

**Step 1: A year of Keir**

**Document 1**

**Is this Keir's year? The challenges ahead for Starmer in 2026**

Natasha Clark, *LBC*, 31 December 2025

It's an open secret in **Westminster** that Labour **MPs**, **No10** and **Whitehall** are planning for when, not if, the **PM** faces a challenge to his leadership this year.

The new year will see a shake-up of the **Downing Street** media operation, with more press conferences, influencers, and TikToks.

5 And there'll be a foot put on the gas in terms of policy and delivery, to show and not just tell voters what the difference a Labour government's made.

Many people think Starmer has just four months to turn things around before Labour face a set of crunch elections in May.

10 London heartlands will be squeezed by both the Greens and Lib Dems, with new leader Zak Polanski keen to make gains.

And Reform will be eying up **the 'doughnut' of outer London boroughs** to see if they can carve out chunks from former Tory areas.

Kemi Badenoch will also be hoping to keep up her momentum with members and see that translated into any sort of poll gain.

15 Can Starmer turn things around? Here are the three things I'm watching closely to see. [...]

**1. Understanding political and cultural references**

a. Match each word to its meaning

Westminster	The government
MPs	The Parliament
No10	Keir Starmer
Whitehall	
PM	
Downing Street	

b. Name the five political parties that are mentioned and make sure you can place them on the political spectrum:

Left	Middle	Right	Far-right

c. "the 'doughnut' of outer London boroughs" (l.11): what area is the journalist referring to?

**2. General understanding the text**

a. What is the journalist's understanding of Keir Starmer's situation today?

### **Document 2**

#### **Video: Key markers of Labour's first year in power**

1. Watch the video and identify the key political, economic, and social landmarks of Keir Starmer's first year in power.
2. In your opinion, was Starmer more successful in his domestic policies or his international policies? Support your answer with specific examples from the video.



### **Document 3**

Labour's summer of discontent –

George Eaton, *New Statesman*, 30 July 2025

At No 10's summer media reception, Keir Starmer sought to conjure optimism. He invoked the success of the **Lionesses** – who won the European Championship five days later – and the return of **Oasis**. As memories turned to the 1990s, he conceded there was at least one difference: Labour's parlous poll ratings. But, he said, "things can only get better". It was the

5 party's 1997 anthem that soundtracked the downfall of **Rishi Sunak**, who came to embody a stuck Britain: a country of stagnant living standards, crumbling public services and uncontrolled immigration.

Labour always knew it could not rely on the wellspring of optimism that accompanied **Tony Blair's** first victory. But matters have deteriorated faster than pessimists anticipated. After a year 10 in power, Labour's average poll rating stands at just 22 per cent, putting it eight points behind **Nigel Farage's** Reform (not until the fuel strikes in 2000 did Blair briefly lose his lead to the Conservatives). Cabinet ministers openly speculate over whether Starmer will still be leader by the next general election. The word that Britons are most likely to use to describe the country, according to research by More in Common, is "broken".

15 Evidence of why surrounds this government. In Epping, Essex, on 27 July, around 500 protesters gathered for the fifth time to demonstrate against the use of the Bell Hotel to house asylum seekers (one of whom has been charged with sexual assault against a 14-year-old girl). Similar demonstrations were held in towns and cities across England. The following day, resident doctors held a fourth day of strikes over pay restoration. Their union, the British Medical

20 Association, is emblematic of a newly militant middle class (the logo of Broad Left, an influential faction in the BMA, features a stethoscope in the style of a hammer and sickle). Doctors complain their earnings remain below the 2008 level even after a 28.9 per cent pay increase. But the sympathy of a public contending with an NHS waiting list of 7.36 million is exhausted.

25 Looming over all this is the state of the economy – which it is Labour's defining mission to grow.

It has shrunk for the last two months, with business closures at a 20-year high and consumer confidence falling at its fastest rate since **Liz Truss's** 2022 premiership. Inside Westminster and the **City of London**, the UK's fiscal precarity is the subject of animated conversation (Britain has

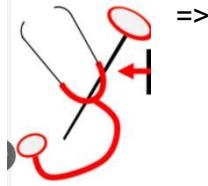
the sixth-highest debt, fifth-highest deficit and third-highest borrowing costs among advanced economies). “There’s a real risk there could be a crisis quite quickly because of the situation with the bond markets,” Helen Thompson, the Cambridge professor of political economy and author, has warned. [...]

**1. Understanding political and cultural references**

a. Match each word with its meaning

The Lionesses	The financial district in London
Oasis	The England women’s national football team
Rishi Sunak	A former Labour PM
Tony Blair	The leader of the far right
Nigel Farage	A former Conservative PM
Liz Truss	A famous British band
The City of London	

b. What is the NHS (I.23)? “consumer confidence” (I.25-26)  
c. What is this?



**2) Understanding the text**

a) True or False, justify by quoting the text

- Reform UK now has more support than the Labour party.
- There was the same enthusiasm for Starmer’s victory as for Blair’s victory.
- People fully support the doctors’ demands.
- The number of companies closing down has reached its highest level in 20 years.
- I.15-23 explain what the two demonstrations were about.

b) What is the biggest problem according to the author?