Written Answers

Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that information for patients is provided in accessible formats for (a) non-English speakers, (b) partially-sighted people and (c) those with learning disabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Simon Burns (Minister of State (Health), Health; Chelmsford, Conservative)

The Department recognises the benefits of good quality accessible information for patients. The national health service, third parties performing public functions on its behalf and the Department are already subject to the public sector equality duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 which requires public authorities to pay due regard to eliminating discrimination and advancing equality of opportunity. In practice this means that the Department and NHS organisations provide information to patients in alternative formats and languages where appropriate.

As part of the Department's wider ambition to give people more information and control over their care, our consultation document "Liberating the NHS: An Information Revolution", published in October 2010, sought views on how to improve the accessibility of information to patients, including those requiring information in languages other than English and those using learning disabilities services. A copy has already been placed in the Library. The Department's Information Strategy will respond to that consultation and is planned to be published in the winter.

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