

## Weekly Political Update

25<sup>th</sup> April 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](#).

### Employment

*Click on link for source*

Item	Summary
<p><b><u>New Philanthropy Capital cites charities warning that the new Work and Health Programme must learn from problems with previous employment support schemes</u></b></p>	<p>The think tank New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) has published a report, <i>Shaping the new Work and Health Programme</i>, in partnership with the Employment Related Services Association (ERSA), which makes a number of recommendations for the Work and Health Programme.</p> <p>The report is based on a roundtable discussion with charities, other employment support providers and civil service officials. This discussion was conducted under Chatham House Rules and therefore none of the participants have been named. The report recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The DWP should guarantee a minimum number of referrals to organisations contracted under the new Work and Health Programme, to make sure charities and other providers can plan their resources appropriately. Some experts reflected on the financial and strategic damage done to small organisations in particular, who were led to expect referrals which never materialised at the beginning of the current Work Programme.</li><li>• The DWP should change its assessment system to gain a broader understanding of each individual's needs at an earlier stage. Some experts argued that the benefits-based assessment system forced charities and other providers to create an 'additional level of assessment' without which they could not provide appropriate support. Experts also argued for earlier referral to specialist provision for jobseekers further from the labour market.</li><li>• The DWP should continue with the pilot for an employment Data Lab, to enable greater evaluation of effective interventions.</li></ul>
<p><b><u>Department for Work and Pensions publishes latest statistics on the number of people supported through Access to Work</u></b></p>	<p>The Department for Work and Pensions has published its latest statistics for the number of people using the Access to Work scheme. The figures show that in the first three quarters of 2015-16 there were 32,150 people supported by Access to Work, of which 5,130 had 'deaf and hard of hearing' as their primary medical condition.</p>

	<p>The Department of Work and Pensions used these figures to issue a <a href="#">press release</a> celebrating the fact that Access to Work has supported 132,740 people since launching in 2007. In the press release the Minister of State for Disabled People, Justin Tomlinson MP (Con, Swindon North) said:</p> <p><i>“Supporting disabled people into work is a priority for this government which is why our Access to Work grants are available throughout people’s careers. I strongly encourage employers and employees to take up this support so that we can reduce the disability employment gap and make sure everyone benefits from being in work.”</i></p>
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## **Disability**

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<b>Item</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<p><b><u>Barclays bank says UK SMEs need better advice to cater for disabled customers</u></b></p>	<p>Barclays bank has commissioned research which shows that the majority of SMEs are not currently catering for disabled customers even though this market is worth £212bn a year.</p> <p>The research from Barclays includes the finding that 83% of SMEs say their products and services are not designed to be accessible to all customers, including those with sensory or mobility disabilities. The press release from Barclays says:</p> <p>“almost one in five (18%) business owners are not sure what the benefit of making their business more inclusive would be, while a similar number (17%) say they would not know where to start or what adjustments would need to be made. For 23% the costs of making their company accessible is too high and about 10% said it would be too much hassle. However, while the majority of UK companies are not currently applying ‘inclusive design’ - the process of making something more accessible and inclusive - to their business, over three quarters (77%) would if they had the right guidance.”</p> <p>Barclays has therefore produced a new <a href="#">website</a> which provides businesses with insight on how they can become more ‘<i>accessibility confident</i>’.</p>
<p><b><u>Written question on the guidance made available to higher education institutions on the Equality Act</u></b></p>	<p>Dave Anderson MP (Lab, Blaydon) has tabled a written parliamentary question asking the Department for Business Innovation and Skills what statutory and other guidance is available to higher education institutions on their duties under the Equality Act 2010 towards disabled students.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Universities and Science, Jo Johnson MP (Con, Orpington) states that higher education institutions have clear legal responsibilities under the Equality</p>

	<p>Act 2010 to support their students, including those with disabilities. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has produced a range of guidance for institutions on their obligations under the Equality Act 2010, including technical guidance setting out the detail of the law.</p> <p>He added that:</p> <p><i>“Guidance is also produced by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), a higher education sector body that supports equality and diversity for staff and students across the UK, including for disabled staff and students on managing “reasonable adjustments”. The ECU also published a report on the implications for institutions of the key issues contained in the Equality Act 2010.”</i></p>
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## **Hearing Loss**

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<b>Item</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<p><b><u>Written question on British Sign Language and apprenticeships</u></b></p>	<p>Stephen Timms MP (Labour, East Ham) has asked the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills whether if a participant is unable to obtain Level 1 English as a result of deafness, fluency in British Sign Language can be accepted as a qualification for completing an intermediate apprenticeship.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Skills, Nick Boles MP (Con, Grantham and Stamford) stated that it is a minimum requirement of an intermediate apprenticeship that the apprentice complete Level 1 English and maths and that BSL is not currently recognised as an alternative for the purposes of completing an apprenticeship.</p> <p>He added:</p> <p><i>“Apprentices can apply for Access to Work funding for reasonable adjustments. These will depend on the individual’s need and the qualification, but may include extra time, assistive technology and the use of a scribe. BSL is permitted as a reasonable adjustment for the oral element of functional skills. We are considering whether BSL could be an acceptable alternative to qualifications in English for the purposes of completing an apprenticeship.”</i></p>
<p><b><u>Written question on the impact of mobile phones on the prevalence of hearing loss</u></b></p>	<p>Shadow Transport Minister, Richard Burden (Lab, Birmingham Northfield) has asked the Department for Health what assessment it has made of the effects on the incidence of hearing loss of mobile phones and other similar devices which do not have a volume control.</p>

	<p>In response the Minister of State for Community and Social Care, Alistair Burt MP (Con, North East Bedfordshire) said that the Government had made no such assessment. He added that:</p> <p><i>“The Department’s Policy Research Programme is funding COSMOS (Cohort Study of Mobile Phone Use and Health) which is conducted by Imperial College London and expected to end in 2019. This study will investigate possible health effects from long term use of mobile phones and other wireless technologies, on a United Kingdom cohort of 105,000 adults. One of the health outcomes investigated will be tinnitus (ringing in the ears). Hearing loss is one of the factors that may be involved in the development of tinnitus and this study will monitor the incidence of tinnitus in mobile phone users.”</i></p>
<p><b><u>Written question on treatment of hearing loss in Norfolk</u></b></p>	<p>Chloe Smith (Con, Norwich North) has asked the Department of Health “how many patients with hearing loss (a) in each age group, (b) who (i) were and (ii) were not eligible for free prescriptions and (c) treated by each of the Any Qualified provider suppliers in Norfolk were treated by (A) Norwich, (B) South Norfolk and (c) North Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Group in each of the last three years.”</p> <p>In response the Minister for Social and Community Care, Alistair Burt MP (Con, North East Bedfordshire) said that the information requested is not held centrally.</p>

## Television

*Click on link for source*

Item	Summary
<p><b><u>Written question on access services on Video on Demand services</u></b></p>	<p>Shadow Equalities Minister Kate Green (Lab, Stretford and Urmston) has asked the Department for Culture Media and Sport what assessment it has made of the progress towards increasing the provision of access services on video on demand content. Kate Green has also asked the Department is taking to increase the provision of access services on video on demand content.</p> <p>In a single answer the Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy, Ed Vaizey MP (Con, Wantage) said that <i>“the provision of access services on video on demand content has increased in recent years, according to the 2015 Authority for Television on Demand report.”</i> He added that:</p> <p><i>“The evidence in this report is supported by dialogue with broadcasters, content providers and platform operators, who fed back to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in Autumn 2015. Ofcom, the principle regulator for video on demand services, is reviewing how to improve the provision of access services on video on demand services.”</i></p> <p>George Howarth MP (Labour, Knowsley) has received an identical answer to his <u>written question</u> on the same subject.</p> <p>Both Kate Green and George Howarth are amongst the 70 MPs who has publicly backed the Action on Hearing Loss <u>Subtitle It! campaign</u>.</p>

## Charity

*Click on link for source*

Item	Summary
<p><b><u>Lords oral question on Government Grant Agreements</u></b></p>	<p>The Earl of Clancarty (Crossbench) led an oral question asking whether the Government have considered the effect on scientific and medical research, the arts, campaigning organisations and other bodies of the anti-lobbying clause in government grant agreements to be introduced on 1 May as a condition of public funding.</p> <p>In response the Cabinet Office Minister, Lord Bridges of Headley (Con) said that <i>‘grant recipients can continue to discuss the findings of publicly funded research with government or Parliament, whether that be by giving evidence or in an advisory capacity. The clause in question is about making sure that</i></p>

	<p><i>taxpayers' money is spent as intended and not diverted from good causes to fund political campaigning and lobbying.'</i></p> <p>During the supplementary questions that followed Lord Taverne (Lib Dem) said that the Government should:</p> <p><i>'recognise that this anti-lobbying clause is going to have a serious impact on research, since most people do research in order to influence policy and make it more evidence-based? Is it not odd that this in fact does not apply in any way to commercial lobbying and restricts only government-funded lobbying? Should not its real emphasis be on the control of the abuse of funds, as with Kids Company? Would it not be wise in the present circumstances to postpone the application of this new agreement until after 1 May so that further consultation can take place on this very important threat to the freedom of research and speech?'</i></p> <p>In response Lord Bridges said that the Government, through the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, did not intend for research councils, the Higher Education Funding Council or the national academies to be covered by this clause.</p>
<p><b><u>Minister for Civil Society speaks at launch of Fundraising Week</u></b></p>	<p>Rob Wilson MP (Con, Reading East), the Cabinet Office Minister responsible for Civil Society, has given the keynote address at the launch of Fundraising Week.</p> <p>The Minister opened his speech by saying that <i>'I absolutely understand that you need to "ask" in order to fundraise. Fundraising enables you to do the vital work which is at the heart of all your organisations. And that is why it is so important to get it right.'</i></p> <p>However he said that poor practice has seen public confidence in the charity sector <i>'plummet'</i>. He welcomed the fact that the majority of the charity sector had taken the decision to heed the Government's warning and implement best practice, in particular backing a system which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supports a stronger self-regulator</li> <li>• allows the public a genuine say about whether they wish to be contacted for fundraising</li> <li>• and will help the sector restore the public trust and confidence on which the sectors future depends</li> </ul> <p>He asked that all relevant organisations should register with the Fundraising Standards Board. He also went on to praise the Fundraising Preference Service as a key mechanism which enjoys overwhelming support from the public.</p>
<p><b><u>Charity Commission issues case report on Age UK's partnership with energy firm E.ON</u></b></p>	<p>The Charity Commission has published a report setting out its conclusions in its recent case following concerns about a commercial partnership between Age UK and the energy company E.ON. The concerns centred on allegations that the</p>

charity was receiving a significant sum of money to promote a particular tariff more expensive than others available.

The Charity Commission has said:

*“The commission found that the trustees had processes in place for reviewing the suitability of products prior to selection. However it was not clear that Age UK, having complied with its processes, sufficiently considered the risks of targeting beneficiaries with a commercial product in an area where the charity also campaigns on behalf of its beneficiaries. The commission has warned that participation in the energy market poses significant risks to a charity, and says Age UK should consider whether continued involvement is in the charity’s best interests.*

*“The commission also sought to establish whether the trustees had appropriate processes for oversight and control of the commercial partnership with E.ON to ensure it remained in the best interests of the charity throughout. Although the charity had oversight mechanisms, the commission found these were insufficient and needed to be kept under more regular review.*

*“The commission found that the nature of the commercial partnerships across the range of services, and the fee or commission received by the charity through the trading subsidiary, was not made clear to customers. It recommends that Age UK clearly identifies any commission or fee received by the charity on all Age UK branded products.”*

## Health and Social Care

*Click on Link for Source*

Item	Summary
<p><b><u>Health Select Committee publishes its report on Primary Care</u></b></p>	<p>The House of Commons Health Select Committee has published its report from the inquiry it undertook into primary care. The report primarily focuses on improved access to primary care, including the provision of evening and weekend GP appointments.</p> <p>The report also made recommendations for the sharing of patients records, saying:</p> <p><i>“It is essential, both for patient safety and to reduce bureaucracy, for patient records, accessed with their consent, to be directly accessible by all the health professionals seeing patients registered with any practice within a federation, network or out-of-hours provider. The response to this report should lay out a clear timetable for these arrangements to be in place including for shared access between primary and secondary care. Efforts should be made to ensure that such arrangements apply UK wide.”</i></p>
<p><b><u>Lords oral question on the social care precept to Council Tax</u></b></p>	<p>Baroness Barker (Lib Dem) has used an oral question in the House of Lords to ask the Government how much revenue they estimate will be generated in 2016–17 by local authorities using their power to increase council tax to offset the cost of social care.</p> <p>Responding for the Government the Whip Viscount Younger of Leckie (Con) said that the Department for Communities and Local Government have published national statistics on council tax levels in England for 2016-17. This reported local authorities’ estimates that they would receive a total of £381.8 million in receipts for the adult social care precept in that financial year. One hundred and forty-four of 152 eligible councils chose to set the precept of up to 2%. The precept will raise up to £2 billion by 2019-20.</p> <p>In her supplementary question Baroness Barker said that the local precept favour authorities who have more higher value properties and therefore called on the Government to <i>‘increase the better care fund for this financial year so that people in poor communities will not lose services and end up having to turn to the NHS?’</i></p> <p>In response Viscount Younger said that the Government:</p> <p><i>‘recognise that some councils with a low council tax base in the poorer communities will not benefit as much. That is why the better care fund.... will provide £1.5 billion by 2020. With this, importantly, average spending power per dwelling for the 10%</i></p>



	<i>most deprived authorities is around 23% higher than in the least deprived authorities.'</i>
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### **Consultations**

**Title:** Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme

**Source:** HM Treasury

**Deadline for written evidence:** 1 July 2016

HM Treasury has published a consultation on a set of proposals to make the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme (GASDS) accessible and simple to administer.

Further information can be found [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

