

Weekly Political Update

6th July 2015

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Health

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Item	Summary
<u>NHS England launches Accessible Information Standard</u>	<p>NHS England has launched its Accessible Information Standard which aims to simplify care information for disabled patients and their carers.</p> <p>The Accessible Information Standard will be implemented on 31 July 2016 and aims to provide people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss with information that they can easily read or understand. This means informing organisations how to make sure people get information in different formats, for example in large print, braille or via a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter.</p> <p>All organisations that provide NHS or adult social care are required to follow the new standard, including NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts, and GP practices.</p> <p>The Accessible Information Standard has been in development for over two years and overseen by NHS England, the Health and Social Care Information Centre, the Department of Health Directorate of Social Care, the RNIB, Sense, CHANGE and independent patient representatives. Action on Hearing Loss has been actively involved in the process.</p> <p>In our press release on the publication Roger Wicks, Director of Policy and Campaigns said:</p> <p>“It is vital that everybody understands the information and advice they receive from their GP or hospital. The Accessible Information Standard is the first time the NHS has provided clear guidance on what people with hearing loss and deafness should expect from health and social care services, and what staff should provide. So long as it’s properly implemented, it will enable patients to access services, to understand information they are given, to manage their own health and to participate fully in decisions about their treatment – things that many of us</p>

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Television

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Item	Summary
<p><u>Written question on the targets for Government review of Access Services on Video-on-Demand</u></p>	<p>Lilian Greenwood MP (Lab, Nottingham South) has asked the Department for Culture, Media and Sport what targets it will use to judge if significant progress has been made on the provision of access service on Video on Demand when the issue is reviewed later this year.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Broadcasting, Ed Vaizey (Con, Wantage), said:</p> <p>“Government will use information from a variety of sources and engagement with relevant parties to develop a target that we would expect to see reached by mid-2016. That information includes the Action on Hearing Loss, Sense and RNIB paper (April 2015). We have been monitoring progress of the provision of access services for Video on Demand content since 2013 through engagement with The Authority for Television On Demand (ATVOD), platform operators and content providers. Discussions with those parties are also helping us to understand better the technical challenges in providing such services.”</p> <p>Action on Hearing Loss has worked with officials in the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to make them aware of the targets set out in <u>Defining Progress for Access Services on Video on Demand</u> (the paper referred to in the above answer) and has sent copies of this document to both Ed Vaizey and the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, John Whittingdale (Con, Maldon).</p> <p>We are also working very closely with Lilian Greenwood on this issue including work around her <u>Private Members’ Bill</u> on the issue.</p>
<p><u>Written question on access services on digital broadcast media</u></p>	<p>Rachel Maskell MP (Lab, York Central) has asked the Department for Culture Media and Sport what progress has been made on ensuring digital broadcast media is accessible for people with hearing impairments.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State responsible for broadcasting, Ed Vaizey MP (Con, Wantage), said that the Government remains committed to seeing an improvement in the provision of access services for video-on-demand (VoD) services. The</p>

<p><u>Written question on DCMS discussions with industry on setting targets for Video on Demand Access Services</u></p>	<p>Government has been monitoring progress of the provision of access services for VoD content since 2013 through engagement with the Authority for Television On Demand (ATVOD), platform operators and content providers. If ATVOD's 2015 annual survey of VOD Services indicates that significant progress has not been made, then as stated in the Connectivity, Content and Consumers Paper (July 2013) the Government will consider legislation in 2016.</p> <p>Sammy Wilson MP (DUP, East Antrim) and Louise Haigh (Labour Sheffield Heeley) both received an identical answer to questions they had tabled.</p> <p>Sammy Wilson also asked the Department what recent discussion it has had with television representatives on the setting of targets on the provision of subtitles for on-demand television services.</p> <p>In response Ed Vaizey said that the Government has been monitoring progress of the provision of access services for Video on Demand (VoD) content since 2013 through engagement with the Authority for Television on Demand (ATVOD), platform operators and content providers. As part of its continuing assessment of access to such services for VoD content, the Government will use information from a variety of sources and engagement with relevant parties to develop a target that it would expect to see reached by mid-2016.</p> <p>Nigel Dodds MP (DUP, Belfast North) has received an identical answer to a question which asked the Department what assessment it has made of the quality of access to on demand television content for people with sensory loss.</p>
<p><u>Written question on television services for people with sensory loss</u></p>	<p>Deputy Leader of the DUP, Nigel Dodds MP (Belfast North) has asked the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions it has held with television broadcasters on improving services for people with sensory loss.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State responsible for broadcasting, Ed Vaizey MP, said the UK is a world leader in the extent and the quality of TV access services, which include subtitles, audio description and signing. UK broadcasters and content providers are committed to meeting the needs of disabled people and want to ensure that this remains the case in the future.</p>

	<p>He added that Sections 303 to 305 of the Communications Act 2003 require Ofcom to draw up a Code which provides guidance as to the extent to which television services should provide access services. Ofcom monitors the provision of access services and publishes reports reflecting licensees' performance against the target. Ofcom has the power to take action against broadcasters who fail to meet their target.</p>
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Employment

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<p><u>House of Lords Oral Question on Access to Work</u></p>	<p>Lord Touhig (Lab) led an oral question in the House of Lords asking what assessment the Government has made of the effectiveness of the Access to Work fund and what plans they have to help people with disabilities into work.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Pensions, Baroness Altmann (Con) said that the Access to Work scheme helped 35,000 people last year and that disabled people and stakeholders consistently tell the Government of the effective support that the scheme offers. In order to offer further support to disabled people the Government will be 'launching specialist employability support, expanding the Disability Confident campaign, extending work choice and expanding the use of our Access to Work mental-health support service'.</p> <p>In his supplementary question Lord Touhig said that he was 'surprised last week when the Minister for Disabled People seemed almost to boast about the fact that his department had underspent the fund's budget by £3 million last year'. He asked why in those circumstances the Government are cutting the grant that disabled people can receive under the fund and why they have failed to publicise the fact that the fund even exists.</p> <p>The Minister responded by saying that Access to Work is not being cut, instead the Government are introducing a cap which means that 'the resources available can support a growing number of people'. She added that Access to Work is a demand-led programme and therefore 'the cap will ensure that we can reach far more people, and, indeed, we did just that over the past year'.</p> <p>Lord Low of Dalston (CB) questioned how the cap would help the Government meet its target of halving the disability</p>
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employment gap by 2020. He said 'a cap at one and a half times the mean average salary may sound generous, but it could limit the effectiveness of the scheme for those with the greatest obstacles to labour-market participation, such as deaf people who need the support of a sign-language interpreter. Will there be any flexibility in the administration of the cap to cater for cases such as these?'

Baroness Altmann responded by highlighting the three year transition arrangements that are being put in place for the 200 people currently receiving awards in excess of the cap. She said that 'nobody currently receiving more than the cap will lose any of their support until we have worked through the programme of transition over the next three years'.

The Bishop of St Albans (CB) highlighted the 'very real concerns of many people in the deaf community about the use of British Sign Language'. He asked how the Government plan to continue to support and encourage deaf professionals on a par with the hearing community in the light of the cap.

The Minister offered reassurance that the Government will continue 'to support deaf people and people with hearing loss. Specialist teams will help customers and their employers with advice on adjustments and technological support and with personal budgets so that users can manage their support flexibly themselves when the scheme is rolled out later in 2015-16. We are also in discussions with relevant stakeholders about how best to plan the implementation.'

Baroness Wilkins (Lab) asked how the Government will monitor the impact of the cap on Access to Work funding from the day it is introduced.

In response Baroness Altmann said the Government carefully monitor all its programmes. She said that 'Access to Work is one of the many programmes that we have introduced and are planning to roll out to protect the disabled and help them to work if they want to, as many do. Last year, we ensured that nearly a quarter of a million more disabled people had work. That is a tremendous success, and our programmes are working.'

The Labour Spokeswomen for Work and Pensions, Baroness Sherlock, said that deaf people will not be protected in the long-run because they will lose the money to pay for their interpreters. She added that 'Advice is helpful. Interpreters are essential'. She asked how the Government will protect deaf people.

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	<p>or their representative organisations can email to ask for a paper claim. In addition work is continuing to design and introduce a PIP digital claim as part of the wider PIP service. The Department is looking to invite a small number of claimants to use the digital service in 2015. This will allow them to test and learn and continually improve the service before wider deployment</p>
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Education

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<p><u>Written question on effectiveness of teachers of the deaf</u></p>	<p>Flick Drummond MP (Con, Portsmouth South) has asked the Department for Education what information it holds on the effectiveness of Teachers of the Deaf and the quality of support they provide to deaf children and their families.</p> <p>In response the Minister of State for Education, Edward Timpson (Con, Crewe and Nantwich) said that the Department does not hold this information. Ofsted, through its inspection of individual schools, considers the extent to which education provided meets the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Inspectors will consider the quality of teaching provided to improve learning for pupils, including those with hearing impairments.</p> <p>He added that teachers of classes of children with sensory impairments must hold a relevant mandatory post-graduate qualification, currently provided by six approved training providers.</p>
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British Sign Language

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<p><u>HMRC launches pilot of new services for deaf customers</u></p>	<p>HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has launched a pilot of a new service for deaf customers. The service, which has been supported by the Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD), will use video relay with a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter via a webcam, and the interpreter will be able to talk directly to an HMRC adviser on the phone to create a three way 'real time' conversation.</p>
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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