

## Weekly Political Update

### 10 January 2019

---

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

### Healthcare

*Click on link for source*

<a href="#">NHS England – Long Term Plan</a>	<p>NHS England has published its long-term year plan setting out how it intends to utilise the additional funding designated to the NHS on its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary – £20.5bn a year over the next five years. The plan stipulates how it will redesign care to ensure that services are kept sustainable for the future.</p> <p>It puts forward:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How the NHS will facilitate joined-up care</li><li>2. How it will encourage prevention with regards to smoking, obesity, alcohol-related conditions and air pollution. This is in addition to setting out how the NHS will help tackle health inequalities</li><li>3. How it will improve care quality – with a focus on cancer, mental health and maternity</li><li>4. How it will address workforce issues</li><li>5. How it will facilitate “<i>digitally enabled care</i>”</li><li>6. How the additional funding will help put the NHS “<i>back on a sustainable financial path</i>”</li></ol> <p>The plan does not specifically mention adult onset hearing loss or deafness (although references have been made to hearing checks for children with learning disabilities). It does however highlight some interesting wider points, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The 2.5 million more people will who benefit from ‘social prescribing’ over the next five years.</li><li>- The roll-out of personal budgets which will be expedited with 200,000 people benefitting by 2023/2024</li><li>- Integrated care systems that will be expanded across England by April 2021</li><li>- Social care, which features in the plan to a limited extent – the plan only refers to the fact that social care can help aid pressures on the NHS. It suggests that social care funding should be such that it “<i>does not impose any additional pressure on the NHS over the coming five years.</i>”</li><li>- The role of technology is also featured in the plan. It states: “<b>Technology will enable the NHS to redesign clinical pathways. Easy access to referral decision trees, referral templates and direct access to investigations that reflect evidence-based best practice and universal access to ‘one click away’ specialist advice and guidance for GPs, will avoid many patients from requiring referral for an appointment. Triaging (and potentially completing) some specialist referrals such as in dermatology with photos and questionnaires will allow some patients to be managed entirely digitally. Virtual clinics with escalation to face-to-face appointments where needed...”</b></li></ul>
--	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In terms of making the NHS more sustainable, the plan highlighted that it would make changes to the payment system. It notes that funding will move away from activity-based payments and will ensure that the majority of funding is rather population-based.</li> <li>- Unfortunately, references to the Accessible Information Standard were omitted from the final document, despite it being included in earlier drafts.</li> </ul> <p>To read more, please click on the link on the left.</p>
--	--

### **Cochlear Implants**

*Click on link for source*

<p><a href="#"><u>Cochlear implants – change to eligibility criteria</u></a></p>	<p>The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence have announced that they will be updating parts of the eligibility criteria for adult cochlear implants. The updated guideline:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Suggests that the level of hearing loss that someone needs to qualify for a cochlear implant should be at a lower level (reducing the threshold from 90 decibels to 80), which potentially means that more people could benefit from cochlear implants.</li> <li>2. Recommends that the controversial Bamford-Kowal-Bench test (BKB) which was used to help determine eligibility, should be replaced with a more accurate test – the Arthur Boothroyd test. The BKB test has been criticised for being both too simplistic and for being delivered in environments that do not reflect everyday scenarios.</li> </ol> <p><b>Action on Hearing Loss has continued to call for the criteria to be updated – working with the Adult Cochlear Implant Action Group and Jim Fitzpatrick MP to raise concerns.</b></p> <p>To read more please click on the link on the left.</p>
--	--

### **Disability benefits**

*Click on link for source*

<p><a href="#"><u>Improving the accuracy of medical assessments for benefit claimants</u></a></p>	<p>Kevin Brennan MP (Labour, Cardiff West) has asked:</p> <p><i>“What recent steps her Department has taken to improve the accuracy of medical assessments of disability for the purpose of claiming benefit.”</i></p> <p>Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, Sarah Newton MP (Conservatives, Truro and Falmouth) responded:</p> <p><i>“Ensuring the quality and accuracy of the assessments undertaken by qualified healthcare assessment providers is a top priority. The Department is implementing a wide range of improvements, as communicated to the Work and Pensions Committee and many stakeholders. All our assessment providers’ claimant satisfaction reviews continue to exceed the minimum satisfaction level of 90%. Accuracy is improving year on year for both personal</i></p>
---	--

*independence payment and work capability assessments, and the Department closely monitors performance, including through the independent audit of assessment reports.”*

To read more, please click on the link on the left.

## 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