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Weekly Political Update

Week ending 16 March 2012

Westminster

Deafness, hearing loss and tinnitus

Click on link for full transcript

| Item | Summary |
|---|--|
| <u>Parliamentary Question on access to the justice system for deaf people</u> | <p>Rosie Cooper MP (Lab, West Lancashire) questioned the impact on the deaf community of awarding Applied Language Solutions with a contract to provide interpreting services to HM Courts and Tribunals Service and the National Offender Management Service. Ms Cooper described the contract as a 'disaster' and stated that poor employment conditions have forced British Sign Language interpreters into other work, contributing to a trend of recruiting BSL interpreters who may not be fully qualified. She asked what safeguards are in place to ensure that deaf people have fair and proper access to justice.</p> <p>Responding, Justice Minister Crispin Blunt MP (Con, Reigate) said he would look into the matter but noted that there are not necessarily 'precise parallels' to be drawn between ordinary language interpreters and translators for the deaf.</p> |

Health/NHS issues

Click on link for full transcript

| Item | Summary |
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| <u>House of Lords Report Stage of the Health and Social Care Bill (day seven)</u> | <p>The Bill to increase GPs' powers to commission services was debated in the Lords at Report stage for a seventh day.</p> <p>During the day's debate on the Health and Social Care Bill four divisions were held and each amendment was rejected. A series of Government amendments were made.</p> |
| <u>Debate in the House of Commons on the Health and Social Care Bill</u> | <p>An opposition day debate was held in the House of Commons to discuss the e-petition signed by 170,000 people calling on the Government to drop the Health and Social Care Bill.</p> <p>Five backbench Lib Dem MPs tabled an amendment to the original motion calling for an urgent summit of the Government, Royal Colleges, professional bodies and patients' organisations to plan health reforms based on the Coalition Agreement. This amendment was put to a vote and was defeated by 314 votes to 260.</p> |

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| <p>Report publication – Health and Social Care Bill: summary of Lords Committee and Report stages</p> | <p>The House of Commons Library has published a report on the key amendments to the Health and Social Care Bill made during the House of Lords Committee and Report stages (so far). The report also includes an account of debates on other clauses where the House divided, or where there was a commitment to return to matters at a later stage.</p> |
| <p>Parliamentary Question on promoting innovation in healthcare</p> | <p>In response to a question from John Glen MP (Con, Salisbury) about who would have responsibility for promoting innovation in health care after March 2012, Health Minister Simon Burns MP (Con, Chelmsford) stated that the Government will undertake a sunset review of all NHS and Department of Health funded or sponsored innovation bodies, which will determine their future form and funding arrangements.</p> |

Social Care

Click on link for full transcript

| Item | Summary |
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| <p>Parliamentary Question on the implications of the Dilnot report</p> | <p>David Morris MP (Con, Morecambe and Lunesdale) asked the Government what steps it is taking to assess the implications of the Dilnot Report into the funding of social care.</p> |

Disability issues – employment and welfare

Click on link for full transcript

| Item | Summary |
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| <p>Written Ministerial Statement on the introduction of Personal Independence Payment</p> | <p>Minister for Disabled People Maria Miller MP (Con, Basingstoke) gave a statement about the introduction of Personal Independence Payment , which will be phased in to replace Disability Living Allowance. Ms Miller stated that a gradual introduction of the benefit was designed to ensure that procedures are working fully before the Government starts processing all new claims and then reassesses existing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claimants.</p> |
| <p>Parliamentary Question on scheduled Work Capability Assessments which did not take place</p> | <p>Employment Minister Chris Grayling MP (Con, Epsom and Ewell) stated that during February of this year 5,353 people had attended a scheduled work capability assessment but had not been seen by Atos. Of these, 2,231 assessments did not go ahead for reasons which it has been contractually agreed to be outside the control of Atos Healthcare, e.g. late arrival or for health and safety reasons. This information was given in response to a question from Teresa Pearce MP (Lab, Erith and Thamesmead).</p> |

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| <u>Parliamentary Questions on Work Capability Assessment decisions and appeals</u> | Shadow Employment Minister Stephen Timms MP (Lab, East Ham) asked a question about the average waiting time for a work capability assessment and asked for information about assessment decisions and appeals. Employment Minister Chris Grayling MP (Con, Epsom and Ewell) stated that the information requested was not currently available, but that the Government intends to publish some data on the outcomes of the reassessment process later this month. |
| <u>Parliamentary Question on complaints relating to Employment and Support Allowance</u> | Employment Minister Chris Grayling MP (Con, Epsom and Ewell) provided information about the total number of complaints recorded by Jobcentre Plus relating to employment and support allowance since November 2010. This was in response to a question from Stella Creasy MP (Lab/Co-op, Walthamstow). |
| <u>Parliamentary Question on referrals to the Work Programme</u> | Shadow Employment Minister Stephen Timms MP (Lab, East Ham) asked what estimate the Government had made of the number of people in receipt of employment and support allowance that would be referred to the Work Programme and what the actual level of referrals have been since the scheme's commencement. He asked what had caused any differences between these figures. |
| <u>Parliamentary Question on welfare benefit cases finalised under a legal services contract</u> | Justice Minister Lord McNally (Lib Dem) stated that in 2010-11, 10% of welfare benefit cases that concluded under a legal aid certificate were appeal cases, and, of these, 40% involved disabled people. This was in response to a question from Lord Beecham (Labour). |
| <u>Parliamentary Question on Employment and Support Allowance appeal hearings</u> | Justice Minister Jonathan Djanogly MP (Con, Huntingdon) gave information about the average time between an employment and support allowance appeal being referred to a tribunal and a decision being made. This was in response to a question from Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary Liam Byrne MP (Lab, Birmingham Hodge Hill). |
| <u>Parliamentary Question about the number of disabled people in employment</u> | Following a question from Ian Lucas MP (Lab, Wrexham), Minister for Disabled People Maria Miller MP (Con, Basingstoke) gave information about how many disabled people were in employment in each of the last five years. |
| <u>Parliamentary Question on the effect of welfare reforms on the employment of disabled people</u> | Ian Lucas MP (Lab, Wrexham) asked if the Government would conduct a review into the likely effects of the Government's proposed welfare reforms on the employment of disabled people. Responding, Minister for Disabled People Maria Miller MP (Con, Basingstoke) stated that the Government has undertaken a series of equality impact assessments for the |

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| | Welfare Reform Bill, which have assessed the likely effect of the Government's proposals on disabled people. |
| Parliamentary Questions on people found fit to work following a work capability assessment | <p>Andrew Stephenson MP (Con, Pendle) asked how many people found fit to work following a work capability assessment are now working. Employment Minister Chris Grayling MP (Con, Epsom and Ewell) noted that the Department for Work and Pensions has commissioned research into this as part of the wider evaluation of Employment and Support Allowance.</p> <p>Mr Stephenson also asked a question about the effect of people being found 'fit to work' on the level of unemployment. Employment Minister Chris Grayling MP (Con, Epsom and Ewell) noted that no assessment had been made because to do so would incur disproportionate cost.</p> |
| Debate in the House of Commons on Work Capability Assessment | The Government was taking some people down a path that could be right for them even if they were reluctant to follow it at first, Employment Minister Chris Grayling MP (Con, Epsom and Ewell) told MPs during a debate on the recommendations for new mental, intellectual and cognitive function descriptors in the Work Capability Assessment. |
| Parliamentary Question on referrals to the Work Programme | Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary Liam Byrne MP (Lab, Birmingham Hodge Hill) asked what the Government's target is for referral of employment and support allowance claimants to Work programme providers and how many referrals have been made to date. |

Biomedical research

Click on link for full transcript

| Item | Summary |
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| Parliamentary Question about projects funded by the Office for Life Sciences | <p>Science Minister David Willetts MP (Con, Havant) provided information about how many projects the Office for Life Sciences has completed since May 2010, which projects are underway, and what the budget is of each such project. This was in response to a question from Shadow Science and Innovation Minister Chi Onwurah MP (Lab, Newcastle).</p> <p>The Government Relations team and the Biomedical Research team have secured a meeting with Chi Onwurah at Newcastle University to showcase an Action on Hearing Loss-funded research project and to discuss wider hearing research issues.</p> |

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| Parliamentary Question on technology and innovation centres | Roger Williams MP (Lib Dem, Brecon and Radnorshire) asked the Government for an update on the setting up of technology and innovation centres. |
| Parliamentary Question on the UK's science base | Shadow Employment Minister Stephen Timms MP (Lab, East Ham) asked what recent assessment there had been of the UK's science base and highlighted a recent letter from the Business Secretary Vince Cable MP (Lib Dem, Twickenham) to the Prime Minister in which he described the Government's science policy as 'piecemeal' and said that 'the Technology Strategy Board...is operating on a shrinking core budget and thereby missing valuable opportunities'. |

Consultations

Title: Personal Independence Payment: assessment thresholds and consultation

Source: Department for Work and Pensions

Deadline: 30 April 2012

Parliamentary Question on access to the justice system for deaf people

Rosie Cooper: It is clear that the ALS contract is a disaster, but I would like to question the Secretary of State and Ministers about the impact on the deaf community. The resulting poor employment conditions have forced British sign language interpreters into other work, contributing to a trend of recruiting BSL interpreters who may not be fully qualified, which may lead to a miscarriage of justice. What safeguards are in place to ensure that deaf people—a protected group with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010—and their officially recognised language, BSL, are afforded proper regard, enabling them to have fair and proper access to justice?

Mr Blunt: The hon. Lady is absolutely right, and I undertake to look into any actions that are happening with regard to deaf people. However, there are not necessarily comparisons and precise parallels to be drawn between ordinary language interpreters and translators for the deaf. I will consider her points and come back to her.

House of Lords Report Stage of the Health and Social Care Bill (day seven)

Summary

The Bill to create an independent NHS Board, promote patient choice and to reduce NHS administration costs was debated in the Lords at Report stage for the seventh day today.

During the day's debate on the Health and Social Care Bill four divisions were held, and each amendment was rejected, and a series of Government amendments were made.

Divisions and Debates

Amendment 243 to leave out Clause 211

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Shadow Deputy Leader of the House of Lords Lord Hunt of Kings Heath moved amendment 243, which was pushed to a division without debate.

Amendment 243 was disagreed with 212 votes to 180.

Amendment 292 to leave out Clause 277

Shadow Deputy Leader of the House of Lords Lord Hunt of Kings Heath moved amendment 292, stating that there were more and more incident reports made by staff in the National Health Service to the National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA), from which patterns were learnt. The NPSA then issued various bulletins and safety warnings so that the health service learnt from mistakes, he added.

Lord Hunt queried what would happen to the national reporting and learning system when the NPSA was abolished.

In reply, Health Quality Minister Earl Howe said that patient safety had to be the key priority for all those working in the health service, and the Bill put safety at the heart of the NHS, not at arm's length. He added that Clause 22 would give the NHS Commissioning Board responsibility for the national reporting and learning function, including the collection of information about patient safety incidents.

Amendment 292 was disagreed by 244 votes to 187.

Amendment 292A to create a new clause before 280

Amendment 292A was moved by Crossbench peer Baroness Greengross, who said that frail, vulnerable, and sick people in need of support or care in residential homes had their human rights protected, but if the same services were provided to people in their home, then they were not. She did not feel this could be right, and stated that the amendment was designed to close the loophole in the law that allowed this.

Opposition Whip Baroness Wheeler strongly supported the amendment, adding that no progress had been made since Committee despite "a plethora" of respected organisations representing older people, mental health, disability and human rights organisations, as well as the Equality and Human Rights Commission. She added they had argued that there was a real problem which needed to be addressed by primary legislation.

Responding, Health Quality Minister Earl Howe shared the determination to ensure that everyone who used publicly funded health and social care services was protected from abuses of their human rights, and the requirement for people to have their human rights protected and respected was not negotiable.

The Minister felt that legislative provision was not the only mechanism for ensuring protection for those using healthcare and domiciliary care services and he argued that that in order to ensure that users of those services are protected from abuses, focus was needed on changing the culture and practice of services which provided poor care.

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Earl Howe said that the problem with the amendment was problem that it had very serious and unhelpful implications for the wider interpretation of the Human Right Act. He explained that by expressly stating that providers of healthcare and homecare services were covered by Act, doubt would be cast on whether all the areas beyond health and social care were covered by it.

Amendment 292A was rejected by 253 votes to 196.

Amendment 300A to Clause 302

Moving amendment 300A, Shadow Health Minister Baroness Thornton said that there were credible claims that detrimental consequences brought about by the scale of change to the NHS were already being felt. She added that there were some extreme assertions, such as from regional risk registers, that patient care could be seriously impacted.

Responding, Earl Howe said that the Government was “undoubtedly fighting a battle” to convince the medical community of the merits of the Bill, a battle that had so far not been won. He confirmed that once the Bill reached the statute the Government would look to build bridges with the royal colleges, the BMA and all those who had an interest in seeing the Bill work.

Amendment 300A was rejected by 237 votes to 178.

Full list of Government amendments made

Clause 214

Amendment 246A

Schedule 19

Amendment 258A

Clause 253

Amendments 259 to 261

Clause 254

Amendments 262 to 267

New clause after Clause 254

Amendment 268

Clause 256

Amendments 269 to 271

Clause 257

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Amendments 272 to 274

Clause 258

Amendments 275 to 278

Clause 259

Amendments 279 to 287

New clause after Clause 259

Amendments 288 and 289

Clause 260

Amendment 290

Clause 266

Amendment 290A

Clause 268

Amendment 291

Clause 270

Amendments 291A to 291D

Schedule 23

Amendments 297A and 297B

Schedule 24

Amendments 297C and 297D

Clause 300

Amendments 299 to 300ZB

Clause 302

Amendment 302

Non-Government amendments agreed without vote

Clause 236

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Amendment 256 moved by Conservative peer Lord Ribeiro

Amendment 257 moved by Conservative peer Lord Ribeiro

Clause 244

Amendment 258 moved by Liberal Democrat peer Lord Marks of Henley-on-Thames

Clause 290

Amendment 296 moved by Liberal Democrat peer Lord Marks of Henley-on-Thames

Full list of probing amendments

New Clause after 240

Amendment 240 moved Crossbench peer Baroness Emerton

Clause 208

Amendment 241 moved by Shadow Deputy Leader of the House of Lords Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

New clause after 219

Amendment 249 moved by Crossbench peer Lord Patel

New clause after 294

Amendment 297 moved by Liberal Democrat peer Lord Clement-Jones

Full list of amendments not moved

Amendment 241A and 241B

Amendment 241C

Amendment 242

Amendment 244

Amendments 245 and 246

Amendment 247

Amendment 248

Amendment 250

Amendment 251

Amendment 252

Amendments 253 to 255

Amendment 255A

Amendment 293

Amendments 294 and 295

Amendment 298

Amendments 300B and 301

The Health and Social Care Bill will return to the Lords for the third reading on nineteenth of March.

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[Opposition Day Debate in the House of Commons on the Health and Social Care Bill](#)

Summary

Government reforms to the NHS were going ahead, and efficiencies were being delivered, MPs heard today.

Responding to a debate on a motion on the Health and Social Care Bill, Health Secretary Andrew Lansley said that Labour's motion was a "desperate ploy from a desperate party", and that the Bill had been scrutinised and approved following "substantial and highly constructive" engagement from stakeholders.

He said that the petition against the Bill, that had acquired 170,000 signatures, had come from the Labour Party, and that the Shadow Health Secretary was "simply shouting slogans" without offering constructive support.

The Government had demonstrated that it cared about the NHS, Mr Lansley said, adding that there was nothing in the Bill that promoted or permitted the transfer of NHS activities to the private sector.

He argued that Labour was against the Bill, but was not against anything that was in the Bill, and the motion was simply "politics masquerading as principle".

Bringing the debate, Shadow Health Secretary Andy Burnham said that the Government had arrived at a "dangerous moment", not only for the NHS, but for democracy. Nobody voted for the Bill at the general election, and it did not have a mandate, he argued.

It was an "intolerable situation", he said, that the Government had not achieved professional consensus or public consent for the changes, and that the mood of the country, and particularly of health professionals, had been misjudged.

Mr Burnham said that he was aware of concerns expressed by Diabetes UK and other organisations representing people with long term conditions, explaining that there was a lack of clarity about how changes would affect their long term care.

Labour also called for the transition risk register to be published, and Mr Burnham gave his support to a Liberal Democrat amendment which had been tabled. Support for this, he said, would not signal support for the Coalition's health policies as laid out in the Coalition Agreement.

Liberal Democrat MP Andrew George moved an amendment calling for an urgent summit of the Government, Royal Colleges, professional bodies and patients' organisations to plan health reforms based on the Coalition Agreement.

He urged the Government to withdraw the Bill and engage constructively with stakeholders on reform.

Conservative Chair of the Health Select Committee Stephen Dorrell commented that if there was any truth in half the arguments made by the Opposition, supporters of the Bill would have not provided their support.

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Elsewhere, Labour MP David Miliband said that however acute the embarrassment was of abandoning the Bill, it would be insignificant when compared with the “embarrassment...trauma and cost” of ploughing ahead with reform.

As the Bill had been repeatedly altered, he commented that the plans had gone from “wrong to being the most half-baked, quarter-thought-out shambles that the NHS has ever seen”.

*Put to a vote, the Liberal Democrat amendment fell by 260 to 314.
Labour’s motion fell by 258 to 314.*

[Parliamentary Question on promoting innovation in healthcare](#)

John Glen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many bodies within the NHS he proposes will have specific responsibility for the promotion of innovation in health care after March 2012; [98772] (2) what future role he plans for NHS regional innovation hubs.[98773]

Mr Simon Burns: Innovation remains crucial to delivering a world-class health service, in terms of improving the quality of patient care and its contribution to economic growth. However, over the last decade, the innovation landscape has become fragmented, cluttered and confusing.

Many new organisations have emerged all charged with improving innovation in the national health service, including the regional innovation hubs.

We need to ensure that innovation investment, development and support are coherently organised, and focused on delivering quality and driving value. This is why, as announced in ‘Innovation Health and Wealth’, we will undertake a sunset review of all NHS and Department of Health funded or sponsored innovation bodies, which will determine their future form and funding arrangements.

[Parliamentary Question on the implications of the Dilnot report](#)

David Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps his Department is taking to assess the implications of the Dilnot Report; and if he will make a statement.[99234]

Paul Burstow: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department of Health. Following the publication of the report of the Commission on Funding of Care and Support, the Government announced they would consult with a range of people and organisations involved in care and support on their recommendations and social care reform more broadly. “Caring for our future: Shared ambitions for care and support engagement” ran between 15 September and 2 December 2011. The Government will publish their plans for social care reform in a care and support White Paper and progress report on funding in the spring.

[Written Ministerial Statement on the introduction of Personal Independence Payment](#)

The Minister for Disabled People (Maria Miller MP): During consideration of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) clauses of the Welfare Reform Bill on 17 January, the Government announced its intention to have a graduated introduction of the new benefit. To ensure a smooth introduction, the launch will be undertaken through a phased approach, commencing initially with a subset of new claimants. This will ensure processes and procedures are working fully before moving to process all new claims and then reassessing existing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claimants.

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Bootle Benefit Centre (Bootle BC) will administer the first new claims from Spring 2013, from areas including Merseyside, North West England, Cumbria, Cheshire and North East England. People in these locations will be the first to claim the new benefit. The primary reason for selecting the Bootle BC is that it handles DLA new claims in volumes that will provide a robust test of PIP processes and new computer systems. During this period, new claimants in all other parts of the country will continue to claim DLA as now.

The remaining network of Benefit Centres currently administering new claims for DLA will start to take on new claims for PIP from Summer 2013, once evidence is in place that processes are working as intended. In addition this network will handle continuing DLA claims for children. Blackpool Benefit Centre will undertake PIP reassessment activity for existing DLA claimants aged 16-64.

[Parliamentary Question on Work Capability Assessments](#)

Teresa Pearce: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people have attended a scheduled work capability assessment but have not been seen by Atos even though they had an appointment in the latest period for which figures are available.[99445]

Chris Grayling: During February 2012 there were 5,353 claimants who had been scheduled to attend a work capability assessment (WCA) for employment and support allowance and, although they attended the Medical Assessment Centre, the WCA could not be conducted by Atos Healthcare.

Of this number 2,231 were for reasons which it has been contractually agreed to be outside the control of Atos Healthcare, these reasons are: being unfit on arrival to be assessed; arrived late (over 10 minutes); nurse being unable to continue with assessment; inappropriate for HCP to see; accommodation problems; unable to be seen for health and safety reasons; no prior notification of special needs; arrived on time but not prepared to wait for up to 30 minutes.

[Parliamentary Questions on Work Capability Assessment decisions and appeals \(1\)](#)

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the (a) mean and (b) median waiting time was for a work capability assessment following the start of a claim or receipt of a reassessment letter for people (i) applying for employment and support allowance and (ii) being reassessed for employment and support allowance from the incapacity benefit caseload in the latest period for which figures are available.[99066]

Chris Grayling: The information requested is not currently available.

[Parliamentary Questions on Work Capability Assessment decisions and appeals \(2\)](#)

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people who were previously receiving incapacity benefit and have been reassessed for employment and support allowance have (a) received the assessment decision and not appealed, (b) received the assessment decision, appealed, and received an appeal decision, (c) received the assessment decision, appealed, and are awaiting an appeal or an appeal decision and (d) terminated their claim prior to a decision.[99065]

Chris Grayling: Data on claimants who were previously receiving incapacity benefit and have been reassessed for employment and support allowance is currently not available. However, the Department intends to publish some data on the outcomes of the reassessment

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process later this month.

[Parliamentary Question on complaints relating to employment support allowance](#)

Stella Creasy: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many complaints he has received relating to the performance of the employment and support allowance benefit delivery centre in each year since 2008; and if he will make a statement.[98907]

Chris Grayling: Jobcentre Plus does not have specific benefit delivery centres for delivering employment support allowance (ESA).ESA was introduced in October 2008 but complaints data specific to ESA was only collected separately in the benefit centre directorate from November 2010.The following table shows the total number of complaints recorded by Jobcentre Plus relating to employment support allowance since November 2010 to 7 March 2012.

| | November 2010 to March 2011 | April 2011 to 7 March 2012 |
|---|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| ESA complaints recorded in benefit centre directorate | 1,854 | 1,322 |

[Parliamentary Question on referrals to the Work Programme](#)

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he made of the number of people in receipt of employment and support allowance that would be referred to the Work programme prior to the scheme's commencement; what the actual level of referrals has been since the scheme's commencement; and what assessment he has made of the causes of any difference between these figures.[98885]

Chris Grayling: The forecast volumes for mandatory employment and support allowance (ESA) payment groups over SR10 was 373,000 at the ITT stage and was 373,000 in the latest review of forecasts, published in December 2011.Between 1 June 2011 to the end of October 2011, there were 20,220 ESA referrals to the Work programme.

A full breakdown of Work programme data can be found at the DWP Tabulation Tool:

<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=wpTwo> main reasons for the change are: A reduction in the number of ESA ex IB claimants found in the mandatory referral group, this is due to more of the ESA ex IB claimants having a longer prognosis and more claimants being found fit for work. Fewer ESA claimants have volunteered for the Work programme than we originally expected. We have made a series of changes to the programme to ensure more ESA claimants have access to the programme.

From October 2011 we increased the prognosis period from 3-6 months for mandatory referrals which will ensure more of claimants in the Work Related Activity Group are referred on a mandatory basis From October 2011 we introduced information sessions to allow ESA claimants who are eligible to volunteer for Work programme to make an informed choice whether the Work programme is the right option for them.Amended estimates for ESA referrals to the Work programme and the latest view on all volumes has been placed in the House of Commons

Library<http://www.parliament.uk/deposits/depositedpapers/2012/DEP2012-0132.doc>These estimates will be updated on a regular basis.

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Parliamentary Question on welfare benefit cases finalised under a legal services contract

Asked by Lord Beecham - To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of welfare benefit cases finalised under a legal services contract were (1) appeal cases, or (2) revision cases; and, of those, how many of the appeal cases and revision cases respectively involved disabled people.[HL15934]

- To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of welfare benefit cases finalised under a legal services contract were appeal cases; and, of those, how many were (1) appeals in relation to employment and support allowance; (2) appeals in relation to jobseeker's allowance; (3) appeals in relation to incapacity benefit; and (4) appeals in relation to disability living allowance.[HL15935]

- To ask her majesty's Government what proportion of welfare benefit cases finalised under a legal services contract were revision cases; of those, how many were (1) revisions in relation to employment and support allowance; (2) appeals in relation to jobseeker's allowance; (3) appeals in relation to incapacity benefit; and (4) appeals in relation to disability living allowance.[HL15936]

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Lord McNally): The Legal Services Commission (LSC) does not record the category of benefit contested in welfare benefit cases where a legal aid certificate has been issued.

In 2010-11, 10% of welfare benefit cases that concluded under a legal aid certificate were appeal cases, and, of these, 40% involved disabled people.

However, there is no requirement for funded clients to disclose whether they have a disability, and, as such, the information provided in relation to disabled clients represents only those clients who choose to disclose that they had a disability. In welfare benefit cases where no legal aid certificate had been issued 38.8% were appeal cases (including appeals to the social security commission), and 8% were revision cases.

The following table provides a breakdown of the category of benefit for which the advice was sought. It is, however, possible that matters funded under legal help in welfare benefits under matter codes other than appeals and revisions, such as, benefit over payments, for example, could also result in a revision or appeal.

Therefore, the proportion of revisions and appeals funded under legal aid could be greater than stated here.

| | Revisions | | Appeals | |
|------------------------------|-----------|------------|---------|------------|
| | Volume | Proportion | Volume | Proportion |
| Employment Support Allowance | 219 | 3% | 8,988 | 26% |
| Jobseekers Allowance | 269 | 4% | 2,130 | 6% |
| Incapacity Benefit | 308 | 4% | 6,076 | 17% |
| Disability Living Allowance | 3,355 | 47% | 9,108 | 26% |

Of these, 79% of legal help matters for appeal cases involved disabled people and 85% in revision cases.

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[Parliamentary Question on Employment Support Allowance appeal hearings](#)

Mr Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) what the average time is between the referral of employment and support allowance appeals to tribunals and a (a) hearing date and (b) decision being promulgated; [99484]

(2) what the (a) minimum, (b) maximum and (c) average time is for a tribunal to complete a hearing into an employment and support allowance appeal.[99485]

Mr Djanogly: The information is as follows:(1) During the period 1 April to 31 October 2011 (the latest period for which data has been published) the average time taken from receipt of an employment and support allowance (ESA) appeal by the Social Security and Child Support (SSCS) Tribunal until (a) the date of the first appeal hearing was 23.1 weeks and (b) a decision being issued was 24 weeks.

In most ESA appeal hearings a decision notice is issued on the day of the hearing.(2) The SSCS Tribunal does not hold information on the single shortest and longest period an appellant waited for a benefit appeal hearing. The information can be provided only at disproportionate cost by manually checking each individual case file. However, during the period 1 April to 31 October 2011, 119,500 ESA appeals were disposed of.

Of these 7% were disposed of within four weeks and 0.1% were more than two years old. An appeal may be disposed of without being heard, or be heard on more than one day, for example a hearing may be adjourned for further evidence to be gathered.HMCTS is working hard to increase the capacity of the SSCS Tribunal and reduce waiting times.

It has implemented a range of measures including recruiting more judges and medical panel members; increasing administrative resources; securing additional estate; increasing the number of cases listed in each session; running double shifts in its largest processing centre; running Saturday sittings in some of the busiest venues; and setting up a customer contact centre to deal with telephone inquiries.All of this is having a positive effect.

The number of disposals has increased significantly from 279,000 in 2009-10 to 380,000 in 2010-11 and the tribunal will dispose of around 435,000 appeals this year, with the capacity for half a million disposals in 2012-13.

Disposals outstripped receipts for the 10 months between January 2011 and October 2011, and the number of cases waiting to be heard reduced by over 35,000 between April and October.

The average waiting time has stabilised nationally, and is beginning to fall in many venues.

[Parliamentary Question about the number of disabled people in employment](#)

Ian Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many disabled people were in employment for each of the last five years for which figures are available.[98830]

Maria Miller: The following table shows the number of working age people aged 16-64 in Great Britain, who are disabled within the Equality Act definition, and in employment in each of the last five years(1):

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| | Number of disabled people in employment |
|---------------------|---|
| July 2006-June 2007 | 2,633,800 |
| July 2007-June 2008 | 2,714,400 |
| July 2008-June 2009 | 2,686,400 |
| July 2009-June 2010 | 2,874,300 |
| July 2010-June 2011 | 3,132,500 |

(1) Figures on people who are considered disabled within the Equality Act definition, are the summed value of the rounded categories: "DDA Disabled only" and "DDA disabled and work-limited disabled", as published on the NOMIS website.
Source: Annual Population Surveys (APS) 2006-11 (years ending June)

[Parliamentary Question on the effect of welfare reforms on the employment of disabled people](#)

Ian Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if his Department will conduct a review into the likely effects of the Government's proposed welfare reforms on the employment of disabled people.[98826]

Maria Miller: The Department has undertaken a series of equality impact assessments for the Welfare Reform Bill, which have assessed the likely effect of the Government's proposals on disabled people. These are available on the Department's website. The Department will continue to fulfil its obligations under the public sector Equality Duty as we take forward our programme of reform.

[Parliamentary Question on people found fit to work following a work capability assessment \(1\)](#)

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people found fit to work following a work capability assessment are now working in the latest period for which figures are available.[98802]

Chris Grayling: These data are not routinely available. However, DWP has commissioned research into this as part of the wider ESA evaluation.

[Parliamentary Question on people found fit to work following a work capability assessment \(2\)](#)

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the effect that people being found fit to work following a work capability assessment has had on the level of unemployment in the latest period for which figures are available.[98801]

Chris Grayling: No assessment has been made and to do so would incur disproportionate cost. The Government do not believe that it is acceptable to write people off to a lifetime on benefits because they have a health condition or impairment.

Many people with health conditions are able to sustain and progress in employment.

Evidence points to the negative impacts of being without work and that appropriate work is generally good for people regardless of whether or not they are disabled or have a health condition

[Parliamentary Question on referrals to the Work Programme](#)

Mr Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his target is for referral of

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employment and support allowance claimants to Work programme providers; and how many referrals have been made to date.[99482]

Chris Grayling: The forecast volumes for mandatory employment and support allowance (ESA) payment groups over SR10 was 373,000 at the 'invitation to tender' stage and was 373,000 in the latest review of forecasts, published in December 2011. Between 1 June 2011 to the end of October 2011, there were 20,220 ESA referrals to the Work programme. A full breakdown of Work programme data can be found at the DWP Tabulation Tool:<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=wp>

[Debate in the House of Commons on Work Capability Assessment](#)

Summary

The Government would not always get it right, and was taking some people down a path that could be right for them, even if they were reluctant to follow it at first, MPs heard today.

Responding to a debate on the work capability assessment, Employment Minister Chris Grayling said it was of “paramount importance” to get issues of mental health right in the work capability assessment process.

Although Mr Grayling acknowledged the good work of charities, he felt they did not always “get it right” and highlighted the internal review as an example of this. He admitted that the Government would not always get it right, and was taking some people down a path that could be right for them, even if they were reluctant to follow it at first,

He explained officials had advised that changes to the system would lead to an increased number of mental health claimants in the support group. He added that although charities protested, an internal review found that the support group as a whole had got bigger.

Mr Grayling said it was easy for groups that advocated change to existing systems to claim authority based on experience. However, he said, this was not always the case, and added that he was open to change if there was evidence that the Government were not getting things right.

He explained that charities had recommended a system which would have involved “tearing up the whole work capability assessment for mental, fluctuating and physical conditions and starting again from scratch”. Mr Grayling argued his was a “comprehensive change to the whole thing, based on no actual evidence”.

Bringing the debate, Labour MP Sheila Gilmore said that 35 per cent of the people undergoing work capability assessments were being recorded as having a mental or behavioural condition as their primary condition.

She explained that in November 2010, Professor Harrington acknowledged that inadequacies in the descriptors for mental, intellectual and cognitive function were likely to play a “substantial role in the high rate of successful appeals”.

In September 2010, Mind, Mencap and the National Autistic Society were asked to provide recommendations on refining the descriptors, said Ms Gilmore, explaining that they presented initial recommendations to an independent scrutiny group in December 2010.

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She explained that following an internal review by the Department for Work and Pensions, descriptors were changed in March 2011. However, a subsequent report found that the internal review had not resolved concerns, she added.

The purpose of the proposed descriptors was to account better for fluctuations in impairment that were commonplace in illnesses, and the amount of support a person might need to overcome their impairment, said Ms Gilmore.

Finally, she said the Department for Work and Pensions had decided not to introduce the new descriptors, arguing either that there was insufficient evidence that the current descriptors were not working.

Parliamentary Question about projects funded by the Office for Life Sciences

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many projects the Office for Life Sciences has completed since May 2010; what projects are underway; and what the budget is of each such project.[98894]

Mr Willetts[holding answer 8 March 2012]: In 2010/11 the Office for Life Sciences (OLS) had a budget of £84,000 covering three projects.

The projects were completed as reflected in Table 1.

| Table 1 | |
|--|-----------|
| Project | Actual |
| Clinical Trials Data Phase 1 | 6,000.00 |
| Extension to the Bioscience and Healthcare Database to include Pharmaceutical Sector | 53,735.00 |
| Clinical Trials Data Phase 2 | 7,100.00 |
| Total | 66,835.00 |

In 2011/12, the OLS had a project budget of £121,000.
Completed projects are reflected in Table 2.

| Table 2 | |
|--|-----------|
| Project | Actual |
| Bibliometric Analysis of Regenerative Medicine | 23,775.00 |
| Strategy for UK Life Sciences (analysis, publication and communications) | 38,728.70 |
| Total | 62,503.70 |

The OLS is currently agreeing its business plan, which is expected to be published in April 2012. Priority projects for 2012/13 will be those that involve implementation of the Strategy for UK Life Sciences.

At present a budget has not been confirmed at individual project level, but the OLS programme budget is expected to remain at £121,000 per annum, until the end of the spending review period in 2014/15.

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[Parliamentary Question on technology and innovation centres](#)

Roger Williams: The Government's investment in the new technology and innovation centres will allow the excellence of UK science to be used to develop commercial technologies. Will the Minister give us a short update on the setting up of these important institutions?

Mr Willetts: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We will be setting up seven such centres, which will tackle the long-standing problem that we have excellent science in Britain but do not always make the connection between research and its commercial applications. These new centres, all across the UK, will bridge that gap and strengthen our economy as a result.

[Parliamentary Question on the UK's science base](#)

Stephen Timms: What recent assessment he has made of the UK's science base.[100026]

The Minister for Universities and Science (Mr David Willetts): Britain's research base is the most productive among the G8, and the Government are committed to maintaining that world-leading position. That is why funding for science and research programmes has been protected with a flat-cash, ring-fenced settlement of £4.6 billion. On top of the £1.9 billion capital funding announced as part of the spending review, we have since announced a further £495 million of capital investment in science.

Stephen Timms: It is national science and engineering week, and the Minister and I are both taking part in a mathematics event today. Does he agree with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, however, in the letter to the Prime Minister that was reported last week, that the Government's science policy is "piecemeal" and:

"The Technology Strategy Board...is operating on a shrinking core budget and thereby missing valuable opportunities"?

Do we not need a long-term strategy, such as the one that was set out in 2004?

Mr Willetts: The Technology Strategy Board does an excellent job and has a crucial role, and if the right hon. Gentleman looks at the board's core funding, together with the funding that is available for its new technology and innovation centres, he will see that its funding has increased.

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.

Parliamentary Question (PQ)

Parliamentary questions are oral or written questions to 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. Parliamentary questions are a vital tool in holding the Government to account. The Prime Minister answers to the House of Commons every Wednesday at midday.

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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.

Select Committees in the House of Lords concentrate on four main areas: Europe, science, economics, and the UK constitution.

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:

- **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