

## Weekly Political Update

29<sup>th</sup> June 2015

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

### Health

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Item	Summary
<a href="#"><u>Written question on the use of new drugs and treatments for hearing loss and tinnitus</u></a>	<p>Jim Shannon MP (DUP, Strangford) has asked the Department of Health what steps it is taking to consider the use of new drugs and treatments for hearing loss and tinnitus.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Care and Support, Alistair Burt MP (Con, North East Bedfordshire), said that NICE is responsible for developing technology appraisal guidance for the NHS on whether new and existing treatments represent an effective use of NHS resources. NHS commissioners are required to fund drugs and treatments recommended by NICE, normally within three months of the publication of final guidance. He added that the Department of Health is aware of a number of treatments for specific types of hearing loss, as well tinnitus, which are currently in development. The safety and efficacy of these treatments would need to be sufficiently demonstrated in clinical trials before they could become publically available and appropriate for consideration by NICE.</p>

### Television

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Item	Summary
<a href="#"><u>The On-demand Audiovisual Services (Accessibility for People with Disabilities affecting Hearing or Sight or both) Bill 2015-16 introduced into the House of Commons</u></a>	<p>Lilian Greenwood MP (Lab, Nottingham South) has introduced the <i>On-demand Audiovisual Services (Accessibility for People with Disabilities affecting Hearing or Sight or both) Bill 2015-16</i> into the House of Commons.</p> <p>The Bill would, if passed, require the Authority for Television on Demand (ATVOD) to draw up a Code which sets minimum levels of provision for subtitles, signing and audio-description.</p>

	<p>These levels would be set following a consultation and then subject to regular review.</p> <p>The Bill has been assigned Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November for its second reading in the House of Commons. However, it is the second piece of legislation scheduled to be debated on this date which means that it is uncertain if the Bill will receive any debating time and virtually certain that there will not be enough time for the Bill to complete its second reading. This means that the Bill can be blocked anonymously by any single MP.</p> <p>Lilian was drawn 12<sup>th</sup> in the Private Members' Bill ballot and was therefore entitled to introduce a Bill on any manner of her choosing. After the ballot Action on Hearing Loss contacted her, knowing that she had an on-going interest in hearing loss issues, and provided a briefing suggesting a Bill on access services for Video-on-Demand (VoD) content. We have met with Lilian to discuss the Bill and are liaising with her office on the Bill and the campaign around it.</p>
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## Employment

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<p><a href="#"><u>Oral question on the Disability Confident Campaign</u></a></p>	<p>Two MPs, Chloe Smith MP (Con, Norwich North) and Nigel Adams (Con, Selby and Ainsty) tabled an oral question asking the Department for Work and Pensions what progress has been made on the Disability Confident Campaign.</p> <p>The Minister for Disabled People, Justin Tomlinson MP (Con, Swindon North) responded saying that the Disability Confident Campaign continues to play a crucial role in the Government's aim of halving the disability gap. It has secured support from 360 employers and pledges from 98 organisations to positively change employment practices towards disabled staff. The Minister added that many MPs have held constituency events.</p> <p>In her supplementary question Chloe Smith asked a question about youth unemployment in Norwich.</p> <p>Nigel Adams MP welcomed the scheme and praised the role of local employers who had attended a Disability Confident Campaign event that he had organised.</p> <p>In response the Minister praised MPs who ran similar constituency events. He added that 'we need employers to see</p>
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	<p>that recruiting and retaining disabled people should be the norm, and that disabled people have a great deal to offer in the workplace.’</p> <p>The remaining supplementary questions focused on the role of the Disability Confident Campaign in supporting people with autism into employment. In response to a question from Barry Sheerman (Lab, Huddersfield) the Minister said that ‘42% of disabled people looking for work say that the biggest barrier they face is the attitude of their employer’.</p> <p>In a subsequent <a href="#">topical question</a> Richard Graham MP (Con, Gloucester) asked if MP led Disability Confident events could be rolled out across the whole country. He also asked the Minister to consider holding an event at which MPs from all parties could hear from DWP staff about how those events are held and the advantages they have.</p> <p>In response Justin Tomlinson said that thirteen MPs have already held events in their constituencies and that all MPs can ‘play a vital role in promoting opportunities for the wealth of talent that is available and willing to go into work.’</p>
<p><a href="#">Oral question on employer awareness of support for disabled employees</a></p>	<p>Kevin Foster MP (Con, Torbay) used a topical question to praise the work of Disability Support Torbay in offering advocacy, support and advice to disabled people trying to enter the workplace. He said that it is crucial to work with employers to make sure that they are aware of work the Government are doing, such as the Access to Work programme, to help them to employ and retain people with disabilities.</p> <p>In response the Minister for Disabled People, Justin Tomlinson MP (Con, Swindon North) said that in the last year there was an increase in the number of disabled people in work of 238,000. He said that the Disability Confident Campaign will continue to share best practice and signpost further help for local businesses.</p>
<p><a href="#">Written question on supporting disabled people into work</a></p>	<p>Kevin Foster MP (Con, Torbay) asked the Government what steps it is taking to help people with disabilities into work and training.</p> <p>In response the Minister for Disabled People, Justin Tomlinson MP (Con, Swindon North), said that the Government have extended Access to Work to support disabled people take up supported internships and traineeships. He added that the</p>

	<p>Government are launching Specialist Employability Support to provide intensive back to work support for more disabled people and will continue to work with employers to ensure that they understand the benefits of recruiting and retaining disabled people.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Written question on the rate of employment for disabled people</u></a></p>	<p>Oliver Herd MP (Con, North East Hertfordshire) asked what estimate has been made of the change in the rate of disability employment in each of the last 10 years.</p> <p>In response the Minister for Disabled People, Justin Tomlinson MP (Con, Swindon North) provided <a href="#"><u>the link for the Office for National Statistics data on the economic activity of disabled people</u></a>. The first point is this data was April-June 1998 and showed that 42.6% of people with work limiting disabilities were economical active – this figure peaked at 50.6 % in October-December 2012 and is currently at 47%.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Written question on trends in the employment rate for disabled people</u></a></p>	<p>Henry Smith MP (Con, Crawley) asked the Government what assessment it has made of the trends in the rate of disability employment.</p> <p>In response the Minister for Disabled People, Justin Tomlinson MP (Con, Swindon North), said that there was an increase of 238,000 disabled people in work last year. The employment rate is now 46.3% - up 2.1% from last year. He added that the Disability Confident Campaign is ensuring that employers understand the benefits of employing disabled people and programmes, like Work Choice and Access to Work, are supporting disabled people into work.</p> <p>Justin Tomlinson also provided an <a href="#"><u>identical answer</u></a> in response to a similar question from former Health Minister Dan Poulter MP (Con, Central Suffolk and North Ipswich).</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Written question on the cost of Access to Work compared to out-of-work benefits</u></a></p>	<p>Steve McCabe MP (Lab, Birmingham Selly Oak) asked the Department for Work and Pensions what comparative assessment has been made of the cost to the public purse of supporting a person via the Access to Work programme and paying out-of-work benefits to that person.</p> <p>In response the Minister for Disabled People, Justin Tomlinson MP (Con, Swindon North) said:</p>

<p><a href="#"><u>Written question on the impact of Access to Work on net public expenditure</u></a></p>	<p>“Access to Work covers a wide range of different types of support and the costs of this support vary considerably according to customers' needs and circumstances. The cost of paying out-of-work benefits to a given person would vary considerably according to that person's eligibility for and take-up of those benefits. This depends in turn on their individual circumstances and preferences.”</p> <p>Steve McCabe MP has also asked what estimate has been made of the net effect of the Access to Work scheme on public expenditure.</p> <p>Justin Tomlinson responded by saying:</p> <p>“Estimating a Value for Money figure for Access to Work is difficult – there is no readily available comparison group against which to assess the difference the programme makes to someone’s likelihood of being in work. Access to Work covers a wide range of different types of support. Each individual case is different and it is not possible to estimate the return to the Exchequer for each one. My officials are considering how best to estimate the return on investment delivered by Access to Work.”</p> <p>Action on Hearing Loss has previously met with Steve McCabe to discuss the support offered to deaf people through Access to Work, including the need to promote a cost-benefit analysis of the scheme.</p>
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Accessibility of Parliament

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<p><a href="#"><u>Written question on provision on hearing loops in meeting rooms within Parliament</u></a></p>	<p>David Winnick (Lab, Walsall North) has asked the House of Commons Commission what advice is given to people using hearing aids in order to hear non-public proceedings in meeting rooms in the building where no loop provision exists – and whether the Commission has discussed this matter with Action on Hearing Loss.</p> <p>In response Sir Paul Beresford MP (Con, Mole Valley), speaking on behalf of the House of Commons Commission, said that guidance on the accessibility of meeting rooms is provided on the internal parliamentary intranet – available to all who work on the parliamentary estate. This says that British Sign Language (BSL)/English interpreters, lip speakers, speech to text reporters</p>
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	<p>(STTRs) and electronic notetakers can be booked for rooms without loop systems.</p> <p>The answer added that:</p> <p><i>“The House of Commons has been awarded the Action on Hearing Loss, Louder than Words charter mark, a nationally recognised award that shows people who are deaf or have hearing loss that an organisation offers a fully deaf aware service. The House of Commons continues to work with Action on Hearing Loss to improve our facilities for those who have hearing loss or are deaf.”</i></p>
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## British Sign Language

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<p><a href="#"><u>Written question on Ministry of Justice contract for language services</u></a></p>	<p>Shadow Minister for Disabled People, Kate Green (Lab, Stretford and Urmston) has asked the Ministry of Justice whether his Department's second generation contract for the supply of language services will require interpreters to be registered with the National Registers of Communications Professionals Working with Deaf and Deafblind People or the National Register of Public Service Interpreters.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Criminal Justice, Mike Penning MP (Con, Hemel Hempstead) said that the Government is committed to providing language service professionals who meet the needs of those requiring support in the justice system, including those working with deaf and deafblind people. He added that future provision of the service is currently being explored.</p>
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## Consultations

**Title:** The Equality Act 2010 and Disability

**Source:** House of Lords Select Committee on the Equality Act and Disability

**Deadline for written evidence:** 4<sup>th</sup> September 2015

The newly created House of Lords Select Committee on the 2010 Equality act and Disability has published its Call for Evidence. The committee is investigating whether the Equality Act has been effective for disabled people, both in its contents and the way in has been implemented, and whether it has achieved everything expected of it by Parliament.

Further details 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