

Weekly Political Report

24th 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

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Amendment in support of the Subtitle It! campaign tabled for committee stage of the Digital Economy Bill</u></p>	<p>Louise Haigh MP (Lab, Sheffield Heeley), Shadow Minister for Culture and Digital, has tabled an amendment to the Government's Digital Economy Bill which would empower Ofcom to publish a statutory code for the provision of access services on on-demand services.</p> <p>The amendment, <u>which is listed as New Clause 21</u>, was included as an appendix to the written evidence which Action on Hearing Loss submitted to the Public Bill Committee. The amendment is likely to be debated on Thursday 27th October.</p>
<p><u>Written question on accessibility of video on demand services</u></p>	<p>Neil Coyle MP (Lab, Bermondsey and Old Southwark) has asked the Department for Culture Media and Sport what steps it is taking to ensure that people with audio or visual impairments benefit from the Digital Economy Bill; and if it will assess how on-demand services will meet such people's needs.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Culture and Digital, Matt Hancock MP (Con, West Suffolk) said that Ofcom is the regulator with responsibility for on-demand programme services (ODPS). Ofcom are presently consulting on how to improve access services.</p>

Disability

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Item	Summary
<u>Written question on web accessibility for disabled people</u>	<p>Tulip Siddiq MP (Lab, Hampstead and Kilburn) has asked the Department for Culture, Media and Sport what steps have been taken to assess the effectiveness of the Equality Act 2010 in improving web accessibility for disabled people.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Culture and Digital, Matt Hancock MP (Con, West Suffolk) said that the Government is committed to increasing digital inclusion for all, and are taking steps to increase web accessibility for disabled people. The Government has published guidance on Gov.UK on making digital services accessible for Government departments, local authorities and anyone else who wants to prepare accessible communications.</p>

Employment

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Item	Summary
<u>Oral question on employers ability to recruit and retain disabled people</u>	<p>During oral questions to the Department for Work and Pensions Graham Evans (Con, Weaver Vale) asked what steps the Government are taking to increase awareness among employers of the value of recruiting and retaining disabled people.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work, Penny Mordaunt MP (Con, Portsmouth North) said that the Government have introduced a new Disability Confident scheme to identify the value that disabled people bring to businesses and to give employers the tools and techniques they need to recruit, retain and develop them. The new scheme went live in July, and it will be formally launched soon.</p> <p>In his supplementary question Graham Evans asked what steps the Government are taking to encourage more small and medium-sized enterprises to engage with Disability Confident.</p> <p>The Minister responded by saying that:</p> <p><i>"In addition to the Disability Confident scheme, we are trialling</i></p>

	<p><i>the small employer offer, which will provide some additional support to those who may have less capacity within their own organisation. We are also working closely with the Health and Safety Executive, with its reach to SMEs, to target our services better.”</i></p> <p>Maria Miller MP (Con, Basingstoke) highlighted research from Scope which shows that 85% of disabled people feel that employers’ attitudes to employing them have not improved during the past four years. She asked if more employers should follow the lead of Waitrose, John Lewis, Morrisons and Marks & Spencer and put practical support in place to help disabled people, particularly when they are applying for jobs in the first place.</p> <p>In response the Minister said that the Government needs to do more to ensure that the support it offers is understood by employers. Disability Confident will help with that. She added that the Government also need to raise employers’ awareness of what they are missing: huge talent and huge insight in their workforce.</p>
<p><u>Written question on the impact of isolation on the career progression of disabled people</u></p>	<p>Matthew Pennycook (Lab, Greenwich and Pensions) what recent assessment he has made of the effect of isolation in the workplace on disabled people and the effect of such isolation on developing skills and career progression for disabled people.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Disabled People, Work and Health, Penny Mordaunt MP (Con, Portsmouth North) said that the Government have made no such assessment. She added that:</p> <p><i>“However, we are committed to halving the employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people. The Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Health have created a cross departmental Work and Health Unit to develop a strategy for system-wide reform on health, disability and employment, in order to reduce the numbers of people who are economically inactive due to a health condition or disability. The treatment of disabled people in the workplace will be among the factors the unit takes into account.</i></p> <p><i>“Meanwhile, employers and disabled employees continue to benefit from the support offered through Access to Work, which provides practical support, advice and guidance for both disabled people in work or entering work and their employers.</i></p> <p><i>“In addition, the Government’s Disability Confident scheme</i></p>

	<p><i>supports our commitment to halve the disability employment gap by focusing on employers, who have a crucial role to play in ensuring disabled people are recruited, retained and developed in their careers. Employers signing-up to Disability Confident on Gov.UK get access to a wide range of information, good practice and other resources, including links to DWP programmes which offer practical support.”</i></p>
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Health and Social Care

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Written questions on NHS audiology services in England</u></p>	<p>Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Deafness, Jim Fitzpatrick MP (Labour, Poplar and Limehouse) has a number of written questions on the provision of audiology services in England. The first question asks how many audiology services there are in England. He also asked the Department for Health what assessment it has made of the progress of audiology services achieving IQIPS accreditation; and what plans it has to ensure that audiology services in NHS trusts and communities give priority to registering with IQIPS. He asked what plans the Department of Health has to introduce financial incentives for physiological services to engage with and achieve IQIPS accreditation. Finally he has asked whether the Department of Health plans to introduce mandatory accreditation of audiology services in England.</p> <p>In response the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Community Health and Care, David Mowat MP (Con, Warrington South) provided a single answer which said:</p> <p><i>“Comprehensive data on the number of audiology services in England is not collected.</i></p> <p><i>“NHS England has no current plans to introduce financial incentives for the achievement of Improving Quality in Physiological Services (IQIPS) accreditation.</i></p> <p><i>“As of 1 September, there are 39 organisations with IQIPS accreditation for audiology, covering 28 adult and 21 paediatric audiology services. If an organisation is accredited for both adult and paediatric audiology, United Kingdom Accreditation Service</i></p>

	<p><i>considers that one accreditation.</i></p> <p><i>“In Commissioning Services for People with Hearing Loss: A framework for clinical commissioning groups, published in July, NHS England strongly encourages clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) to expect providers to have completed the IQIPS self-assessment tool and applied for accreditation with UKAS, and achieve accreditation within the duration of their contract.</i></p> <p><i>“This is reflected in the model service specification for adults. In the contract for Genomics Medicines Centres, Annex M requires National Health Service trusts nominated as Lead Organisations and Local Delivery Partners to be working towards diagnostic accreditation across all available schemes, including IQIPS.</i></p> <p><i>“NHS England is also working with the Care Quality Commission to agree the use of scientific and diagnostic schemes as an information source for inspection purposes, as set out in their latest strategy.</i></p> <p><i>“We currently have no plans to introduce mandatory accreditation of audiology services in England.”</i></p>
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Transport

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Written question on accessibility of public transport for disabled people</u></p>	<p>Jim Shannon MP (DUP, Strangford) has asked the Department for Transport what recent steps it has taken to improve access to public transport for disabled people.</p> <p>In response the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Andrew Jones MP (Con, Harrogate and Knaresborough) said:</p> <p><i>“The Government recognises how important improving access to public transport is for disabled people and is committed to making transport more inclusive.</i></p> <p><i>“We also recognise that positive interactions with bus drivers can make a big difference to disabled people’s experience of taking</i></p>

	<p><i>the bus. We are working with the bus industry and disabled people to design best practice guidance in delivering disability awareness training which, we hope, will help to give bus drivers the skills and knowledge to assist every disabled passenger.</i></p> <p><i>“The Government tabled an amendment to the Bus Services Bill, proposing to give the Secretary of State powers to make Regulations about the provision of a minimum level of accessible information on local bus services throughout England, Scotland and Wales. The issue is devolved in Northern Ireland. Creation of the powers to introduce the Accessible Information Requirement is still reliant upon the successful passage of the Bus Services Bill through Parliament.</i></p> <p><i>“The Government intends to publish an Accessibility Action Plan for consultation by the end of the year which will present its ambition for further progress on this important agenda.”</i></p>
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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.

