Written Answer

Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will issue guidance to commissioners of sign language interpreters in the NHS to ensure that only fully qualified interpreters are used during health appointments; and if he will make a statement.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth, Labour)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health who he proposes will be responsible for commissioning sign language interpreters for healthcare appointments in the new NHS structure.

Paul Burstow (Minister of State (Care Services), Health; Sutton and Cheam, Liberal Democrat)

From 1 April 2013, it will be for the NHS Commissioning Board and clinical commissioning groups to make arrangements, for the delivery of services they are responsible for, including the appropriate provision of interpreters for users of sign language services during health care appointments.

The Department has no plans to issue guidance on this matter. From 1 April 2013 it will be for the NHS Commissioning Board to decide what guidance it wishes to issue to clinical commissioning groups.

When making decisions about what services are delivered locally, all national health service organisations must assure themselves that they have complied with the Equality Act 2010. This includes advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic, including a disability such as hearing loss, and those who do not. Advancing equality involves, for example, taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.

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