he last met representatives of a particular body. These were tabled because they were 'transfer proof'. That is they could not be transferred to another departmental minister. The opportunity to ask a supplementary question allowed the questioner to raise a substantive issue ... Since the latter half of the 1970s, the standard open question has been the 'engagements' question, asking the Prime Minister to list his engagements for the day.²¹

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ HC Deb 18 July 1961 c1052

¹⁹ "Prime Minister willing – Commons to keep reply times", *Times*, 25 October 1961

²⁰ [HC Deb 24 October 1961 c740](#)

²¹ Philip Norton, "Calling Time on Questions", *Parliamentary Review*, June 1996

Committees reviewed the operation of Prime Minister's Questions in 1971-72; 1976-77; 1990-91; 1994-95 and 2001-02.²²

On 12 May 1977, James Callaghan, the then Prime Minister, referred to the recommendations of the 1976-77 report, *Questions to the Prime Minister*, when he made the following statement about how he would respond to questions tabled for him to answer:

With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a brief statement about the Fifth Report of the Sessional Committee on Procedure, on Questions to the Prime Minister. I should like to thank the Committee for its speedy and constructive report.

The report makes four recommendations. I have proposed to the Committee that, for an experimental period, I should retain for answer by myself more Oral Questions on important matters, even if they fall within the responsibilities of another Minister. That proposal—the full details of which are spelled out in the first annex to the report—is made as the first recommendation by the Committee. I accept it and will apply it immediately and until the end of the Session, when I will review the matter in the light of experience.

The second recommendation of the Committee is directed at the House itself: it recommends that Members should table fewer Questions of an "indirect" kind—think of what I might have been spared this afternoon—such as official visit and engagement Questions, and more Questions of the kind that I have indicated that I am prepared to retain.

The third recommendation of the Committee is directed to the practice on grouping Questions: it suggests that indirect Questions should not be grouped for answer with identical Questions on the Paper for that day. The purpose of this recommendation is to break up blocks of syndicated Questions. I accept that recommendation and will apply it henceforth; I will review it, along with the first recommendation, at the end of the Session.

The fourth recommendation, Mr. Speaker, relates to your practice.

I hope that adoption of these recommendations will assist the House and improve Question Time.²³

In fact very few questions were transferred and similar undertakings were given (and adhered to) by Mrs Thatcher shortly after taking office, on 12 July 1979.²⁴

The Procedure Committee's 1995 report on *Prime Minister's Questions* recommended that Members asking the Prime Minister balloted "open" questions should only ask their supplementary question.²⁵ This procedure was adopted in 1997. On 21 May 1997, the Speaker made the following statement:

Madam Speaker: Before I call the hon. Member for Esher and Walton (Mr. Taylor), I remind the House of the new method of handling engagements questions. The Member with the first such question should call out the number of his or her question in

²² The reviews were listed in the Procedure Committee's 1995 report:

"Select Committee on Parliamentary Questions 1971-72 HC393; Fifth Report from the Procedure Committee 1976-77 HC320; 1984-85 (subject inquired into but no evidence published or report made: Minutes of Proceedings 14 May 1985); Third Report from the Procedure Committee 1990-91 HC178"

Source: Procedure Committee, *Prime Minister's questions*, June 1995, HC 555 1994-95, para 1n

²³ HC Deb 12 May 1977 cc1550-1551

²⁴ HC Deb 12 July 1979 c663ff

²⁵ Procedure Committee, *Prime Minister's questions*, June 1995, HC 555 1994-95, para 29

the normal way. After the Prime Minister has described his engagements, that Member will be asked to put a supplementary question. For the second and subsequent engagements questions, the Members who tabled the question should not call out the number of the question but simply put their supplementary question as soon as I call their name. Members with substantive questions on the Order Paper should, of course, continue to call the number of the question.²⁶

The Procedure Committee also made the following recommendations, which were not adopted:

CONCLUSION

We understand that there are Members who do not wish to see any limitation of the open-ended question and are content with Prime Minister's questions as it is (and this view is reflected among Members of the Committee). We have received little evidence arguing for maintenance of the current arrangements. The matter therefore needs to be debated by the House. The Committee, after considerable study has come to the conclusion that an experiment with an alternative arrangement is the best way forward. It rests with the House to make the final decision on whether such an experiment should be conducted.

If it is felt by the House that there is need for a change, then **we recommend that, for an experimental period, Prime Minister's questions on Thursdays be conducted so that:**

Members should give notice ten sitting days in advance of their intention to ask a question to the Prime Minister

The ten Members successful in the ballot would have up to noon on the Wednesday prior to PM's Questions to table a substantive question – open questions which do not disclose a real subject would not be in order

supplementary questions would be confined to the subject of the original question.

On Tuesdays we propose no change ...²⁷

3.4 1997 onwards

Changes

Since 1997, Prime Ministers have continued to answer questions but, only once a week, on Wednesdays for half an hour. The change from the twice-weekly format was announced by the Prime Minister, as noted in the first question that he received, from Ian Taylor:

I warmly welcome the Prime Minister to his role of answering questions and I am grateful to him for finding the time in his diary to do so. At some point he might consult the House about these changes.²⁸

The amount of notice a Member needs to give of a question has been reduced to three sitting days, following a recommendation to that effect from the Procedure Committee in 2001-02,²⁹ which was agreed by the House on 29 October 2002.

²⁶ HC Deb 21 May 1997 c702

²⁷ Procedure Committee, *Prime Minister's questions*, June 1995, HC 555 1994-95, paras 60-62

²⁸ HC Deb 21 May 1997 c703

In the case of substantive questions, the Speaker now allows a supplementary question from the next Member called to revert to an engagements question.³⁰ This has not always been the case.³¹ In the case of departmental question times, the Speaker has remained stricter in ensuring that supplementary questions relate to the subject of the tabled question.³²

In addition to PMQs, since July 2002, the Prime Minister has been regularly held to account by Members who sit on the Liaison Committee. Since then, the Prime Minister has given oral evidence to the Liaison Committee, initially, on two occasions a year.

Criticism of holding Prime Minister’s Questions once a week

Criticism of the 1997 changes continued long after they were made in 1997. For example, on 1 July 2009, Eric Martlew questioned the Prime Minister about reverting to holding Prime Minister’s Questions on Tuesdays and Thursdays;³³ and Diane Abbott tabled the following Early Day Motion, entitled Prime Minister’s Questions:

That this House regrets the fact that in 1997 Prime Minister's Questions was moved from twice a week to once a week; notes that there was no proper consultation about this step; further notes that this has made it more difficult for back-benchers to ask topical questions; further notes that consequently the House is less effective in holding the Government to account; and calls on the Government to restore Prime Minister's Questions to Tuesdays and Thursdays.³⁴

4 Further information

4.1 Absence of a Prime Minister

On the occasions that the Prime Minister cannot be present at Prime Minister’s Questions, for whatever reason – most commonly an official engagement – either the Prime Minister’s deputy, or another senior minister will stand in to answer questions. In such situations the Leader of the Opposition, and the leader of the third party will not ordinarily put questions to the minister, instead a shadow minister or spokesperson will substitute for the leaders.

Information on the number and proportion of Prime Minister’s Questions (PMQs) sessions attended by the current and four former Prime Ministers since 1979 are set out below:

Prime Minister (period of office)	No of PMQs	No attended	%
Margaret Thatcher (1979-90)	752	694	92.3
John Major (1990-97)	398	351	88.2
Tony Blair (1997-2007)	343	326	95.0
Gordon Brown (2007-10)	85	75	88.2
David Cameron (2010-*)	150	139	92.7

* to 15 December 2014

Note until Tony Blair took office, there were two 15 minute PMQs sessions each week. Since he took office there has been a single 30 minute PMQs session each week

Source: House of Commons Library Standard Note, [Attendance of the Prime Minister at Prime Minister’s Questions since 1979](#), SN/PC/4401, 15 December 2014

²⁹ Procedure Committee, *Parliamentary Questions*, 26 June 2002, HC 622 2001-02, para 38. There is a useful summary of developments in Prime Minister’s Questions in paras 49-62

³⁰ For example on 20 November 2013, a question on nuclear deterrence was followed by a non-related supplementary from a Member whose name was not on the Order Paper [[HC Deb 20 November 2013 cc1228-1229](#)]

³¹ [HC Deb 23 June 2010 c293](#); [HC Deb 17 November 2010 cc881-882](#)

³² For example: [HC Deb 21 November 2013 cc1359-1360](#) on pork exports

³³ HC Deb 1 July 2009 c298

³⁴ Early Day Motion 1791 2008-09

4.2 Cancellation of Prime Minister's Questions

Although rare, Prime Minister's Questions have not taken place on three occasions in recent years: on 25 February 2009 they were replaced with statements of condolence following the death of David Cameron's son; on 26 January 2000 the whole day's parliamentary business was lost when the previous day's proceedings ran over; and on 12 May 1994 they were cancelled after the death of John Smith, the Leader of the Opposition.