

Weekly Political Update

21 December 2018

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

This is the final weekly political report of 2018 as we enter Christmas recess. Reports will resume in the New Year.

Services - Subtitles

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<p><u>Ofcom Statement – ‘Making On-Demand Services Accessible</u></p>	<p>The communication services regulator, Ofcom has published a statement setting out its recommendations for subtitles on video on-demand programming.</p> <p>Ofcom was tasked with consulting on a new code, following Action on Hearing Loss’s successful amendment to the Digital Economy Bill. This code would stipulate the amount of on-demand content that contains subtitles.</p> <p>In its recently published statement, the regulator recommends that 40% of video on-demand programming should be subtitled in two years – rising to 80% of content after four years.</p> <p>To read more, please click on the link on the left.</p>
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Healthcare

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<p><u>Public Accounts Committee report – Department of Health and Social Care Accounts</u></p>	<p>The Public Accounts Committee has published its Seventy First report – <i>‘Department of Health and Social Care Accounts.’</i></p> <p>The report mentions that the financial sustainability of the NHS is an on-going concern, with the Committee noting in particular the NHS’ reliance on short – term funding to reduce deficits. The example provided, was the money given to the NHS to ease winter pressures.</p> <p>The report also notes the following uncertainties and suggests that the Government should set out how these uncertainties will be addressed in the upcoming NHS ten year plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The uncertainties around the long-term funding of social care;- NHS staff pay- The UK leaving the EU and the corresponding issues around workforce and access to medicines and medical supplies <p>To read the report in full, please click on the link on the left.</p>
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<p><u>NHS Clinical Commissioners and NHS Providers Report – ‘Driving Forward Systems Change’</u></p>	<p>NHS Clinical Commissioners and NHS Providers have published a joint report on the “<i>changing relationship between commissioners and providers</i>” noting a greater move towards a collaborative approach to commissioning services.</p> <p>To read the report, please click on the link on the left.</p>
<p><u>National Audit Office – Review of the Role and Costs of Clinical Commissioning Groups</u></p>	<p>The National Audit Office has published its ‘<i>Review of the Role and Costs of Clinical Commissioning Groups.</i>’</p> <p>The review considers changes in the way that services are commissioned. It notes that commissioners and providers are working in a more integrated way to plan and design services.</p> <p>It also examines the future of clinical commissioning groups, in light of “<i>the changing commissioning landscape.</i>”</p> <p>To read more, please click on the link on the left.</p>

Disability benefits

Click on link for source

<p><u>Work and Pensions Select Committee report – ‘Universal Credit: Support for Disabled People’</u></p>	<p>The Work and Pensions Select Committee has published its twenty first report – ‘Universal Credit: Support for Disabled People.’</p> <p>The report reveals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That only a third of new claimants who receive additional payment due to disability, actually receive their payment on time and in full. - That some disabled people experience difficulties trying to use the online system to make a Universal Credit claim. In response to these challenges, the Committee recommended that the Government ensure that providers of its Universal Support provision also provide on-going support for claimants unable to use the online system. - One particularly noteworthy recommendation was the acknowledgement that the success of the Work and Health Programme depends on Work Coaches identifying and referring people. The Committee recommended that Work Coaches receive training on how to refer people unto the Programme and also recommended that the Job Centre Plus carry out a campaign of the Programme geared towards Work Coaches. - A second key recommendation came in response to the controversial ‘<i>managed migration process</i>’ which seeks to move existing claimants of certain benefits unto Universal Credit. The Committee noted that the Government must seek additional approval from parliament (via regulation) to carry out an ‘<i>accelerated</i>’ managed migration process. They recommend that this regulation should only come before
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	<p>parliament when the Government publicly sets out its findings of the upcoming <i>'managed migration pilot'</i>, which would migrate 10,000 claimants from mid-2019-2020. As well as how the pilot's findings will be incorporated into the proposed accelerated process.</p> <p>To read more, please click on the link on the left.</p>
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Social Care

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<p><u>Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement: England 2019-2020</u></p>	<p>The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, James Brokenshire MP (Conservatives, Old Bexley and Sidcup) has published a range of documents relating to local government finance in England for the period 2019-2020.</p> <p>These documents include the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. The Settlement reiterates among other things, the £650m additional social care funding announced by the Chancellor Phillip Hammond MP (Conservatives, Runnymede and Weybridge) at this year's Autumn Budget.</p> <p>The resources also include a consultation document, which is seeking views on Government methods for allocating social care funding.</p> <p>The Settlement is in draft form as it will ultimately need to be approved by the House of Commons.</p> <p>To read more all accompanying documents, please click on the link on the left.</p> <p>To read the consultation in full, please click <u>here</u>.</p>
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Disability benefits

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<p><u>Backbench business debate on the cumulative impact of social security changes on sick and disabled people</u></p>	<p>Former Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Debbie Abrahams MP (Labour, Oldham East and Saddleworth) has moved the following motion for debate:</p> <p><i>"That this House calls on the Government to commission an independent assessment of the cumulative impact of changes to the social security system on sick and disabled people and their families and carers."</i></p> <p>In her introductory remarks, Debbie Abrahams MP highlighted the fact that a number of cross-party MPs back in February 2014 raised the cumulative effect of public spending restrictions on disabled people. She stated:</p> <p><i>"Disappointingly, the Government's response at the time was to deny that the public spending cuts—not only in social security but across other Government Departments—were having such a detrimental impact on disabled people. They also said that cumulative impact assessment methodology was very difficult. At that time, Scope and Demos estimated that the cumulative effects</i></p>
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of the changes in the Welfare Reform Act 2012 alone amounted to £28 billion-worth of cuts for 3.7 million people...

She continued:

"I wish to clarify exactly what a cumulative impact assessment—or a CIA...is. A CIA involves various methods and processes to assess the overall effect of a set of changes—for example, Government policies such as tax or welfare reforms—on a particular population, which in this case is disabled people."

"...Back in March this year, the Equality and Human Rights Commission published its report on the cumulative impact of tax and welfare reforms. The report looked at the effect, since 2010, of tax, welfare, social security and public spending on people with protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010. It included assessments of the impact on disabled people. The EHRC looked at the measures introduced in the both the 2012 Act and the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, including the move to personal independence payments from disability living allowance; the cuts in support to the employment and support allowance work-related activity group; the introduction of universal credit, which involved the removal of the severe and enhanced disability premiums; the freeze in the uprating of social security support payments; and more. The EHRC analysis found that, by 2021, households with at least one disabled adult and a disabled child will lose more than £6,500 a year—that is 13% of their income. Households with six or more disabilities lose almost £3,150 a year, and disabled lone parents, predominantly women, with at least one disabled child lose almost £10,000 of their net income."

Debbie Abrahams MP also referred to the number of disabled people in employment. She stated:

"I am sure that the Government will say that they are helping disabled people to improve their living standards by getting them into work. However, just over 51% of 4 million disabled people of working age are in employment compared with 81% of non-disabled people—a disability employment gap of just over 30%, a figure that has barely narrowed since 2015... Last year, the Government set more modest ambitions with a new target to get 1 million more disabled people into work, but even this needs a radical rethink. There are many reasons why the disability employment gap has hardly reduced in the last three years, including the lack of information and advice for employers, but we must remember that discrimination of disabled workers is still quite prevalent. In a recent survey, 15% of disabled people revealed that they had been discriminated against when applying for a job, and one in five while they were in work. Information is not enough to address this; it needs leadership and cultural change."

Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work, Sarah Newton MP (Conservatives, Truro and Falmouth) responded:

"I want to reassure hon. Members that the Government do publish distributional analysis of the cumulative impact of Government decisions on household finances at every fiscal event. The last publication was in October, to accompany the autumn Budget, and assessed the tax, welfare and public

spending changes announced from the 2016 autumn statement onwards that carry a direct and quantifiable impact on households. ...”

“Her Majesty’s Treasury uses the LCF survey, because it is the primary source of data about what income people have, how they spend their money and what public services they have accessed. The survey is unique in capturing all that information. Only by assessing the impact of Government policy on each of these areas can an accurate and fully comprehensive assessment of the total impact of all Government policies on welfare, taxes and spending on public services be made. Looking at only one aspect, such as changes to income from benefits, does not provide a complete picture and is misleading. For example, the Government have committed to increasing spending on the NHS by £20 billion, which will have a positive and direct impact on the lives of millions of disabled people. To look only at benefits would be really misleading...”

“The LCF survey came into existence in 2007, but a household food consumption and expenditure survey has been run by Government since the 1940s. The primary purpose of these surveys has always been to collect detailed expenditure data for a sample of people, which is then used to assess changes in people’s spending patterns in order to adjust the basket of goods used to estimate inflation. The survey does not collect information from the sample of individuals that would allow us to assess whether a person is disabled—it has never been able to do that...”

“...Therefore, the lack of information about disability means that the information does not exist for the Treasury to estimate the cumulative impact of all Government policies on disabled people.”

“...although a cumulative impact assessment is not possible now, the DWP does undertake a wide range of other research and analysis to assess and monitor the impact of policies on disabled people. The DWP runs its own household survey—the family resources survey—which collects information from a sample of households, with detailed information on sources of income, the amount of income families receive and detailed information on the characteristics of the people in those households.”

“...The family resources survey collects the information required to make an assessment of the disability status of people in a household. The information is then used to provide estimates of the amount of income that families with disabled people have. The DWP publishes estimates of the numbers and percentages of people within households with disabled people who have low incomes in the annual “Households below average income” publication.”

She suggests that the Department for Work and Pensions also publishes:

“... Impact assessments for every new policy that carefully consider the potential impact of those policies on people with protected characteristics, in line with its legal obligations and its strong commitment to promoting fairness. The DWP has a continual and broad programme of research and evaluation of policies affecting disabled people, which is often contracted to independent research bodies, and all the findings are published.”

	<p>In conclusion and in response to issues raised over the number of disabled people in employment, the Minister stated:</p> <p><i>“Employment is really important...We are absolutely determined through what we do with our sector champions and on our inter-ministerial working groups to make sure that every disabled person in our society can play their full part. We are removing those barriers. We are absolutely committed to living up to all the UN standards that we have signed up to, which are certain to make positive differences and changes.”</i></p> <p>To read the debate in full, please click on the link on the left.</p>
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Equalities

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<p><u>Written question on the EnAble Fund</u></p>	<p>Shadow Minister for Voter Engagement and Youth Affairs, Cat Smith MP (Labour, Lancaster and Fleetwood) has asked:</p> <p><i>“The Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the launch of the EnAble Fund for Elected Office, what support her Department is providing to help disabled candidates standing for parliamentary elections.”</i></p> <p>Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Women, Victoria Atkins MP (Conservatives, Louth and Horncastle) responded:</p> <p><i>“The Government believes that political parties have the prime responsibility for supporting their disabled candidates. We are undertaking a programme of work with disability stakeholders to help political parties to better support disabled candidates.</i></p> <p><i>Alongside this work we have launched the EnAble Fund for Elected Office which is a £250,000 interim fund to support disabled candidates, primarily for the forthcoming local elections in May 2019.</i></p> <p><i>The fund will help cover disability-related expenses people might face when seeking elected office which could include items such as British Sign Language Interpreters, Assistive Technology or taxi fares where other modes of transport are not appropriate.”</i></p>
<p><u>Oral question on support for disabled people standing for election</u></p>	<p>Damien Moore MP (Conservatives, Southport) has asked:</p> <p><i>“What steps the Government is taking to support more disabled people to stand for election.”</i></p> <p>Minister for Women and Equalities, Penny Mordaunt MP (Conservatives, Portsmouth North) responded:</p> <p><i>“We are undertaking a programme of work with disability organisations to help political parties better support disabled candidates. In the meantime, to ensure that support is in place for the local elections next year, we have launched the £250,000 EnAble fund, which is an interim fund to support disabled candidates.”</i></p> <p>Damien Moore MP then asked:</p>

“In May, my right hon. Friend made a commitment to work with political parties to help support disabled candidates. Can she give a further update on how that work is going?”

The Minister then replied:

“We are making good progress. We have met a number of political parties and disability organisations, including Disability Rights UK and Mencap, and those meetings will continue into the new year. It is very important that political parties support all candidates; by sharing good practice and doing this work in a much more methodical way, I hope that all political parties will be able to do so in the coming years.”

To read the oral question in full, 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