

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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| <u>'Subtitle It! clause' amended during Lords report stage of the Digital Economy Bill</u> | <p>During the Report Stage of the Digital Economy Bill the Government amend the clause setting out the requirement for a statutory code of practice on the provision of subtitles on Video on Demand services. The clause was a result of our Subtitle It! campaign and had been introduced during the committee stage of the Bill.</p> <p>The Government amendments proscribe the consultation process which Ofcom will go through before creating the code, including the requirement to consult both with content providers and 'representatives of people with disability affecting their sight or hearing'. The code will be enacted by secondary legislation and the Government have amended the clause to make it clear that this will be scrutinised under the positive procedure (a vote in a committee of each House). These amendments were in response to the recommendations of the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee. The amendments were agreed without a division.</p> <p>Action on Hearing Loss did not oppose the amendments or brief Peers to speak for or against them.</p> <p>In speaking to the amendments the Government Spokeswomen, Baroness Buscombe (Con) also announced that the secondary legislation would include a review clause on the burdens on business caused by the code. She said this <i>'will allow a post-implementation analysis of the burdens imposed, to assess whether they are proportionate'</i>.</p> <p>Lord Clement-Jones (Lib Dem) also moved an amendment which would have required the code to be 'proportionate'. Speaking to the amendment he said that:</p> <p><i>"The broadcasters wish certain other aspects to be aired today. It is a question of the difference between delivering access services on on-demand services and delivering them on linear.On demand is much more challenging and fragmented, and there is a huge array of different online platforms. Each platform has its own technological underpinning, and there is no common standard for delivering access services. Accordingly, if this</i></p> |
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| | <p><i>clause is interpreted too broadly there is a danger that a one-size-fits-all approach which takes no account of the revenue, size, usage or length of establishment of a service or online platform would result in fewer online services for everyone because of the disproportionate cost of requiring access services to be rolled out across every platform, regardless of how practical or economic that is.”</i></p> <p>The Minister rejected this amendment saying that although the Government was sympathetic to their aims the Government wanted to:</p> <p><i>“recognise that a balance must be struck between the interests of on-demand services and the interests of those with disabilities that affect hearing and sight being able to enjoy as much content on demand as possible. Achieving this balance will be at the heart of Ofcom’s consultation. Service providers will be able to set out what they consider proportionate.”</i></p> <p>Lord Clement-Jones withdrew his amendment without a vote.</p> <p>The Digital Economy Bill will receive its third reading in the House of Lords on Wednesday 5th April.</p> |
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Disability

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| <p><u>Written question regarding hearing impaired asylum seekers</u></p> | <p>Shadow SNP Spokesperson for Cities Alison Thewliss MP (SNP, Glasgow Central) has asked which support groups are engaged by the Home Office to support asylum applicants who are deaf and hard of hearing.</p> <p>Minister of State for the Home Office Robert Goodwill MP (Con., Scarborough and Whitby) responded by stating that asylum claims made by those who are deaf or hard of hearing are processed in a way that ensures that claimants are not disadvantaged. He said that where available, officials will use hearing loops, signers or allow the submission of written evidence. These methods have ensured cases have progressed without the need for support groups however should specialist support be necessary to progress a case then we would of course engage accordingly.</p> <p>Those granted asylum or resettled in the UK have the right to access disability support services offered by local authorities.</p> |
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Health and Social Care

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| <p><u>Communities and Local Government Committee publishes report into social care funding</u></p> | <p>The House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee has published its report into adult social care. The report finds that <i>'inadequate funding very seriously affects the quantity and quality of adult social care provision, impacting on those receiving care, the NHS, care staff, carers and providers'</i>.</p> <p>Within the report the Committee sets out the ways in which funding restrictions have limited the quality of social care services, saying that care is routinely provided only to those with the highest needs and providing the minimum required to get people through each day.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed the announcement in the recent Budget that the Government has committed to provide an additional £2billion for social care over the next three years. However they are clear that this falls short of the amount that is required to plug the current funding gap.</p> <p>The report makes a number of recommendations commissioning, monitoring, workforce standards and retention, integration of health and social care, and future funding. On future funding the Committee welcomes the announcement that the Government will issue a Green Paper in the Autumn – and calls for cross part talks <i>'on the basis that 'all options are on the table' and considers taking funding from a wide range of sources'</i>.</p> |
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Employment

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| <p><u>Written question on Access to Work assessment times</u></p> | <p>SNP Spokesman for the Devolved Government's, Deirdre Brock MP (SNP, Edinburgh North and Leith) has asked the Department for Work and Pensions what steps it is taking to reduce the time taken under Access to Work for disabled people to receive the support packages they require.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work, Penny Mordaunt MP (Con, Portsmouth North) said:</p> <p><i>"In 2014 Access to Work transformed its operational delivery, providing greater consistency and increased speed of customer service. Consequently, Access to Work delivery is now performing above its Key Performance Indicators, which are internal measures of performance. However, we are constantly considering ways to improve the customer journey and expedite the provision of support. For example:</i></p> |
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- *Last year we re-launched Access to Work as a digital service, allowing customers to apply online at a time of their choosing and taking an average of 20 minutes to do so. We are currently exploring what further online functionality could be offered.*
- *We have recently specified in new contracts to be awarded shortly that 90% of independent workplace assessments are to be delivered within 8 days rather than the current 10 days.*
- *We are also considering whether customers could have a longer window to apply in advance of receiving an employment start date from an employer, in order to ensure support is in place for the first day at work. We are currently working with employer and customer stakeholders to establish whether there is an optimum period.*

“As a highly personalised grant scheme, Access to Work is reliant on correct information being received from customers and employers within set timeframes in order to calculate awards or make payments timeously. It is important to note that Access to Work provides grants on receipt of invoices to pay for items or services that are commissioned by employers or disabled employees and which may therefore be delivered to timeframes over which Access to Work has no control.”

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