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Television

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Item	Summary
<u>Proposed Amendment to the Digital Economy Bill in support of the Subtitle It! campaign</u>	<p>Shadow Minister for the Digital Economy Louise Haigh MP (Lab, Sheffield Heeley) and Kevin Brennan MP (Lab, Cardiff West) have submitted an amendment to the Digital Economy Bill in support of the Subtitle It! campaign. If passed the amendment would give Ofcom the power to actively promote accessible services for on-demand television, including services for people for are hard of hearing and blind or partially sighted.</p> <p>Louise Haigh has <u>used her blog</u> to set out the detailed the need for this amendment, pointing out that the last act focusing on TV accessibility was tabled five years before BBC iPlayer was released. 78% of the UK's on demand broadcasters offer no subtitling at all.</p> <p>Action on Hearing Loss has liaised closely with Louise Haigh on the drafting of this amendment. This will be debated when the Digital Economy Bill returns to the floor of the House of Commons on Monday 28th November.</p>

Employment

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Item	Summary
<u>Written questions on the Disability Confident scheme</u>	<p>Richard Fuller MP (Con, Bedford) asked the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions a number of questions relating to the Government Disability Confident scheme. He asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What steps are the Government taking to ensure that employers who engaged with Disability Confident had the information required to employ people with hearing loss?• What steps are the Government taking to ensure the construction industry engage with Disability Confident?• What steps are being taken to ensure sign language users are aware of the change from Two Ticks to Disability Confident? <p>In reply the Minister of State for Disabled People, Work and Health, Penny Mordaunt MP (Portsmouth North) replied that</p>

	<p>Disability Confident is designed as a pan-disability scheme. It has been well received in testing and further promotion, including in BSL, is planned for the near future.</p> <p>It is also aimed at reaching the widest possible number of industries including the construction industry, which was represented by the Construction Industry Council during the formation of the scheme.</p> <p>Finally she stated:</p> <p><i>'The Disability Confident scheme contains embedded links to information for employers about supporting staff with hearing loss, including references to Access to Work. The Access to Work scheme can assist where disabled people need support above and beyond employer-provided reasonable adjustments. Access to Work features specialist teams who provide a dedicated service to particular groups of customers, including deaf customers.'</i></p>
<p><u>Written Answer to Questions regarding the transfer from Two Ticks to Disability Confident</u></p>	<p>Chris Leslie MP (Lab, Nottingham East) has asked a number of questions regarding the transfer from Two Ticks to Disability Confident as the system for accrediting employers for implementing best practice on disability employment. He asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evaluation has the Government made of the effectiveness of Disability Confident? • What steps the Government is taking to ensure that employers transferred from the Two Ticks scheme to the Disability Confident scheme are meeting the requirements for which they are being accredited. • What is being done to ensure disabled people are aware of the transfer from Two-Ticks to Disability Confident. • How many employers are accredited under Two Ticks. <p>In reply Minister of State for Disabled People, Work and Health Penny Mordaunt MP (Con, Portsmouth North) stated that The previous Positive about Disability (Two Ticks) scheme has been replaced by the new Disability Confident scheme, which was formally launched on 2 November 2016 with attendant publicity aimed at both employers and disabled people.</p> <p>The new scheme has been designed to give employers the tools they need to recruit, retain and develop disabled staff. Employers currently registered with the Two Ticks scheme are invited to transfer to Disability Confident. If they accept, they are sent the Disability Confident Employer self-assessment pack and allowed 12 months to undertake the self-assessment.</p> <p>Although businesses can test themselves, they must submit to external testing to reach the highest level which could include:</p>

	<p><i>'examination by disabled groups, disabled staff networks or professional assessment bodies'</i></p> <p>Penny Mordaunt added that:</p> <p><i>"The new Disability Confident scheme went live in a test and learn phase from July 2016. Feedback was considered and changes made to the scheme before it was launched on 2nd November. The effectiveness of the scheme will now be closely monitored, looking at the number of employers signed up by sector and by geographic area, as well as such issues as what offers of employment, apprenticeships, internships, etc. they are making and delivering."</i></p> <p>There were around 3,500 accredited Two Ticks employers and there are now 2,400 Disability Confident employers</p>
<p><u>Written question regarding the introduction of caps on Access to Work</u></p>	<p>Alex Cunningham MP (Lab, Stockton North) has asked the Government what support it is putting in place to support employees currently in receipt of Access to Work awards over the annual cap and their employers to prepare them for the end of the transition phase of the annual cap for existing scheme users.</p> <p>In reply Minister of State for Disabled People, Work and Health Penny Mordaunt MP (Con, Portsmouth North) responds that users who were already receiving a higher level of support when caps were introduced in October 2015 will still receive the same amount for a period of three years, giving them a significant time frame in which to prepare. She claims that it is too early to tell at this point, but claims that the cap application will be monitored and flexibility discussed if necessary in the future.</p> <p>Alex Cunningham MP tabled <u>separate questions</u> asking how many people arranged 'by type of disability' were receiving more than the cap and since the caps introduction and how many people assessed since the imposition of the cap were awarded an amount equal to the cap.</p> <p>In response Penny Mordaunt said that the information was not available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.</p>
<p><u>Written question regarding specialist employment advice access</u></p>	<p>Shadow Minister for Work and Pensions, Margaret Greenwood MP (Lab, Wirral West) asked the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people in the support group for employment and support allowance can access specialist employment advice.</p> <p>In reply Minister of State for Disabled People, Work and Health Penny Mordaunt MP (Con, Portsmouth North) responds that all employment support in the support group do not need to undertake work related activity but they can volunteer if they want to. She recognises that the recent 'Health, Work and Disability Green Paper' shows the government need to offer</p>

	<p>more support in this area and extensive research is being undertake that reflects this.</p>
<p><u>Written question regarding specialist employment services for young disabled people</u></p>	<p>Norman Lamb MP (Lib Dem, North Norfolk) To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to improve access to specialist employment services for young disabled people.</p> <p>In reply Minister of State for Disabled People, Work and Health Penny Mordaunt MP (Con, Portsmouth North) cites the ‘Improving Lives Green Paper’ published 31st October as detailing the provision of personalised packages, which would include packages for young people. She gives more detail as:</p> <p><i>‘... we will explore how to better support young disabled people by testing a voluntary, supported Work Experience programme. This will give young disabled people the opportunity to benefit from time in the workplace with a mainstream employer. It will enable them to build their confidence and skills, enhance their CV and demonstrate their ability to perform a job role.’</i></p>
<p><u>Written question about the 2020 employment gap</u></p>	<p>Stephen Timms MP (Lab, East Ham) asks why the Improving Lives Green Paper does not contain a commitment to halving the disability unemployment gap by 2020.</p> <p>In reply Minister of State for Disabled People, Work and Health Penny Mordaunt MP (Con, Portsmouth North) cites the success that they have already been having:</p> <p><i>‘...seen almost 500,000 more disabled people in employment over the past three years. Over the same time we’ve seen the employment rate for disabled people increase by over 4 percentage points, where it now stands at 48 per cent.’</i></p> <p>She claims that the Green Paper’s intent is shorter term than 2020 and therefore does not require long term aims. The Paper intends to explain short term action being taken to bring about the change required to meet targets. It sparks a challenging conversation and includes questions for reforms longer term in parliament and beyond, which will be the bedrock for meeting employment gap targets.</p> <p>After this Stephen Timms tabled a <u>further written question</u>, asking if the Government expects to achieve the commitment to halve the disability employment gap by 2020, 2025 or 2030.</p> <p>In response Penny Mordaunt said:</p> <p><i>“The Green Paper explores how action is required by many different partners on a number of fronts. It seeks to build consensus on the change needed across society. It also asks questions on ideas for longer-term reform over this Parliament and beyond, so that our systems, sectors and social attitudes all work together to help achieve the ambition of halving the</i></p>

	<p><i>disability employment gap. We are not setting a deadline for completing this work, in recognition that achieving real and lasting change to the employment prospects of disabled people and people with long-term health conditions, will require a collaborative approach from government, employers, the third sector and health care professionals. This is why we are consulting on the best approach to reform and the most accurate measures of success.”</i></p>
<p><u>Written questions regarding social services staffing</u></p>	<p>Daniel Zeichner MP (Lab, Cambridge) asked the Secretary of State for the Home department whether care staff will be added to the shortage occupation list.</p> <p>Robert Goodwill MP (Con, Scarborough and Whitby) replied that as Tier 2 is reserved for graduate level occupations only this would not be possible.</p>

Charities

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator will not be using the Fundraising Preference Service to regulate Scottish Charities</u></p>	<p>In 2017 the fundraising activities of charities in England and Wales will fall under the remit of a new organisation called the Fundraising Regulator which will work by using a Fundraising Preference Service (FPS). The FPS will allow people to sign up and make it illegal for charities to contact them with fundraising asks</p> <p>In Spring 2016 the Scottish Fundraising Working Group conducted a consultation on a new system of fundraising regulation in Scotland.</p> <p>In it, there was strong support for a creating a system that would allow us to actively pursue excellence in fundraising across Scotland. Curbing aggressive fundraising and protecting vulnerable people is essential part of that, as is ensuring that charities have strong complaints processes in place to deal with public complaints.</p> <p>The Scottish Fundraising Implementation Group will be the organisation that puts the findings of the consultation into practise. However, the FPS was not seen as a feasible method to achieve this end as the funding for the FPS relies predominantly on a concentration of large charities paying an appropriate portion of their income. The Scottish charity sector however is predominantly made up of small and medium sized organisations.</p>

Hearing Loss

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Written question on the potential cost to the Department for Education of interference with assisted listening devices</u></p>	<p>Helen Goodman (Lab, Bishop Auckland) has asked the Department for Education what estimate it has made of replacing assistive listening devices funded by the Department, such as radio aids used by deaf children in schools, in the event that such devices suffer from interference as a result of the release of the 2.35 to 2.39 GHz spectrum bands.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families, Ed Timpson MP (Con, Crewe and Nantwich) said that <i>'under the Equality Act, schools and local authorities are required to provide auxiliary aids when it would be reasonable to do so and if such an aid would alleviate any substantial disadvantage that the pupil faces in comparison to non-disabled pupils.'</i> He added:</p> <p><i>'The Office of Communications (OFCOM) is managing the release of the 2.35 to 2.39 GHz spectrum bands. OFCOM have carried out careful tests of listening devices and sought evidence from across the deaf community to ensure these devices will not be affected by future mobile signals.'</i></p> <p>Helen Goodman also asked a similar question to the Department of Health. To which the Minister for Community Health and Care, David Mowat (Con, Warrington South) provided the same information about Ofcom's management of the sale.</p>

Disability

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Written answer to questions regarding PIP appeals process</u></p>	<p>Maria Eagle MP (Lab, Garston and Halewood) asked the Secretary of State for Justice why someone with personal experience of disability is no longer required on the appeal board for Personal Independent Payment (PIP) disagreements. It has been required since PIP were implemented.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Courts and Justice Oliver Heald MP (Con, North East Hertfordshire) replied that the justice system is progressing in such a way that a person with director experience of an is not always considered necessary when assessing suitability to provide a verdict. Sir Oliver claims that the £1bn investment to reform and digitise our courts will make</p>

	them accessible meaning that it will be down to the discretion of the Senior President of Tribunals when a this is required, although it is a measure that will still be available in all cases.
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Armed Forces

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Item	Summary
<u>Written question regarding veterans care</u>	<p>Justin Tomlinson MP (Con, North Swindon) To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to support armed forces veterans who are disabled or have a long-term health condition.</p> <p>Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Defence Mark Lancaster MP (Con, Milton Keynes North) responded by pointing out the NHS and Devolved Administrations provide healthcare for all veterans, including those with disabilities and long-term health conditions. Specific services are in place to meet mental health and prosthetic needs through these bodies. <u>There have been recent improvements in care offered which the government has detailed.</u> He closes by stating that:</p> <p><i>'All veterans, including those who are disabled or have a long term health condition, are able to access the support offered by the Veterans UK helpline and website and the Veterans Welfare Service.'</i></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 almost no chance of becoming law

