



## Summer recess for the Scottish Parliament runs from 27 June to 30 August 2015

### Health and Social Care

**S4W-26234 Jim Hume (South Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government for what reason the number of inpatient beds for children and adolescent mental health services at the South Glasgow University Hospital has been reduced from nine to six, following the transfer of the child inpatient psychiatric service from the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Yorkhill.**

**Jamie Hepburn:** NHS National Services Scotland carried out a review of the national child inpatient psychiatry service (for children under the age of 12) in November 2014 (<http://www.nsd.scot.nhs.uk/services/specserv/inpsych.html>) and found that since 2009 the bed occupancy (excluding day patient beds) ranged from 47% in both 2009-10 and 2010-11 to 28% at its lowest in 2012-13. The expert panel concluded that there was still a need for the facility but the number of beds should reduce from nine to six.

[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_ChamberDesk/WA20150706.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_ChamberDesk/WA20150706.pdf)

**S4W-26481 Jim Hume (South Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what learning disability service models it has identified for delivery in children and adolescent mental health services.**

**Jamie Hepburn:** We are funding Glasgow University, in collaboration with the Learning Disabilities Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (LD CAMHS) Scotland Network to carry out the 'LD CAMHS Models and Outcomes Study' in order to deliver on this commitment. The study is in progress and it is anticipated that it will complete in April 2016. So far the study has collected information systematically on the structure and staffing profile of services in all health board areas in Scotland. The study is now building on these findings by focusing on Intensive Treatment Service (ITS) models. ITS services across the UK have agreed to provide information on service specifications, multi-agency partnership working and service outcomes. These models are being systematically examined to inform prototype services for children and young people with learning disabilities. This part of the work will be completed by December 2015 and the information used to set out different prototypes for ITS services which will be shared with health boards and LD CAMHS services in Scotland.

[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_ChamberDesk/WA20150717.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_ChamberDesk/WA20150717.pdf)

**S4W-26533 Jim Hume (South Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government when the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Implementation Monitoring and Support Group has held meetings; what was discussed, and whether it will provide the minutes from those meetings.**

**Jamie Hepburn:** Details including the remit and copies of previous minutes for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Implementation Monitoring and Support Group can be found at the following link: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health/Services/Mental-Health/Strategy/Child-Adolescent-Services>

[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_ChamberDesk/WA20150729.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_ChamberDesk/WA20150729.pdf)

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## Learning and Justice

**S4W-26164 Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party):** To ask the Scottish Government what development checks are carried out on children up to the age of five.

**Maureen Watt:** A development review is carried out at 27 to 30 months. There are opportunities to discuss development at the six to eight week health review and at the two months, three months, four months, 12 to 13 months and three to five years immunisation contacts. Vision screening takes place in the pre-school year, with the exception of one health board where it takes place in Primary One.

**S4W-26165 Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party):** To ask the Scottish Government how often children under five are screened for development in (a) verbal, (b) motor, (c) social and (d) other skills expected in this age range.

**Maureen Watt:** Health reviews are carried out within the first 24 hours and within the first 10 days of life. Motor, social and other skills development are reviewed at six to eight weeks; verbal, motor, social and other skills are reviewed at 27 to 30 months, and there are opportunities to discuss development in these skills at the immunisation contacts at two months, three months, four months, 12 to 13 months and three to five years. Vision screening takes place in the pre-school year, with the exception of one health board where it takes place in Primary One.

[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_ChamberDesk/WA20150706.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_ChamberDesk/WA20150706.pdf)

**S4W-26163 Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party):** To ask the Scottish Government what is being done to promote training for postgraduate qualifications relating to visual impairments, including in Braille. Holding answer issued: 17 July 2015

**Angela Constance:** In Scotland, the responsibility for ensuring that teachers are appropriately trained under the Requirements for Teachers (Scotland) Regulations 2005, rests with education authorities. To support this, the Scottish Government funds the Scottish Sensory Centre to provide high-quality continuous professional learning and development. The Scottish Government provide the Scottish Sensory Centre with a grant (£150,000 for 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17) to support teachers of deaf, visually impaired and deaf-blind pupils. The University of Edinburgh delivers a postgraduate programme in 'Additional Support for Learning (Visual Impairment)' aimed at the professional development of teachers working with children and young people who have a visual impairment.

[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_ChamberDesk/WA20150728.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_ChamberDesk/WA20150728.pdf)

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## Enterprise and Environment

**S4W-26216 Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party):** To ask the Scottish Government what economic assessment it has made of proposals to increase the national minimum wage in Scotland.

**John Swinney:** The Scottish Government believes that with responsibility for the minimum wage the Scottish Parliament could address low pay and in-work poverty and give employers and workers incentives to invest in skills, increasing productivity.

**S4W-26217 Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the impact of separating proposals to increase the national minimum wage in Scotland from the recommendations of the Low Pay Commission.**

**John Swinney:** The Low Pay Commission makes recommendations on a UK basis. Its recommendations to the UK Government are not specifically tailored to the needs of Scotland. Any national minimum wage introduced in Scotland would take account of Scottish circumstances, and would be informed by the commitment this government places on supporting inclusive growth and tackling inequality.

**S4W-26218 Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the impact on public spending of an annual growth in the national minimum wage in Scotland of 5.5%.**

**John Swinney:** The Scottish Government has repeatedly called on the UK Government to raise the minimum wage and is committed to increasing the pay of those on the lowest wages in the public sector. This commitment has included supporting the living wage in our public sector pay policy since 2011 - a decisive long term commitment to those on the lowest incomes.

**S4W-26219 Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what additional cost would be incurred by public bodies in Scotland if the national minimum wage were set at £8.70.**

**John Swinney:** I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-26218 on 7 July 2015. 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/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx> .

**S4W-26220 Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what economic assessment it has made of the impact of reductions in employer national insurance contributions.**

**John Swinney:** The Scottish Government would like to see a reduction in the burden of employer national insurance contributions particularly for small businesses. One way of introducing this is to make the employer's allowance more generous or linked to companies paying the living wage. Any changes in employer national insurance contributions would be part of a cohesive package of measures to boost sustainable economic growth in Scotland. Appropriate economic assessment will be undertaken once the policy specifics can be set out following the devolution of these powers.

[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_ChamberDesk/WA20150707.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_ChamberDesk/WA20150707.pdf)



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## Access to Jobs (Disabled People)

**900717 Ian Lavery (Wansbeck) (Lab): What assessment she has made of the effectiveness of Government policies in tackling disadvantages faced by disabled people in accessing jobs. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Justin Tomlinson):** Some 3.2 million working-age disabled people are in work, an increase of 238,000 in the past year, which

demonstrates the success of our policies. We are building on that by launching specialist employment ability support, expanding the Disability Confident campaign, extending Work Choice and expanding the use of our Access to Work mental health support service.

**Ian Lavery:** During the last Parliament, the Government callously closed the Remploy factories, casting thousands of disabled people out of work. Less than 50% of those people are back in work—many grappling with short-time hours and low pay. What is the Minister doing to improve those horrendously unacceptable figures?

**Justin Tomlinson:** Some 1,190 of the 1,537 former employees have already found work; 875 are being supported by a personal case worker; and additional support will remain in place, as is the case for anybody with a disability. I celebrate the fact that 650 disabled people a day over the past 12 months were able to find work.

**Peter Heaton-Jones (North Devon) (Con):** Does the Minister agree that we have a challenge in ensuring equality of opportunity in employment for people with mental health conditions, and that the Disability Confident campaign has made an excellent start? Will he consider attending the Disability Confident campaign roadshow that I plan to organise in my constituency?

**Justin Tomlinson:** My wife and I would be delighted to support my hon. Friend's event in North Devon. Mental health is incredibly important. We spent £42 million in the Budget on a series of pilot schemes for telephone, group and face-to-face support. We have provided funding for an extra 40,000 people to receive cognitive behavioural therapy. Through the Access to Work scheme, we are helping 1,500 people, with a 92% retention rate.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150702/debtext/150702-0001.htm#15070233000028>

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## Tax Credits (Working Families)

**Shabana Mahmood (Birmingham, Ladywood) (Lab): I beg to move,**

That this House believes that people should be given support and incentives to find employment and stay in employment; notes that, at a time when the recovery is still fragile for many, the impact of a significant reduction in in-work tax credits could increase hardship and undermine the importance of making work pay; believes that any meaningful effort to address the real causes of high welfare costs should tackle the underlying drivers of low pay, housing costs and insecure working conditions; further notes that the threat of a £5 billion reduction in child tax credits would see 3.7 million working families lose an average of £1,400 a year in income; and urges the Chancellor to guarantee that any assistance in the July 2015 Budget is focused solely on people on middle and low incomes.

I am pleased that we have finally come on to our Opposition day debate. It was postponed last week and has been delayed today owing to the emergency debate on English votes for English laws. It is important that we have this debate ahead of the Budget, because what the Government decide to do tomorrow in relation to tax credits will show up the rhetoric they have been using since the election and prove whose side they are really on. It is not the side of working people. They say that they are now the workers' party. Indeed, the Chancellor's op-ed in *The Sun* this weekend started with the line:

“We were elected in May as a party for working people; that’s how we’ll govern; and that’s who my budget this week is for.”

On reading that line for the first time on Sunday morning, I would have choked on my cereal were it not for the fact that it is Ramadan and I am fasting. Saying it—asserting it—simply does not make it true. It is about what we do and the choices we make. If the decision the Government make tomorrow on tax credits is as we expect, it will prove that their rhetoric is very far removed from the reality.

We know from what the Chancellor said over the weekend that £12 billion of savings from the welfare budget have been found. It is reported that a substantial chunk of that money will come from cuts to tax credits. Certainly, the Government’s attempts to discredit the tax credits regime suggest that they are laying the groundwork ahead of tomorrow’s Budget. The independent Institute for Fiscal Studies has suggested that the Government could cut the childcare element of child tax credit back to its 2003-04 level, saving £5.1 billion per year. The IFS says that a £5 billion cut in tax credits in this way would mean some 3.7 million families losing £1,400 a year on average and would push a further 300,000 children into relative poverty. Those are huge sums of money for working people on low pay—people who are trying to do the right thing, who are at the mercy of a labour market that, at the lower end, is insecure and of high housing costs that keep going up and up. Without tax credits to help them through, those who are working and stuck on low pay simply cannot make ends meet.

To read the full debate, go to

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150707/debtext/150707-0003.htm#15070743000001>

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## Public Sector Broadcasting (Diversity)

**Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab):** I beg to move,

That this House has considered diversity in public sector broadcasting.

It is a pleasure to consider this matter under your excellent and expert chairmanship, Mr Streeter, and to lead this debate on an important subject. Public sector broadcasting is sometimes more broadly known as public service broadcasting, because although the BBC, Channel 4 and S4C are effectively publicly owned, ITV and Channel 5 both have public service obligations as part of their broadcast licences. Ofcom defines the purpose of public service broadcasting as “Informing our understanding of the world; stimulating knowledge and learning; reflecting UK cultural identity; representing diversity and alternative viewpoints.”

Public service broadcasters have a duty to represent the public.

The United Kingdom is a vibrant, diverse, complex and at times eccentric country, and it is essential that our public service broadcasters should reflect that—indeed, that is why we have public service broadcasting. Left to itself, the market would not; anyone who has watched “Fox News” cannot fail to agree with that.

I will touch on all aspects of diversity, as I believe there is still much to be done. I want to concentrate on an area that has had little coverage and few initiatives: class and region.

**Jesse Norman (Hereford and South Herefordshire) (Con):** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for introducing, in this of all weeks, this important topic to a public debate. I share her concern about the lack of representation in public service broadcasting generally, and in the public sector.

Will she permit me to clear up one misunderstanding that has arisen in relation to the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport, which I chair? As matters stand, my Committee has no women or black and minority ethnic members. That is not because of any planned structure or other institutional arrangement, but because no women or black and minority ethnic candidates stood for election. That is highly regrettable, from my point of view. I wish that they had done so and that there was a bigger pool in Parliament from which such candidates could have offered themselves. We are, as matters currently stand, working within the rules of the House. I thank the hon. Lady for allowing me to put that on the public record.

**Chi Onwurah:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, which illustrates something of the challenge that we face. He said eloquently that he wished there was a larger pool of women and black and minority ethnic Members in the House from which people could have put themselves forward to his Committee. It is regrettable that there is not and that no women or black and minority ethnic Members put themselves forward; having an entirely male and pale Select Committee representing the House on such matters does not do justice to the House and does not reflect well on it or its reputation. I thank the hon. Gentleman for putting that on the record.

To read the full debate, go to

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150714/halltext/150714h0001.htm#15071434000002>

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## Tax Credits

**900931 Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab):** What discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the effect on claimants in Scotland of changes in entitlement to working tax credits and child tax credits.

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr David Gauke):** The Chancellor has regular discussions with Treasury colleagues, as well as with the rest of the Cabinet, on a wide range of topics. The changes to tax credits are at the centre of the Government's intention to move to a higher wage, lower tax and lower welfare society.

**Debbie Abrahams:** The independent Institute for Fiscal Studies has shown that the poorest 20% of the population will lose proportionately more than any other income group as a result of the benefit and tax changes. Given that International Monetary Fund analysis has shown that an increase in income to the poorest 20% stimulates growth, what is the Minister's assessment not just of the increase in poverty in Scotland but of the stifling of growth?

**Mr Gauke:** The point I would make to the hon. Lady is that if we want to have a strong economy, we have to move to a higher wage, lower tax and lower benefits system. That is what the Government have been elected to do; that is what we are delivering.

**Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con):** Does my hon. Friend agree that part and parcel of changing the system is to encourage the Scottish people to live on the wages they earn from the jobs that will be created under the long-term economic plan?

**Mr Gauke:** The key to prosperity is to ensure that we have a dynamic economy. That is why we are cutting business taxes so we have higher wages and higher productivity; that is why we are improving our skills and investment in the United Kingdom; and that is the way we can ensure we have higher living standards for the people of Scotland and all parts of the United Kingdom.

**Angus Robertson (Moray) (SNP):** The UK Government are planning to restrict child benefit to two children for new parents. The Department for Work and Pensions and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs have in the Budget been asked to "develop protections for women who have a third child as a result of rape, or other exceptional circumstances." Can the Minister explain how that will work?

**Mr Gauke:** The point I would make to the hon. Gentleman is that we think it is right that all families face the same situation, having to make choices bearing in mind the financial consequences of the number of children they have. It is right that a regime is put in place for exceptional circumstances. If the hon. Gentleman does not want to restrict tax credits to two children per family in future, he will be able to bring in top-ups paid for by the Scottish taxpayer under the powers provided in the Scotland Bill.

**Angus Robertson:** Rape is one of the most serious crimes and has one of the poorest clear-up rates. It is thought that 85% of women who are raped do not confirm that they have been raped. May I urge the Secretary of State and his colleagues to look very, very closely at this issue? I have already asked the Minister the question once and he did not give an answer as to how the Government are going to manage this very, very sensitive issue. May I ask him again how the Government plan to make this work?

**Mr Gauke:** We will set out the details in due course, but it is perfectly reasonable to limit in future—this is prospective; this is for future births—the support that is provided to families to two children under the tax credits system, so that all households face the same consequences of decisions about how many children they have. That is what most families have to live with.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150715/debtext/150715-0001.htm#15071540000020>

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## Benefit Sanctions

**900932 Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP):** If he will make an assessment of the effect of benefit sanctions on (a) levels of poverty and (b) social cohesion in Scotland.

**The Minister for Employment (Priti Patel):** All evidence shows that work is the best route out of poverty. This Government have taken action to reform the welfare system to support people to come off benefits and get into work.

**Alison Thewliss:** May I ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for an urgent review, as recommended by Citizens Advice Scotland, of the 323% increase in requests for food parcels in the past four years owing to the main triggers of benefit sanctions and benefit administration?

**Priti Patel:** I return to the comments I have just made. The best route out of poverty is to increase work incentives and to support employment opportunities—having a job. To do that, we need a Government with a long-term economic plan that secures employment prospects for the country as a whole.

**Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP):** Since the question about having a review will not be answered, is it not time that the powers were transferred to the Scottish Parliament to carry out this pressing and urgent review of the increase in the use of food banks in Scotland?

**Priti Patel:** Welfare powers will, of course, be devolved to the Scottish Parliament, so it will be up to it to use them effectively as it sees fit.

**Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab):** I agree with the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss), because yesterday I also met Citizens Advice Scotland, which told us that more than 200 people a day were being sanctioned by the Department for Work and Pensions and that 100,000 children were being affected. Will the Minister please answer the question? Why will she not instigate a full review of the sanctions regime, as recommended by the Church of Scotland?

**Priti Patel:** When it comes to sanctions in particular, individuals are asked to meet reasonable requirements to take into account their circumstances, which is right and proper when people are looking for work and employment. *[Interruption.]* I see SNP colleagues laughing at the prospect, but we are all about supporting individuals into the employment market. As we have seen, 70% of jobseeker's allowance recipients say that the system of sanctions and conditionality leads them to engage positively with the support on offer to help them into employment.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150715/debtext/150715-0001.htm#1507154000020>

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## Employment Support Allowance

**901118 Dawn Butler (Brent Central) (Lab):** What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the effect of proposed changes to employment support allowance on levels of employment.

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Greg Hands):** We created 2 million jobs in the previous Parliament, and our objective is to create a further 2 million in this Parliament. A crucial part of that is the welfare reforms that we have introduced to help make work pay, which is consistent with our long-term economic plan.

**Dawn Butler:** Of course we all want to see work pay, but a large section of the community are sometimes unable to work for short periods of time because of illnesses such as sickle cell disease. The Minister seems to have overlooked that group of people.

**Greg Hands:** I thank the hon. Lady for her question. Our welfare reforms are based on the principle of fairness; fair on those who receive the benefits and fair on those who pay the tax. With regard to a specific group, there is clearly a difference between the work-related activity group and the support group, and we are happy to look at those differences. She is clearly not satisfied with what we are doing, but she is also one of the 48 Labour Members who rebelled last night on welfare, so I do not think that she is satisfied with her Front Benchers' position either.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150721/debtext/150721-0001.htm#15072125000033>

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## Early day motion 286

**Keep Me Posted**  
**Harry Harpham**



That this House welcomes the work of the Keep Me Posted campaign which believes that all consumers should have the right to choose how they receive bills and statements, whether on paper or online, from service providers including utility companies and banks without financial penalty; notes that approximately 18 million consumers who do not have access to the internet or have basic digital skills are unfairly disadvantaged by service providers that do not offer them this choice; welcomes the support of 78 charities, consumers groups, trades unions and businesses championing the campaign's aims; welcomes to date the four service providers, Yorkshire Water, Wessex Water, Welsh Water and Principality Building Society who have pledged to protect 10 million consumers' right to choose without penalty how they receive bills and statements; and calls on other service providers to also offer consumers the choice of how they receive their bills and statements.

Supported by 61 MPs

<http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2015-16/286>

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## Early day motion 283

### Glasgow Safe Taxi Scheme Alison Thewliss

That this House commends the University of Strathclyde Students' Association, Glasgow Caledonian University's Students' Association and Glasgow Taxis for their response to the community safety concerns of students in creating the Safe Taxi scheme; notes that the simple act of presenting a student card will allow students to get an emergency taxi home; looks forward to the further development and expansion of this scheme to colleges in Glasgow, and encourages other colleges and universities to take on this example of good practice and establish similar schemes to improve student safety.

Supported by 32 MPs.

<http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2015-16/283>

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## Broadband: Rural Areas

**HL808 The Earl of Shrewsbury: To ask Her Majesty's Government when they estimate that residents living in rural areas will be able to access the same broadband speeds as customers living in cities and towns.**

### Baroness Neville-Rolfe:

The Government recognises that customers in rural areas currently experience, on average, lower broadband speeds than those in urban areas. This is why the Government is investing £780 million to deliver superfast broadband, mostly targeted at rural areas where it would not otherwise be available if left to the commercial sector. Superfast broadband is available to 80% of UK premises and we aim to reach 95% coverage by 2017. By the end of this year access to standard broadband of 2 Megabits will be available to everyone. The Government has also made available up to £10 million to support pilot projects to explore ways to extend superfast broadband beyond 95% of UK premises, with technologies such as satellite and wireless and using new financing models.

<http://qnadailyreport.blob.core.windows.net/qnadailyreportxml/Written-Questions-Answers-Statements-Daily-Report-Lords-2015-07-02.pdf>

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## British Nationality: English Language

**HL701 Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: To ask Her Majesty's Government by what process they decided to reduce to two the number of examination boards whose English language tests may be used for applications for citizenship.**

**Lord Bates:** From November 2015 the same English language requirements will apply for settlement and naturalisation as already apply to other immigration applications. This is to ensure the same level of assurance, and that the same security requirements apply, throughout the immigration system. From November, only qualifications that are on the Home Office's approved list will be acceptable. The decision as to which providers are on the list was made following a competitive procurement exercise. A letter was sent to all Awarding Bodies offering ESOL qualifications on 23 March 2015 informing them of the impending change. A further copy of the letter was sent on 13 April as it appeared some recipients were not aware of the original mailing. The Gov.Uk website was amended to reflect these forthcoming changes.

**HL705 Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether the process by which a decision was made to reduce to two the number of examination boards whose English language tests may be used for applications for citizenship met Cabinet Office guidance on procurement in relation to small and medium-sized enterprises.**

**Lord Bates:** Following significant abuse identified in the provision of English language testing the Home Office commissioned an independent review. A key outcome was to reduce the number of service providers. The benefit of the approach was to improve the Home Office's ability to actively manage service provision. In terms of compliance with Cabinet Office's policy for small and medium-sized enterprises the procurement process permitted all organisations, irrespective of size, to submit compliant bids in line with the business and commercial requirements. All bids were evaluated in accordance with the requirements and those organisations that were compliant were awarded Concession Agreements.

<http://qndailyreport.blob.core.windows.net/qndailyreportxml/Written-Questions-Answers-Statements-Daily-Report-Lords-2015-07-06.pdf>

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## **Employment: Disability**

**HL724 Baroness Kennedy of Cradley: To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people they expect to find jobs as a result of the Disability Confident campaign.**

**Baroness Altmann:** The Disability Confident campaign makes the business case for recruiting and retaining more disabled people and aims to increase the number of employers taking positive action to be more disability confident. We are not able to measure the number of disabled people moving into employment as a direct result of it, but the campaign is an important contributor towards our commitment to halve the gap between the employment rates of disabled and nondisabled people.

<http://qndailyreport.blob.core.windows.net/qndailyreportxml/Written-Questions-Answers-Statements-Daily-Report-Lords-2015-07-06.pdf>

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## **Universal Credit**

**Lord Leigh of Hurley**

**To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the experience of those claiming Universal Credit.**

**The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Lord Freud) (Con):** For those who are now claiming universal credit, the experience is a positive one. Work is clearly incentivised and as a result claimants look for work more actively, find work more quickly, stay in work longer and

earn more. The system is simpler and easier to understand for claimants, those who advise them and departmental staff.

**Lord Leigh of Hurley (Con):** I thank my noble friend the Minister for that Answer. What steps has he taken to protect the most vulnerable people encompassed by the system and those people who will be encompassed by it in the rollout?

**Lord Freud:** Clearly, as we roll out universal credit in the years to come, we will be pulling in people who are more vulnerable than the groups we are currently pulling in. We are looking to support them in a number of ways. That is one of the reasons why we are doing this careful rollout with a test-and-learn strategy. But the specific things we are looking at in this area are help with personal budgeting support and the development of universal support delivered locally, where we are in partnership with local authorities throughout the country. We are trialling that and the results will inform the future rollout.

**Lord Rooker (Lab):** Is it not also true that the system is simpler to understand for cybercriminals? Given the fact that universal credit is going to be such a large percentage of government spending, what preparations are the Government taking to make sure that this system is clear and safe from cyberattack?

**Lord Freud:** The noble Lord is absolutely right that this is potentially a major target for cybercriminals. We have made an enormous effort in developing the digital system, which is a two-way system, unlike the live system that we are currently rolling out across the country. We are making sure that that is safe from cybercriminals, and the first group of people are looking at security operations, because it is not a question of just building a system; you have to maintain it with a big team to make sure that nothing of that nature is going on.

**Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope (LD):** Will the Minister confirm that when this House enacted the Welfare Reform Act 2012, the planning assumption was that up to 1 million households would now be receiving universal credit? Will he acknowledge that actually the number of households receiving universal credit is just over 50,000? Will he also accept that that means that lots of families are being denied useful help month by month and the delay is therefore important? Will he undertake to talk to his business manager friends on the Government Front Bench to try to find ways of regularly updating the House over the next 18 months? The delays in the introduction of universal credit are now causing real grief within low-income households.

**Lord Freud:** One of my purposes today is to find a forum where I can update noble Lords in this Chamber about what is happening in a somewhat more sensible atmosphere than is perhaps seen elsewhere in the Palace of Westminster. On the point about timing we have reset this programme, as I am sure all noble Lords here well remember, and will not be going on to the rather sharp upgrades in the volumes that we were initially looking at. We are now designing it in such a way that we will test different groups and make sure that we roll it out sensibly. That was what the reset was about and, interestingly, it is exactly what the NAO and MPA are saying is the way to roll out big programmes.

**The Lord Bishop of Chester:** My Lords, in his Answer the Minister referred to universal credit as incentivising people to work. Can he give a bit more detail on just what that incentivisation involves? What is the typical marginal effective tax rate for someone who is on universal credit, given that I read recently that it can be more than 70%?

**Lord Freud:** The marginal rate—the rate at which one withdraws benefit—is 65%. In practice, among the incentive effects are that all the constraints about taking temporary jobs or trying part-time jobs have disappeared, as have some of the constraints against people who may be disabled with fluctuating conditions. They would not normally dare take on a job because if their condition

came back, they would have to restart the process of getting on benefits. Because universal credit is both an out-of-work and in-work benefit, it means that there is no risk element to being in work.

**The Countess of Mar (CB):** My Lords, the Minister will no doubt have seen and heard increasing criticism of tax credits as a way of supporting profit-making companies which should be paying proper wages to their staff but are bad employers. What are Her Majesty's Government doing to reduce the number of people claiming tax credits and incentivise employers to pay proper wages to their staff, so that they do not need to claim tax credits?

**Lord Freud:** My Lords, it is a bad day to answer that question. The real point is that as we move from the combination of the benefit and tax credit systems into one universal credit system, the incentives will be restructured to encourage people to work their way down the taper.

**Baroness Sherlock (Lab):** My Lords, I am grateful to the Minister for wanting to update us—in fact, he sent me a lovely letter last week telling me how well universal credit was going—but the point made by the noble Lord, Lord Kirkwood, was that we were expecting 1 million people to be on it by last year. In fact, in two years' time there should be 7 million people on it. So if the Minister wants to update us, given that there are currently just 65,000 people getting universal credit, will he not follow the advice of the National Audit Office and tackle the secrecy surrounding the programme? In particular, will he agree to publish the full business case for universal credit and a proper plan with milestones, so that we can judge it and reassure people how their money has been spent and when universal credit will be rolled out? He will know that his good friend the Prime Minister has said that sunlight is the best disinfectant. Is it not time to throw open the windows of DWP and let some light in?

**Lord Freud:** We have completed the strategic outline business case and will be doing the outline business case this summer. We have actually put out quite a lot of figures, in particular on the amount that this programme is costing, which is down from the original £2.4 billion to £1.8 billion. The letter which I sent to the noble Baroness and various others, and which is available in the Library, tries to deal with the main changes going on in this programme. It reflects my determination that this House will be kept informed of developments as they come up. I have made a commitment to do that and I will do that.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/ldhansrd/text/150707-0001.htm#15070742000417>

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## Access to Work Programme

**HL986 Baroness Uddin To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure the availability of Access to Work grants for those who especially need them to start working.**

**Baroness Altmann:** Access to Work grants are available for those who meet the eligibility criteria for the scheme including those who are about to start working. Access to Work has specialist teams to ensure more complicated cases are processed as quickly as possible and fast track applications for those who know their circumstances or have a prior assessment enabling support to be put in place quickly.

<http://qndailyreport.blob.core.windows.net/qndailyreportxml/Written-Questions-Answers-Statements-Daily-Report-Lords-2015-07-08.pdf>

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## UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

**HL790 Lord Lester of Herne Hill To ask Her Majesty's Government why they decided not to nominate a United Kingdom candidate for the UN Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.**

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The UK strongly supports the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) against Women and it is committed to advancing women's rights. We are fully committed to the CEDAW process and are fully engaged with the UN and the Committee. We regularly consider nominating a UK national for election to the Committee, but have not yet done so under this present government. UK nationals are well represented on other UN treaty monitoring bodies, such as the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

<http://gnadailyreport.blob.core.windows.net/gnadailyreportxml/Written-Questions-Answers-Statements-Daily-Report-Lords-2015-07-09.pdf>

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