

People with Disabilities

Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how it is ensuring that the additional costs faced by families living with disability are addressed in its work to tackle child poverty. (S3W-19859)

Stewart Maxwell: The Scottish Government is taking a wide range of measures to support families living with disability. For example, we provide substantial funding (around £3.3 million in 2008-09) for a range of organisations directly supporting families with disabled children. We also provide funding to the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland to develop training, advice and information on tax credits and benefits for frontline workers working with children with disabilities and their families.

We have also clearly committed to the UK Government's child poverty targets. We will do all within the powers available to us to help achieve the interim target of halving child poverty by 2010, and the goal of eradicating child poverty by 2020. We are also liaising closely with the UK Government on their initial proposals for a Child Poverty Bill.

However significant short term action to combat child poverty and to meet the additional costs faced by families living with disability requires extra investment by the UK Government in tax credits and benefits. The Scottish Government does not currently have responsibility for personal taxation and benefits but we are working in the context of the National Conversation, to develop key principles for how the benefits and tax credits system could operate to tackle poverty and income inequality in the event of fiscal autonomy or independence.

We recognise that such families may be at risk of fuel poverty and so we announced in November that from April this year our new Energy Assistance Package will provide a range of help for low income families with a disabled child, to reduce energy costs and lower fuel bills which may include free insulation or central heating.

We set out our new approach to tackling poverty and income inequality in Achieving Our Potential, which together with the frameworks on health inequalities and early years, commit to a concerted approach with our partners to tackle disadvantage and promote equality for people with disabilities.

Concessionary Travel

Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to ensure that bus operators comply with the rules and regulations of the national concessionary travel scheme. (S3W-19766)

Stewart Stevenson: Transport Scotland undertakes a regular programme of audit inspections to examine the claims for reimbursement submitted by operators. Transport Scotland also conducts on-bus surveys to collect information on the operation of the scheme, including details of cardholders' journeys. If discrepancies are found, the reimbursement to the operator is adjusted accordingly.

Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it has taken to ensure that bus operators submit correct information on the revenue forgone or average fare element of their travel claims under the national concessionary travel scheme. (S3W-19767)

Stewart Stevenson: Every concessionary travel claim submitted to Transport Scotland is subject to a robust system of checks and analysis. Transport Scotland undertakes a regular programme of audit inspections to examine the claim compilation and submission procedures used by operators. They also carry out checks on the detailed information behind the claims which is available from the operators' ticketing systems and undertake on-bus surveys. The information collected is used to analyse the revenue foregone or average fare data submitted in the operators' claims.

Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive why some bus operators do not have to record boarding and alighting points when submitting claims for concessionary travel. (S3W-19768)

Stewart Stevenson: When the Scotland-wide Free Bus Travel Scheme was introduced, it was agreed in consultation with the Confederation of Passenger Transport (the industry representative body) that operators would continue to submit claims using the procedures for reimbursement used under the previous local authority schemes.

Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it intends to require bus operators to record the origin and destination of journeys under the national concessionary travel scheme. (S3W-19769)

Stewart Stevenson: This is one of a number of issues being considered as part of the review of the Scotland-Wide Free Bus Travel Scheme for Older and Disabled People. The review is nearing completion and has been looking at how the scheme could be improved.

Questions	Period ending: 23 Jan
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Mental Health

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive how the proposed merger of NHS Quality Improvement Scotland, the Care Commission and the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland is being progressed. (S3W-19926)

Shona Robison: The proposal to establish two new scrutiny bodies covering health, mental welfare, care and social work was announced as part of the package of scrutiny changes by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth on 6 November. The legislative provisions for the new bodies will be taken forward in the Public Services Reform Bill which will be introduced in Parliament in the spring.

A project team has been set up within Scottish Government to take forward the work required to establish the two new bodies. As part of the project an engagement and consultation process has been established. That process is underway and includes a number of focus groups and stakeholder events. This will enable the views of both internal and external stakeholders, including the bodies affected, to be considered as the legislative proposals are developed.

Mental Health

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to ensure that there is effective support in the community for offenders with severe and enduring mental illness on release and how it will monitor effectiveness. (S3W-19478)

Shona Robison: Discharge planning for prisoners with a diagnosis of severe and enduring mental illness will be undertaken in a multi-disciplinary way using the Care Programme Approach (CPA). CPA focuses on the care and treatment likely to minimise the risk posed. CPA will be initiated shortly before liberation by the prison's healthcare staff resulting in an additional case conference that focuses specifically on addressing clinical need.

NHS boards are accountable for the quality of care and treatment they provide and for ensuring effective clinical governance arrangements are in place. NHS boards discharge these responsibilities by achieving the NHS Quality Improvement Scotland Clinical Governance and Risk Management Standards and by the work which they are taking forward on integrated care pathways, which will also be accredited by NHS Quality Improvement Scotland. This accountability applies to all patients including those who have been released from prison.

Mental Health

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether any consultation was carried out with the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland prior to the announcement of its merger with NHS Quality Improvement Scotland and the Care Commission and, if not, what the reasons were. (S3W-19341)

Shona Robison: The proposals supporting the First Minister's statement to the Scottish Parliament on 30 January 2008 on Delivering More Effective Government indicated that the future of Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland (MWCS) would be reviewed as part of the consideration of the scrutiny and complaints landscape. The follow-up announcement on 6 November by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth announcing the outcome of this consideration enables discussions on the proposed changes to be undertaken to with the bodies and external stakeholders.

Disabled People

Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what funding has been made available to support networks that offer specialist advice provision for disabled people. (S3W-19150)

Stewart Maxwell: The Scottish Government takes the provision of advice to disabled people very seriously, across all its areas of responsibility. Funding is provided to a wide range of organisations that provide such advice. We would highlight the following:

Health:

Self-Directed Support -

In 2008-09, through section 10 (1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, the self-directed support team made grants of £210,000 available to organisations who advise people about self-directed support.

Mental Health:

Section 10 Organisations and payments 2008-09 -
Alzheimer Scotland - £100,000
Bipolar Fellowship - £27,825
Dementia Services Development Centre - £135,000
Headway - £72,500
National Schizophrenia Scotland - £74,620
Penumbra - £61,880
Penumbra Respite - £20,850
Richmond Fellowship - £31,500
Scottish Huntington's Association - £52,000
Scottish Association for Mental Health - £88,000
Stresswatch - £11,219.

In addition, through section 16B of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978, the Scottish Government provides grants totalling £377,000 to a range of voluntary organisations which support people experiencing mental illness. The organisations that receive funding undertake various functions that include giving help and advice to members of the public who experience mental ill health and their carers. Examples of high profile organisations that receive money in this way are Alzheimer's Scotland, Cruse Bereavement Care (Scotland), Depression Alliance Scotland and the Scottish Association for Mental Health.

Housing and Adaptations:

Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living provides a range of independent living advice, information and training support services to disabled people in and around Glasgow, and has been funded through the Housing Voluntary Grant Scheme to develop a disabled housing register. They received £23,600 in 2008-09 and will receive £24,072 in 2009-10.

Education:

Support for Learning -

The Scottish Government fund the Scottish Sensory Centre (SSC) to promote innovation and good practice in the education of deaf, visually impaired and deafblind pupils. The Scottish Government also funds CALL Scotland, who provide specialist expertise in technology for children who have speech, communication and/or writing difficulties, in schools across Scotland. Both services are housed in the University of Edinburgh. In 2008-09, SSC were awarded £219,861 and CALL £317,760.

The Scottish Government also provided in 2008-09, £424,260 funding for the provision of Enquire, the national organisation with links to local networks. Enquire provides free and independent information and advice to families of children with additional support needs.

Disabled Children:

The Butterfly Trust - 2008-09, £64,575

Care Co-ordination Network UK - 2008-09, £47,281

Contact a Family - 2008-09, £64,062

Sleep Scotland - 2008-09, £75,030.

Lifelong Learning:

The Lifelong Learning Directorate (LLD) within the Scottish Government have for a number of years funded Skill Scotland to update the advice contained within Helping You Meet The Cost of Learning for 2008-09 - Disabled Learners. The LLD have also previously funded Skill Scotland to write the advice contained within a publication called the Employing Own Support Workers in Higher Education.

SKILL Scotland also receives a Headquarters Grant which is administered via the Lifelong Learning Directorate. The grant for 2008-9 was £52,871.

Skill Scotland is a national charity promoting opportunities for young people and adults with any kind of impairment in post-16 education, training and employment. Skill Scotland operates an information and advice service, provides volunteering opportunities, informs and influences key decision makers, runs conferences and works with its members.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive in what form the performance of the provision of respite for disabled people will be reported in light of the ending of ring fencing. (S3W-19477)

Shona Robison: Local authority funding for respite services for all care groups was not previously ring-fenced. Funding for respite and carer support services was included within the annual local government finance settlement and paid as part of the general block grant. That remains the case.

In recognition of the importance of respite and short breaks in supporting both carers and those they are caring for, the Scottish Government included a commitment in our concordat with local government to make progress towards an additional 10,000 respite weeks a year. We have provided an extra £4 million - on top of the total settlement to local government - to enable local authorities to deliver this commitment in full by 2011. These additional weeks should benefit a wide range of carers and those they are caring for, including disabled people.

It will be at the discretion of individual local authorities how they develop and allocate these additional weeks, based on local needs and priorities. We have agreed with COSLA that they will monitor the delivery of the commitment and will report to the Scottish Government with total Scotland-wide figures.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when the first meeting of the reference group on independent living will be held. (S3W-19487)

Stewart Maxwell: The first meeting of the reference group on independent living will be held on 6 February 2009.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps have been taken to produce a self-directed support strategy. (S3W-19488)

Nicola Sturgeon: A roundtable on self-directed support was convened in June 2008 to consider a strategy to increase the uptake of self-directed support, as a result of which an on-going reference group has been established. Members subsequently discussed a draft strategy at the October meeting which is being finalised and will be presented to members at their next meeting on 5 March 2009.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive which three test sites have been chosen for consideration of how to improve the uptake of self-directed support. (S3W-19489)

Nicola Sturgeon: Dumfries and Galloway, Glasgow and Highland Councils have been selected as the three test sites. NHS Lothian and Borders Council will also be contributing to the development of the policy through other local initiatives.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when the reference group on self-directed support last met. (S3W-19490)

Nicola Sturgeon: The reference group on self-directed support last met on Thursday 30 October 2008.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when the next meeting of the reference group on self-directed support will take place. (S3W-19491)

Nicola Sturgeon: The next meeting of the reference group on self-directed support will take place on Thursday 5 March 2009.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it measures unmet need for home adaptations for disabled people and, if so, what the level of unmet need is, expressed in terms of the number of disabled people and financial cost. (S3W-19505)

Stewart Maxwell: The Scottish Government does not measure unmet need. It is for individual local authorities to identify and meet the eligible needs of people in their area within a reasonable timescale according to relevant welfare and housing legislation and guidance and to monitor their own performance.

Disabled People

Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how it ensures that disabled people are consulted when the services that they use are being put out to tender. (S3W-19863)

John Swinney: I refer the member to the answer to question S3W-18864 on 8 January 2009. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search

facility for which can be found at
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/Apps2/Business/PQA/Default.aspx>.

Access for Disabled People

Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps have been taken to develop a set of minimum accessibility standards for all buildings. (S3W-19145)

Stewart Stevenson: Accessibility of new buildings and new building work to existing buildings are addressed through Scottish building regulations. These make provision for a range of physical access issues, to ensure that a building can be used and enjoyed by as wide a range of people as practical. For non-domestic buildings, Scottish building regulations are the equivalent of those elsewhere in the UK and, for domestic buildings, are the most demanding in the UK. The latest accessibility standards came into effect in May 2007.

A duty to consider the accessibility of a building also exists under equalities legislation, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & 2005 (DDA), which is reserved to Westminster. This legislation places a duty on service providers and employers to make reasonable adjustments to the way services are delivered, or facilities are provided, to prevent discrimination against persons on the basis of disability. This could include not only alteration of physical barriers to access and use, but also the manner in which a building is managed and operated. The DDA can therefore address certain access issues which lie outwith the scope of building regulations.

S3W-19766 Hugh Henry: To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to ensure that bus operators comply with the rules and regulations of the national concessionary travel scheme.

S3W-19767 Hugh Henry: To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it has taken to ensure that bus operators submit correct information on the revenue forgone or average fare element of their travel claims under the national concessionary travel scheme.

S3W-19768 Hugh Henry: To ask the Scottish Executive why some bus operators do not have to record boarding and alighting points when submitting claims for concessionary travel.

S3W-19769 Hugh Henry: To ask the Scottish Executive whether it intends to require bus operators to record the origin and destination of journeys under the national concessionary travel scheme.
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/businessBulletin/bb-09/bb-01-15e.htm>

Questions and Answers	Period ending: 16 Jan
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Audiology

Tom McCabe (Hamilton South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive, further to the answer to question S3W-11929 by Shona Robison on 29 April 2008, how many students entered the graduate diploma in audiology course delivered by Queen Margaret University in the final September 2008 intake. (S3W-19048)

Shona Robison: Eleven students commenced the Graduate Diploma in September 2008 as the final intake.

Tom McCabe (Hamilton South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how many qualified audiologists it estimates will be available to the NHS in Scotland by 2012 via the graduate diploma in audiology course delivered by Queen Margaret University. (S3W-19049)

Shona Robison: Queen Margaret University estimate that approximately 40 graduate diploma students will take up employment in the NHS by 2012.

British Sign Language

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has awarded a contract to any organisation to translate Scottish Government information into British Sign Language.

Holding answer issued: 9 January 2009 (S3W-18672)

John Swinney: The Scottish Government have contracted with AC2.com and the British Deaf Association (Scotland) to acquire British Sign Language (BSL) translation services.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/pqa/wa-09/wa0114.htm#2>

Disabled People

Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what action has been taken to ensure that Careers Scotland and Scottish Enterprise are setting targets for supporting disabled people, particularly young disabled people, into work and training. (S3W-19148)

Fiona Hyslop: Helping all young people into education, employment and training is a top priority for the government and we have a specific indicator to that effect in the national performance framework. To support delivery of this, on 28 November 2008 we launched "16+ Learning Choices", which will be rolled out across Scotland by 2010. The new model will bring a particular focus to improving outcomes for young people who leave school at the earliest opportunity and for those who need additional support to make a successful transition.

Support for people with disabilities is a matter for a number of agencies, including Skills Development Scotland, which comprises Careers Scotland, the Skills element of the Enterprise Networks and Learndirect Scotland. We have been working with Skills Development Scotland to ensure all equality issues are considered and reflected within their corporate plan, which is due for publication in April 2009.

Questions and Answers	Period ending: 09 Jan
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British Sign Language

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will adapt its website to enable British Sign Language (BSL) to be used. (S3W-18673)

Stewart Maxwell: The British Sign Language and Linguistic Access Working Group advises the Equality Unit on improving linguistic access for deaf people in Scotland. Since January 2008, the Scottish Government's website has included a BSL translation of an introductory page within its People and Society Topic at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/disability/remit>

The Scottish Government has funded a wide variety of initiatives to promote BSL and has committed £1.5 million for 2008-11 to increase the number of BSL teachers and of BSL/English interpreters.

Access for Disabled People

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when an announcement will be made on the appointment of the convener and members of the new Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland. (S3W-18831)

Stewart Stevenson: The Scottish Government recently completed an appointment round, and announced the appointment of the new convener and six new members of the Mobility and Access Committee on 19 December 2008. The appointments will run for a three year period commencing on 1 January 2009. Further appointments are expected to be made early in 2009.

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what arrangements are being made for the first meeting of the new Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland.

(S3W-18832)

Stewart Stevenson: A meeting is expected to be held in late January 2009 subject to members' availability.

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how the convener and members of the new Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland will be inducted and assisted to take over from the previous committee. (S3W-18833)

Stewart Stevenson: The new members of the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland have all been informed that an induction day will be held in due course. As well as initial training, they will be made aware of governance issues in relation to non-departmental public bodies. At the first meeting they will take cognisance of the previous committee's legacy.

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether the convener and members of the new Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland will be given freedom to set their own agenda and work programme and, if so, what experienced staff they will have to support this. (S3W-18834)

Stewart Stevenson: The Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) is an advisory non-departmental public body and is able to determine its own priorities. It is supported by a secretariat which is based within the Scottish Government's Transport Strategy Team. I intend meeting with the convener to discuss the MACS work programme in due course.

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what budget the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland will be given to allow it to carry out its work programme and undertake research. (S3W-18835)

Stewart Stevenson: The budget for Transport Strategy and Innovation provides running cost support for the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland, Passengers' View Scotland, the regional transport partnerships and support for innovative transport solutions. The budget for 2008-09 is £6.6 million.

Disabled People

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to support the re-establishment of a training course for rehabilitation workers for people with visual impairments. (S3O-5434)

Fiona Hyslop: Between 2004 until 2007 the Scottish Government provided Guide Dogs for the Blind £225,000 to develop a rehabilitation course in Scotland. I understand that Guide Dogs for the Blind have reached an agreement with Glasgow Caledonian University to run a two year training course for a class size of up to 15 students.

The Scottish Funding Council will provide a block grant to Glasgow Caledonian University and funding for this course will be met from the block grant.

It is not for the Scottish Government to instruct either the Scottish Funding Council or Glasgow Caledonian University on which courses the block grant should fund.

**UNITED KINGDOM PARLIAMENT****Industrial Health and Safety: Hearing Impaired****29 Jan 2009 : Column 695W**

Mr. Moore: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps his Department takes to (a) improve employers' understanding of deafness and (b) ensure employers do not discriminate on grounds of health and safety against (i) deaf British Sign Language users and (ii) employees who become deafened during the course of their employment. [247571]

Jonathan Shaw: Through the "Employ ability" programme, we are engaging with employers to improve their understanding of disability and their attitudes towards employing disabled people. The key aims of "Employ ability" include challenging negative assumptions about the skills and talent that disabled workers, and those with long-term health conditions, have to offer, building the confidence of employers in recruiting and retaining disabled workers. "Employ ability" activity is aimed at small to medium-sized employers and is being rolled out to Scotland, Wales and seven regions between 24 March 2008 and 27 February 2009.

To ensure that employers do not discriminate against deaf people, we support and uphold the principles of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The Act provides protection from discrimination for a person who has a hearing impairment, provided that the person meets the definition of a disabled person under the Act. The Act requires an employer not to discriminate against a disabled person by treating the person less favourably for a reason related to the person's disability, unless that treatment can be justified.

People who are deaf or who become deaf in the course of their employment, and their employers may also receive support from Access to Work. Support is tailored to the individual customer's needs but can include funding for British Sign Language Interpreters, Lip Speakers or Palantypists; whether as support workers in the work place or for communication support at job interviews. Access to Work could also provide indirect support to a deaf person by funding awareness training to help the person's work colleagues, including their employer, gain a better understanding of their condition.