



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-0101, 13 October 2020

Disability inclusive Covid-19 response

Summary

On 15 October 2020 at 1.30pm, there will be a Westminster Hall Debate on a "Disability inclusive Covid-19 response". Dr Lisa Cameron MP is to lead the debate.

Office for National Statistics [analysis](#) estimated that disabled people made up 59% of all deaths involving coronavirus from 2 March to 14 July 2020 in England and Wales (disabled people made up c.16% of the study population followed from the 2011 census).

In April 2020, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Disability wrote to the Prime Minister expressing concern at the treatment of persons with disabilities. Areas of concern included easements to the *Care Act 2014*, the impact of restrictions on loneliness, and employment.

The Prime Minister in July said the Government remained committed to publishing a [National Strategy for Disabled People](#).

This briefing focuses on England. Section 11 provides reports and statistics relating to the whole of the UK. The Senedd Cymru's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, [Into sharp relief: Inequalities during the pandemic](#) and Scottish Parliament's Equalities and Human Rights Committee, [Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on Equalities and Human Rights](#) also contain relevant information.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

By Philip Loft, Lizzie Parkin, Doug Pyper, Tom Powell, Manjit Gheera, Nerys Roberts, Robert Long, Sue Hubble, Aaron Kulakiewicz, Andy Powell, David Foster

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1. Disability inclusive response to Covid-19

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Disability [wrote](#) to the Prime Minister in April 2020 expressing concern at the treatment of persons with disabilities during the coronavirus and called for a disability inclusive response to coronavirus.¹ It highlighted five areas:

- The Government must recognise the needs of those with complex disabilities and ensure accessible communications [...]
- The Government must re-evaluate its current strategy to ensure social distancing does not lead to exclusion for those with disabilities who rely on assistance accessing groceries, medication and other personal care needs [...]
- Given amendments to the *Care Act 2014*, Local Government must provide clear, accessible guidance on social care and support services that are available to those living with disabilities, including information on the process by which they can challenge any decisions to withdraw or reduce services.[...]
- The Government must be prepared to resource a disability-inclusive response. During this crisis, additional funding, training, resources and PPE are vital so that people with complex disabilities and their families receive the care they need [...] [and]
- It is necessary to accelerate efforts to include people with disabilities in the Government's economic recovery plan.²

In July 2020, the Prime Minister responded to the APPG letter and said that the Government remained committed to a National Disability Strategy:

Our resolve to ensuring that disabled people can play a full role in society is steadfast and unchanged, with a manifesto commitment to publish a National Strategy for Disabled People. The Strategy's significance is even greater as we rebuild the UK's economy and society after COVID-19.³

The UK Government had previously committed to developing a [National Disability Strategy](#), with the intention of publishing the strategy in Spring 2021.⁴

2. Equality Act

The *Equality Act 2010* repealed, replaced and in large measure consolidated the principles of forging equality legislation. The Act represents a codification of UK equality law, which is part domestic in

¹ Disability Rights UK, [MPs and Peers call for disability inclusion](#), 4 May 2020

² [Dr Lisa Cameron MP to the Prime Minister](#), 29 April 2020

³ [The Prime Minister to Lisa Cameron MP](#), 9 July 2020, p2

⁴ [PQ 86094 \[Disability\]](#), 7 September 2020

origin, part derived from EU law. The Act prohibits discrimination in a variety of areas, including services, public functions, employment and education.

Protection from discrimination

The Act's protections apply only to a person possessing one of the protected characteristics, listed in [section 4](#), which include disability. In the areas within scope of the Act, disabled individuals are protected from direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

Direct discrimination occurs when a person, because of a protected characteristic, treats another less favourably than he would treat those without the characteristic.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a person applies a "provision, criterion or practice" which, although applied to persons with different protected characteristics (e.g. disabled and non-disabled persons) puts one group of persons at a particular disadvantage.

Harassment is defined as engaging in unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic, which has the effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

Victimisation is defined as subjecting an individual to detriment because he or she has done a "protected act" (or in the belief that he has). The protected acts involve asserting rights under the Act (e.g. alleging that a person has contravened the Act).

Public Sector Equality Duty

Alongside the Act's protections from discrimination, it creates a positive duty for public authorities to have due regard to equalities considerations when exercising their functions; this is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Section 149(1) of the Act sets out the Duty as follows

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

For more information see the Library's note: [The Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Impact Assessments](#)

3. Face coverings exemption

There is anecdotal evidence that some service providers have refused to serve disabled people who present in their establishments without a face covering, notwithstanding the fact that there is a disability-related exemption to the rules on face coverings.⁵ This has given rise to concerns that some businesses are failing to educate their employees about the rights of disabled people and are leaving themselves open to legal challenge.

The relevant law

The *Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings in a Relevant Place) (England) Regulations 2020* provide ([regulation 3\(1\)](#)) that:

No person may, without **reasonable excuse**, enter or remain within a relevant place without wearing a face covering.

Part 1 of the Schedule to the Regulations defines a relevant place as a shop, enclosed shopping centre, a bank or a post office, but excludes from this definition restaurants, bars and public houses.

It is a “reasonable excuse” not to wear a mask if the person in question ([regulation 4\(1\)](#)):

cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering ... because of any physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability (within the meaning of section 6 of the Equality Act 2010)

As such, if a shop refuses entry, or to serve, a disabled person because they are not wearing a face mask, and that disabled person is exempt from the requirement to wear one, the shop may be in breach of their duties under the Equality Act 2010. The refusal may constitute “discrimination arising from disability”, defined in [section 15](#) of the Equality Act:

- A person (A) discriminates against a disabled person (B) if—
- (a) A treats B unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of B's disability, and
 - (b) A cannot show that the treatment is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

This will not apply though, if the shop can show that it “did not know, and could not reasonably have been expected to know, that [the person] had the disability.”⁶

The Government’s [guidance](#) on face coverings states that:

Those who have an age, health or disability reason for not wearing a face covering should not be routinely asked **to give any written evidence** of this, this includes exemption cards. No

⁵ [Shops Could Face Legal Action If Disabled People Are Turned Away Over Masks](#), *Huffpost*, 25 July 2020; [Disabled man repeatedly turned away from Edinburgh Apple store despite wearing lanyard and visor](#), *Edinburgh Live*, 12 September 2020

⁶ *Equality Act 2010*, section 15(2)

person needs to seek advice or request a letter from a medical professional about their reason for not wearing a face covering.⁷

The guidance does not state that a person should not or must not be asked whether they have a disability. Nor does the Equality Act prevent a person being asked whether they are exempt from wearing a face covering by reason of their disability.

4. Education

Schools/SEND pupils

The type of support that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) receive may vary widely, as the types of SEND that they may have are very different. However, two broad levels of support are in place: SEN support, usually provided in schools or colleges and more formal Education, Health and Care Plans.

The Library briefing [Special Educational Needs: support in England](#) (March 2020) sets out the system of support for children and young people in England aged 0-25 with special educational needs.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, most children with SEND have, alongside their peers, been educated at home for long periods.⁸ In its response to the Education Committee report on SEND, the Government acknowledged that most children with SEND had not been receiving their usual support:

The great majority of children and young people with SEND have been at home during the crisis, and even those still attending their school or college have generally not been receiving their usual support, and not receiving it in the usual way.⁹

The *Coronavirus Act 2020* gives the Secretary of State powers to issue a notice to temporarily disapply certain educational requirements, which are usually required by law.

This includes requirements on local authorities to secure education and health care provision under an Education, Health and Care Plan for those who need more support. If a notice is made, the duty is still fulfilled if authorities have made 'reasonable endeavours' to fulfil these requirements. Notices to this effect were made in May-July 2020.¹⁰

Other temporary changes, for instance to grant leeway to local authorities in timescales for carrying out EHC plan assessments when

⁷ Face coverings: when to wear one, exemptions, and how to make your own, Gov.uk, 24 September 2020 [accessed 13 October 2020]

⁸ An overview of the rules during the initial lockdown period can be found in House of Commons Library Insight, [Coronavirus: Impact on special educational needs in England](#), 15 April 2020

⁹ Education Committee, [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2019](#), July 2020, HC 668, p3

¹⁰ The now withdrawn guidance remains available: Department for Education, [Education, health and care needs assessments and plans: guidance on temporary legislative changes relating to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#), 26 August 2020

the impact of COVID-19 made this difficult, were also in place during the summer but have now expired.¹¹

Higher Education

Many students with disabilities and mental health issues have found coping during the pandemic particularly difficult - social isolation and the move to online learning have proved challenging for these students

The Office for Students has published briefing notes outlining the impact of the pandemic on disabled students and the range of actions being taken by higher education institutions to help students with disabilities and mental health issues during the crisis:

- [Disabled students](#)
- [Supporting student mental health](#)

Students with disabilities may be eligible for a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) to help with costs incurred as a result of their studies. This grant however does not cover the cost of standard computers and disabled students requesting computer provision as part of their DSA must make a £200 contribution towards the cost of this equipment. [Early Day Motion 739](#) suggests that this cost may be a particular barrier to disabled students during the pandemic as many courses have moved to online delivery – the EDM asks the government to “implement alternative mechanisms to ensure that a lack of finance is no longer a significant barrier to inclusive education opportunities for students with disabilities.”

However, a spokesperson for [Abilitynet](#) has said that the changes in delivery of higher education courses has improved accessibility and inclusion for disabled students:

Lecturers that had hitherto been firmly against recording lectures, setting inclusive assessments, or using online tools are now embracing them due to the lockdown, and many disabled students are benefitting as a result.

[...]

For students living with physical impairments and long-term health conditions, the benefits of studying from home and avoiding the exhausting experience of accessing face-to-face learning has left them with more energy to apply to their studies

¹².

A report by the Higher Education Commission, [Arriving at Thriving](#), October 2020 has an overview of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on disabled students on p11.

5. Employment

The library briefing [People with disabilities in employment](#) outlines the support that is in place to help disabled people find work. An outline of

¹¹ In force from 1 May 2020 to 24 September 2020 inclusive

¹² Universities UK, [Covid-19 silver linings: how the pandemic has increased opportunities for disabled university students](#), 15 July 2020

some of these schemes is provided below with information on how these have been amended in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Access to Work

[Access to Work](#) provides support to meet the needs of people with disabilities in the workplace. Access to Work grants are available to both employees and to the self-employed, and aim to provide practical and financial support to help people with disabilities find or stay in work.

This provision included elements such as:

- Communication support for interviews
- Special aids and equipment
- Adaptations to premises and vehicles
- Help with travel costs
- Support workers
- A mental health support service

The maximum annual amount that an individual can receive has been set at £60,700 from 1 April 2020. This is updated annually every April.

Various measures were introduced since the outbreak of the pandemic. These include the transportation of assistive technology from the workplace to the home environment where possible, or considering new adjustments to support home working.¹³

Further information on the Access to Work scheme is provided in the library briefing [‘Access to Work’ scheme for disabled people](#) (February 2020).

Work and Health Programme

The Work and Health Programme provides support to help people find and keep a job. It is available, on a voluntary basis, to those with health conditions or disabilities, and to various groups of vulnerable people. The programme is compulsory for those who have been unemployed for over two years.

A participant is classed as achieving a job outcome when they have reached a specified level of earnings once in employment, or reach six months of being in self-employment.

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, this programme will be expanded in Great Britain to provide additional voluntary support for those on benefits that have been unemployed for more than 3 months.¹⁴

Further information on this programme is available in the Library briefing note [Work and Health Programme](#) (June 2020).

Intensive Personalised Employment Support programme

¹³ [PQ 76768 \[Employment: Disability\]](#), 23 July 2020

¹⁴ HM Treasury, [Plan for Jobs](#), July 2020, p9

The [Intensive Personalised Employment Support programme](#) provides personalised support to those who are at least a year from moving into work. This programme aims to benefit 10,000 people. People on this programme will have a dedicated support worker who will provide one-to-one support and training to help them get into work. They will usually receive this support for 15 months, as well as 6 months of on-the-job support if they find employment.

Providers to this programme, and the Work and Health Programme, are using digital channels to provide one to one support to claimants.¹⁵

Disability Confident

Disability Confident aims to help organisations “improve how they attract, recruit and retain disabled workers”. As of October 2020, almost 19,000 employers had signed up to the scheme.

6. Adult Social Care

Care Act easements

The *Coronavirus Act 2020* provides for a relaxation of local authority duties around the provision of care and support needs (often referred to as the Care Act easements). For example, under the changes local authorities in England are only under a duty to meet a person’s eligible care and support needs where not doing so would breach their human rights. The changes were brought into force in England on 31 March 2020.

The Government has stated that the Care Act easements are aimed at enabling local authorities to prioritise the social care services they offer in order to ensure that the most urgent and serious care needs are met. It has also emphasised that the easements should only be used when absolutely necessary, with local authorities operating under the pre-amendment duties where possible. However, concerns have been raised about the negative impact the easements could have on the provision of social care, potentially putting disabled people at risk.

Further information on the easements is provided in the Library Briefing 8889, [Coronavirus: Local authorities’ adult social care duties \(the Care Act easements\)](#).

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

The above Library Briefing provides information in relation to England. However, the Coronavirus Act made broadly equivalent changes relating to Scotland and Wales. (Because of its different legislative framework, Northern Ireland took the view that the necessary flexibility could be achieved without legislation).¹⁶

For information on the Coronavirus Act’s social care provisions in respect of Scotland and Wales, see Library Briefing 8861, [Coronavirus Bill: health and social care measures](#) (the relevant provisions were not

¹⁵ [PQ 76768 \[Employment: Disability\]](#), 23 July 2020

¹⁶ DHSC, [Adult Social Care Covid-19 Forum – weekly teleconferences](#), 8 April 2020.

altered during the Bill's passage through Parliament). Further information on the use of the relaxations is provided in guidance published by the Welsh and Scottish Governments:

- Welsh Government, [Adult social services during the COVID-19 pandemic: guidance](#), 30 April 2020.
- Scottish Government, [Coronavirus \(COVID 19\): guidance on changes to social care assessments](#), 8 April 2020.

Adult social care during Covid-19

The Library Briefing 9019, [Coronavirus: Adult social care key issues and sources](#), provides more general information on key issues concerning adult social care during the coronavirus outbreak: including:

- Policy in relation to adult social care since the start of the coronavirus outbreak
- Government support for the sector
- The number of deaths in care homes
- Testing for care workers and care homes residents
- Policy concerning family and friends visiting individuals in care homes
- The discharging of patients from hospital into care homes

7. Health

Access to services

The *Health and Social Care Act 2012*¹⁷, requires Clinical Commissioning Groups, in the exercise of their functions, to have regard to the need to reduce inequalities between patients with respect to their ability to access health services; and reduce inequalities between patients with respect to the outcomes achieved for them by the provision of health services.

The [NHS Operational Planning and Contracting Guidance 2017-19](#) set out requirements for implementing improved access by addressing issues of inequalities in patients' experience of accessing general practice, identified by local evidence, and putting actions in place to resolve this. The contracting guidance set out nine 'must dos' priorities including improving access to:

- therapies and support by implementing the [Mental Health Five Year Forward View](#) for all ages.
- healthcare for people with learning disability so that by 2020, 75% of people on a GP register would be receiving an annual health check.¹⁸

The [NHS Standard Contract 2019/20](#) is mandated by NHS England and Improvement for use by commissioners for all contracts for healthcare services (other than primary care). It includes [Learning Disability](#)

¹⁷ Section 4 of the *Health and Social Care Act 2012*, inserted a new section 1C - Duty as to reducing inequalities - into the *National Health Service Act 2006*

¹⁸ NHS England, [NHS Operational Planning and Contracting Guidance 2017-19](#); pp9-10

[Improvement Standards](#) for NHS Trusts to monitor and review the care they provide to people with a learning disability or autism. The aim is for the standards to apply to all NHS-funded care by 2023/24.

[NHS Operational Planning and Contracting Guidance for 2020/21](#), which included commitments to expand mental health therapies and improve access to services for the learning disabled, was [suspended in March 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic](#). [Guidance to clinicians](#) on the [NHS response to the pandemic](#) acknowledges that the pandemic “has further exposed some of the health and wider inequalities that persist in our society.”¹⁹ It sets out urgent actions for NHS organisations and partners to protect the vulnerable including, accelerating preventative measures such as health checks for people with learning disabilities and supporting those that suffer from mental health.

“Do Not Resuscitate” decisions

During the initial peak of the pandemic there were a number of reports of GPs writing to ‘high risk’ patients about Do Not Attempt Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR or DNAR) decisions in the context of the coronavirus pressures.²⁰ However, the Government has said that there has not been a national instruction or directive issued for blanket DNACPR decisions to be put in place. They also state that DNACPR decisions should involve the person concerned or, where the person lacks capacity, their families, carers, guardians or other legally recognised advocates.²¹ The NHS has also confirmed on a number of occasions that the [blanket application of DNACPRs is unacceptable](#) and that standards and quality of care should be maintained even in pressurised circumstances.

On 7 April 2020 the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Stephen Powis, and the Chief Nursing Officer, Ruth May, wrote to NHS and GP leaders on [Maintaining standards and quality of care in pressurised circumstances](#). This provided the following:

In regard to those patients who are the most vulnerable, we should encourage them to discuss their individual wishes and concerns regarding their treatment preferences should they develop COVID-19 symptoms and record those preferences in an advance care plan. The British Medical Association, Care Provider Alliance, Care Quality Commission, and the Royal College of General Practice have recently issued a statement on the role of general practitioners in this regard which provides an excellent basis for the approach required, not just in general practice but throughout the health and care system. The key principle is that each person is an individual whose needs and preferences must be taken account of individually. By contrast blanket policies are inappropriate whether due to medical condition, disability, or age. This is particularly important in regard to ‘do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation’ (DNACPR) orders, which should

¹⁹ NHS England, [Implementing phase 3 of the NHS response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

²⁰ See for example, Health Service Journal, [GPs contacting patients about ‘do not resuscitate’ forms](#), 1 April 2020

²¹ [PQ 81526, 9 September 2020](#)

only ever be made on an individual basis and in consultation with the individual or their family.

The [BMA, CPA, CQC, RCGP joint statement](#) referred to above was published on 1 April 2020 and provides further information on advance care planning. Further background on DNACPRs is also available in some further guidance from the Royal College of Nursing: [COVID-19 guidance on DNACPR and verification of death](#)

Further background can be found in the Library briefing paper, [Coronavirus: health and social care key issues](#) and sources (July 2020) (section 1.2, page 10). The Department of Health and Social Care has asked the CQC to review how DNACPR decisions were used during the coronavirus pandemic, building on concerns that the CQC reported earlier in the year. The CQC are expected to look at people's experiences in care homes, primary care and hospitals, and interim findings to be reported later this year (with a final report expected in early 2021). A full news story is [available on the CQC website](#).

Section 7.2 of this debate pack examines the impact of coronavirus on people with a learning disability (below). Further information on policies and services for people with a learning disability in England is set out in a Library briefing paper on [Learning Disability](#) (June 2020). The Library briefing paper [Mental health policy in England](#) (July 2020) also provides information on mental health policy including mental health and the Coronavirus pandemic.

People with learning disabilities

Increased deaths

[Data published by the Care Quality Commission](#) (CQC) in June 2020 showed a significant increase in deaths of people with a learning disability as a result of Covid-19. The figures included deaths reported by those who provide care for people with a learning disability and/or autism. This includes adult social care, independent hospitals and community care.

Between 10 April and 15 May 2020, 386 people who were receiving care from learning disability and/or autism services died. In the same period last year 165 people died. This represents a 134% increase.

Of the 386 people who died this year, 206 were as a result of suspected or confirmed Covid-19.

Access to testing

Anyone who has [symptoms of Covid-19 in England may be tested](#). But there have been concerns about access to testing for people with learning disabilities in care homes.

Care homes can order testing kits for their residents and staff. The Government said that they were offering [testing to staff and residents in every care home in England](#). However, until 5 June 2020 these homes [could only order testing kits if they were looking after people aged over 65 or people with dementia](#). This left care homes for younger people with learning disabilities without access to testing kits.

The CQC said its data on increased deaths (published 2 June) should be considered when making decisions on testing priorities:

We already know that people with a learning disability are at an increased risk of respiratory illnesses, meaning that access to testing could be key to reducing infection and saving lives.

These figures also show that the impact on this group of people is being felt at a younger age range than in the wider population – something that should be considered in decisions on testing of people of working age with a learning disability.²²

Mencap said:

We've been telling the Government for weeks that it is putting people with a learning disability at risk by not giving them priority testing; it's time the Government acted to make sure that everyone who needs social care, regardless of their age, disability or care setting, is prioritised for testing. This is a matter of life or death, yet people with a learning disability continue to be forgotten.²³

Asymptomatic testing

On 3 July, the Government announced the [roll out of regular retesting for care home residents and staff](#). Residents will be given coronavirus tests monthly, while staff will be given coronavirus tests every week. However, asymptomatic testing was initially only be available for care homes looking after over 65s or those with dementia, excluding for example care homes for younger people with learning disabilities.

In response to an Oral Question on regular testing for people with learning disabilities (October 2020), the Minister noted that the Government is seeking to roll out regular testing to further care settings as testing capacity increases:

Baroness Hollins (CB): My Lords, a ministerial response in the other place last week stated that only some supported living settings would be able to access asymptomatic testing. People with learning disabilities have had excess death rates higher than over-65 year-old care home residents, and many live in supported living settings. When do the Government intend to extend regular asymptomatic testing to all supported living settings, where the majority are still effectively shielding, and thus perhaps also enable day centres to open?

Lord Bethell (Con): We are seeking to extend asymptomatic testing as widely as we possibly can and as soon as we possibly can. At the moment, our focus for testing is on residential social care, where we have committed to 100,000 tests a day. That is where the greatest threat comes from. But as the number and range of tests increase, we hope to be able to roll out asymptomatic testing to a much broader set of user cases, and

²² CQC, [CQC publishes data on deaths of people with a learning disability](#), 2 June 2020

²³ [Mencap responds to CQC death data on people with a learning disability and calls for Government to extend priority testing to people with a learning disability](#), 2 June 2020

the kind of care centres that she describes will surely be near the top of the list.²⁴

Impact on human rights for young people with learning disabilities

The Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) published a report on [The Government's response to COVID-19: human rights implications](#) (14 September 2020). The Committee examined the detention of young people who are autistic and/or have learning disabilities. It raised concerns about human rights abuses in places of detention, due to blanket bans on visits, increased use of restraint and confinement and heightened vulnerability to Covid-19:

122. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, these institutions where young people who are autistic and/or have learning disabilities are detained, were closed to the outside world, making the risk of human rights abuses even greater. Unlawful blanket bans on visits were put in place. This, along with the suspension of routine inspections, the increased use of restraint and solitary confinement, and the vulnerability of those in detention to infection with Covid-19 (due to underlying health conditions and the infeasibility of social distancing), created a severe crisis.

123. In our report on the Government's response to COVID-19 and the detention of young people who are autistic and/or have learning disabilities, published on 12 June 2020, we recommended that NHS England must write immediately to all hospitals, including private ones in which it commissions placements. This letter should state that hospitals must allow families to visit their loved ones, unless a risk assessment has been carried out relating to the individual's circumstances which demonstrates that there are clear reasons specific to the individual's circumstances why it would not be safe to do so.

124. Since that report was published, we have continued to be made aware of families who face restrictions in visiting their loved ones being held in mental health detention, potentially in breach of their right to family life. It is also of the gravest concern that the Care Quality Commission's evidence to this inquiry, submitted in July, notes that "mental health services are under pressure and ratings deteriorating." We welcome the CQC's commitment, set out in its written evidence that: "**[w]e have continued and will continue to cross the threshold** [of care settings] through inspections where we have significant concerns, including serious concerns about people's care and where there are human rights breaches." (emphasis in original).

125. We are currently awaiting the Government's response to both our previous reports on the detention of young people who are autistic and/or have a learning disability. Those reports exposed that young people in these settings were subjected to significant and frequent violations of their human rights. Our recommendations in these reports must be implemented in full as

²⁴ HL Deb, [Covid-19: People with Learning Difficulties and Autism](#), 5 October 2020, c380

matter of urgency to bring these human rights violations to an end.²⁵

²⁵ House of Commons, House of Lords, Joint Committee on Human Rights, [The Government's response to COVID-19: human rights implications](#) Seventh Report of Session 2019–21, 14 September 2020

8. Parliamentary material

8.1 Devolved Parliaments

Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru, Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, [Into sharp relief: Inequalities during the pandemic](#), August 2020

Scottish Parliament, Equalities and Human Rights Committee, [Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on Equalities and Human Rights](#) (ongoing enquiry),

8.2 UK Parliamentary Debates

HC Deb, [Coronavirus Act 2020 \(Review of temporary provisions\)](#), 30 September 2020, cc338-415

HL Deb, [Coronavirus Act 2020: Temporary provisions](#), 28 September 2020, cc289-95

HL Deb, [Covid-19: Social Care Services](#), 23 April 2020, cc95-141

8.3 UK Parliamentary Questions

[Remote Education: Coronavirus](#)

05 October 2020 | 95635

Asked by: Jim Shannon

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has in place to (a) contact, (b) encourage parents who have not sent their children back to school to do so and (c) provide home school support for children whose health precludes them from school re-entry.

Answered by: Nick Gibb | Department: Department for Education

Whilst over 7 million pupils are back in the classroom, we recognise that some parents will still have concerns. In such cases we recommend schools discuss with parents their concerns, and provide reassurance of the measures in place to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in their school.

In the guidance for full opening, we asked schools and local authorities to communicate clear and consistent expectations around attendance to families, and to use the additional catch up funding settings will receive. In addition, schools should make full use of existing pastoral and support services, attendance staff, and pupil premium funding to put measures in place for those families who will need additional support to return to school. Relevant guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#attendance>.

Schools and local authorities have also been asked to work closely with other professionals, as appropriate, to support pupils' return to school, including continuing to notify a child's social worker, if they have one, of non-attendance.

As is usually the case, schools should follow up whenever a pupil is absent to ascertain the reason and ensure any appropriate safeguarding action is taken. Schools have a duty to inform the local authority of any pupil of compulsory school age who has had a continuous period of unauthorised absence of ten school days or more.

On the 1 October, the Department announced a package of remote education support designed to help schools and colleges build on and deliver their existing plans in the event that individual or groups of pupils are unable to attend school because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Schools can access a new central support hub, where resources and information on remote education will be housed. This support has been co-designed with schools and includes a range of school-led webinars and resources intended to share good practice. We are also investing £1.5 million of additional funding to expand the EdTech Demonstrator programme, which provides peer-to-peer support for schools and colleges.

This adds to existing support including the resources available from Oak National Academy. The Department has made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy, both for the summer term of the academic year 2019-20 and the 2020-21 academic year, to provide video lessons for reception up to year 11. It provides lessons across a broad range of subjects and includes specialist content for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Oak National Academy will remain a free optional resource for 2020-21.

The support package can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

The Department is committed to the continuation of high-quality education for all pupils during this difficult time. We also want to make clear that schools have a duty to provide remote education for state-funded, school-age children who are unable to attend school due to the COVID-19 outbreak in line with guidance and the law. We have, therefore, published a Direction which provides an express legal duty on schools to provide remote education in these circumstances. The purpose of this direction is to provide greater certainty for all involved in the education sector, including parents, teachers and schools themselves.

[Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus](#)

05 October 2020 | 95632

Asked by: Jim Shannon

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has in place to ensure that the assessment of children who may require special needs support is not additionally delayed as a result of new covid-19 social distancing and other restrictions.

Answered by: Vicky Ford | Department: Department for Education

We understand the need for effective and timely assessment of children who require special needs support. The department's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Improvement and Intervention Unit, alongside NHS England, will be engaging with all local areas to discuss progress on recovery from the disruption caused by the outbreak of COVID-19, and the return to school for children with SEND. This will include representatives from local authorities, health and the parent carer forum for the area, and will be led by the department's professional SEND advisers, Department for Education case leads and an NHS England SEND adviser.

One section focuses on statutory processes, education, health and care (EHC) plans and annual reviews. SEND advisers will probe local areas on the timeliness and quality of plans, any barriers to progress, such as capacity to reduce EHC plan backlogs, and actions proposed by local areas to address weaknesses identified. The local authority engagement will also aim to ascertain if the areas have improvement needs that can be addressed by the department's funded delivery support programme.

We are increasing high needs funding for local authorities by £780 million this year and a further £730 million next year, which means high needs budgets will have grown by nearly a quarter in just 2 years. In addition, local authorities have been allocated a further £3.7 billion to help their communities through the COVID-19 outbreak. This funding is un-ringfenced, recognising local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the major COVID-19 service pressures in their local area, including support to children's services.

Schools: Coronavirus

29 September 2020 | 92796

Asked by: Dr Lisa Cameron

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) guidance, (b) support and (c) resources his Department is providing to schools with students returning to school who have (i) tracheostomies and (ii) other aerosol-generating procedures.

Answered by: Vicky Ford | Department: Department for Education

As I set out in my letter of 2 September to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, their families and carers and those who work to support them, we know that it is critical that all pupils and students can once again benefit from a full-time on-site education 5 days a week. There are a small number of children with complex needs that require aerosol generating procedures (AGPs) to be undertaken where risks need to be carefully managed in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Schools, health, and local authority partners need to work together on how the current guidance applies in their setting and to the specific children they are working with to enable them to return to school safely. We have heard examples of good practice locally and are working with Public Health England (PHE) and NHS England to establish

whether any changes to the guidance or further information about practice principles are needed.

It is important that schools communicate clearly with parents on progress towards supporting children who need AGPs to return to school safely, and provide remote education and support if they are unable to do so.

As part of their risk assessment, schools will need to consider measures so that specialists, therapists, clinicians, and other support staff for their pupils can continue to provide support that is needed. Schools should refer to the guidance for special schools, specialist colleges, local authorities and any other settings in managing the needs of children and young people with complex needs, such as AGPs. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>.

The government's guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment, provides further support on preventing and controlling infection and contains a section on caring for children who need AGPs at Annex A. This guidance reflects advice from PHE and is updated as necessary to reflect current advice. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>.

Disability: Physiotherapy

16 September 2020 | 84244

Asked by: Jim Shannon

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to provide physiotherapy for disabled patients who have had covid-19.

Answered by: Helen Whately | Department: Department of Health and Social Care

NHS England and NHS Improvement have worked with the University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust to develop a digital, interactive, personalised recovery programme for people recovering from COVID-19. The new 'Your COVID Recovery' service, which was announced on 5 July, forms part of National Health Service plans to expand access to COVID-19 rehabilitation treatments for those who have survived the virus but still have problems with breathing, mental health problems or other complications.

Social Services: Disability

09 September 2020 | 84283

Asked by: Dr Lisa Cameron

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to work with (a) disabled people, (b) their families and (c) social

care providers to develop an action plan to reintroduce safe and flexible community care and support services.

Answered by: Helen Whately | Department: DHSC

Local authorities and service providers should have maintained contact with carers and those receiving services throughout the lockdown. They will now be discussing arrangements to reintroduce care packages where these had been limited due to lockdown restrictions.

Understanding and mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on disabled people was a focus of the Social Sector COVID-19 Support Taskforce. The Taskforce was supported by several advisory groups, one of which was the learning disability and autism advisory group. The group included members with lived experience.

The recommendations of the Taskforce will shape our approach to COVID-19 in the adult social care sector and, in particular, the plans we put in place for winter which we will set out in the Adult Social Care Winter Plan, being published later this month.

Public Transport: Coronavirus

08 September 2020 | 82400

Asked by: Stuart Anderson

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that public transport is accessible to people with disabilities during the covid-19 outbreak.

Answered by: Chris Heaton-Harris | Department: Department for Transport

The Government remains as committed to delivering inclusive transport for all passengers as they were before the COVID-19 pandemic. Our expectation is that transport operators should continue to assist disabled passengers who need assistance. I made this clear in my open letter to the rail industry on 8 April 2020

(www.gov.uk/government/speeches/letter-from-the-rail-minister-to-the-rail-delivery-group-on-maintaining-accessibility-during-the-covid-19-outbreak).

We have also made clear to local authorities that the Public Sector Equality Duty still applies and that they must continue to consider the needs of disabled people. An accessible public realm is vital to enabling disabled people to access public transport. On 9 May the Department published statutory guidance to local authorities on reallocating road space which makes clear that authorities must consider the needs of disabled people and those with other protected characteristics when making changes to their transport networks

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reallocating-road-space-in-response-to-covid-19-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities/traffic-management-act-2004-network-management-in-response-to-covid-19>).

Public Sector Equality Duty requirements apply to temporary measures as they do to permanent ones.

I am meeting regularly with key disability stakeholders, including Disability Rights UK, Scope, Guide Dogs and Transport for All, to hear directly from them about the experiences of disabled people using transport. This engagement helps the Department take action quickly if we find that passengers are not receiving the assistance to which they are entitled. Many stakeholder groups have also developed their own "model guidance", which we have shared with Train Operating Companies.

The Government has launched an active communications campaign which advises people about exemptions to the face coverings rules for disability and health reasons. The publication reminds people that not all disability is visible and includes a non-compulsory exemption card should people want to use it.

[Employment: Coronavirus](#)

01 September 2020 | 77709

Asked by: Vicky Foxcroft

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the number of disabled people working from home as a result of the covid-19 outbreak or in response to the Government's covid-19 guidance on shielding during the covid-19 outbreak.

Answered by: Chloe Smith | Department: Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office | Asked to reply: UK Statistics Authority

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

[Letter from the UKSA](#)

[Employment: Disability](#)

24 July 2020 | 76770

Asked by: Dr Lisa Cameron

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing a jobs strategy for disabled people as part of the Government's covid-19 recovery strategy.

Answered by: Steve Barclay | Department: Treasury

On 8 July 2020, the Chancellor announced the Plan for Jobs, a package of measures which will help people find work by significantly increasing help offered through Jobcentres and providing individualised advice through the National Careers Service. The Chancellor also announced the Kickstart Scheme, a £2bn fund to create hundreds of thousands of new, fully subsidised jobs for young people. People with disabilities are able to access all of the above measures, in addition to the existing disability employment and support offer.

The government's manifesto committed to reducing the disability employment gap and the government is very aware that people with disabilities face extra barriers in both recruitment and retention.

On recruitment, people with disabilities who have lost their job and require more intensive employment support have access to both the Work and Health Programme and Intensive Personalised Employment Support. In addition, the Disability Confident scheme provides employers with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to attract, recruit, retain and develop people with disabilities in the workplace.

On retention, the Access to Work programme offers people with disabilities practical in-work support above the level of statutory reasonable adjustments, including a discretionary grant of up to £60,700 per year. The government will continue to look at ways of supporting people with health conditions to stay in work. The government plans to publish a response to the Health is Everyone's Business consultation by the end of the year. The consultation set out proposals to assist all employers to take early and supportive action to help staff who are managing health conditions in work.

[Disability](#)

23 July 2020 | 76769

Asked by: Dr Lisa Cameron

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when the Government plans to publish its National Strategy for Disabled People.

Answered by: Justin Tomlinson | Department: Department for Work and Pensions

Due to Covid 19 impacts, a slower timetable for publication of the National Strategy for Disabled People is inevitable. This is to ensure that we are able to meaningfully engage with stakeholders and strengthen our evidence base to deliver the ambitious strategy that the Prime Minister has called for. We are aiming to publish in Spring 2021.

[Employment: Disability](#)

23 July 2020 | 76768

Asked by: Dr Lisa Cameron

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to remove barriers to disabled people returning to work after the covid-19 outbreak.

Answered by: Justin Tomlinson | Department: DWP

Recognising the challenges Covid-19 may present, DWP has introduced a number of measures to support disabled people whether they are working from home, or returning to work at their workplaces.

The Access to Work offers disabled people practical in-work support above the level of statutory reasonable adjustments, including a discretionary grant of up to £60,700 per year. The scheme's new

Blended Offer complements support provided by employers and contains a flexible mix of support, including support to work from more than one location, a package of home working support which can be blended with workplace support, mental health support for people returning to work after a period of furlough or shielding, travel-to-work support where the individual's disability means social distancing on public transport is too risky and the prioritisation of applications from disabled people in the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Group.

During the pandemic Access to Work introduced a number of measures to enable disabled people to move into or retain employment, the measures included:

- Transporting assistive technology from the workplace to the home environment to support home working and, where this is not possible, AtW will work with the disabled person and their employer to consider new adjustments to support adaptations to standard equipment.
- Extending timeframes for receiving claims for payments
- Accepting email claim forms and employer/support signatures via email so customers can shield.
- Delivering assessments through virtual means to further protect customers.
- Accepting email claim forms from customers who request this as a reasonable adjustment;
- Extending Support Worker awards that are coming to an end by 6 months;
- Prioritising new applications from key workers and those with jobs starting within the next 4 weeks.

Disabled people who have lost their job and require more intensive employment support still have access to both the Work and Health Programme and Intensive Personalised Employment Support. Providers are making use of digital channels to provide one to one support, including regular health and wellbeing conversations with our most vulnerable claimants.

In addition, Disability Confident provides employers with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to attract, recruit, retain and develop disabled people in the workplace.

[Visual Impairment: Social Distancing](#)

21 Jul 2020 | 72881

Asked by: Mark Menzies

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what guidance he has issued to (a) businesses and (b) service providers on making social distancing measures accessible for blind and partially sighted people.

Answered by: Paul Scully | Department: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

The Government has published guidance on safer working for a range of working environments, available on GOV.UK. The guidance does not change employers' obligations to make reasonable adjustments for those with disabilities.

Our guidance also does not replace existing employment, health and safety or equalities legislation. It provides information to employers on how best to meet these responsibilities in the context of COVID-19.

The safer workplaces guidance provides some suggestions to help employers make their workplaces COVID-19 secure for their employees, visitors and customers. We expect all businesses to approach reopening in a sensible way, taking account of the Government's guidance and discussing with neighbouring businesses and their local authorities where applicable.

[Hearing Impairment: Coronavirus](#)**16 Jul 2020 | 58070****Asked by: Mary Kelly Foy**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has issued to (a) the NHS and (b) social care providers on meeting the requirements of the Accessible Information Standard for patients with (i) hearing loss and (ii) who face additional communication barriers due to the use of face masks during the covid-19 outbreak.

Answered by: Jo Churchill | Department: DHSC

The recommendations for the use of face masks by hospital staff and face coverings for hospital visitors have been made for to help prevent the spread of infection. Evidence has shown that those infected with COVID-19 can have very mild or no respiratory symptoms (asymptomatic) and potentially transmit the virus to others without being aware of it, so it is important we take steps to reduce the risk of transmission from staff who may be asymptomatic.

Staff working alone in a private workspace will not be expected to wear a mask but when they leave the private work area to move through the hospital building, e.g. on an errand, or for meal breaks, they should put on a surgical face mask as outlined in the guidance.

For some, wearing of a face covering may be difficult, and therefore all other measures must also be considered and introduced e.g. social/physical distancing, timed appointments; being seen immediately and not kept in waiting rooms. Individual risk assessments should be undertaken where required; for example, patients with mental health and learning disabilities. Such risk assessments must be documented.

The use of face masks due to the COVID-19 pandemic may have an impact on patients who are deaf or have a hearing impairment as they can block the face of healthcare workers and prevent the ability to use visual cues such as facial expressions and lip reading.

The Government's personal protective equipment procurement team has sourced clear surgical face masks to support communication with patients who may be deaf or hearing impaired. They are working with regions to identify where those are best distributed.

Where clear masks are not possible, communication tactics should be considered to support patients and visitors who are deaf or have a hearing impairment.

Coronavirus: Disability

06 July 2020 | 53650

Asked by: Fleur Anderson

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to protect people with disabilities from covid-19.

Answering member: Helen Whately | Department: DHSC

The Government is working to protect disabled people from Covid-19. This includes:

- Providing guidance on social distancing and advice for people with specific conditions who are considered to be clinically vulnerable to Covid-19:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>

- Advising people with specific health conditions, who are deemed to be extremely clinically vulnerable to Covid-19, to shield, and providing direct support to the shielded population. Support provided includes weekly boxes of basic supplies, priority for supermarket deliveries and help to meet basic care needs.

- Providing guidance and advice for health and social care providers and professionals to mitigate risks of Covid-19:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/wuhan-novel-coronavirus#adult-social-care>

- Making available the NHS Volunteer Responders programme to help support people who are vulnerable but not shielding, including disabled people.

Flexible Working: Coronavirus

30 June 2020 | 62298

Asked by: Barry Sheerman,

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps her Department is taking to ensure suitable flexible working arrangements for people with disabilities in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Answered by: Paul Scully | Department: BEIS

The Government is committed to supporting disabled people affected by the Covid-19 outbreak. The Government continues to support

disabled employees to access assistive technology and other forms of support they need to remain in work. For example, Access to Work is continuing to provide support for people with a disability or health condition whether they are working in the workplace or are working from home.

Currently the Government advice is that people should be working from home where it is possible to do so. Employers have particular responsibilities towards disabled workers including making reasonable adjustments to avoid disabled workers being put at a disadvantage.

The law is clear: to discriminate directly or indirectly, against anyone because of a protected characteristic such as age, sex or disability, race or ethnicity is unlawful. All equality and discrimination laws and obligations continue to apply during the Coronavirus pandemic.

[Public Transport: Coronavirus](#)

29 June 2020 | 61840

Asked by: Robert Largan

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that wheelchair users are able to safely access public transport, in the context of social distancing guidelines.

Answered by: Chris Heaton-Harris | Department: Department for Transport

The Government remains as committed to delivering inclusive transport for all passengers as they were before the COVID-19 pandemic. We have made clear to local authorities that the Public Sector Equality Duty still applies and that they must continue to consider the needs of disabled people.

Our expectation is that transport operators should continue to assist disabled passengers who need assistance, including wheelchair users. I made this clear in my open letter to the rail industry on 8 April 2020.

I am also meeting regularly with key disability stakeholders, including Disability Rights UK, Scope and Transport for All, to hear directly from them about the experiences of disabled people using transport. This means we will be able to take action quickly if we find that passengers are not receiving the assistance to which they are entitled.

An accessible public realm is vital to enabling disabled people to access public transport. On 9 May the Department published statutory guidance to local authorities on reallocating road space which makes clear that authorities must consider the needs of disabled people and those with other protected characteristics when making changes to their transport networks. Public Sector Equality Duty requirements apply to temporary measures as they do to permanent ones.

Further, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has published guidance for the owners and operators of urban centres to help social distancing, including at transport hubs.

[Learning Disability: Coronavirus](#)

18 June 2020 | 51514

Asked by: David Amess

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that people with learning disabilities living (a) independently, (b) with family and (c) in care homes receive equal access to testing and treatment for covid-19; and whether he plans to allocate resources to enable the safe return to community (i) activities and (ii) services to support the (A) physical and (B) mental well-being of those people.

Answered by: Helen Whately | Department: DHSC

From 7 June 2020 all remaining adult care homes will be able to access whole care home testing for all residents and asymptomatic staff through the digital portal at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test-care-home>

We expect that access to services that support people with learning disabilities should be restored as soon as is appropriate, in line with social distancing guidelines, and as regulations and guidance permit. Work is underway to plan for an expected increase in demand for patients needing mental health support due to COVID-19. Existing mental health services are open and available for any person requiring support.

[Coronavirus: Disability](#)

03 June 2020 | 45275

Asked by: Dr Lisa Cameron,

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure public health and care services remain aware of their legal obligations to (a) make reasonable adjustments, (b) meet communication needs and (c) assess capacity during care or treatment for disabled people during the covid-19 outbreak.

Answered by: Helen Whately | Department: DHSC

A range of guidance has been published to ensure that public health and care services remain aware of their legal obligations to make reasonable adjustments during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, NHS England and NHS Improvement have produced the 'Grab and Go' hospital passport and related guidance to support organisations to make reasonable adjustments for people with learning disabilities and/or autism.

We expect organisations to continue to comply with the requirements of the Accessible Information Standard which National Health Service organisations must follow to support effective communication. NHS England and NHS Improvement have also published a range of easy read documents to support the communication needs of people with a learning disability, autism or both during COVID-19.

The principles of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and the safeguards provided by the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards still apply during the

COVID-19 outbreak. On 9 April we published guidance to help decision makers make decisions regarding capacity quickly and safely, whilst also keeping the person at the centre of the process.

[Coronavirus: Disability](#)

18 May 2020 | 45274

Asked by: Dr Lisa Cameron

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will ensure that all key information and communications on covid-19 are (a) accessible to disabled people and (b) available in a range of formats.

Answered by: Chloe Smith | Department: Cabinet Office

Accessibility of public information on Covid-19 is a high priority for the Government. We have worked to ensure that key health advice like detailed social distancing guidance is available in alternative formats including large print, British Sign Language, braille in English and Welsh and audio description.

We ensure that we publish guidance on how to access a range of formats on our website through the gov.uk accessibility statement. We are continually reviewing our communications to ensure they are as accessible as possible.

[Employment: Disability](#)

14 May 2020 | 43959

Asked by: Dr Lisa Cameron

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to monitor the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on its goal of supporting one million more disabled people into work.

Answered by: Justin Tomlinson | Department: DWP

The Government is committed to reducing the disability employment gap and seeing one million more disabled people in work between 2017 and 2027. We continue to monitor employment of disabled people using the quarterly Labour Force Survey along with other relevant sources. Collection of this information is happening now but there will be a period until data needed to robustly assess the effects of the covid-19 outbreak on disabled people's employment is available.

Labour Force Survey statistics for the first quarter of 2020, will be reported by the Office for National Statistics on 19 May 2020, covering the very start of the covid-19 outbreak in March. Statistics for the second quarter of 2020 will be available in August.

The Office for National Statistics is producing a range of wider information about the social and economic impacts of covid-19 such as the Business Impact of Coronavirus (BIC) survey. Statistics from the ONS Omnibus survey for 3 April 2020 to 13 April 2020 show that a lower proportion of disabled people than non-disabled people were worried about aspects of work and household finances.

[Press Conferences: Coronavirus](#)

4 May 2020 39766

Asked by: Marsha De Cordova

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reasons a British Sign Language interpreter is not provided in the Government's daily press briefings on covid-19; and if he will take steps to ensure that a British Sign Language interpreter is included in future briefings.

Answered by: Chloe Smith | Department: Cabinet Office

It is vital that key information is accessible to all. Since the daily press briefings began, British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation has been available on the national broadcaster. The BBC provides BSL interpretation at the daily No10 press conference via its News channel, Youtube channel and iPlayer. This is available free to air.

8.4 UK Parliament Committee reports

Women and Equalities Select Committee, [Unequal impact? Coronavirus, disability and access to services: Interim report into temporary conditions in the Coronavirus Act. Women and Equalities Committee first report with formal minutes](#), 22 September 2020 | House of Commons | HC 386 2019-21

Joint Committee on Human Rights, [The Government's response to COVID-19: human rights implications](#), 21 September 2020 | House of Commons | HC 265 / HL 125 2019-21

8.5 UK Parliament petitions

E-petition 301461, [Require British Sign Language Interpreters for emergency announcements on TV \(with Government response\)](#), 13 May 2020

8.6 Early Day Motions

[Support for Learning Service](#)

EDM 960 (Session 2019-21)

5 October 2020

Apsana Begum

That this House notes that Support for Learning Services provide early intervention, assessment and support for children with SEND from birth to 25, working with families, nurseries and schools to enable all children to be fully included in their local settings and communities and to achieve positive outcomes; further notes that evidence shows that the covid-19 outbreak has hit disabled children and their families disproportionately and deepened inequalities; is therefore concerned at the proposal to reduce Tower Hamlets Support for Learning Service by about 50 percent which will force schools to take on more responsibilities and work; is alarmed that at a time when there is a spike in need, the capacity of schools, central services and local authorities are being undermined by underfunding and cuts; and calls on the

Government to immediately increase funding levels for SEND to ensure provision is maintained and expanded where necessary.

[Shortage of learning disability nurses](#)

EDM 919 (Session 2019-21)

23 September 2020

Bob Blackman

That this house expresses concern that there will potentially be a repeat of the 134 per cent increase in deaths of people with learning disabilities that happened between 10 April and 15 of May 2020 with the recent rise of covid-19 cases without more learning disability (LD) nurses; notes that the NHS North West London Trust recently decided to recruit another learning disability nurse to address the issues that led to this increase in deaths; further notes that more LD nurses would help the Government implement its incoming Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training in Learning Disability and Autism; and calls on the Government to launch a campaign to support the recruitment of more learning disability nurses and get more into lead positions at hospitals.

[Disabled students and access to higher education](#)

EDM 739 (Session 2019-21)

20 July 2020

Dr Lisa Cameron

That this House is concerned that students with disabilities face a financial barrier when accessing assistive technology and other miscellaneous equipment as a result of the £200 minimum contribution required from the Disabled Students Allowance; notes that the implication of that cost is likely to be magnified as a result of the transition to e-learning following the covid-19 outbreak; calls on the Government to acknowledge the effect of that barrier on accessing higher education and on social mobility, and further calls on the Government to implement alternative mechanisms to ensure that a lack of finance is no longer a significant barrier to inclusive education opportunities for students with disabilities.

[Accessibility of the covid-19 Government briefings](#)

EDM 412 (Session 2019-21)

30 April 2020

Layla Moran

That this House notes that the daily covid-19 Government briefings must be accessible to all citizens of the United Kingdom; recognises the need for the Government to follow example of the Scottish Government by including sign language interpreters in those briefings; and acknowledges the British Deaf Association's concerns that the daily briefings are inaccessible for deaf people across the country.

9. Press Articles

The following is a selection of news and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or the accuracy of external content.

General

[Coronavirus in Scotland: learning disabled go months without seeing family](#)

The Times

16 September 2020

[COVID crisis 'left disabled people feeling abandoned, ignored and devalued'](#)

Disability News Service

10 September 2020

[Coronavirus: Disabled 'pushed out' of post-lockdown world](#)

BBC

5 September 2020

[Coronavirus: Why disabled people are calling for a Covid-19 inquiry](#)

BBC

4 July 2020

[Coronavirus: Disabled people 'forgotten' by government strategy](#)

BBC

1 May 2020

[Disabled people left off coronavirus vulnerable list go without food](#)

The Guardian

19 April 2020

[UK: COVID-19 Law Puts Rights of People with Disabilities at Risk](#)

Human Rights Watch

26 March 2020

Education

[Special needs children 'shut out' of school in England due to Covid-19 rules](#)

The Observer

4 October 2020

[Parents of disabled children 'pray for the end of each day' during lockdown](#)

The Times

13 September 2020

[Coronavirus: Parents of disabled children 'cut off and ignored'](#)

BBC

27 May 2020

Employment

[Coronavirus: Disabled people fear losing their job](#)

BBC

16 September 2020

[Parents, carers and disabled people in UK 'twice as likely to lose job'](#)

The Guardian

6 August 2020

[Disabled people in UK threatened with sack unless they go back to work](#)

The Guardian

18 May 2020

Adult Social Care

[Coronavirus restrictions have robbed disabled people of their independence](#)

The Guardian

6 October 2020

['I have lost care support because of coronavirus'](#)

BBC Scotland

26 April 2020

Health

[Two in three victims of Covid-19 had a disability](#)

The Times

1 July 2020

[Coronavirus: Hundreds of learning disability deaths in just eight weeks, new data shows](#)

The Independent

19 May 2020

10. Press Releases

[Government delivers 250,000 clear face masks to support people with hearing loss](#)

Department of Health and Social Care

5 September 2020

[New help on offer for disabled people working from home during the pandemic](#)

Department for Work and Pensions

18 August 2020

[Supporting local areas to prioritise and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND](#)

Ofsted

9 July 2020

[£37 million to support children with complex needs](#)

Department for Education

19 May 2020

[Supporting disabled people through the coronavirus outbreak](#)

A joint statement from the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, the Minister for Care, and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families.

31 March 2020

11. Reports and statistics

Official statistics

Office for National Statistics (ONS), [Rates of deaths involving COVID-19 by disability status](#), England and Wales, 18 September 2020

ONS, [Counts of deaths involving COVID-19 and all deaths by disability status, England and Wales](#), 18 September 2020

Public Health Wales, [Covid-19 related deaths in Wales amongst people with learning disabilities from 1 March to 26 May 2020](#), 4 September 2020

Care Quality Commission (CQC), [Data on deaths of people with a learning disability](#), 2 June 2020

CQC, [Information about how many people with a learning disability have died during the coronavirus outbreak compared to last year](#), June 2020

ONS, [Coronavirus and the social impacts on disabled people in Great Britain](#), 24 April 2020

International organisations

UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, [Statement on Covid-19 and the human rights of persons with disabilities](#), 9 June 2020

International Labour Organisation, [Covid-19 and the world of work: Ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities at all stages of the response](#), 4 June 2020

UN, [Policy brief: A Disability-Inclusive response to Covid-19](#), May 2020

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, [Leaving no one behind: the COVID-19 crisis through the disability and gender lens](#), May 2020

UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, [Covid-19 and the rights of persons with disabilities: guidance](#), 29 April 2020

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