

Weekly Political Update

14th September 2015

Employment

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[Government responds to select committee report on Access to Work](#)

The House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee have published the Government's formal response to the Committee's report on Access to Work. The Committee's report '[Improving Access to Work for disabled people](#)' was published in December 2014; the Government's response was delayed because of the general election. The Government published a written ministerial statement outlining a number of reforms to the Access to Work scheme in March of this year – this means that some of the Committee's original recommendation are now out of date or have already been the subject of substantive action from the Government.

In response to a recommendation that the Government conduct a cost-benefit ratio of Access to Work to support the case for addition funding the Government said:

“Officials have undertaken research to explore the potential costs and benefits of Access to Work expenditure, including the impacts on social security expenditure and income tax returns. However, it is difficult to establish an overall value for money figure and it would be misleading to publish such a figure.”

The response gave no indication that the Access to Work budget will receive an increase, merely saying that “budgets for future years will be set in the Spending Review later this year.”

The Government were able to cite the policy changes made in March as its response to many of the recommendation made by the Committee, such as on the '30 hour rule' and the review of the BSL interpretation market.

In order to make Access to Work guidance more accessible the Government have said that they will start to translate user friendly guidance into BSL 'shortly'.

Action on Hearing Loss submitting written evidence to the Work and Pensions Committee as part of its original inquiry.

<p><u>Oral question on specialist providers of employment support</u></p>	<p>Richard Graham MP (Conservative, Gloucester) welcomed the Government’s commitment to support one million disabled people into work. He said he had recently met representatives of an access-to-work contractor, Pluss, which is very active in Gloucester who told him about some ‘remarkable stories of people being helped into jobs’. He asked if the Government thinks that specialist providers have a real role to play in helping achieve this important goal.</p> <p>In response the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Iain Duncan-Smith (Conservative, Chingford and Woodford Green) said:</p> <p><i>“That is one of the objectives of this Government. We have made huge strides in getting more people with disabilities back into work—I think the figure is now over 220,000, which I believe is the highest figure since records began, in proportionate terms—but the most important point is that we are looking to get that up to the level of normal, non-disabled people who are back in work. Those with disabilities have every right and every reason to expect exactly the same support into work that everybody else gets.”</i></p>
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Health and Social Care

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Financial support for residential care homes run by charities</u></p>	<p>Tim Loughton MP (Con, East Worthing and Shoreham) asked the Treasury what financial measures he has introduced to help residential care homes for elderly people run by charities since 2010.</p> <p>In response the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, David Gauke MP (Con, South West Hertfordshire) said that the Chancellor has not introduced any financial measures which are specifically targeted towards residential care homes for elderly people run by charities. However a range of measures have been introduced by the Government to support the social care sector and charities. He went on to cite the reform of social care brought about by the 2014 Care Act and changes to the Gift Aid regime.</p>

Disability

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<p><u>Written question on action to tackle disability hate crime</u></p>	<p>David Simpson MP (DUP, Upper Bann) asked the Home Office what recent assessment it has made of the effectiveness of steps taken to counteract disability hate crime.</p> <p>In response the Home Office Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Karen Bradley MP (Con, Staffordshire Moorlands), said that the Government take all forms of hate crime seriously. She added that In 2012 the Government published a hate crime action plan and a total of 13 actions were dedicated to the prevention of disability hate crime, including the creation of a new cross government Disability Strategy, the publication of the Crown Prosecution Service Action Plan on disability hate crime and publishing examples of good practice by disabled persons' user-led organisations. She went on to say that the progress report on the action plan, published in 2014, showed that we had either completed or made good progress on all actions.</p>
<p><u>Written question on disability access to sports grounds</u></p>	<p>Paul Flynn MP (Lab, Newport West) has asked the Department for Culture, Media and Sport what support has been available to assist sports stadiums on improving their disabled accessibility.</p> <p>In response the Minister for Sport, Tracey Crouch (Con, Chatham and Aylesford) said that the Government is committed to ensuring that all spectators have appropriate access to sporting venues and services and that professional sports clubs and sporting venues have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate disabled supporters.</p> <p>The Department for Culture, Media and Sport approved a £1.9mbid from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to deliver the Sports Equality Standard programme. The programme includes support and guidance for improving the physical and cultural accessibility of sporting venues. As part of this programme, the EHRC is actively working with a range of sports to deliver access audits at a number of grounds over the next two years, which will enable clubs to identify areas where access can be improved.</p>

British Sign Language

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Written question on the market review of British Sign Language interpreters</u></p>	<p>Ian Lavery MP (Labour, Wansbeck) asked the Department for Work and Pensions for what reason it decided not to commission an independent body to conduct the market review of British Sign Language interpreters.</p> <p>In response the Minister for Disabled People Justin Tomlinson MP (Con, Swindon North) said that the review does not intend to make recommendations but to obtain a clearer picture of current and projected supply and demand for stakeholders, including DWP to consider in future policy design. It is more cost effective to lead the market review of communication support within DWP than commission this work externally. A call for evidence to which all stakeholders may contribute will be launched shortly.</p>
<p><u>Written question on the British Sign Language National Framework Agreement</u></p>	<p>Ian Lavery MP (Labour, Wansbeck) has asked the Cabinet Office for what reasons no consultation has taken place with members of the deaf community, service users and British Sign Language interpreters and service providers on the National Framework Agreement for interpreting and translation.</p> <p>In response the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General Mike Hancock MP, (Con, West Suffolk) said that there has been extensive stakeholder engagement for a new Language Services Framework Agreement (RM1092) over the past year, following which the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) has amended the specification of requirements to address the points that have been raised by stakeholders, including organisations representing deaf people, users, interpreters, suppliers and industry standards organisations. CCS has also included the National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters (NUBSLI), and the National Union of Professional Interpreters and Translators (NUPIT) as part of the consultation process over this period.</p>

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

UK Council on Deafness are indebted to Action on Hearing Loss and other organisations that have allowed the sharing of their internally produced information relating to policy and Parliamentary activity, with the wider membership. Any views and comments do not necessarily represent the UKCoD view. The information source should always be researched and/or contacted if you require more detailed information