

Weekly Political Report

17th October 2016

The consultations section is at the end of this document.

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

Television

Click on Link for Source

Item	Summary
<p><u>Ofcom gives oral evidence calling for parity of legislation between on-demand and linear TV</u></p>	<p>The Government's Digital Economy Bill has begun its committee stage in the House of Commons. The Public Bill Committee has been calling witnesses to give oral evidence on the Bill, ahead of their line-by-line scrutiny of the measures it contains.</p> <p>During their oral evidence Ofcom, the regulator of video-on-demand services, were asked an open question by Kevin Brennan MP (Lab, Cardiff West) on whether they had any suggested amendments to improve the Bill. In response Ofcom's Director of Content Standards, Licensing and Enforcement, Tony Close, said:</p> <p><i>"We have been contacted recently by a number of stakeholders who are keen to see improvements in the provision of access services such as subtitles and audio description in the video on demand sector. Action on Hearing Loss has been in touch, and it is keen to see Ofcom given very similar powers to those it already has in relation to linear television to set challenging but proportionate targets for access services in a code for video on demand services. We would welcome such an amendment."</i></p> <p>Action on Hearing Loss welcomes this as a potentially significant intervention. At the moment the Government is arguing that Ofcom will take action to improve the provision of access services on VoD, a position which we do not believe is tenable when Ofcom themselves are calling for additional powers.</p> <p>Action on Hearing Loss has submitted <u>written evidence</u> to the Public Bill Committee. Our evidence sets out the case for an amendment to be made and includes a provisional draft text of the amendment. We have also been in contact with a number of members of the Committee to try to secure a debate on our</p>

	amendment.
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Employment

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Item	Summary
<u>Written question on the disability employment gap</u>	<p>Stephen Timms MP (Lab, East Ham) has asked the Department for Work and Pensions what progress the Government has made in reducing the disability employment gap.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Disabled People, Work and Health, Penny Mordaunt MP (Con, Portsmouth North) said that the Government recognises that the gap between the employment rates of disabled people and non-disabled people remains too large.</p> <p>She added:</p> <p><i>“Last year the Work and Health Unit was established to lead the drive for improving work and health outcomes for people with health conditions and disabilities, as well as improving support for people absent from work through ill health and those at risk of leaving workforce. The Unit has begun work to build the evidence base of what works to support disabled people and people with health conditions to obtain and remain in work. We plan to produce a Green Paper later this year that will explore a range of ways to improve the prospects and transform the lives of disabled people and people with long term health conditions by removing barriers that prevent them from working, and helping ensure that they are able to obtain and remain in work.”</i></p>

Disability

Click on Link for Source

Item	Summary
<u>Written question on disability hate crimes</u>	<p>Tulip Siddiq MP (Labour, Hampstead and Kilburn) has asked the Home Office how many hate crimes were committed against disabled people in each of the last five years.</p> <p>In response the Home Office Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Sarah Newton MP (Con, Truro and Falmouth) said that in</p>

	<p>2011/12, the police recorded 1,748 disability hate crime offences, 1,911 in 2012/13, 2,006 in 2013/14 and 2,508 in 2014/15. Further information on hate crime can be found in Hate Crimes, England and Wales, 2014/15, available here.</p> <p>The Minister added:</p> <p><i>“This Government is committed to tackling hate crime. The UK has one of the strongest legislative frameworks in the world to tackle hate crime. We are working across Government with police, (including National Community Tensions Team), the Crown Prosecution Service and community partners to send out a clear message that hate crime will not be tolerated and we will vigorously pursue and prosecute those who commit these crimes.”</i></p>
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Transport

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Government tables amendment to the Bus Services Bill to provide for audio-visual display systems</u></p>	<p>The Government has tabled an amendment to its Bus Services Bill which would, if passed, give ministers new powers to ensure audio-visual display systems will be included on all buses.</p> <p>The Bill is currently awaiting its report stage in the House of Lords, where peers can move amendment to the Bill. The proposed amendment (No. 101, tabled by Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Con)) would give the Secretary of State the power to pass secondary legislation amending the 2010 Equality Act in order to mandate bus companies to provide a range of audio and visual information on buses - such as next stop, delays, diversions etc. The amendment would require the UK Government to consult with the devolved administrations before introducing the requirement, which would apply across the UK.</p> <p>The amendment will be debated by the House of Lords on Monday 24th October.</p> <p>Action on Hearing Loss has been campaigning for the introduction of audio-visual display system of buses and welcomes the proposed amendment. We recently submitted</p>

	<p><u>written evidence the House of Commons Transport Select Committee</u>, making a case for this amendment to the Bill.</p>
<p><u>Written question on disability awareness training for taxi drivers</u></p>	<p>Barry Sheerman MP (Lab, Huddersfield) has asked the Department for Transport what steps it is taking to ensure that all taxi and minicab drivers undergo disability equality training.</p> <p>In response the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Andrew Jones MP (Con, Harrogate and Knaresborough) said that taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) provide a particularly important service for many disabled people and it is therefore vital that their drivers have the knowledge and skills to provide appropriate assistance whenever it is required. He 'encourage local licensing authorities to consider how a requirement to undergo disability awareness training might help drivers to feel more confident in providing such assistance, consistent with the authority's Public Sector Equality Duty'.</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.

