

Weekly Political Update

20 December 2017

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Employment

Click on link for source

<p><u>Oral question on what progress the Government is making on implementing the Disability Confident scheme</u></p>	<p>James Morris MP (Conservatives, Halesowen and Rowley Regis) has asked the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, <i>“what progress his Department is making on implementing the Disability Confident scheme”</i></p> <p>Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, David Gauke MP’s response (Conservatives, South West Hertfordshire):</p> <p><i>“Over 5,000 employers have signed up to Disability Confident since its launch in November 2016. The Disability Confident business leaders group, made up of prominent national businesses, is promoting the scheme to other employers. I am pleased to report that all the main ministerial Government Departments have now achieved Disability Confident leader status.”</i></p> <p>James Morris MP (Conservatives, Halesowen and Rowley Regis) then asked: <i>“Does the Secretary of State agree that Disability Confident will prove to be an effective way of breaking down barriers for disabled people to get into work, particularly by addressing the issues of stigma that a lot of disabled people still feel? In that regard, would he consider attending my Disability Confident event in Halesowen on 26 January?”</i></p> <p>Mr Gauke (Secretary of State for Work and Pensions) replied <i>“I will certainly consider my hon. Friend’s kind invitation. I agree that a lot of Disability Confident events have been very productive in engaging employers at local level and encouraging them to see the benefits of employing disabled people. The Department for Work and Pensions continues to support local authorities and MPs in holding such events, so maybe I will have the opportunity to attend one in his constituency.”</i></p> <p>Philip Hollobone MP (Conservatives, Kettering) asked <i>“How many of the FTSE 250 companies have signed up to this excellent campaign?”</i></p> <p>Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, David Gauke MP (Conservatives, South West Hertfordshire) replied:</p> <p><i>“That is a very good question, and I will have to write to my hon. Friend with the answer. I can tell him that businesses small and large have participated in the scheme, including large organisations such as Microsoft, GlaxoSmithKline, Sainsbury’s and Channel 4, as well as many small businesses up and down the country.”</i></p> <p>Mark Pawsey MP (Conservatives, Rugby) asked:</p>
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	<p><i>“The small employment adviser at Rugby jobcentre has just signed up 15 new employers to become Disability Confident. Does the Secretary of State agree that the role of those officers in building links with small employers in local areas is crucial to ensuring that more disabled people get access to the workplace?”</i></p> <p>Work and Pensions Secretary, Mr Gauke (Conservatives, South West Hertfordshire) responded:</p> <p><i>“Yes, I do. My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. It is really important that that engagement happens up and down the country, and I am pleased that we are making progress. As I have said, we have over 5,000 Disability Confident employers, and I hope that we will continue to increase that number. My Department will certainly be doing everything it can to achieve that.”</i></p> <p>Shadow Minister for Disabled People, Marsha De Cordova MP (Labour, Battersea) asked:</p> <p><i>“In the recently published “Improving Lives: Helping Workless Families” paper, the Government said that they wanted to work in partnership with employers to help them to draw fully on the talents of disabled people. However, following the Chancellor’s recent comments scapegoating disabled people as being the reason for low productivity, does the Secretary of State agree that there is a need for a clear and coherent message from the Government that employing disabled people can enhance productivity and make a real contribution to organisations and businesses across the UK?”</i></p> <p>Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, David Gauke MP’s responded (Conservatives, South West Hertfordshire):</p> <p><i>“There is a clear and coherent message from this Government. We have seen significant increases in the number of disabled people in work, which is good for disabled people, but it is also good for the economy as a whole. That continues to be our message, and that is why we published our “Improving Lives” document. We will continue to work to improve the opportunities for disabled people in the labour market.”</i></p> <p>To read in full, please click on the link on the left.</p>
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Disability benefits

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<p><u>Oral question on the accuracy and efficiency of contracted-out health assessments</u></p>	<p>Mary Creagh MP (Labour, Wakefield) asked “what recent assessment he has made of the (a) accuracy and (b) efficiency of contracted-out health assessments for (i) employment and support allowance and (ii) personal independence payments”</p> <p>The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, Sarah Newton MP’s response (Conservatives, Truro and Falmouth):</p>
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	<p><i>“We are committed to ensuring that claimants receive high-quality, accurate assessments. We monitor assessment quality through independent audit. Decision makers can return reports for rework or additional advice. A range of measures, including provider improvement plans, address performance failings when we experience standards below what we want. We continually look to improve the assessment process.”</i></p> <p>To read in full, please click on the link on the left.</p>
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Social Care

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<p><u>Oral question on what assessment the Government has made of the adequacy of funding social care</u></p>	<p>Dan Carden (Labour, Liverpool Walton) has asked <i>“what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for social care.”</i></p> <p>Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health, Jackie Doyle-Price MP’s response (Conservatives, Thurrock):</p> <p><i>“Councils in England will receive an additional £2 billion for social care over the next three years, as announced in March 2017. The Government have given councils access to up to £9.25 billion more dedicated funding for social care over the next three years as a result of measures introduced since 2015. This means that, overall, councils are able to increase spending on adult social care in real terms in each of the next three years.”</i></p> <p>Dan Carden MP (Labour, Liverpool, Walton) replied:</p> <p><i>“Last week’s Health Survey for England revealed that older people in more deprived areas, such as my own constituency of Liverpool, Walton, are twice as likely to have unmet social care needs and our NHS is left picking up the pieces. When will this Government stop passing the buck and bring forward concrete plans on proper investment and reform to end the national scandal that is our care system?”</i></p> <p>The Minister, Jackie Doyle-Price (Conservatives, Thurrock) responded:</p> <p><i>“The entitlement to care is completely enshrined in the Care Act 2014, so if needs are not being met, there is a statutory obligation that can be enforced. On the long-term solutions, obviously, we have put in additional money to sort out the short-term funding pressures, but we need to have a long-term and more sustainable deal with which to meet our obligations for social care, which is why we are bringing forward a Green Paper next year. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will participate in that debate.”</i></p> <p>Shadow Minister for Mental Health and Social Care, Barbara Keeley MP (Labour, Worsley and Eccles South) stated:</p> <p><i>“The recent Health Survey showed not only that unmet needs were most concentrated among people who are the most deprived, as we have just heard, but that 2.3 million older people, aged 65 and over, now have unmet care needs—2.3 million. Neither the care Minister in her recent statement nor the Chancellor in his Budget said anything about closing the funding gap for social</i></p>
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	<p><i>care. Given that the Green Paper is only scheduled for next summer, what is the Health Secretary doing about the crisis in funding social care and meeting staggering levels of unmet needs?"</i></p> <p>Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health, Jackie Doyle-Price MP replied (Conservatives, Thurrock):</p> <p><i>"The hon. Lady will be aware that, immediately following these questions, we will be having a statement on funding from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. I remind her again that we have made an additional £9.25 billion available for social care over this three years, but she is right that the long-term sustainability will be addressed by reform, which is why we are bringing forward the Green Paper. As to the figures on unmet needs, I simply do not recognise them. The entitlement to care is enshrined in the Care Act, and those rights are protected."</i></p> <p>To read in full, please click on the link on the left.</p>
<p><u>Written question on how to ensure care provider CQC ratings are taken into account in advice issued by local authorities to people seeking care homes</u></p>	<p>Chair of the Science and Technology Committee, Norman Lamb MP (Liberal Democrats, North Norfolk) has asked <i>"the Secretary of State for Health, what processes are in place to ensure that care provider CQC ratings are taken into account in advice issued by local authority social services to people seeking a care home."</i></p> <p>Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health, Jackie Doyle-Price MP's response (Conservatives, Thurrock):</p> <p><i>"Information and advice is fundamental to enabling people, carers and families to take control of, and make well-informed choices about, their care and support and how they fund it.</i></p> <p><i>The Care Act 2014 placed duties on local authorities to establish and maintain information and advice services relating to care and support for all people in its area.</i></p> <p><i>When appropriate, local authorities direct people to national sources of information, including the quality ratings of providers from the Care Quality Commission."</i></p>

Life Sciences

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<p><u>Oral question on what steps the Government is taking to support investment in life science</u></p>	<p>Andrew Bowie MP (Conservatives, West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) asked <i>"What steps he is taking to support investment in life sciences for the development of new medical treatments"</i></p> <p>Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health, Steve Brine MP's response (Conservatives, Winchester and Chandler's Ford).</p> <p><i>"The recently announced life sciences sector deal draws significant investment into the sector from across the world, ensuring that the next wave of</i></p>
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breakthrough treatments, innovative medical research and technologies—and highly skilled jobs, of course—are created right here in Great Britain.”

Andrew Bowie MP then asked “...will he give the House some more detail on the sector deal and industry investments that could give even more strength to this world-leading industry across the United Kingdom?”

The Minister, Steve Brine MP responded: “*The sector’s commercial activity is very broadly spread across the whole of the UK—my hon. Friend’s concern. There are a number of strong emerging life sciences clusters. The deal highlights successes around the UK in Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Glasgow, south Wales, and the south-east, so it is a very broad spread.*”

Daniel Zeichner MP (Labour, Cambridge) asked:

“Medical research charities play a key role in developing new medical treatments, yet the Charity Research Support Fund, which enables universities to unlock investment from the sector, has been frozen since 2010. Will the Minister heed the call from the Association of Medical Research Charities to enhance CRSF in real terms, in line with inflation and with charity investment?”

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health, Steve Brine MP’s response (Conservatives, Winchester and Chandler’s Ford).

“I can come back to the hon. Gentleman in more detail on that. As part of the life sciences sector deal, there is just over £210 million of industrial strategy challenge funding for early diagnosis. This includes funding to build on the UK’s leadership in genomics, where we are very strong, and to establish programmes in digital diagnostics and artificial intelligence in healthcare.”

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