

Parliamentary Reports and Policy Updates: March 2015



Scottish Parliament

British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill Update

The Education and Culture Committee

The Committee took taking evidence from the Scottish Government – Dr Alasdair Allan, Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages, and Hilary Third, Team Leader, Equality Policy, Scottish Government; and from Mark Griffin MSP on the 17th March 2015.

To watch the evidence session on the Scottish Parliament TV Channel, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7TIFkobd3M&list=PL4l0q4AbG0mliY0vSqJYb7eT0lYv7lsSX&index=1>

To read the English transcript, go to <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9858>

The Committee met on Tuesday 31 March 2015 to consider their response to the Bill – this was done in private. The Bill will be debated in the Chamber shortly and it will be voted on. If the vote is in favour of the Bill, then it will move onto Stage 2 of the parliamentary process.

It is at Stage 2 that any amendments can be made to the Bill.

Cross Party Group on Deafness Meeting

At the Cross Party Group on Deafness meeting on 11th March 2015, there was an update from Mark Griffin MSP on the progress of the Bill. He is willing to meet with any person or organisation that would like to propose amendments to the Bill before Stage 2 starts. If you would like to meet with Mark to discuss an amendment, please contact him directly at mark.griffin.msp@scottish.parliament.uk or by telephone on **01236 423 555**.


Educational Attainment of school pupils with a sensory impairment

The **Education and Culture Committee** is holding a short inquiry to consider how the attainment levels of school pupils with a hearing and/or a visual impairment can be improved. The Committee recognises that children with a sensory impairment may have other disabilities, which may have a significant effect on education and can require complex additional support. Therefore, the Committee's inquiry focuses solely on children with a sensory impairment and no other disabilities. These children may refer to themselves as Deaf, deaf, hearing impaired, dual sensory impaired, Deaf/blind, blind or visually impaired.

The Committee is currently seeking views on the inquiry. The deadline for responses is **Wednesday 29th April 2015**.

[Read the call for views](#)

[Read the call for views \(69KB pdf\) \(English\)](#)

 [Read the call for views \(BSL\)](#)

The Committee invites you to give them concise and specific suggestions about what could be done to improve the attainment of children with a sensory impairment.

Public Petitions Committee 3rd March 2015

Residential Care (Severely Learning-disabled People) (PE1545)

PE1545 by Ann Maxwell on behalf of the Muir Maxwell Trust is on residential care provision for the severely learning disabled. Members have a note by the clerk, a Scottish Parliament information centre briefing paper and the petition.

Ann Maxwell:

Thank you, gentlemen, for giving me the opportunity to speak to you this morning.

I ask the committee to walk with me in my shoes for a moment. I am the mother of Muir, who has a severe form of epilepsy called Dravet syndrome. Muir had his first seizure when he was just four months old and, as we rushed him in to hospital, we did not know that the legacy of the seizures that would follow would leave him profoundly brain damaged and would dramatically alter the course of not just his life but the life of his family for ever.

My husband and I are now Muir's legal guardians. For more than 18 years, we have been his voice. He cannot read, he cannot write and he can barely colour in between the lines. He will never work or marry or have children of his own. He requires care 24/7, including all aspects of personal care. However, he is a speaking child and he has an amazing personality and sense of humour. His behaviours are at times challenging, but there is still much to celebrate.

Muir has been a pupil at Donaldson's college since he was five years old. At his most challenging, around the age of 12, we fought for him to become resident at Donaldson's lodge. Since that day, Muir has positively thrived, with lots of friends and a very fulfilled life, but now that he is 18, what the future holds for him is extremely uncertain.

I urge the Scottish Government to support schools such as Donaldson's with significant public sector investment and to encourage local authority placements for children and young people at the school and in residence, and then to go one step further and replicate the service in adult services, in partnership with organisations such as Donaldson's, which are already delivering. In turn, they will be the feeder for the long-term residential care, with respite for those families who desperately need it.

To read the whole discussion, go to

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9824>

Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill: Stage 2

At the meeting on the 4th March, the Committee considered amendments to the Bill. The list of amendments are:

Section 27—Nature of land in which community interest may be registered;
Section 28—Meaning of “community”;
Section 29—Modification of memorandum, articles of association or constitution;
Section 30—Period for indicating approval under section 38 of 2003 Act; and
Section 31—Procedure for late applications.

There are a number of other amendments. These are listed in the text of the report.

To read the full report from the Committee, go to
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9817>

S40-04082 Guardianship Orders

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):

To ask the Scottish Government under what circumstances it considers it appropriate for a guardianship order to be granted.

The Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs (Paul Wheelhouse):

The Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 put in place a range of measures to provide for the personal welfare and/or financial affairs of adults who are incapable by reason of mental disorder or inability to communicate of managing their own affairs. An application for a guardianship order can be made to the sheriff court by an individual or the local authority when no one else is applying and the adult has been assessed as requiring a guardian. The need for guardianship must be demonstrated by the applicant and is governed by the grounds that are set out in the 2000 act. Arrangements for making applications are set out in sections 57 and 58 of that act. It is for the sheriff to determine whether and in which circumstances a guardianship order should be granted. Guardianship orders can cover financial and/or welfare matters. An order is likely to be suitable when a person of 16 years or over lacks capacity or has never had the capacity to take decisions or actions on those matters for himself or herself. It allows another person with an interest in the adult, such as a family member, the authority to act and make decisions on their behalf.

Alison McInnes:

Monitoring by the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland has revealed that the number of successful new applications has risen by 58 per cent since 2008-09 and that orders are increasingly being used for adults with learning disabilities. Campaigners such as People First (Scotland) are concerned that some people with learning disabilities are having control over their lives removed when it would be more appropriate to support them to make the decisions that they are capable of making.

Given that it is 15 years since the 2000 act was passed, does the Government believe that it would be appropriate to review the law and practice on guardianship orders to ensure that their use is consistent and justified and that individual autonomy is being upheld, as called for in "Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights 2013-2017"?

Paul Wheelhouse:

I recognise Alison McInnes' point about learning disabilities. The 2000 act applies to those who have lost the capacity to make their own decisions or who have never had that capacity, as I said in my first answer.

There is no strict list of categories of people to whom the provisions apply, but the legislation recognises that decision-making capacity is not an all-or-nothing proposition and that capacity may fluctuate. Adults who have some form of learning disability may of course be able to take some decisions for themselves and should be supported in doing so when that is possible. Each individual's requirements vary. When guardianship is appropriate, the order can be tailored to meet the individual's needs. I am happy to discuss with Alison McInnes any specific ideas that she has, because I am conscious that the issue is increasingly important in the modern era. I certainly encourage people to look at matters closely to see what is suitable for their relative and to ensure that the appropriate arrangements are in place, and I am happy to meet Alison McInnes to discuss that.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9816>

S40-04114 Self-directed Support (Glasgow)**James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):**

To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made in implementing self-directed support in Glasgow.

The Minister for Sport, Health Improvement and Mental Health (Jamie Hepburn):

Self-directed support is an important part of the Scottish Government's health and social care reforms. The change that we want to see in Scotland is greater flexibility, choice and control for individuals and carers who need support. In order to fully achieve our goal, a major culture change is required and that will take some time.

To help with that transformation, Glasgow City Council has received £2.4 million of funding from the Scottish Government between 2011 and 2015, and a further £279,000 has been allocated for 2015-16.

James Dornan:

I have been contacted by a number of constituents who have worries about the way in which the legislation is being interpreted by Glasgow City Council. There is a belief that, in many cases, it is being used to cut budgets rather than for the benefit of service users.

Will the minister meet me to discuss further some of the concerns that I have?

Jamie Hepburn:

I will start with the bottom line—self-directed support is not a mechanism for delivering cuts. The Scottish Government expects individual needs to be met by the local authority in accordance with the legislation. If it is implemented correctly, self-directed support can help people to achieve better outcomes within whatever level of resources is available. There are a number of very positive examples of that approach, and local authorities should draw on them in their delivery of self-directed support.

Mr Dornan will appreciate that it is not always possible for the Scottish Government to assist with an individual case. I am sure that he will know about the routes for seeking redress that exist and will be advising his constituents accordingly, but I would, of course, be very happy to meet him to discuss further any concerns that he and his constituents have.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9831>

Foreign Language Courses (Schools)**S40-04126 Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):**

To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to expand the range of foreign language courses available in schools.

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan):

As a result of this Government's ambitious languages policy, schools all around Scotland are developing their languages provision to introduce a much earlier start and strong progression throughout a young person's broad general education. Deciding which languages to offer is a key part of that, and many schools are finding ways to offer a more diverse range of languages than they have done previously. Since 2010, there has been an 8 per cent increase in higher language entries.

Murdo Fraser:

The minister will know that there has been criticism from some quarters, not least the German consulate, about the reduction in the uptake of German in schools, with the number of pupils taking higher German falling by 20 per cent since 2009, and a 50 per cent drop in the number of specialist German teachers. Given that Germany is our second-largest export market and that we have large numbers of German tourists who, along with Americans, are the biggest spenders when they come to Scotland, is the minister concerned, as I am, about the impact on our economic potential?

Dr Allan:

I am glad that Mr Fraser has taken the opportunity to clarify the views that he seemed to take in a committee meeting recently, when he described French as “a very minor language.” Like Mr Fraser, I support the teaching of all modern languages in schools. I have had contact with the German consulate and the cross-party group on Germany about some of the legitimate concerns that they have about ensuring that German remains to the fore in our schools. The point about language diversity is well made. We are trying to increase the number of people who have access to modern languages in schools and we want there to be a broad range of languages that they can access, which would certainly include German.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

I call Christian Allard.

Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP):

Merci, Presiding Officer.

Does the minister agree that we should be supporting people to learn as many languages as possible, rather than undermining the teaching of specific languages, as Murdo Fraser did in relation to French in the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee last month?

Dr Allan:

I sympathise with those sentiments. I am sorry to return to this, but I think that it must have come as a shock to the 200 million or so people across much of Europe, north Africa and other places who speak French to be told by Murdo Fraser that it is a “minor language”. All that I can say—although I can only just say it—is that, *pour moi, la langue française est très importante*.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9859>

Motion S4M-12710: Shona Robison, Dundee City East, Scottish National Party, Date Lodged: 17/03/2015**Health and Social Care Integration**

That the Parliament notes progress toward the implementation of the integration of health and social care, with new integration joint boards being established from 1 April 2015 in line with legislation; welcomes the substantial resources that are being invested to deliver integration; supports the agreement between COSLA and the Scottish Government on the core suite of indicators for integration; notes the commitment for NHS boards and local authorities to work together to deliver benefits for their patients and service users, and believes that integration is vital to realising the 2020 vision for health and social care, and providing the best caring environments for the people of Scotland.

This motion was debated in the Chamber on the 19th March 2015. To read the debate, go to <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9860>



www.parliament.uk UK Parliament

Personal Independence Payments

Question: Lord Touhig (Lab)

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people are awaiting assessment for personal independence payments.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Lord Freud)

(Con): I am pleased to update the House that the average claimant is waiting 14 weeks for an assessment. This is within the 16-week target set by the Secretary of State. In any high-volume business, we would always expect to have a significant number of cases moving through the system at any one time.

Lord Touhig (Lab): My Lords, anyone making an application for a PIP assessment today will have time for 16 return journeys to the moon or 35 flights around the world before they will get their assessment.

In fact, they would be back in Britain a week before their assessment was due. The timeframe announced by the Minister is simply not acceptable. However, when this was debated in the Commons in January, a number of Members of Parliament said that when they intervened the process was reduced considerably. Is the system so broken that the best way to get a short and quick interview for a PIP assessment is to involve a Member of Parliament? What does he say to his own independent reviewer, Paul Gray, who said that the delays were doing a disservice to disabled people and their families?

Lord Freud: The backlogs that we suffered earlier have been reduced very substantially. The 14-week wait I referred to is down from 30 weeks in June 2014. We are now putting through 52,000 cases a month.

Baroness Campbell of Surbiton (CB): My Lords, PIPs are intended to assist with disability-related expenses. The disability charity Scope estimated in a recent study that these amount to an average of £550 a month. Given that the Government have reasserted their commitment to protecting the value of the state pension through the triple lock, what consideration has the Minister given to affording PIPs the same protection?

Lord Freud: We are maintaining our spending on disability and disability payments and services are running at £50 billion a year. Indeed, our disability payments have been moving up right the way through this Parliament in real terms.

Baroness Jenkin of Kennington (Con): My Lords, will my noble friend the Minister tell us how effectively the fast-track service for terminally ill claimants is performing at the moment?

Lord Freud: People who are terminally ill are fast-tracked through the process and the median end-to-end clearance time is now, as of this January, seven working days compared with 11 days in January last year.

The Lord Bishop of Leicester: My Lords, can the Minister tell us how many 16 and 17 year-olds are awaiting reassessment? What action do the Government propose to take to meet the additional needs of that group, including providing support for them through the reassessment process?

Lord Freud: I will have to write to the right reverend Prelate on that matter. I do not have the data on 16 and 17 year-olds so I shall write to him.

Baroness Farrington of Ribbleton (Lab): My Lords, will the Minister please answer the question asked by the noble Baroness, Lady Campbell? This is supposed to be not just Question Time, but questions and answers.

Lord Freud: My Lords, I have made answers to the questions.

Lord German (LD): My Lords, the reliability criteria used for the personal independence payment assessments—that is, whether people can undertake tasks safely, acceptably and repeatedly—are crucial for people with fluctuating conditions. In their response to the Gray review the Government say that everybody involved in assessing those criteria should have training, yet later they say that the DWP will undertake training separately from Atos and Capita, which will do their own training. Does my noble friend not think it would be much better if all three worked together on the training so that we have consistency of outcome and avoid outcomes such as the inappropriate loss of a Motability car?

Lord Freud: We have been working very closely with the providers to make sure that there is an identity of approach in training, right the way through the two different providers and DWP.

Baroness Sherlock (Lab): My Lords, the Government have taken to using a variety of unpublished statistics in relation to PIP. When my noble friend Lord Dubs asked a Question on this very subject on 15 January, the Minister answering said that the backlog was down to 107,000—but was then obliged to write and say that that was not the case at all. So can the Minister tell me something very specific? The latest published figures cover only new applications for personal independence payments, not reassessments of the kind mentioned by the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Leicester. People suspect that those on disability living allowance are having much slower assessments in order to enable the Government to fast-track new claims. Can the Minister reassure the House that that is not true and also tell us what the waiting times are for DLA?

Lord Freud: The two processes, for PIP and for DLA—or rather, for the WCA, which I imagine is what the noble Baroness meant—are separate, and separate contractors operate them. Indeed, Maximus has come in to run the WCA process. As for the figures, statistics will be released next week, on 18 March, giving the PIP clearance times and the waiting outstanding times. That statistical release has been preannounced, in accordance with the normal protocols.

The Countess of Mar (CB): My Lords, I express my thanks to the Minister for the excellent revision that was made of the training manual for CFS/ME. What checks are made of the assessors to ensure that they are not bringing their preconceived ideas about CFS/ME to the assessment that they make of people with that condition?

Lord Freud: This is an area into which we have looked very closely, helped by the noble Countess. We have an audit system for all of these tests whereby we test that they are being conducted to the quality that we require.

Baroness Hollis of Heigham (Lab): My Lords, of those people who are going from DLA to PIP, how many does the Minister expect will lose their Motability car? Will it be 50,000 or 100,000?

Lord Freud: My Lords, I am not in a position to give exact figures. We debated this in some detail when we went through the Bill. I can say what the award rates are at the moment. Thirty-two per cent of people have been both on the enhanced daily living allowance and on the enhanced mobility allowance, which I hope gives some direction as to where we are going with these tests.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201415/ldhansrd/text/150310-0001.htm#15031037000377>

Employment and Support Allowance HL5277 Question: The Countess of Mar

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the written statement by Lord Freud on 27 November 2014 (HLWS32), when they plan to bring forward the measure to prevent claimants being paid the Employment Support Allowance assessment rate if they have already been found fit for work but have made a repeat claim, and what consideration they have given to the implications this will have for disabled people and those with fluctuating conditions.

HL5278 Question: The Countess of Mar

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the scoring for Work Capability Assessment applicants with mental health problems has been loaded to make it more difficult for women to qualify for the support group than it is for men; and, if so, why.

Lord Freud:

The Regulations that implement the measure making changes to how repeat claims for Employment and Support Allowance are dealt with were laid before Parliament on 5th March. The Regulations can be found at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/id/uksi/2015/437>. The criteria for eligibility for the support group in Employment and Support Allowance remains the same for men and women. The updated guidance for healthcare professionals on the assessment of risk in claimants with a Mental Health condition was developed with input from senior psychiatrists. It differentiates between men and women in relation to suicide risk because the suicide rate in men is significantly higher than in women. The guidance makes clear that the assessment of risk needs to focus both on the claimant's health and whether the claimant could cope with work-related activity.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201415/ldhansrd/dr110315.pdf>

Access to Work Statement

The Minister for Disabled People (Mr Mark Harper):

Access to Work plays a key part in building a disability confident Britain. In 2013-14 Access to Work spent £108 million to help 35,540 disabled people enter or remain in work, over 4,000 more than in 2012-13. I want to build on this by continuing to improve customer service, increase the numbers of disabled people helped, improve choice and control and reach out to under-represented groups such as those with hidden impairments including mental health conditions, learning disabilities and autism. In December 2014, I announced operational improvements to the Access to Work scheme. The transformation of Access to Work operations is starting to bear fruit and I am pleased to announce that we are now meeting service standards.

This gives a platform for further reform. In 2015-16 we will start a process of offering personal budgets for those with ongoing awards for travel or support. This will give users more freedom over how they use their awards. We also aim over time to transform the way disabled people interact with the service. A new project is underway to re-engineer Access to Work as a digital service, building on the email channels opened up before Christmas. **We also intend to offer a video relay service option for BSL users later in 2015-16.**

In 2013-14 the average Access to Work award was around £3,000, and half of users have awards below £1,000. However, 1% of users with awards over £35,000 per annum account for 15% of the budget. I want to ensure that Access to Work can help the most people it can in future. So as of October 2015, Access to Work will provide awards up to a limit set at one and half times average salary—a limit of £40,800 per person per year at October 2015. This will be updated annually in line

with the level of average salaries. I believe it is right that there is this explicit link to the labour market.

Anybody with an award higher than this level as of October 2015 will not be subject to that limit until April 2018. This is to help them and employers adjust to their new level of support. Specialist teams will work in partnership with these individuals and employers, for example advising on reasonable adjustments and greater use of technology. These individuals would also be invited to take advantage of a personal budget to help them manage their support in more tailored and efficient ways to meet their needs.

DWP have also been working closely with deaf Access to Work users and the Crown Commercial Service to develop a framework for translation services including British Sign Language. This will guarantee quality standards and set transparent rates from summer 2015. We will build on this by working with deaf people and stakeholder groups to undertake a market review of BSL interpretation provision to explore long term improvements in the market. In this context, I can announce the removal of the currently suspended “30 hour guidance” from April 2015 which these wider reforms will render unnecessary.

Over 30% of Access to Work spending is on taxis for customers with mobility problems. This is a transformative service for customers and I want to ensure that improvements to customer service, reliability, value for money and accessibility standards for wider society can be driven by Government using their buying power to drive quality and performance. Starting early in 2015-16, we will look to pilot contracted services for customers across our largest towns and cities.

Self-employment is a flexible option for many disabled people. I am now able to announce that I have recently established a further specialist team to provide expert advice and support to disabled people who want to run their own successful businesses. Furthermore, to ensure disabled people have a clear understanding of how they can be supported to maintain their business and continue in self employment, from October 2015 eligibility will be based around the universal credit rules. These balance allowing a reasonable period for businesses to establish themselves, with ensuring that taxpayers money goes to support legitimate and viable businesses, offering Access to Work a more consistent and objective basis for awards.

I want Access to Work to continue to help more people with mental health conditions. The disability confident campaign is raising the profile of Access to Work’s mental health support service and DWP is exploring how referrals to the mental health support service could be more straightforward. We have also highlighted the mental health support provided by Access to Work by changing the pre-employment eligibility letter to reassure employers of the help available. This help includes not just the mental health support service but mainstream Access to Work support such as communication support at interviews, help with travel and awareness training for colleagues to combat stigma.

Finally, as part of my commitment to improve transparency, to complement the detailed scheme guidance published following my last statement in December 2014, **we will publish summaries of the guidance for customers, including in easy read and BSL formats**, and also illustrate good practice to employers with case studies to help them in becoming more disability confident in supporting disabled employees early in 2015-16.

We have invested an extra £15 million in Access to Work since 2012. User numbers are rising steadily. I hope that these changes to Access to Work will help many more to join them in staying in and getting into work with help from the programme in future.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm150312/wmstext/150312m0001.htm#15031227000003>

Joint Select Committee

UK's commitment to children's rights doesn't go far enough

In a report published Tuesday 24 March 2015, the Joint Committee on Human Rights welcomes the progress made by the Government in recognising children's rights in law and policy but says that more still needs to be done.

[Report: UK's compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

[Report: UK's compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(PDF\)](#)

[Inquiry: UK's compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

[Joint Committee on Human Rights](#)

The Report also points to areas, such as immigration, legal aid and children in custody, where some policy developments have actually worked against the best interests of children, despite the Government's specific commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) made in December 2010.

Government's statutory duty

The Committee expresses its disappointment that, during the current period of austerity, children – particularly disadvantaged children – have in certain areas suffered disproportionately, and concludes that the Government's statutory duty to eliminate child poverty by 2020 should be treated as a human rights issue.

The Committee also states that the Government should move to ratify the Optional Protocol to the UNCRC which would allow children in the UK the right to individual petition to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in the same way that applies under the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Committee also believes that the children's rights portfolio in Government should be carried at a more senior level, as is the case with the Women and Equalities brief held by a Secretary of State, notwithstanding the personal commitment to children's rights clearly shown by the current Children's Minister.

The Committee in its Report also:

- Notes that the Government's recent changes to legal aid provision represent a black mark on its children's rights record;
- Calls on the next Government to review the legal definition of the age of a child in the UK.
- Recommends that the Government undertakes to look into how the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England might be given the powers and resources to examine individual cases, as her counterparts in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland are empowered to do.
- Recommends that its successor Committee should look into the issues of reasonable punishment of children and of under-18s in the armed forces in the light of the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to be issued in 2016.
- Concludes that a UK-wide examination of the impacts of devolution on the protection and promotion of human rights is required after the Election in order to provide reassurance that there is a sufficiently consistent approach to children's rights across the four countries of the UK, and that the different arrangements which very properly have been adopted in those countries do not reduce the level of protection for children but, where they have increased that protection, rather provide useful best practice for the rest of the UK to follow.

Chair's comments

The Chair of the Committee, Dr Hywel Francis MP, said:

"The 2010 commitment by the Government to have due regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child when making policy and law was a bold and welcome step. In many areas things have

improved for children over this Parliament as a result, although the momentum set in train in 2010 has slowed considerably in some areas. We hope the new Government will renew that commitment and that our successor Committee will monitor how children's rights are fully take into account in new law and policy.

The different approaches of the devolved administrations to children's rights and the challenges presented in achieving a coherent overarching implementation of the Convention is something our successor Committee needs to take account of in its work, and which the Government must address as the changes brought into place by the devolutionary settlement in the UK continue."

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/joint-select/human-rights-committee/news/childrens-rights-report/>

Health Services: Sign Language

HL5818 Question: Baroness Hollins

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made by NHS England in establishing a framework for workforce planning to increase the supply of British Sign Language interpreters within healthcare settings.

Earl Howe:

NHS England has no plans to establish a framework for workforce planning to increase the supply of British Sign Language interpreters within healthcare settings. The provision of language support, including interpretation and translation, is driven by the requirement for all National Health Service organisations to comply with the public sector equality duty. As public sector organisations, NHS bodies have a duty to ensure that all people have equal access to the information and services that they provide. The provision of interpretation and translation services by NHS bodies is a matter for local determination based on the composition of the communities they serve, and the needs and circumstances of their patients, service users and local populations. As part of its commitment to improving the experience of patients using NHS services, empowering people to be equal partners in their own care and help reduce unacceptable variation in the quality of reasonable adjustments, NHS England is developing an Information Standard for the provision of accessible, personalised information.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201415/ldhansrd/dr250315.pdf>

Digital Inclusion

908311 Ann McKechin (Glasgow North) (Lab):

What progress he has made on promoting digital inclusion.

The Minister for Civil Society (Mr Rob Wilson):

This is a devolved matter but in England and Wales more than 70 public, private and voluntary sector organisations now support activity under the digital inclusion charter, working together to help individuals, small businesses and charities to realise the benefits of being online. Later today the Government will launch the Digital Friends initiative that will call on civil servants to go out into their communities and teach digital skills to friends, family, neighbours, or colleagues who are offline.

Ann McKechin:

The Minister will be aware that, unfortunately, Glasgow has one of the highest levels of population who are offline. The Government have recently run a series of adverts on Glasgow radio stations about encouraging people to switch their electricity and gas suppliers, but they are asking people

only to use the online route. What assessment has he made about how we can encourage digital inclusion and the appropriate way to target Government adverts?

Mr Wilson:

As I said, this is a devolved matter. The Scottish Government published their digital participation strategy in April 2014, led by the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop MSP, and supported by a ministerial advisory group.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm150325/debtext/150325-0001.htm#15032574000019>
