

Weekly Political Update

9th May 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>Written question on access services on Video on Demand</u></p>	<p>Ruth Smeeth MP (Labour, Stoke-on-Trent North) has asked the Department for Culture Media and Sport what assessment it has made of progress on increasing the provision of access services on video on demand content. She also asked how the Department measures the progress made on increasing the provision of access services on video on demand.</p> <p>In a single response the Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy, Ed Vaizey MP (Con, Wantage) said that according to the 2015 ATVOD report the provision of access services on video on demand content has increased in recent years. He added that evidence in this report is supported by the Department's dialogue with broadcasters, content providers and platform operators, who fed back to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in Autumn 2015.</p> <p>Ruth Smeeth has also asked DCMS what steps it is taking to improve the provision of video on demand access services.</p> <p>In response Ed Vaizey said that 'Ofcom, the regulator for video on demand services, is reviewing how to improve the provision of access services on video on demand services'.</p> <p>Caroline Ansell (Con, Eastbourne) received an identical answer in response to her <u>written question on this issue</u>.</p> <p>Ruth Smeeth is one of the 70 MPs who have <u>publically backed our Subtitle It! campaign</u>.</p>

Employment

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Item	Summary
<u>Written question on the accessibility of apprenticeships for BSL users</u>	<p>Stephen Timms MP (Lab, East Ham) has used a follow-up to his previous parliamentary question to ask the Department for Business Innovation and Skills when it plans to decide on whether British Sign Language is an acceptable alternative to qualifications in English for the purposes of completing an apprenticeship.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Skills, Nick Boles MP (Con, Grantham and Stamford) said that the Government will provide an update before the parliamentary summer recess.</p>

Disability

Click on link for source

Item	Summary
<u>Lords written question on the Access to Elected Office for Disabled People Fund</u>	<p>Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb (Green Party) has asked the Government what plans they have for the future of the pilot Access to Elected Office Fund.</p> <p>In response the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Baroness Williams of Trafford (Con), said:</p> <p><i>“The Access to Elected Office Fund was a pilot established in 2012 to test this type of support for disabled candidates. We are now reviewing the findings of the assessment of the pilot and anticipate making an announcement in due course.”</i></p> <p>Action on Hearing Loss has supported the provision of support to disabled candidates created by the Access to Elected Office for Disabled People Fund and took part in an evaluation event run by the Government Equalities Office. The pilot fund was closed after the 2015 General Election and no alternative support mechanism has been provided since.</p>

Transport

Click on link for source

Item	Summary
<u>Written question on extension of the concessionary travel scheme for disabled people</u>	<p>Ben Howlett (Con, Bath) has asked the Department for Transport if it will extend the English national concessionary travel scheme for disabled people beyond off-peak times.</p> <p>In response the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Andrew Jones MP (Con, Harrogate and Knaresborough) said that whilst he appreciated that concessionary pass holders might wish to use buses before 9.30am, but there are no plans to extend the statutory scheme to include morning peak time travel. He added that local authorities already have powers to introduce “discretionary concessions” building on the minimum national standard.</p>
<u>Written question on accessible transport for disabled people</u>	<p>David Mackintosh MP (Con, Northampton South) has asked the Department for Transport what steps it has taken to encourage transport operators to provide services that are accessible to disabled people.</p> <p>The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Andrew Jones MP (Con, Harrogate and Knaresborough) said that the Department was committed to building transport networks which work for everyone, ensuring that disabled people have the same access to transport services as non-disabled members of society. He added that compliance with bus accessibility Regulations was 89% in England in 2015; while 60% of rail vehicles, up from 46% in 2013, were built or fully refurbished to modern access standards. He also said that the Department works closely with its statutory advisors on the needs of disabled people, the Disabled Persons’ Transport Advisory Committee, such as on a project to develop best practice guidance on the delivery of disability awareness training for bus and coach drivers.</p>

Health and Social Care

Click on Link for Source

Item	Summary
<u>Written question on the impact of social care budgets on the demand for health services</u>	<p>Peter Dowd MP (Labour, Bootle) has asked the Department for Health what assessment it has made of the effect of changes to local authority social care budgets on the demand for health services.</p> <p>The Minister for Community and Social Care, Alistair Burt (Con, North East Bedfordshire) said that the Government is aware of the important link between social care and the health service which is why the Government has given local authorities access</p>

to up to £3.5 billion of new support for adult social care by 2019/20. He said:

“This should mean local government has access to the funding it needs to increase social care spending by the end of the Parliament. This funding includes an additional £1.5 billion a year for the Better Care Fund by the end of the Parliament. The Better Care Fund creates a local single pooled budget to incentivise the National Health Service and local government to work more closely together, placing people’s wellbeing as the focus of health and care services, and shifting resources into social care and community services for the benefit of the people, communities and health and care systems. Integrated care is the right way to deliver a sustainable health and social care system that can provide better quality care and improve outcomes for individuals.”

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