

## Weekly Political Update

1<sup>st</sup> February 2016

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

### Hearing Loss

*Click on link for source*

Item	Summary
<p><b><u>Written question on the educational achievement of children with hearing loss</u></b></p>	<p>Sharon Hodgson MP, Shadow Minister for Special Educational Needs (Lab, Washington and Sunderland West) has asked the Secretary of State for Education what the average point score for deaf A-level students was in 2015 was. She also asked how many deaf students had not achieved a level 2 qualification in English by the age of 19 in 2015.</p> <p>In response The Minister of State for the Department for Education, Edward Timpson MP (Con, Crewe and Nantwich) said that:</p> <p><i>“Information regarding the attainment of students with special educational needs (SEN) in England is broken down by type of SEN and published in the “Phonics screening check and key stage 1 assessment: England 2015”, “National curriculum assessments at key stage 2: 2015” and “GCSE and equivalent results in England: 2015” statistical first releases.”</i></p> <p><i>“Information on the average points score of students with a hearing impairment or the number that achieve three A* to A grades or better at A level is not held by the Department. The Department also does not hold information on the number of students with a hearing impairment who have not achieved a level 2 qualification in English by the age of 19.”</i></p> <p>He continued saying that:</p> <p><i>“Currently, there are no plans for the Department to publish A-level data split by type of special educational need or to collect additional data on the outcomes achieved by students who have a disability but not an identified special educational need, although this is reviewed every year as part of the collection process.”</i></p>

## **Equality**

*Click on link for source*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b><u>DH publishes the Public Sector equality duty compliance report: 2015</u></b>	<p>The Department of Health has published a report outlining how it met the public sector equality duty as part of its services and public functions in 2015.</p> <p>The report explains the department's current equality assurance arrangements.</p> <p>This information has been published in line with the requirements of the <u>Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011</u>. As in previous years, equality information about the DH's workforce is published separately.</p> <p>More information on the report can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>

## **Charities**

*Click on link for source*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b><u>Trustees must engage with finance guidance, says charity regulator 'The Charity Commission'</u></b>	<p>Charity trustees must engage with and use finance guidance from the regulator if they are to run their charities effectively, the Charity Commission tells charity trustees today.</p> <p>The Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has updated key finance guidance to show clearly that trustees are ultimately responsible for their charities' finances, and respond to the need to make sure its guidance reflects the most current challenges facing thousands of charities.</p> <p>Many charities face a daily challenge of making ends meet, balancing reduced income with potential increased demands or costs. Some inevitably end up becoming insolvent and need to wind up. With around 600 new charities being registered every month, competition for funding is very strong.</p> <p>This climate makes the commission's finance guidance essential reading. It covers the importance of having a good reserves policy and how trustees can manage their charities in charities in challenging circumstances. It says clearly what trustees must do, that they must understand the legal requirements, and know what they should do in terms of good practice.</p> <p>In response to this report the Director of Policy and</p>

	<p>Communications for the Charity Commission, Sarah Atkinson, said that:</p> <p><i>“We recognise that charities operate in a very challenging environment, with some charities heavily reliant on single sources of funding. So it is all the more important that trustees are in control of their charity’s finances. This means actively taking steps to manage their charity’s finances through regular monitoring, asking the right questions and getting professional help where needed. Donors and beneficiaries rightly ask questions about issues such as reserves, and want to understand why charities do or don’t have them.”</i></p> <p>She continued saying that:</p> <p><i>“These guidance updates are designed to help trustees make the right call and support them, not to overburden them. That’s why there are also guides on how to set a good reserves policy for small and large charities. As regulator there is a limit on how much we can do as these are individual decisions for trustees to make. But these tools will help them manage any difficulties properly and with confidence.”</i></p> <p>More information on the updated guidelines can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
<p><b><u>Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Bill has third reading in Parliament</u></b></p>	<p>The Charity (Protection and Social Investment) Bill has received its report stage and third reading in the House of Commons. The Bill was passed at third reading without a division.</p> <p>During the report stage the Labour Frontbench moved an amendment which enshrined the right of charities to ‘undertake political campaigning or political activity in the context of supporting the delivery of its charitable purposes’ and to campaign ‘to ensure support for, or to oppose, a change in the law, policy or decisions of central government, local authorities or other public bodies’. The Shadow Minister for the Third Sector, Anna Turley (Lab, Redcar) said that the amendment was ‘to ensure support for, or to oppose, a change in the law, policy or decisions of central government, local authorities or other public bodies.’</p> <p>Speaking for the Government the Minister for Civil Society, Rob Wilson (Con, Reading East) argued against the amendment saying it would be wrong to allow charities to campaign in a party political manner.</p> <p>The amendment was defeated on division by 280 votes to 236.</p>

## Disability

*Click on link for source*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<p><b><u>Written Question in the House of Commons regarding making music more inclusive for disabled people.</u></b></p>	<p>John Mc Nally MP (SNP, Falkirk) has asked the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what estimate he has made of the number of spaces available for disabled people in music venues; and if he will make a statement.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Culture Media and Sport, Edward Vaizey MP (Con, Wantage) said that:</p> <p><i>“We believe that everyone should have equal access to arts and culture - having a disability should not be a barrier to enjoying Britain's awe-inspiring cultural treasures. That is why we are working with venues and organisations representing disabled people to identify barriers to access, while at the same time seeing how we can share examples of best practice and what more cultural venues need to do to be accessible to people with disabilities.”</i></p> <p>He continued, saying that:</p> <p><i>“We support the work of Attitude is Everything, which works with audiences, artists and the music industry to improve deaf and disabled people’s access to live events. I also recently held a roundtable meeting with Justin Tomlinson, Minister for Disabled People, to look at access to cultural venues and events for disabled people.”</i></p>
<p><b><u>MPs debate changes to funding support for disabled people</u></b></p>	<p>Neil Coyle MP (Lab, Bermondsey and Old Southwark) led a Westminster Hall debate on the funding support for disabled people. His speech focused on the higher costs of living for disabled people and the issues of gender and pay gap in disability noting that, according to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, disabled men in work face an 11% pay gap, while disabled women face a 22% pay gap.</p> <p>He criticised the government’s introduction of personal independence payments which as a result have increased people’s fears that disabled people will lose work. He said that fewer disabled people are now supported under the Access to Work scheme than in 2009-10 and that the figure has dropped from just over 37,000 to 36,700.</p> <p>He argued that:</p> <p><i>“53% of working-age disabled people were in work in 2010, but that the figure is now under 50%. The Library has pointed out that, of the 320,000 disabled people on employment and support allowance referred to the Work programme since 2011, only 16% got a job. Although 43% of those on Work Choice—a more</i></p>

*specialised programme—could be supported into work, which is of benefit, the Government have announced that the two schemes will be merged in 2017.”*

Responding to the debate, Barbara Keeley MP, the Shadow Minister for Health (Lab, Worsley and Eccles South) opened her speech by saying that the ‘toxic combination’ of cuts to local authority budgets and changes to support has had a significant negative impact on disabled people and on their Carers. She said that:

*“Social care is widely seen to be in crisis. The most recent survey by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services reported that 400,000 fewer people are receiving social care services than in 2009-10. Of those who are still supported, a significant number are now getting less care. Most directors expect that still fewer people will get access to services over the next two years.”*

She continued saying that:

*“Proposed increases to the better care fund are risky, because they are so back-loaded. They do not reach £1.5 billion until 2019, but as I said, demand is growing each year before then and we have already lost £4.6 billion. Funding from the social care precept is uncertain; it can only raise £1.6 billion by 2019-20 if every single council decides to raise council tax by the maximum possible, and they may not do so. However, adult social care is in crisis now and there have been significant cuts since 2010. Local authorities are not helped by Government funding that is too little and that comes too late.”*

She said she was happy however that the Government conforming to the Court’s ruling and exempting full-time carers from the benefit cap, but other changes to social security were still in the pipeline and is causing serious concern for carers. She also discussed, in depth the, the risk to Carers if this consultation goes ahead, noting that both disability and carers charities have said that all five of the Government’s proposed changes would restrict access to PIP and therefore affect carer’s allowances. She criticised the government for making such a rash decision and said that hundreds of thousands of carers alone will be hit by the Government’s proposed changes to support for disabled people.

In response to the shadow cabinet’s critique, The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Disabled People, Justin Tomlinson MP (Con, North Swindon) said that :

*“First, on unemployment, we all welcome the Prime Minister’s pledge that we will halve the disability employment gap. Some 339,000 more people with disabilities have been in work over the past two years, which is a good start, but we still have a long*

*way to go. There is a real-terms funding increase in spending to help people with health conditions and disabilities to return to and remain in work. There is support throughout the system, and we are multi-skilling our coaches to ensure that they are all aware how to support people with disabilities. There will be opportunities to make improvements through the White Paper.”*

On the ‘Access to Work Scheme’ he said that the Government had:

*“Introduced the Fit for Work service particularly to focus on helping people remain in work. It is a lot easier to help people remain than to help them back into work. The current figure for Access to Work is 36,760, with four years of growth. It is a demand-led scheme, but a funding increase for an extra 25,000 places has been confirmed, which is significant. We are actively considering the best ways to do that. We have an open mind, and I welcome any suggestions, but obviously greater promotion is key, particularly to smaller businesses where the scheme would be particularly helpful in removing barriers. Specialist employment support has doubled the job outcomes of residential training colleges, which is good progress.”*

In response to PIP, he said the Government is continuing to improve the PIP process. He said that only 16% of DLA claimants secured the highest rate, but the figure was now 22.5% under PIP, so the Government would continue to use this system.

He told the house that:

*“We are in the process of the full roll-out, taking the 1.7 million DLA claimants over to PIP, but please be assured that that is being done in a controlled, measured and timely manner that learns the lessons of the reviews. We are doing the roll-out in a manner that meets the available capacity so as not to repeat the mistakes of when PIP was first launched. The disabled facilities grant currently funds about 40,000 house adaptations a year, and I am delighted that funding is due to increase by 79% next year from £220 million to £394 million.”*

On the Disabled Student Allowance he said that the Government recognised that progress had been made since the Equality Acts. He noted that all Universities, like all public bodies, had a duty to meet the law. He said that the Government should not be paying for things that they, the Universities themselves, should be doing.

In closing, Neil Coyle MP (Lab, Bermondsey and Old Southwark) asked for the Government to take more responsibility towards funding for disabled people, and said that:

*“That from the Department that is directly responsible for*

	<p><i>representing disabled people and much of central Government disability policy. The Government are not doing enough, and to try to pass responsibility on to universities when the Government are failing to uphold their own responsibilities is crude.”</i></p>
<p><b><u>Department for Work and Pensions publishes guidance leaflet on ‘The Disability Living Allowance’ ending.</u></b></p>	<p>The Department for Work and Pensions has published an information leaflet for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claimants about the DLA ending.</p> <p>The leaflet provides information about Disability Living Allowance (DLA) ending for people who were born after 8 April 1948 and are 16 or over. It also includes information for claimants about deciding whether to claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP).</p> <p>Further information and an electronic copy of the leaflet can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
<p><b><u>Peers debate the Welfare reform and Work Bill at the House of Lords</u></b></p>	<p>The Government’s Welfare Reform and Work Bill has been debated at report stage in the House of Lords, this is one of the stages where Peers can move amendments to the Bill.</p> <p>A cross-party group of Peers led by Baroness Campbell of Surbiton moved an amendment (Crossbench) moved an amendment (amendment 1) which would have compelled the Government to publish an annual report on the progress being made towards halving the disability employment gap – a commitment made in the Conservative Party Manifesto. The amendment would require this to be included as part of the Government’s report on progress towards achieving full employment, as outlined in Clause 1 of the Bill.</p> <p>The Minister of State for the Department for Work and Pensions, Rt Hon Lord Freud (con) rejected the amendment as unnecessary, saying <i>“I hereby formally commit the Government to report on our progress towards halving the disability employment gap in the annual report on full employment—no ifs, no buts. Halving the disability employment gap is a crucial part of achieving our full employment aspirations and a key priority for this Government in its own right.”</i></p> <p>The amendment was therefore withdrawn without being put to a vote.</p> <p>On the second day of report stage Lord Low (Crossbench) moved an amendment (41) which removed Clause 13 from the Bill – this is the clause which reduces the level of financial support provided to those people placed in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) for (ESA). The proposed change would reduce this part of their weekly benefit from £102.15 to £73.10 a</p>

week—the same level as jobseeker’s allowance.

In explaining the proposed change Lord Freud said that the measure will save £640 million over the long term but in 2017-18, it will save £55 million. He said that this savings in 2017-18 was a part of the £60 million the Government was investment into additional practical support, including employment support and the Work and Health programme. He argued that ‘as a Government, we want to ensure that we spend money responsibly in a way that improves individuals’ life chances and helps them to achieve their ambitions, rather than paying for a lifetime wasted on benefits’.

The Government were defeated on division by 283 votes to 198, and the Amendment was passed removing the reduction in WRAG ESA from the Bill. However, the Government is likely to try and reinstate the cut to ESA when the Bill returns to the House of Commons during ‘ping-pong’.

Before the vote over 30 national charities, including Action on Hearing Loss an open letter to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Iain Duncan Smith MP (Con, Chingford and Woodford Green) warning that the Government’s cut to ESA will “push disabled people further away from work and closer to poverty.”

The Government has suggested that sick and disabled people who get this benefit are being disincentivised from finding work because of the £30-a-week more they get compared to those on Job Seeker’s Allowance. However the DBC strongly disputes this claim and a recent survey in October 2015 of over 500 disabled people found this to be completely false:

- Almost half (45%) of respondents say that the cut would probably mean they would return to work later
- Just 1% said the cut would motivate them to get a job sooner
- Almost 7 in 10 (69%) say cuts to ESA will cause their health to suffer
- More than a quarter (28%) say they sometimes can’t afford to eat on the current amount they receive from ESA
- 40% have become more isolated and less able to see friends or family after their ESA was withdrawn or reduced.

This warning comes just two weeks after 150 disabled people from across the country visited Parliament to speak directly to their MPs about their concerns around the Welfare Reform and Work Bill, particularly the cut to ESA. This DBC ‘mass lobby’ took place on Wednesday 13th January and acted to show MPs the huge fears that exist amongst disabled people around their benefits.

	<p>The Learning Disability charity Mencap revealed further findings with a public poll, with over 2000 people taking part, which found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 71% of people think cuts to welfare will make the UK a worse place for disabled people to live.</li> <li>• Just 6% thought the Welfare Reform and Work Bill would make the UK a better place for disabled people.</li> </ul> <p>Paul Breckell, Chief Executive of Action on Hearing Loss and Jeff Skipp, Chief Executive of Deafblind UK and Richard Leaman CB OBE, Chief Executive of Guide Dogs were three of the 37 signatories of the letter, who signed ahead of the debate earlier last week.</p> <p>Further information can be found <a href="#">here</a></p>
<p><b><u>The Department for Work and Pensions releases official statistics: Disability Living Allowance Claimants in hospital</u></b></p>	<p>The Department of Work and Pensions has released its official statistics on Disability Living Allowance claimants who are (or have been) in hospital and impacted by the hospital suspension rule.</p> <p>The information was provided to the Social Security Advisory Council to consider as part of an equality analysis in relation to a proposed policy change following the case of Cameron Mathieson v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions [2015] UKSC 47.</p> <p>Further information can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
<p><b><u>Written Question on Social Security Benefits for disabled people to the Department of Work and Pensions</u></b></p>	<p>Julie Cooper MP (Lab, Burnley) has asked the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people who were in receipt of disability benefits re-joined the workforce in (a) 2010, (b) 2011, (c) 2012, (d) 2013, (e) 2014 and (f) 2015.</p> <p>In response, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions: Disabled People, Justin Tomlinson MP (Con, North Swindon) said that:</p> <p><i>“The information requested is not available. Disability benefits are comprised of Attendance Allowance (AA), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP). These benefits are all non-means-tested, cash benefits available to disabled people to provide a contribution towards extra costs and can be paid regardless of the employment status of the claimant. Because of this, the employment status is not collected during the claims process or at any other point during the lifetime of a claim.”</i></p>

## Health and Social Care

[Click on Link for Source](#)

Item	Summary
<p><b><u>MPs debate on the NHS and Social Care Commission</u></b></p>	<p>The Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Health, Norman Lamb MP (Lib Dem, North Norfolk) led a debate on the NHS and Social Care Commission last week. The debate was on a motion that the House of Commons ‘calls for the establishment of an independent, non-partisan Commission on the future of the NHS and social care which would engage with the public, the NHS and care workforces, experts and civic society, sitting for a defined period with the aim of establishing a long-term settlement for the NHS and social care’.</p> <p>He opened the debate saying:</p> <p><i>“I have felt for a long time now that the NHS and the care system face a very real existential threat, and we have been drifting in that direction for many years. We have to get to grips with this before seriously unattractive things start happening to some of the most vulnerable people in our country. The motion obviously addresses the situation in England, but the position in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is essentially the same; we are all facing the same demographic challenges and the same need to ensure that our health and care systems meet the needs of our communities today, rather than those of 1948.”</i></p> <p>On the threat to hospitals and the increased need for more beds in social care he said that:</p> <p><i>“Let me give an example of the pressure that the system is facing. It is fair to say, as a gentle challenge to the Government, that this year we are not seeing the data on accident and emergency pressures over the winter period, so the situation is slightly hidden from view. However, I heard that on Tuesday this week all the hospitals in Hertfordshire, north London, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Leicestershire were on black alert, which occurs, in essence, when hospitals are completely full and under enormous pressure.”</i></p> <p>Although the Government allowed the motion to be passed without a division the Minister was explicit in rejecting the calls for a Commission, saying the Government ‘do not believe that there is a need to launch an independent commission into its future. The NHS and wider health system has already examined what needs to be done to ensure the sustainability of the health and care system. Part of the purpose of making NHS England independent was to allow it to examine the circumstances of its finances and project into the future. It did so independently and came up with a figure.’ He argued that the Government have gone beyond the funding requested by NHS England in its Five Year Forward View, stating that the Government was providing</p>

	<p>an additional £10bn a year rather than the £8bn requested.</p> <p>He also repeated the Government's commitment to provide an additional £3.5bn for the Better Care Fund.</p> <p>The Shadow Health Secretary, Heidi Alexander MP (Lab, Lewisham East) also rejected the idea of an independent commission, arguing that whilst she understood the attraction of the idea <i>'the way in which we fund elderly care is the most deeply political question that our country faces in the next decade, and it is political because it is about who pays and who benefits..... If the NHS and care system are to be adequately funded in the future, the truth is that a political party needs to be elected to government having stood on a manifesto that sets out honestly and clearly how we pay for elderly care, and how we fairly and transparently manage the rising costs of new treatments, drugs and technology. No matter how well researched, intentioned or reasoned an independent commission's recommendations may be, someone at some point will have to take a tough decision.'</i></p> <p>She also cited previous cross-party talks, including those prior to the 2010 election, which had been heavily politicised.</p>
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## **Consultations**

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**Title:** London Transport: Travelling with a sensory impairment – for consultation (active)

**Source:** The London Assembly Transport Committee

**Deadline for written evidence:** 12/02/2016

The London Assembly Transport Committee is investigating the experiences of people with a sensory impairment using the London transport network.

The Committee wants to hear from people with a sensory impairment and their representative organisations about the impact of accessibility initiatives and any on-going challenges.

The Committee would particularly like to know:

- What are the current challenges for people with a sensory impairment in using the transport network and pedestrian environment in London?
- How well do Transport for London, boroughs and providers of rail or bus services support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?
- How could Transport for London and other providers improve the accessibility of the transport network for people with a sensory impairment, including supporting independent, as well as assisted, travel?

The deadline for comments 12/02/2016, and the consultation will close 09/03/2016.

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

