



Scottish Parliament

The Education and Culture Committee Call for Evidence

The **British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill** was introduced in the Scottish Parliament by Mark Griffin MSP on 29th October 2014.

The Bill and accompanying documents are available on the Parliament's website in English and BSL at: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/82853.aspx>

The Education and Culture Committee has been given the role of gathering evidence to support the Bill and to scrutinise this evidence. The Committee has issued a call for evidence which closes on **Monday 2nd February 2015**.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/83906.aspx>

S4M-11494 Welfare Benefits (People with Disabilities)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-11494, in the name of Margaret Burgess, on welfare benefits for people living with disabilities. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons now or as soon as possible.

The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):

It is just three months since the last debate on welfare reform in the chamber, but much water has flowed under the bridge since then. Although the referendum did not produce the result that the Scottish Government wanted, we are determined to ensure meaningful change for Scotland. That is why in the proposals that it has submitted to the Smith commission the Scottish Government has called for full powers over all social security and tax to come to this Parliament. Indeed, that call has been made not just by the Scottish Government; 65 leading charities in Scotland are calling for more powers over tax and welfare.

In the previous debate, I noted that we live in a society where, according to Oxfam, the five richest families in the United Kingdom are wealthier than the bottom 20 per cent of the entire population. That statistic is an outrage, and it goes right to the heart of the increasing inequality and unfairness in our society. As we know, it is our most vulnerable people who are bearing the brunt.

In the Scottish Government's draft budget, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth focuses on three key goals: to make Scotland a more prosperous country; to tackle inequalities; and to protect and reform public services. The draft budget also sets out commitments that are designed to tackle the poverty and inequality that blight our society. The Scottish Government has committed to maintaining our spending on welfare reform mitigation and providing additional investment in housing, with a strong focus on affordable and social housing; and it has confirmed our commitment to the living wage and Scotland's wider social wage.

We have called this debate to highlight the impact of Westminster's cuts on disabled people in Scotland; to set out some of the Scottish Government's work to provide support to disabled people and their carers; and to call on the UK Government to halt the roll-out of the personal independence payment in Scotland. The last is clearly something that the Labour Party is not prepared to do, given its attempt to remove that part of our motion, and I am disappointed that it is not taking that step.

As members will be well aware, the UK Government's welfare reforms from 2010-11 to 2015-16 could result in the total Scottish welfare bill being reduced by £6 billion and, as highlighted in the Scottish Government report entitled "Financial Impacts of Welfare Reform on Disabled People in Scotland", our disabled people are bearing much of the burden, including a disproportionate loss of income. Disabled people already face higher costs of living and are more likely to live in poverty, and with the replacement of disability living allowance by the personal independence payment, around 105,000 disabled people in Scotland will lose some or all of their disability benefits by 2018. A reduction in any one component of their entitlement is worth at least £1,120 per year.

The Treasury's 2013 budget document estimates that the reduction in spend from replacing disability living allowance with the personal independence payment will be nearly £3 billion a year by 2017-18, with Scotland's share of that cut being around £310 million a year. That brings us to the heart of why the Labour Party will not call for a halt to the personal independence payment. It has signed up to these cuts. As we know, Labour in Scotland follows what it is told to do by Labour in London.

To read the full debate, go to

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9620#.VHioijGsX4I>

Motion agreed to:

That the Parliament notes the damaging and destructive impact of the UK Government's welfare policies on disabled people across Scotland; recognises that around 105,000 working age disabled people will lose some or all of their disability benefits by 2018 as the result of the replacement of disability living allowance with personal independence payment (PIP), with a loss of at least £1,120 per year and, as a consequence of changes in eligibility to the mobility component, 47,000 disabled people are expected to lose up to £2,964 per year; notes that wider benefit reforms are having a disproportionate impact on disabled people, who already face higher costs of living, and calls on the UK Government to halt the roll out of PIP, which will severely disadvantage disabled people across Scotland.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9620#.VHioijGsX4I>

S40-03685 Alex Rowley (Cowdenbeath) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that anyone who may need help with a mental health problem can access appropriate help easily and receive treatment quickly.

The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson):

We have made significant progress in delivering the commitments in the "Mental Health Strategy for Scotland: 2012-15". For example, Scotland was the first part of the United Kingdom to introduce a target—from December this year—for speed of access to mental health services.

We know that waits of up to one or two years were common before we introduced the targets. We still have further improvements to make, but the latest position shows that the average wait for access to psychological therapies is eight weeks and access to specialist child and adolescent mental health services is nine weeks. I am sure that the member would recognise that that is significant progress.

Alex Rowley:

Given that the Scottish Association for Mental Health recently reported that in Scotland 25 per cent of people who experience a mental health problem will wait more than an a year before seeking help, and that an estimated 800,000 adults a year do not know where to access help, does the

minister agree that having trained mental health first aiders in all our communities would help to quickly identify those who need assistance and direct them to support services? What is the Scottish Government doing to promote the mental health first aiders programme and increase the number of trained mental health first aiders in Scotland?

Michael Matheson:

The member makes a good point. It is widely recognised that many individuals who may have a mental health problem leave an extended period before they seek assistance from clinicians. A key part of our strategy to encourage people to access help is the see me anti-stigma campaign to remove the stigma that is often associated with mental health and which can act as a barrier to individuals seeking help.

The mental health first aiders programme has a valuable and important part to play. One of the areas of work that we will take forward as part of the mental health strategy is how to continue to improve access to mental health services, including the mental health first aid programme. I would be more than happy to discuss the matter in more depth with the member if he would find that helpful.

Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP):

In this week of remembrance, does the minister agree that organisations such as HorseBack UK are to be congratulated on providing mental health services for veterans? It is a most unusual, but very therapeutic service.

Michael Matheson:

Yes. Such organisations have an important part to play. I recognise that the best way that we can continue to improve mental health services is by working with the voluntary sector and statutory agencies to ensure that we deliver the best possible services to those who can benefit from them.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9622#.VHirKzGsX4I>

S40-03730 Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):

To ask the Scottish Government what analysis has been published of the impact of welfare reform across Scotland.

The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):

The Scottish Government has published a range of analysis, reflecting significant concern about how welfare reform is impacting on people across Scotland.

That includes analysis of how women and disabled people are being disproportionately affected by the reforms; of how the number of sanctions has been increasing over time; of how food aid provision has grown over time, which is partly because of the impact of sanctions; and of how, over the six years to 2015-16, the cumulative impact of all welfare reform changes means reductions of around £6 billion in welfare expenditure in Scotland. All the analysis is available on the Scottish Government website.

Stewart Stevenson:

If welfare and social policy are devolved to this place, as indeed they should be under the vow, how will the Government use that to tackle poverty and create a fairer society?

Margaret Burgess:

Our proposals will focus on equipping the Scottish Parliament with the powers to create more jobs, tackle inequality and protect public services in order to create a wealthier and fairer society.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9639#.VHiukzGsX4I>

S4O-03742 Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to tackle high rents in the private sector.

The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):

Rents in the private sector reflect conditions in local housing markets, and rent levels vary widely across Scotland. Where rents are high, the answer is to build more houses, and we have taken decisive action on that. We have boosted housing supply budgets by investing £1.7 billion in affordable housing over this parliamentary session and, only this month, we announced a £200 million increase in funding to stimulate Scotland's housing industry. We are also working with Homes for Scotland to attract new sources of investment to build more homes for private rent.

Drew Smith:

Nearly half of lets in the private sector are occupied by families and one in four of the poorest people have to rent privately. At the same time, we have seen rent rises in some areas of 40 per cent in just four years, meaning that many Scots are paying half their monthly pay packet in rent alone.

What reassurance can private renters in my area have that the Government understands their predicament, particularly if there are no substantial proposals for action in this afternoon's legislative programme and given that the minister previously failed to back rent reform when Scottish Labour proposed it?

Margaret Burgess:

As I said in my original answer, rent levels differ across Scotland, but the average rent increases over the past four years—including those in the member's Glasgow region—have been less than the inflation increase. That applies across most of Scotland. We are aware that rent levels in some hot spots, such as those in Aberdeen and in parts of Edinburgh, are rising at a higher rate than inflation, and we are looking at that. We committed to looking at that issue and we are consulting on it. We are exploring rent levels as part of our consultation on reviewing the private sector tenancy.

I remind the member that Labour proposed rent reform at a very late stage of the Housing (Scotland) Bill. Labour did not introduce the idea early in the bill process. Rent reform was not mentioned until, lo and behold, Labour was allowed to mention it because Ed Miliband mentioned it in London. Not until then was it mentioned by Labour.

Margaret Burgess:

We had already made a commitment to review the private sector tenancy regime and rent levels and we stuck to that commitment.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9653#.VHiwKzGsX4I>

S4O-03745 Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP):

To ask the Scottish Government how it seeks to promote affordable public transport for vulnerable groups.

The Minister for Transport and Islands (Derek Mackay):

Traveline Scotland provides support for disabled people who are planning public transport journeys; more than 1.25 million people have older and disabled persons passes, which provide free bus travel; and the new ScotRail franchisee will provide a wide range of rail fare promotions, including those for jobseekers.

Bob Doris:

I thank the minister for that answer and I welcome him to his new transport brief. Last month, I hosted an awareness-raising event in Parliament by Breast Cancer Care Scotland, which mentioned the difficulties that people living with cancer often have in accessing services. Will the minister look at reviewing transport costs with specific reference to the concessionary travel scheme or perhaps even another mechanism by which the Scottish Government could support, transport cost-wise, vulnerable groups such as people who are living with cancer and seeking treatment?

Derek Mackay:

A number of people with long-term conditions already qualify for the national concessionary bus travel scheme. Those who are awarded the middle or higher rate of the care component or the higher rate of the mobility component of disability living allowance, those who receive attendance allowance and those who have a progressive degenerative condition in so far as the illness or condition severely impedes their mobility and ability to carry out day-to-day activities may also receive support.

In addition, we amended regulations last year to allow those who will receive personal independence payments at both the standard rate and the enhanced rate to be eligible for the scheme. We take care to keep options for eligibility for the scheme under review. We have no immediate plans for further changes, but I am happy to consider the detail further.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab):

Bob Doris points out that hospital out-patients—in particular those without a car—form one of the vulnerable groups. According to Transport Scotland research that was carried out in August, only 54 per cent of those people think that access to bus services is very or fairly convenient. How does the minister plan to improve bus services between hospital and communities for out-patients?

Derek Mackay:

I am happy to look into that in further detail. Some services are provided by local authorities, and some by transport partnerships and dedicated schemes, including partnership schemes, which I am very aware of. I am happy to consider the issue further to ensure that the transport solutions are fit for those who rely on them, including the most vulnerable in our communities.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9653#.VHiwKzGsX4I>

S4O-03756 James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):

To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its legacy plans from the Commonwealth games.**The Minister for Sport and Health Improvement (Jamie Hepburn):**

The Scottish Government and our legacy partners are working to capitalise on the opportunities that were brought about by our hosting the best Commonwealth games ever. In the days following the games, £6 million was announced towards Scotland's first ever dedicated parasports centre, as well as a further £2 million to build on and deepen the legacy, which is already delivering benefits nationwide.

A further £50 million will be invested by sportscotland in the active schools programme between 2015 and 2019, significantly increasing opportunities for children to participate in sport across the whole of Scotland.

More recently, on Tuesday, the opening at Grangemouth stadium of a new track that uses the track from Hampden park means that young people can now train on the track that was used by Eilidh Child and Usain Bolt, which will inspire the next generation of champions.

A full economic assessment of the games will be published in the spring, but recent analysis points to £282 million being spent by visitors to the games. A post-games legacy evaluation report that assesses progress towards legacy outcomes will be published in July 2015.

James Dornan:

I thank the minister for that comprehensive response and congratulate him on his well-deserved new position as a minister.

My Glasgow Cathcart constituency has a number of interesting legacy projects, including a plan to turn the disused St Martin's church in Castlemilk into the Cathkin Braes mountain bike and activity centre. Will the minister come and visit the site of the proposed centre and meet those who are involved in the proposal? What assistance is the Government giving or intending to give to local and community projects to assist them with such legacy building in local communities?

Jamie Hepburn:

I thank Mr Dornan for his welcome.

Having delivered the most successful Commonwealth games ever, we are determined to secure its legacy, and communities across Scotland are interested in playing their part. I encourage communities across Scotland to visit the legacy website to find out more about the on-going sources of support such as the legacy 2014 active places fund and the legacy 2014 sustainable sport for communities fund.

I am delighted to learn of the efforts in Glasgow Cathcart. I wish those who are involved well, and of course I will be happy to visit with Mr Dornan.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9655#.VHixjGsX4I>

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HL2851 Work Capability Assessment**Question: The Lord Bishop of St Albans**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether people who are undergoing a work capability assessment because of mental health problems are guaranteed assessment by health professionals who have psychiatric expertise.

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

All healthcare professionals who carry out work capability assessments on behalf of the DWP are fully trained in disability assessment and are registered with their respective Regulatory Body. Healthcare professionals receive comprehensive training in the functional effects of mental health conditions. In addition all health professionals are supported by mental function champions who have specialist knowledge of mental health conditions and provide support and best practice advice.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201415/ldhansrd/text/141125w0001.htm#14112545000090>

HL2869 Universal Credit**Question: Baroness Thomas of Winchester**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what funding they have provided for locally delivered Universal Support in the Universal Credit Pathfinder areas; what funding is planned for the roll-out in 2015; and how much of any such funding will be targeted at front-line delivery, as opposed to "enabling" activities (such as assessing needs and provision in an area, and co-ordinating existing services).

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

We have provided funding in the pathfinder sites and all current live Universal Credit sites through Delivery Partnership Agreements (DPAs) which were based on local agreement as to the likely level on need for support in each area.

From February 2015, Universal Credit will rollout to new single claimants who would currently be eligible for Jobseekers Allowance across all remaining jobcentres and local authorities. This provides the opportunity to build a secure platform for the introduction of Universal Support by mobilising local partnerships nationwide, putting in place a robust infrastructure for more complex and vulnerable claimants.

The Department will put in place Delivery Partnership Agreements (DPAs) with local authorities. As in the current live sites these will provide a framework to make available funded support for those who need additional help.

How much funding is targeted for specific purposes by the Department will be determined by the individual partnerships, based on local need.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2014-11-17/HL2869/>

Income Support: Scotland

215949 Cathy Jamieson:

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many households in each (a) parliamentary constituency and (b) local authority in Scotland have had their income support capped since the introduction of the benefits cap.

Esther McVey:

The number of households subject to the benefit cap by (a) Parliamentary Constituency and (b) Local Authority is published quarterly through Stat-Xplore, the Department's online interactive tabulation tool. The latest data, showing the total number of 46 households capped from 15 April 2013, when the benefit cap was introduced, to August 2014, can be found in Table 1 of the data tables published here:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

The benefit cap applies to the combined income from a number of benefits, including Income Support.

- the main out-of-work benefits (Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, and Employment and Support Allowance except when the Support Component is in payment);
- Housing Benefit;
- Child Benefit;
- Child Tax Credit;
- other benefits such as Carer's Allowance.

The cap is currently administered through Housing Benefit. This means that, if affected, it is only a household's Housing Benefit entitlement that is reduced so that the total amount of benefit received is no longer higher than the cap level.

<http://qnadailyreport.blob.core.windows.net/qnadailyreportxml/Written-Questions-Answers-Statements-Daily-Report-Commons-2014-11-28.pdf>

Early day motion 550**Broadband in the Highlands and Islands**

Primary sponsor: Thurso, John

Date tabled: 26.11.2014

That this House notes that many Government services are now only delivered online; congratulates the Government on providing funds to enable the roll-out of fibre optic cables and broadband in the Highlands and Islands and that the project is on schedule to complete in 2016-17; further notes, however, with concern that neither Openreach nor Highlands and Islands Enterprise will say which houses will benefit, leaving communities unable to plan for the choice between commercial and community provision; and calls on the Government to require the providing partners to be open and transparent.

<http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2014-15/550>

Minimum Wage/Living Wage

906137 Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab):

906142 Mr William Bain (Glasgow North East) (Lab):

906149 Ann McKechin (Glasgow North) (Lab):

906155 Julie Hilling (Bolton West) (Lab):

What steps the Government are taking to (a) enforce payment of the minimum wage and (b) encourage firms to pay the living wage.**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (Jo Swinson):**

The Government are taking tough action on employers that break minimum wage law. We have made it simpler to name and shame employers that do not pay the national minimum wage properly and increased the financial penalty that employers pay for breaking the law. The Government will always support and encourage businesses to pay higher than the national minimum wage, where they can.

Diana Johnson: The Sunday Mirror has reported that Greencore, which has a factory in Hull, is recruiting 300 Hungarians to undercut local jobseekers and is resisting a 6p an hour pay increase. It is part of a growing trend of low-paid work that removes people from the official jobless figures, but not from poverty. An estimated 300,000 workers earn less than the national minimum wage. How can Ministers claim to be serious about promoting the living wage, when they fail to enforce the minimum wage properly?

Jo Swinson: The hon. Lady is right to highlight the importance of businesses and employers paying the national minimum wage properly. We absolutely agree. We have invested extra money in enforcement and are helping more employees. Indeed, last year, £4.6 million of arrears were secured for workers who had not been properly paid. We have also increased the penalties and the resources to enforce the penalties, and we are now naming and shaming companies that offend.

Mr Bain: Two weeks ago while campaigning in my own constituency for the living wage, I met a mother who told me that her son had been offered part-time work paying at just over £2 an hour. With the Office for National Statistics showing yesterday that the proportion of jobs not paying the minimum wage has increased under this Government, does the Minister not regret failing to adopt the proposal from the Opposition to increase the fine for non-payment to £50,000 so that we could have proper enforcement of the minimum wage in this country?

Jo Swinson: The key is not only increasing the fine to £20,000, but enabling that fine to be levied per worker rather than per employer. The fine, which is of course linked to the amount of arrears, covers all but three cases found over the last year. None of the others would have reached the £20,000 maximum. We will be fining employers more when they break the law because those responsible employers who abide by the law deserve to know that those who break the law will be properly punished.

Ann McKechin: Seatruck, which operates domestic ferries between Aberdeen and Lerwick and Ullapool and Stornoway, pays its Estonian national seafarers as little as £3.66 an hour, while it benefits at the same time from the tonnage tax scheme operated by this Government. Is it not about time that we tackled the people who are undermining the national minimum wage, particularly for seafarers, by ensuring that regulations are tough enough to capture this group of people?

Jo Swinson: The hon. Lady raises the issue of seafarers, which has been raised by other hon. Members. I know that my predecessor, when I was on maternity leave, was dealing with this issue, and we continue to look at it. I reiterate to all hon. Members who have constituents concerned about not being paid the national minimum wage, that Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs will investigate every single complaint made to the pay and work rights helpline on 0800 917 2368. If people will please report instances of where the national minimum wage is not properly being paid, we can investigate and enforce it to ensure that people get what they deserve.

Mr Speaker: Wow! It is always useful to have a bit of information.

Julie Hilling (Bolton West) (Lab):

When many large employers are making vast profits but charging the taxpayer by paying their employees the minimum wage and when families are hit by the cost of living crisis, why will the Minister not follow Labour's lead and our plans to incentivise employers to pay a living wage through "make work pay" contracts?

Jo Swinson: I do not think the proposals put forward by the Opposition stack up. Providing only a small incentive for only a 12-month period is unlikely to change behaviour, but it is important to encourage employers to pay more than the minimum wage where they can. It is important that we are cutting income tax by £800 for low and middle earners so that they can keep more of their hard-earned cash. That is why this Government will continue to build the stronger economy we need so that people can properly prosper.

Living Wage

906205 Jim McGovern (Dundee West) (Lab):

906211 Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab):

What steps he is taking to encourage firms in Scotland to pay the living wage.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell):

The Government support businesses that choose to pay the living wage, where it is affordable and does not cost jobs. Decisions on what wages to set, above the national minimum wage, are for employers and workers. However, we encourage employers to pay the living wage where possible.

Jim McGovern: Last week, Glasgow Celtic, the football club that I support—indeed, I am a season ticket holder—announced that anyone working there who was not on the living wage would be put on to it. That will mean a major increase for many of the club's employees. Where Celtic leads, many others follow. We have only to look back to 1967 when Celtic became the first British club to win the European cup. They were followed, famously, by Manchester United in 1968—

Mr Speaker: Order. It is time for the hon. Gentleman to take his penalty, for goodness' sake!

Jim McGovern: What can the Minister do to ensure that more organisations and major employers in Scotland pay the living wage?

David Mundell: On this occasion, I share the hon. Gentleman's view that where Celtic football club has led, others should follow. We want to encourage all employers who are in a position to do so to pay the living wage.

Ian Murray: Pay is one of the most important tools in helping to fight poverty, but it also makes perfect business sense. The Government appear to have absolutely no plans to encourage employers to pay the living wage. The Minister will also be aware that the Scottish National party Government have just refused to put the living wage into Government contracts. Should not the Government be supporting Labour's "make work pay" contracts, which would share tax benefits with employers, thereby encouraging them to pay the living wage?

David Mundell: I completely refute the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that the Government are not encouraging employers to pay the minimum wage where they are in a position to do so and it does not cost jobs. This Government's commitment to those on low pay is clear from the way in which we have raised the personal allowance. His party's position is far from clear—Labour claimed that it would reduce the national minimum wage to a level that is actually lower than it is projected to be in 2020.

Margaret Curran (Glasgow East) (Lab): As we approach the first anniversary of the tragedy, I am sure the whole House will join me in remembering the victims of the Clutha helicopter crash that happened in my own city. Our thoughts will be with the victims and their families this Saturday. Does the Minister agree that the living wage is a means of addressing the scandal of low pay in Scotland, and that tackling low pay should be a higher priority for this Government? In the light of that, can he tell the House how many people in Scotland were paid below the minimum wage in the past year?

David Mundell: I join the hon. Lady in highlighting the first anniversary of the terrible Clutha tragedy. It is a credit to all Members of this House and particularly to the people of Glasgow that not just at the time but throughout the past year they have responded to that. The hon. Lady will know that unlike the Labour Government, this Government have been keen to ease the procedures whereby those who pay below the minimum wage are named and shamed. Earlier this year 25 employers that had not paid the minimum wage were named, three of which were in Scotland.

Margaret Curran: That is a most disappointing answer. In fact, 11,000 people in Scotland are paid below the minimum wage, and it is shameful that neither the Minister nor the Government know that figure. In the past two years there has not been a single prosecution, and only two companies in Scotland have been named and shamed. Eleven thousand people in Scotland are not paid what they are entitled to. Given the gross failure of this Government properly to enforce the national minimum wage, should not the Minister apologise to those 11,000 people who have been failed by this Government? He does not even know who they are.

David Mundell: It is the hon. Lady who needs to apologise. Anyone watching this exchange would think that there were prosecutions under the previous Government. There were absolutely none. If she wants to get her facts right, I can tell her that three companies have been named and shamed in Scotland. They are Sun Shack Ltd in Hamilton, Cargilfield School Ltd in Edinburgh and Perth Hotels Ltd in Perth. If she has the details of additional people who are not receiving the minimum wage, rather than political point-scoring in this House, she should take their details to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs so that their employers can be dealt with.

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm141126/debtext/141126-0001.htm#column_909

Under-occupancy Penalty (Disabled People)

906310 Mr John Spellar (Warley) (Lab):

What assessment she has made of the effects of the under-occupancy penalty on disabled people.

The Minister for Disabled People (Mr Mark Harper):

The removal of the spare room subsidy is just making sure that the same rules apply in the social housing sector as apply in the private sector, as implemented by the previous Labour Government. To deal with difficult cases, the Government have made available a significant amount of discretionary housing payment to give local authorities the flexibility they need to deal with cases where disabled people need more support.

Mr Spellar: According to the Government's own evaluation, 68% of those hit by the bedroom tax are themselves disabled or have someone in their household with a disability. Is the Minister not ashamed of that figure? When will the Government scrap that cruel and unfair tax?

Mr Harper: I note that the right hon. Gentleman did not deal with the point that I made. We are treating people in the social housing sector in exactly the same way as the previous Government treated them—*[Interruption.]* I hear someone heckling on the Labour Benches. Disabled people do not get a spare room subsidy in the private sector. Those rules were implemented by the previous Labour Government. This is a matter of fairness. The £345 million we have made available to local authorities over the past two years for discretionary housing payment gives them the flexibility they need to deal with individual circumstances.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): Will the Minister name and shame the five worst local authorities that have the largest number of disabled people who are affected by the spare room subsidy removal but are not using the discretionary funds that the Government have given them?

Mr Harper: I am afraid that I cannot satisfy my hon. Friend on that this morning, but it is a very good idea. I will write to him with the information and put a copy in the Library of the House.

Mr John Leech (Manchester, Withington) (LD): I was going to ask exactly the same question as the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr Hollobone). Will the Minister name and shame all local authorities that are failing to provide discretionary housing benefit for people who are being penalised as a result of their disability?

Mr Harper: We do have records of the amount of money that the Government make available to local authorities. In the interests of transparency, I will put in the Library details of the money made available by the Government and the extent to which local authorities take up that generous allocation of funding.

Mr Speaker: No colleague need be shy; repetition is not an unknown phenomenon in the House of Commons.

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm141127/debtext/141127-0001.htm#column_1071