

Weekly Political Report

7th November 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

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Government publishes <i>Work, health and disability green paper: improving lives</i></u></p>	<p>The Government have published their long awaited Green Paper on disability employment and launched a consultation on its proposals. <i>Work, health and disability green paper: improving lives</i> has been published jointly between the Department of Work and Pensions and the Department of Health.</p> <p>In the Green Paper the Government commits to working jointly across the whole of government, significantly improving the current provision of employment support, working with health partners such as NHS England and investing £115 million of funding to develop new models of support to help people into work when they are managing a long-term health condition or disability.</p> <p>The Green Paper also identifies seven areas on which the consultation will focus, these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How big a role should employers play• How can work coaches play a more active role for disabled people• How can the Government improve a welfare system that leaves 1.5 million people – over 60% of people claiming Employment and Support Allowance• How can the Government promote mental and physical health and ensure that people have timely access to the health and employment support• How to develop better occupational health support right across the health and work journey• What will it take to reinforce work as a health outcome in commissioning decisions and clinical practice?• How can we best encourage, harness and spread innovation to ensure that commissioners know what works best in enabling disabled people and people with health conditions to work• How can we build a culture of high hopes and expectations for what disabled people and people with long-term health conditions can achieve, and mobilise support across society

In an oral statement to the House of Commons the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Damian Green MP (Con, Ashford) said it is clear *'for many disabled people, the barriers to entering work are still too high, and that people in work who get ill too often fall out of work, lose contact, lose confidence and do not return to work'*. He added that Spending on disabled people will be higher every year of this Parliament than it was in 2010, but that the Government needs to continue to review and reform the system based on what works.

The Secretary of State committed to:

"Introduce a new personal support package for disabled people, providing better tailored support, including a new health and work conversation between someone on ESA and their work coach, focusing on what they can do, rather than on what they cannot do. We will recruit around 200 community partners into jobcentres, to bring in expertise from the voluntary sector, and we will give young people with limited capability for work the opportunity to get valuable work experience with employers. These are practical steps and support that the welfare system will provide for disabled people."

He also said the consultation on the Green Paper would explore how the Department of Health and Department for Work and Pensions can better collaborate on these issues.

The Secretary of State also highlighted the importance of employers in reducing the disability employment gap and announced the Government would *'create a "Disability Confident" business leaders group to increase employer engagement in looking after the health and wellbeing of their employees, and opening up opportunities to them.'*

In her response to the statement the SNP's Spokesperson for Social Justice and Welfare, Dr Eilidh Whiteford MP (SNP, Banff and Buchan) used the example of the On the Move programme run by Action on Hearing Loss, saying:

"Earlier this year, the Government cut the budget for their Work programme from £2 billion to £130 million. Given its performance, I understand why they did that, but we know from more successful schemes to support disabled people into work such as Access to Work, and from voluntary sector initiatives such as the Moving On programme of Action on Hearing Loss, that tailored, personalised support does not come cheap. What additional budget does the Secretary of State envisage will be attached to the Government's proposals? What discussions has he had with the Treasury ahead of the autumn statement, and will there be Barnett consequential for Scotland?"

Action on Hearing Loss has welcomed the publication of the Green Paper and the collaborative focus of the Department of

	<p>Work and Pensions and the Department of Health on integrated support for work and health.</p> <p>Laura Cook is leading a piece of work to map the contents of the Green Paper against our work and explore the opportunities it creates for us as an organisation. Please contact Laura if you would like any further information.</p> <p>The consultation on the green paper closes on 17th February 2017.</p>
<p><u>Written questions on timescale for closing the disability employment gap</u></p>	<p>Stephen Timms (Lab, East Ham) has asked the Department for Work and Pensions when it expects to achieve its aim of halving the disability employment gap and what progress it expects to see between 2015 and 2020.</p> <p>In her response the Minister for Disabled People, Work and Health, Penny Mordaunt MP (Con, Portsmouth North) said that the Government remains committed to halving the disability employment gap. She said that 500,000 more disabled people are in employment over the past three years. Over the same time the employment rate for disabled people increased by over 4 percentage points, where it now stands at 48 per cent.</p> <p>She added that <i>‘Halving the gap is a long term project and although the Government has an important role to play in leading the way and facilitating change, everyone needs to play their part.’</i></p>
<p><u>Written question on personal budgets for employment support</u></p>	<p>Shadow Work and Pensions Minister, Margaret Greenwood MP (Lab, Wirral West) has asked the Department for Work and Pensions if it will carry out a trial of the introduction of personal budgets for employment support 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 <i>‘recognises that people need support that is tailored to their needs. Personal Budgets are currently being trialled in Access to Work to offer customers greater flexibility to manage their Travel to Work or Support Worker costs. Initial findings from the trial are expected in early 2017.’</i></p> <p>She added that:</p> <p><i>“A Personal Budgets model was previously tested in the Right to Control Trailblazers, which ran from 2010 to 2013. Disabled people taking part in the trailblazers were offered greater choice and control over the support they received, as well as the option to take a direct payment and arrange their own support. The final evaluation report did not find any evidence that the Right to Control Trailblazers had a significant positive impact on customers, both overall and by subgroup.”</i></p>

<p><u>Written question on local employment markets and encouraging employers to hire disabled workers</u></p>	<p>Andrew Bridgen MP (Con, North West Leicestershire) has asked what steps the Department for Work and Pensions is taking to ensure that providers of his Department's services better understand the demands of the local labour market and reach out to employers to encourage them to consider disabled applicants.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Employment, Damian Hinds MP (Con, East Hampshire) said:</p> <p><i>“There are specific programmes which support disabled people with entering or retaining work, and through which providers can work with local employers. These include Work Programme, Work Choice, and Specialist Employability Support. Additionally, Disability Confident was launched in July 2013. Disability Confident supports this Government’s commitment to halve the employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people by focusing on the role of employers, who have a crucial role to play in ensuring disabled people are recruited, retained and developed in their careers. When employers sign up as Disability Confident, they are asked to make specific meaningful offers of opportunities for disabled people such as jobs, apprenticeships, internships, and work experience opportunities. So far, over 1900 businesses have signed up to the new Disability Confident scheme, with this number growing daily.”</i></p>
<p><u>Department for Work and Pensions published list of employers who have signed up to the Disability Confident scheme</u></p>	<p>The Government have published a full list of employers who have signed up to the Disability Confident scheme.</p> <p>The list provides the company name, location and level of Disability Confident compliance. Of the 2,400 names on the list 13 are Disability Confident ‘Leaders’ (level three).</p> <p>Action on Hearing Loss is amongst the 2,400 employers on the list.</p>
<p><u>Written questions on specialist support for disabled jobseekers</u></p>	<p>David Lammy MP (Lab, Tottenham) has asked the Department for Work and Pensions what actions it plans to take to provide support for disabled people who will lose access to specialist help to find work as a result of changes in the level of funding for the Government's work programme. He has also asked what estimate it has made of the number of disabled people who will lose access to specialist help to find work as a result of changes in the level of funding for the Government's work programme.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Disabled People, Work and Health, Penny Mordaunt MP (Con, Portsmouth North) said:</p> <p><i>“Contracted provision will continue to play a crucial role in offering support at the right time to those who have difficulty accessing the labour market. The Spending Review announced funding rising to at least £130 million a year by 2019/20 for the new Work and Health programme, including funding to be devolved to Scotland, focussing support on people with a</i></p>

	<p><i>disability, early access for priority groups and the long term unemployed. We expect the majority of people who will start the programme will be disabled people.</i></p> <p><i>“The Work and Health Programme is only one part of the wider package of support for disabled people. Improving Lives, The Work, Health and Disability Green Paper Cm 9342, announced to the House by the Secretary of State of Work and Pensions on 31 October, confirms we will introduce a new Personal Support Package for people with health conditions and disabilities, with a range of new interventions and initiatives designed to provide support that is tailored to the individual needs of claimants.</i></p> <p><i>“The Package will be delivered through Jobcentre Plus, including replacing the Work Programme with a smaller, but more focused Work and Health Programme, coupled with significant new investment in a new Health and Work Conversation for all ESA claimants; additional Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres; additional places on our existing employment programmes including a place on the Work and Health Programme for all new ESA Work-Related Activity Group claimants who wish to volunteer and are eligible, improved training for Work Coaches; and new measures that will harness the expertise of third sector organisations within Jobcentres.”</i></p>
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Television

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Subtitle It! amendment debated during committee stage of the Digital Economy Bill</u></p>	<p>The amendment drafted by Action on Hearing Loss in support of our Subtitle It! campaign has been debated by MPs during the committee stage of the Digital Economy Bill. The amendment would give Ofcom the power to establish a statutory code to underpin the provision of access services on video-on-demand programmes – the mechanism that has been used to drive-up the provision of accessible content on tradition, linear TV.</p> <p>Speaking to the amendment the Shadow Minister for the Digital Economy, Louise Haigh MP (Labour, Sheffield Heeley) said that the amendment would update the 2003 Communications Act – which provides Ofcom with the power for traditional TV. She said:</p> <p>“The principles behind the Communications Act 2003 recognise that those with sensory loss should not be denied access to the information and services that many of us take for granted. Obviously, that principle still applies, yet, because of changes to technology, those with sensory loss cannot keep up. In July 2013, the then Minister for the Digital Economy acknowledged</p>

	<p>this paradox, saying: <i>“If it is clear that progress isn’t being made in three years’ time...we will consider legislation.” We say that time is up. That is why the Opposition have helpfully brought forward a new clause to remind the Government of their commitment. The clause would merely update the existing regulatory regime that has worked so well for linear TV and apply it to on-demand.”</i></p> <p>In his response the Minister for Digital and Culture, Matthew Hancock MP (Con, West Suffolk) rejected the amendment. However, for the first time, he also acknowledged the limitations of the current legislative provision and indicated that the Government would consider giving Ofcom new powers, saying:</p> <p><i>“We have been engaged in discussion with Ofcom to determine how we can address the shortcoming so that an increase in the provision of access services for video on demand can be achieved. We will continue that engagement with Ofcom. It made its position clear in evidence to the Committee, having previously argued that the law as it stood was what was needed</i></p> <p><i>[...]</i></p> <p><i>“after the publication of the Bill, Ofcom said that it thought there was a need for the change in the law. We should take that seriously, consult Ofcom and consider exactly what needs to happen.”</i></p> <p>Louise Haigh withdrew her amendment, but said that she wanted further assurances from Ofcom and that if these weren’t given that the Labour Frontbench would return to the issue at report stage.</p> <p>Action on Hearing Loss welcomes the debate and the Government’s acknowledgment that the current legislative framework is not sufficient. We are seeking clarity from the Government on what this means and will also be working with supportive MPs to press the issue again when the Bill returns to the Floor of the House of Commons for its report stage.</p>
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Charities

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Minister for Civil Society Rob Wilson gives speech to the Annual Charity Conference held by Paris Smith</u></p>	<p>Minister of State for Civil Society, Rob Wilson MP, has given a speech to the Annual Charity Conference held by legal firm Paris Smith.</p> <p>In his speech the Minister said that <i>‘the voluntary sector must retain the trust of the public and effectively self-regulate to</i></p>

	<p><i>continue to maintain and grow levels of giving'. He added that it was therefore 'deeply unfortunate that the actions of a few large fundraising charities have tarnished a sector which generally consists of dedicated, and well-run organisations. Now is the time to put it right.'</i></p> <p>He added:</p> <p><i>"I want the sector to take collective responsibility for safeguarding your reputation and long-term sustainability. That includes support for the new Fundraising Regulator. I know you have had the opportunity to hear from Stephen Dunmore earlier this morning.</i></p> <p><i>"The Fundraising Regulator now has responsibility for investigating and adjudicating complaints as well as maintaining and updating the Fundraising Code of Practice. The Regulator will be the complaints body that the public can turn to. It won't be alone though, everyone will be working together. The Charity Commission, Information Commissioner and the sector itself will be getting behind the regulator and supporting it through levy and through respecting the forthcoming Fundraising Preference Service.</i></p> <p><i>"I am pleased to see that the Fundraising Regulator has already signed Memorandums of Understanding with its statutory partners. It has consulted the sector on the practical details of the Fundraising Preference Service.</i></p> <p><i>"These are important steps in upholding public trust and I look forward to reviewing progress early next year."</i></p>
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Health and Social Care

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Written question on social care precept on council tax</u></p>	<p>Peter Kyle MP (Labour, Hove) has asked the Department of Health if it remains Government policy to introduce a two per cent social care precept on council tax and additional funding for the Better Care Fund in 2017-18.</p> <p>In response the Minister for Community Health and Care, David Mowat MP (Con, Warrington South) confirmed that this was still Government policy. He added that Local authorities who are responsible for social care will still have the flexibility in 2017-18 to raise council tax in their area by up to 2% above the existing threshold. This new funding for adult social care will be pooled with additional funding from the Better Care Fund.</p>

Transport

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Government amends Bus Service Bill to create power to provide accessible information on buses</u></p>	<p>The Government have amended its own Bus Service Bill to give Ministers a new power to amend the 2010 Equality Act to compel buses to include accessible information on its services. The terms of the amendment mean that the information must be both announced and displayed – ensuring that the information is accessible to people with all types of sensory loss.</p> <p>Speaking to the amendment the Transport Minister Lord Ahmed said:</p> <p><i>“While we are clear about the core principles that should underpin the accessible information requirement, it is important that we develop the details in full consultation with both the bus industry and disabled passengers. We therefore propose to amend the Equality Act 2010 to provide the regulation-making powers required to develop the accessible information requirement. The regulations themselves and supporting guidance will be developed in liaison with affected parties, including the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, the Passengers’ Council and the devolved Administrations. I assure the House that we will work to progress these discussions as quickly as possible and bring forward regulations as soon as we are realistically able to do so.”</i></p> <p>The amendment was passed without a division.</p> <p>The Government have also published a <u>Policy Scoping Note</u> on the amendment. This gives further details on the likely parameters of any change in legislation. It also says that the Government ‘are aiming to launch a consultation in spring 2017, with a view to publishing finalised Secondary Legislation in April 2018’.</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

