

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

Television

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<p><u>House of Lords passes 'the Subtitle It! Amendment' to the Government's Digital Economy Bill</u></p>	<p>The House of Lords has passed an amendment to the Government's Digital Economy Bill which allow the Government to give new powers to the regulator of TV, Ofcom, to set on-demand subtitle quotas for broadcasters – one of the main aims of our Subtitle It! Campaign. The amendment was passed without a division. The amendment is only an enabling measure – meaning the Government will need to pass a statutory instrument to bring it into effect. During the debate the Government committed to passing this instrument later this year.</p> <p>The amendment was moved by backbencher Peer Lord Borwick (Con) during the final session of the Bill's committee stage deliberations, although the amendment was supported and drafted by the Government.</p> <p>In speaking to the amendment the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Lord Ashton of Hyde (Con) said:</p> <p><i>"I also pass on the Government's thanks to the Ewing Foundation and Action on Hearing Loss for bringing this important issue to our attention."</i></p> <p>He went on to say that the amendment would overcome the shortcomings in access service available via on-demand content. He added:</p> <p><i>"Through consultation with Ofcom, the industry and other stakeholders, the Government will determine the requirements that providers of on-demand programme services will be required to meet. We need to make sure that the requirement maximises the benefits to consumers while not presenting undue burdens to providers of on-demand services. Consultation will enable us to strike the correct balance. I can tell the noble Lord, Lord Grantchester, that officials are engaged in discussions with Ofcom. The aim is for statutory instruments to be put in place later this year."</i></p>
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Employment and Industry

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Work and Pensions Select Committee publishes its report on the disability employment gap

The House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee has published its report into the disability employment gap. Its headline recommendation was that if the Department is to press ahead with introducing a lower rate of benefit for new claimants of the Employment Support Allowance (ESA) in the Work-Related Activity Group (WRAG) it must first have set out a clear plan for identifying where new claimants have additional, unavoidable living costs relating to their conditions, and how it will ensure that these costs are covered.

There were also a number of recommendations of relevance to our current employment work. These are set out below by category.

The Timescale & Strategy

The Committee starts from the premise that the Government will not halve the Disability Employment Gap by 2020, and therefore:

“It is a long-term ambition that requires long-term thinking and a consistent approach. The Department can do much to lay the ground for this by introducing clear expectations, and detailed measurements and reporting standards now. Only through measuring outcomes will it be possible to identify and spread good practice.”

It also recommended:

“the Government publish a Disability Employment Strategy, building on the outcome of the green paper consultation. This would bring together the initiatives already announced that relate to halving the gap, build on them, and ensure that this seen as a shared, long-term objective and priority across all relevant Departments. It should then commission an annual report on progress towards meeting its strategic goals, drawing on the improved monitoring that we recommend.”

Access to Work

One very interesting recommendation on Access to Work – acknowledging the fact that people cannot understand the support they receive until they have obtained a job. The Committee therefore recommended:

“We recommend that the Department launch a publicity campaign for Access to Work, targeting disabled people, employers, and its own frontline staff. We further recommend that potential beneficiaries should be permitted to complete pre-eligibility checks in Jobcentre Plus without the requirement to have obtained an offer of employment, and that claimants should be allowed to take their awards, or pending awards, with them if they move jobs.”

The Committee also re-ran much of the evidence and arguments about Access to Work not being widely known by suggesting a public information campaign. The Committee also reissued its appeal for a better cost-benefit analysis of the scheme.

Disability Confident

The committee notes the centrality of employers and employer attitudes as a part of improving employment opportunities for disabled people and therefore seems to take our line on Disability Confident – well-intentioned but no measure of the scheme – and therefore recommends:

“To assess whether Disability Confident is meeting its objective of increasing disability employment, and to learn lessons for future employer engagement strategies, we recommend that the Department commission an evaluation of the campaign before 2020. This should take into account what changes members display in their hiring and employee retention behaviour, as well as establishing whether it is attracting a broad spectrum of employers.”

The Committee also makes the call for a ‘one-stop shop’ on disability employment, noting that many organisations are trying to support employers, saying:

“We recommend that the Department proceed with implementing a “one-stop shop” for employers, which should be linked to Disability Confident. A central feature of this should be signposting towards local, specialist services (including those that deal with specific impairment types) that offer support on making adjustments and on other aspects of employment retention.”

Financial Incentives

The Committee present a selection of the evidence they received which calls for financial incentives to be part of the package offered to employers. It says:

“We welcome the Department’s measures to support employers of disabled people, such as the Small Employer Offer and the Fit for Work tax exemption scheme. We also recognise that where some forms of incentives, such as wage subsidies, have been trialled in the past, there has not been concrete evidence of success. Financial incentives could, however, encourage employers to undertake desirable behaviour, which in turn might encourage others and create a virtuous circle. It is clear that there is a great deal of interest in the role incentives for employers could play in tackling the disability employment gap, even if it is currently far from clear what sort of financial support package might work best in Britain.

	<p><i>“We recommend the Department test a range of approaches to incentivising employers, using a collection of small trials. These should test, for example, the impact of wage subsidies, incentives such as relief on National Insurance Contributions, and commissioning external organisations to provide support and guidance directly to employers. The Department’s evaluations should consider the effects on different industries and different sizes of business. In finding out what does work, the Department must also be open to discovering what does not. Sticking to the same safe strategies will continue to bring the same results.”</i></p> <p>Action on Hearing Loss <u>submitted written evidence</u> to this inquiry and met with the Committee’s Clerk to discuss our evidence around employer attitudes.</p>
<p><u>DWP appoints Tim Fallowfield as Chair of business community disability group</u></p>	<p>The Department for Work and Pensions has announced that Tim Fallowfield, Company Secretary and Corporate Services Director of Sainsbury’s will Chair the Disability Confident Business Leaders Group, announced as part of the Work and Health Green Paper earlier this year. The Group will comprise leading figures in the business community who will work with the Government on its aspiration to halve the disability employment gap.</p> <p>The Government has said that further appointments will be made in the coming weeks.</p>
<p><u>British Sign Language Confirmed as a suitable alternative to English for application to apprenticeships</u></p>	<p>Minister of State for Apprenticeships and Skills, Robert Halfon MP (Con, Harlow) has confirmed a policy change from the Department for Education meaning that in the future, BSL will be considered a suitable alternative to English when applying for apprenticeships. This will allow thousands of BSL users to access apprenticeship schemes made available under the apprenticeship levy from April 2017, which will require English and Maths as basic skills.</p>
<p><u>Written question regarding employment support spending</u></p>	<p>Stephen Timms (Lab, East Ham) asked the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the evidential basis is for his statement that his Department will spend an extra £330m on employment support compared with current Work Programme and Work Choice arrangements.</p> <p>Minister of State for Disabled People, Work and Health, Penny Mordaunt MP (Con, Portsmouth North) replied that the Chancellor announced a support package of £330m over four years (Summer Budget 2015) for people with limited capability for work from April 2017. The Improving Lives Green Paper provided details of this new personal support package. The funding is targeted at new ESA Work Related Activity Group and UC Limited Capability for Work claimants from April 2017. It will deliver a broad range of employment and health support. This will rise from £60m in 2017/18 to £100m in 2020/21.</p>

<p><u>Department for Work and Pensions statistics</u></p>	<p>The DWP has published its statistical summaries for 2017. These set out the high level summary of the latest National Statistics available on DWP administered benefits and sanction. The release includes information on ESA, PIP and DLA.</p>
<p><u>Written question on the employment gap</u></p>	<p>Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Debbie Abrahams MP (Lab, Oldham East and Saddleworth) asked what the government's policy is on halving the disability employment gap by 2020.</p> <p>Minister of State for Work and Pensions, Penny Mordaunt MP (Conservative, Portsmouth North) replied that making progress on the Government's manifesto ambition to halve the disability employment gap is central to the social agenda. She pointed to the c600,000 additional disabled people in employment over the past three years and the 5% increase in employment rate for disabled people to 48%. She referenced the Government's Improving Lives Green Paper for short and long term plans, saying:</p> <p><i>"The Green Paper 'Improving Lives: The Work and Health Disability Green Paper' (published on 31st October 2016) sets out the short-term action we intend to take to bring about change. It also asks questions on ideas for longer-term reform over this Parliament and beyond through a formal national consultation, so that our systems, sectors and social attitudes all work together to help achieve the ambition of halving the disability employment gap."</i></p>
<p><u>Written question regarding disability employment support spending</u></p>	<p>Neil Gray MP (SNP, Airdrie and Shotts) asked how much the Government plans to spend on employment support services for disabled people by 2020, and what will be available per programme.</p> <p>Minister of State for Disabled People, Work and Health, Penny Mordaunt MP (Con, Portsmouth North) referenced the Summer Budget 2015 support package of £330m over four years, which will rise from £60m in 2017/18 to £100m in 2020/21. Additionally, the 2015 Spending Review announced funding rising to at least £130m a year by 2019/20 for the new Work and Health Programme.</p> <p>Penny Mordaunt added that:</p> <p><i>"The Package will be delivered through Jobcentre Plus, including following the Work Programme with a smaller, but more focused Work and Health Programme, coupled with significant new investment in a new Health and Work Conversation for all ESA claimants and additional Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres."</i></p>
<p><u>Prime Minister responds to oral</u></p>	<p>Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Disability, Dr Lisa Cameron (SNP, East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow),</p>

<p><u>question on progress towards halving the disability employment gap</u></p>	<p>spoke at Prime Ministers Questions to highlight a recent report from the Group on the Government’s pledge to halve the disability employment gap. She said that the research shows that that pledge will not be met for 50 years. Dr Cameron asked the Prime Minister to place people with disability at the heart of policy and ensure that her Ministers engage with the APPG and its recommendations.</p> <p>The Prime Minister, Theresa May MP (Con, Maidenhead) responded by reassuring that the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is aware of the report and intends to follow up on the reconmendations made by the APPG.</p>
<p><u>Written question regarding support for disabled people in work</u></p>	<p>Jim McMahon MP (Lab, Oldham West and Royton) asked what steps the Government is taking to ensure disabled people have the right support in place to say at work.</p> <p>Minister of State for Disabled People, Work and Health, Penny Mordaunt MP (Con, Portsmouth North) replied stating the Government’s Improving Lives Green Paper’s intent to remove long-standing injustices and barriers that stop disabled people and people with health conditions from getting into and staying in work. She said the Government are consulting on what exactly the barriers are and what the Government can do to help. She also said the DWP are reforming and expanding Government schemes that support employers and employees with health and disability issues.</p>
<p><u>Greater London and Manchester to be handed devolved power to support disabled people</u></p>	<p>The Department for Work and Pensions has announced that are to receive new powers to help disabled people enter work. The two cities will receive around £100 million to develop, procure and deliver localised versions of the new Work and Health Programme to fit the needs of their residents.</p> <p>In the last 3 years, the number of disabled people in work has increased by almost 600,000. However, the gap between the employment rates of disabled people and non-disabled people remains too large at 32%.</p> <p>By devolving these powers, participants – including homeless people and long-term unemployed people – will receive more intense, tailored support based on local expertise that will give them the best chance to move into long-term employment.</p> <p>Work and Pensions Secretary Damian Green said:</p> <p><i>“This is a significant step to help thousands of disabled and vulnerable people get the support they need to move away from benefits and find lasting work. Good work has huge benefits for physical and mental health and we are committed to helping all those people who can work to find work. By devolving powers we are sending our clearest message yet that we are serious about making changes for the better, and believe this can be found in the expertise of local providers who know their residents best.”</i></p>

<p><u>Written Question to Department on Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy regarding employer support</u></p>	<p>SNP Spokesman for Fair Work and Employment, Neil Gray MP (SNP, Airdrie and Shotts) asked what financial support has been made available in 2016-17 to assist employers supporting disabled people.</p> <p>The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility, Margot James MP (Con, Stourbridge) answered that the DWP Access to Work scheme provides financial awards to disabled people in order to fund additional support above the level of an employer's statutory duty to make reasonable adjustments. This does not replace employers' duties under the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>In addition, Disability Confident supports the Government's commitment to halve the disability employment gap by engaging with employers. This scheme gives employers the chance to assess how Disability Confident their business is. She added that the DWP is currently tribally a Small Employer Offer with personalised support and advice plus £500 after three months when they take on new employees who have health conditions or disabilities.</p>
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Industrial Strategy

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<p><u>Government published its industrial strategy Green Paper</u></p>	<p>The Government has released a new Industrial Strategy Green Paper entitled 'Building our Industrial Strategy: Green Paper'. The Government uses the Green Paper to define its industrial strategy, saying:</p> <p>"The objective of our modern industrial strategy is to improve living standards and economic growth by increasing productivity and driving growth across the whole country."</p> <p>The Green Paper identifies ten 'pillars' of the industrial strategy. Amongst these pillars is the commitment for the Government to be 'Investing in science, research & innovation'. The Government commits itself to:</p> <p><i>"Substantially increase investment in R&D and ensure that UK research continues to be world class. We will provide an additional £4.7 billion of funding by 2020-21 – an increase of around 20 per cent to total government R&D spending, and the biggest increase in any parliament in almost 40 years."</i></p> <p>The Green Paper is out to public consultation until 17 April.</p>
<p><u>Oral question regarding industrial strategy</u></p>	<p>Dr Caroline Johnson MP (Con, Sleaford and N. Hykeham) asked how the Industrial Strategy would support disabled people who want to start and grow their own businesses.</p>

	<p>The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility ,Margot James MP (Con, Stourbridge), responded:</p> <p><i>‘The disabled employment programme is an important part of our work in labour markets, and it is backed by many top retailers. We will continue to press this issue and work with the Department for Work and Pensions for greater access to work for people with disabilities.’</i></p>
<p><u>Written question on the provision for disabled people in the Government’s Industrial Strategy</u></p>	<p>The SNP’s Spokesman for Fair Work and Employment, Neil Gray MP (SNP, Airdrie and Shotts) has asked the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy what provision has been made for disabled people as part of the Government’s Industrial Strategy. Neil Gray also asked what meetings the Department has had with disabled people’s organisations on the industrial strategy.</p> <p>The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility, Margot James MP (Con, Stourbridge) gave a single response which stated that the Industrial Strategy Green Paper is part of a consultative approach to developing our strategy and seeks views from organisations across the country, including disability organisations. She added:</p> <p><i>“The Government is clear that the industrial strategy is part of our work to deliver an economy that works for everyone, including disabled people. In particular, the Government’s green paper Improving Lives – the Work, Health and Disability Green Paper considers how we can improve employment outcomes for disabled people. Many employers are already creating healthy, inclusive workplaces, but more needs to be done so that employers provide the support needed for employees with disabilities and long-term health conditions, to help them get into and stay in work.”</i></p>

Health and Social Care

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<p><u>Written question regarding support for working aged disabled people to achieve independent living goals</u></p>	<p>Norman Lamb MP (Lid Dem, North Norfolk) ask the Secretary of State for Health, with reference to paragraph 1.4 of the Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015 on local plans for health and social care integration, what steps the Government and NHS England are taking to ensure that (a) the needs of working age disabled people and (b) outcomes related to independent living are included in those plans.</p> <p>The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Care and Support, David Mowat MP (Con, Warrington South) replied that the Better Care Fund (BCF) implemented the first national</p>
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	<p>mandatory integration policy. One of its overarching aims is to keep people living independent. The BCF Policy Framework for 2017-29 sets out proposals for going before the BCF towards further integration by 2020. He said that the Government will provide a set of resources, integration models and indicators for integration to help local areas, but it will be up to local areas to decide how best to use the funds.</p>
<p><u>NHS Confederation appoints new Chief Executive</u></p>	<p>Niall Dickson has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of the NHS Confederation. He has just completed seven years as Chief Executive of the General Medical Council and has previously been the Chief Executive of The King's Fund. He took over NHS Confederation on the 1st February.</p>
<p><u>Written question regarding disabled consultations</u></p>	<p>Jim McMahon MP (Lab, Oldham West and Royton) asked the Department of Health what consultations were conducted with disabled people as part of its review of social care.</p> <p>The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Care and Support, David Mowat MP (Con., Warrington S.) replied stating the Department regularly engages with people with disabilities. Last summer, the Department commissioned Think Local Act Personal to survey the views of social care service users as part of an ongoing evaluation of the Care Act 2014's Implementation.</p>
<p><u>Written questions regarding provision of BSL support in health and social care settings</u></p>	<p>Alex Salmond MP (SNP, Gordon) has asked how many staff in a social care setting, home care setting and end of life care setting have received BSL and deaf awareness training in the last five years. He also asked about patients who have requested a BSL interpreter at medical appointments have had their request fulfilled in the last five years. He asked how many appointments have had to be postponed due to a British sign language interpreter either not being booked or not being unavailable in the last five years. Alex Salmond has also asked whether the NHS has a standard procedure for booking British sign language interpreters; whether that guidance is publicised to NHS staff; and whether such staff can use it confidentially.</p> <p>The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Community Health and Care, David Mowat MP (Con, Warrington South) provided a single answer which stated:</p> <p><i>“Information is not collected centrally on the number of fulfilled requests by patients for a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter; the number of appointments postponed where a BSL interpreter was not provided, or on the number of staff providing social care who have received bespoke BSL and deaf awareness training.</i></p> <p><i>“The Accessible Information Standard, which was formerly known as SCCI1605 Accessible Information, was published by NHS England in July 2015. It sets out a series of requirements that organisations that provide National Health Service care or publicly funded social care in England must follow. These</i></p>

	<p><i>include arranging for support to be provided by communication professionals, including BSL interpreters, where this is needed to support effective communication. The Standard also provides direction around appropriate qualification and professional registration status of communication professionals, including BSL interpreters, as well as providing other guidance in this regard. However, the Standard does not direct how such support should be arranged or funded, as this is a matter for local decision.</i></p> <p><i>“Compliance with the Standard is a legal duty and all organisations that provide NHS care, including general practice, or adult social care were required to implement the Standard in full by 31 July 2016, and then ensure ongoing compliance thereafter.”</i></p>
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Brexit

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<p><u>House of Lords debates the impact of Brexit people on disabled people</u></p>	<p>The House of Lords has debated the impact of Brexit on disabled people.</p> <p>Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Lord Henley, responded to the debate for the Government and made clear that Brexit would not soften the Government’s commitment to supporting disabled people. He assured Peers that there would be considerable consultation when appropriate with disabled people, and considerable scrutiny by Parliament of these matters. He cited the UK’s longstanding support of disabled people and identity as a forerunner of disability rights and support – predating the European Union – as proof that leaving the EU would not be seen by the UK as a mean of abandoning its duties.</p>
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Transport

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<p><u>Written question regarding taxi’s in rural areas</u></p>	<p>Will Quince (Con, Colchester) asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that there is sufficient provision of accessible taxis for disabled people in rural areas.</p> <p>Andrew Jones (Con, Harrogate and Knaresborough) replied that taxi’s and private hire vehicles (PHVs) availability from an accessibility standpoint varies greatly. He claimed the government encourage local licensing authorities to use their existing powers to ensure that a range of vehicle categories are represented in their taxi and PHV fleets.</p>
<p><u>Written question on the provision of audio-</u></p>	<p>Tom Blenkinsop MP (Lab., Middlesbrough S. and E. Cleveland) asked what the Department for Transport has made of the options available to increase the provision of audio-visual</p>

**visual display systems
on buses**

information on buses.

Transport Minister, Andrew Jones MP (Con, Harrogate and Knaresborough) replied that the Bus Service Bill includes powers to introduce an Accessible Information Requirement for local services throughout Great Britain. The impact assessment for these new powers considered a number of options to increase provision of audio-visual services – full information has been published [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