

Weekly Political Report

13th June 2016

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For further information on any of the parliamentary terms used in this document, please click [here](#).

Employment

Click on link for source

Item	Summary
<u>Opposition Day Debate on the disability employment gap</u>	<p>The Labour Party has used an Opposition Day Debate to question the progress made by the Government towards closing the disability employment gap.</p> <p>Leading the debate the Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Owen Smith MP (Lab, Pontypridd) spoke to a motion which condemned the Government for delaying the publication of its Green Paper and reducing funding for specialist support for claimants with health conditions and disabilities through the Work and Health Programme. The motion also called on the Government to <i>‘to reverse cuts to the work-related activity component of Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit work allowances that risk widening the disability employment gap’</i>.</p> <p>Owen Smith set out the challenge faced by the Government, saying:</p> <p><i>“The volume of people currently employed who are not disabled stands at 80%, but the figure for those who are disabled stands at 46%—a gap, as I said a few moments ago, of 34%. The House of Commons Library, the Resolution Foundation and the TUC have all carried out analysis to show that the Government are making little or no progress towards the target. To hit it, they will need to get 1.5 million disabled people into work.”</i></p> <p>Throughout his speech Owen Smith argued that changes in the benefits system, including reductions in ESA, Universal Credit and PIP, were making it harder for disabled people to enter the workforce.</p> <p>In response the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Stephen Crabb MP (Con, Preseli Pembrokeshire) set out his vision, saying:</p> <p><i>“I am ambitious for disabled people and for the support that they receive. I am ambitious for Britain to become the best country in the world for disabled people to live: a country that provides the right kind of support to help them lead as full and active a life as</i></p>

possible; a country that is a world leader in assistive technologies that transform their independence at home and their working environments; a country where employers embrace and embed disability awareness as a core component of their business; a country where disabled people have the same opportunities as anybody else to get a job and share in the prosperity of our growing economy.”

The Secretary of State used his speech to confirm that the Government’s Green Paper will be published later this year. He also indicated that the Government is open to using the tax system – including the possibility of providing employers with National Insurance breaks – to tackle the disability employment gap. In response to an intervention on the possibility of National Insurance breaks for small businesses employing disabled people he said:

“It is exactly that kind of incentive that I hope the Green Paper process will explore. Those are exactly the kinds of ideas that we need to examine. My colleagues in the Treasury will obviously take an interest, but we have to think differently right across Government if we are to have any hope of closing the disability employment gap. I am particularly keen to know what small businesses think about what they can do to employ more people with disabilities.”

During the debate the Conservative backbencher Maggie Throup (Con, Erewash) quoted the survey of UK business leaders conducted by Action on Hearing Loss, saying:

“Many disabled people are fully mobile, but have other work-limiting conditions. For instance, a recent survey revealed that 35% of business leaders did not feel confident about their businesses employing a person with hearing loss. As our workforce age, disabilities such as hearing loss will increase rather than decreasing. The Government provide support for businesses through the Access to Work scheme, but I am afraid that too many employers are totally unaware of its existence. I ask the Secretary of State to consider ways of promoting support for disabled people and their employers.”

In her response to the debate the Shadow Minister for Disabled People, Debbie Abrahams MP (Labour, Oldham East and Saddleworth) called on the Government to do more to help people who acquire disabilities during their working life, saying:

“If 90% of disability is acquired, why are we doing so little to help employers retain skilled and experienced employees who may become poorly or disabled? We need practical measures to support disabled people at work, enabling them to thrive, and protecting them from prematurely leaving the labour market. Some disability charities have recommended more flexible leave arrangements, as well as extending the Access to Work programme.”

	At the end of the debate MPs voted against the motion tabled by the Labour Party by 262 votes to 215.
<u>Written question on the publication of the Green Paper on the Work and Health Programme</u>	<p>SNP Spokesman for Fair Work and Employment, Neil Gray MP (SNP, Airdrie and Shotts) has asked the Department for Work and Pensions when it plans to publish its Green Paper on the proposed new Work and Health programme.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Employment, Priti Patel MP (Con, Witham) said:</p> <p><i>“As the Secretary of State has said, we will be publishing a Work and Health Green Paper later in the year. Separately, it was announced in the 2015 Spending Review that the Department for Work and Pensions would introduce a new Work and Health Programme, following the end of referrals to both the current Work Programme and Work Choice. This programme will be implemented in 2017 and will help to achieve the Government’s ambition of halving the disability employment gap.”</i></p>

Transport

Click on Link for Source

Item	Summary
<u>Accessible buses raised at Prime Minister’s Questions</u>	<p>Alan Brown MP (SNP, Kilmarnock and Loudoun) raised the issue of accessible buses at Prime Minister’s Questions. He said:</p> <p><i>“It is time that buses, like trains, were required to provide audiovisual information. This would benefit not just those who are blind or deaf, but many general users. I have written to the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Harrogate and Knaresborough (Andrew Jones), on this subject. Will the Prime Minister commit his Government to signing up to an amendment to the Bus Services Bill that would allow such a measure to be implemented in order to provide accessibility for all?”</i></p> <p>In response the Prime Minister, David Cameron (Con, Witney) didn’t commit to the proposition, saying:</p> <p><i>“I will look closely at what the hon. Gentleman says. I think I am right in saying that the Bus Services Bill is a devolved matter, so it affects issues in England rather than in Scotland, but let me look carefully at what he says, because we want to make sure that disabled people can properly use our bus services.”</i></p> <p>The Buses Services Bill is currently being scrutinised in the House of Lords and will move to the Commons later this year. Action on Hearing Loss is working with Guide Dogs to lobbying</p>

	parliamentarians to use the Bill to support amendments introducing a requirement for audio-visual displays.
<u>Written question on 'talking buses'</u>	<p>Roger Godsiff MP (Lab, Birmingham Hall Green) has asked the Department of Transport if it will include a requirement in the Bus Services Bill for all new buses to be talking buses.</p> <p>The campaign for 'talking buses', which is being led by Guide Dogs, is calling for all buses to be fitted with audio-visual display systems and is therefore of benefit to people with both hearing and sight loss.</p> <p>The Transport Minister Andrew Jones (Con, Harrogate and Knaresborough) acknowledged that accessible on-board information helps a range of passengers to feel confident when using buses, safe in the knowledge that they will know when to alight. He added that:</p> <p><i>'Traditionally systems providing next stop announcements have been expensive to fit and maintain, meaning that mandating their use would have placed a significant burden on bus operators. Related technology continues to evolve however, and we are keeping these developments under review.'</i></p>

Hearing Loss

Click on Link for Source

Item	Summary
<u>Written question on the potential for legislation to support British Sign Language</u>	<p>Richard Fuller MP (Con, Bedford) has asked the Department for Work and Pensions if it will bring forward legislative proposals to apply provisions equivalent to those of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 to England.</p> <p>In response the Minister for Disabled People, Justin Tomlinson MP (Con, Swindon North) said the Government have no such plans. He said that the Government have launched a market review of British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting provision, which would engage with Deaf people and stakeholder groups to examine opportunities that could strengthen and improve the market in the long term. The Call for Evidence for this review opened in January 2016 and closed in March 2016. He said that the Government have <i>'received hundreds of comprehensive submissions of evidence, which we are currently analysing'</i>.</p>
<u>Mayor of London questioned on adaption of the BSL charter</u>	<p>Navin Shah AM (Labour, Brent and Harrow) has asked the Mayor of London if he plans to sign up to the British Sign Language Charter on behalf of the GLA.</p> <p>In response the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan (Lab) said that:</p>

	<p><i>"I am fully committed to Deaf Londoners having full access to information and services across the capital. The BSL charter offers an opportunity to raise the aspirations for improving access for BSL Deaf people. Over the next few months we will be reviewing policies and plans to improve the lives of Deaf Londoners including our capacity to implement the BSL charter. We will do so in close consultation with Deaf stakeholders."</i></p>
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Charities

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Charity Commission issues new guidance for charity trustees about fundraising from the public</u></p>	<p>The Charity Commission has issued guidance entitled 'Charity fundraising: a guide to trustee duties (CC20)'. This guidance explains what trustees need to do to comply with the law relating to the management and control of their fundraising.</p> <p>The guide sets out 6 principles the trustees should follow to achieve this. The 6 principles are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plan effectively • supervise your fundraisers • protect your charity's reputation, money and other assets • follow fundraising laws and regulation • follow recognised standards for fundraising • be open and accountable

Health and Social Care

Click on Link for Source

Item	Summary
<p><u>Written question on monitoring of the Accessible Information Standard</u></p>	<p>Shadow Minister for Disabled People, Debbie Abrahams (Labour, Oldham East and Saddleworth) has asked the Department of Health how it will monitor the progress of organisations providing NHS or adult social care towards conforming to the Accessible Information Standard.</p> <p>In response the Minister for Community and Social Care, Alistair Burt MP (Con, North East Bedfordshire) said that Compliance with the Standard is a legal duty and organisations that provide National Health Service care or adult social care are required to implement the Standard in full by 31 July 2016. Compliance with the Standard is also a requirement of the NHS Standard Contract 2016/17.</p> <p>He went on to say:</p>

	<p><i>“NHS England does not hold information on how many NHS trusts conform to the Standard. NHS England is not proactively monitoring progress of organisations that provide NHS or adult social care towards conforming to the Accessible Information Standard, as the Standard does not establish a new national audit or dataset which requires organisations to report centrally on their adherence. In addition, NHS England as an organisation does not have a monitoring or inspection remit.</i></p> <p><i>“However, the Standard includes requirements for organisations to publish or display an accessible communications policy which explains how they will follow the Accessible Information Standard, and an accessible complaints policy. The inclusion of these requirements is intended to support ease of compliance assessment by interested organisations, and to ensure that people with information and communication support needs are able to provide feedback to organisations about their experiences.</i></p> <p><i>“The specification for the Standard also makes clear that commissioning organisations must actively support compliance by organisations from which they commission services and must also seek assurance from providers in this regard.</i></p> <p><i>“In addition, the Care Quality Commission will look at evidence of how services implement the Accessible Information Standard as part of their inspection of health services and adult social care services when they make judgements about whether health services are responsive to people’s needs, and adult social care services are responsive to people’s needs and whether they are well led.”</i></p>
<p><u>Public Accounts Committee publishes report on personal budgets in social care</u></p>	<p>The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee has published its report into personal budgets in social care. The summary of the report states:</p> <p><i>“The Department of Health has demonstrated the potential of personal budgets to transform care and improve quality of life for most groups of social care service users but it is not doing enough to ensure that all can reap the benefits and it has not set out how it will judge success. We are not assured that local authorities can fully personalise care while seeking to save money and are concerned that users’ outcomes will be adversely affected. Local authorities face a substantial challenge supporting sustainable local care markets which offer the diverse range of provision needed for users to personalise their care, while care providers are struggling to recruit and retain appropriately qualified staff as financial pressures increase.”</i></p>

Consultations

Title: Is the funding available for adult social care sufficient?

Source: House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee

Deadline for written evidence: 19th August 2016

The Communities and Local Government Select Committee has launched an inquiry into the financial sustainability of local authority adult social care and the quality of care provided.

The Committee is inviting written submission on:

- The impact of the 2015 Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement, including the two per cent council tax precept, the Better Care Fund, and the National Living Wage, on whether the funding available for social care is sufficient to enable local authorities to fulfil their duties under the Care Act 2014 to assess and meet the needs of people in need of care and support
- The role of carers in providing adult social care, the relationship between local authorities and carers and whether the funding available is sufficient for local authorities to assess and meet their needs
- The effect of local authority adult social care commissioning practices and market oversight functions on their local social care markets
- Innovative approaches to the design and delivery of adult social care, for example use of digital technology, and the progress made by local authorities and health services to deliver integrated health and social care by 2020, and the expected outcomes

Further details can be found [here](#)

Parliamentary terms

Early Day Motion (EDM)

Early Day Motions are formal motions for debate submitted by MPs in the House of Commons. There is usually no time available to actually debate an EDM, but they are useful for drawing attention to specific events or campaigns and demonstrating the extent of parliamentary support for a particular cause or point of view. MPs register their support by signing individual motions.

Oral Parliamentary Question (OPQ) and Written Parliamentary Question (WPQ)

Parliamentary Questions are used by both MPs and Peers to question Ministers in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. They are used to seek information, and Ministers are obliged to explain and defend the work, policy, decisions and actions of their departments, oral questions can also be used to make political points. Parliamentary questions are a vital tool in holding the Government to account. The Prime Minister answers oral questions from the House of Commons every Wednesday at midday.

Debates

Both the House of Commons and the House of Lords hold debates in which Members discuss government policy, proposed new laws and current issues. All debates are recorded in a publication called 'Hansard' which is available online or in print.

All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)

All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) are informal groups composed of politicians from all political parties. They provide an opportunity for cross-party discussion and co-operation on particular issues. All-party groups sometimes act as useful pressure groups for specific causes helping to keep the Government, the opposition and MPs informed of parliamentary and outside opinion.

Select Committees

House of Commons Select Committees exist to scrutinise the work of government departments. Most committees have about 11 members and reflect the relative size of each party in the Commons. They conduct enquiries on a specific issue, and gather evidence from expert witnesses. Findings are reported to the Commons, printed, and published on the Parliament website. The Government then usually has 60 days to reply to the committee's recommendations.

Written ministerial statements

Government ministers can make written statements to announce:

- The publication of reports by government agencies
- Findings of reviews and inquiries and the government's response
- Financial and statistical information
- Procedure and policy initiatives of government departments

Private Members' Bills

Private Members' Bills allow backbench MPs or Peers to introduce their own legislation. There are three types of Private Members' Bills introduced into the House of Commons:

- **Ballot Bills:** A ballot is held at the beginning of each parliamentary year the 20 MPs whose names come out top are allowed to introduce legislation on a subject of their choice.
- **Ten Minute Rule Bills:** The sponsoring MP is given a slot in which they may make a speech lasting up to 10 minutes in support of his or her bill
- **Presentation Bill:** a Member is not able to speak in support of it and it stands almost no chance of becoming law

