



The Queen's Speech December 2019

INTRODUCTION

The Queen laid out the Government's legislative programme for the new parliamentary session on Thursday 19 December. She announced a number of things of potential interest to the speech and language therapy profession. These include five Bills:

- NHS Funding Bill
- NHS Long Term Plan Bill
- Medicines and Medical Devices Bill
- Health Service Safety Investigations Bill
- Serious Violence Bill

Other reforms announced which may be relevant to speech and language therapy include:

- Delivering the NHS Long Term Plan
- Social care reform
- Mental health reform
- National disability strategy
- Royal Commission on the Criminal Justice Process

Going forward, the RCSLT Policy and Public Affairs Team will keep a watching brief on these areas and seek to influence them where appropriate.

A summary of relevant information from the Government's background briefing is included below.

BILLS

NHS Funding Bill: *“For the first time, the National Health Service's multi-year funding settlement, agreed earlier this year, will be enshrined in law.”*

- Early legislation will be brought forward to enshrine in law the multi-year funding settlement for the NHS, agreed earlier this year, that will see a £33.9 billion increase in cash terms by 2023-24.

NHS Long Term Plan Bill:

- The Government is considering the NHS's recommendations and will bring forward detailed proposals shortly. This will include measures to tackle barriers the NHS has told Government it faces.

- This will lead to draft legislation that will aim to accelerate the Long Term Plan for the NHS, transforming patient care and future-proofing the NHS.

Legislation to enshrine the NHS funding settlement and to implement the NHS Long Term Plan would extend and apply to England only. NHS and health policy is devolved to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Medicines and Medical Devices Bill

- The main elements of the bill include:
 - Powers to remove bureaucracy for the lowest risk clinical trials, with the aim of encouraging the rapid introduction of new medicines.
 - Increasing the range of professions able to prescribe and supply certain medicines to make the most effective use of the NHS workforce where recommended by experts, as well as developing more innovative ways of dispensing medicines in local pharmacies.
- The Bill's provisions would extend and apply to the whole of the UK. Human and veterinary medicines are reserved in the case of Scotland and Wales, but are devolved to Northern Ireland.

Health Service Safety Investigations Bill

- The purpose of the Bill is to establish the world's first independent body – the Health Service Safety Investigations Body (HSSIB) - to investigate patient safety concerns and share recommendations to prevent similar incidents occurring.
- The main elements of the Bill include:
 - prohibiting the disclosure of information held by HSSIB, except in limited circumstances, with the aim of allowing participants to be candid in the information they provide and enable thorough investigations.
 - improving the quality and effectiveness of local investigations by developing standards, providing advice, guidance and training to organisations.
- The Bill's provisions would extend and apply in the main to England and Wales, with exception to one clause on data protection which also extends and applies to the whole of the UK.

Serious Violence Bill: "New laws will require schools, police, councils and health authorities to work together to prevent serious crime."

- The purpose of the Bill is to:
 - Create new duties on a range of specified agencies across different sectors, such as local government, youth offending, and health and probation, to work collaboratively, share data and information, and put in place plans to prevent and reduce serious violence within their communities.
 - Amend the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to ensure that serious violence is an explicit priority for Community Safety Partnerships, which include local police, fire and probation services, as well as local authorities and wider public services.
 - Ensure the police have the powers they need to keep weapons off the streets

- The Government has stated that the main benefits of the Bill would include:
 - A multi-agency approach to tackle the root causes of violent crime by placing an emphasis on intervention with young people and acknowledging that law enforcement alone cannot tackle violence.
 - Complementing the Government's investment in Violence Reduction Units in the areas most affected by serious violence by ensuring that agencies work effectively together.
- Statutory guidance will be published that will set out the likely implications on a sector-by-sector basis.
- The Bill's provisions would extend and apply to England and Wales only.

OTHER REFORMS

Delivering the NHS Long Term Plan: “Steps will be taken to grow and support the National Health Service’s workforce and a new visa will ensure qualified doctors, nurses and health professionals have fast-track entry to the United Kingdom.”

- Reforms will include measures intended to deliver more nurses, with non-repayable maintenance payments of at least £5,000 per year for nursing, midwifery and some allied health professional students, more doctors and more primary care professionals in general practice.
- The NHS People Plan will aim to ensure that qualified doctors, nurses and allied health professionals with a job offer from the NHS, and who have been trained to a recognised standard, will be offered fast-track entry, reduced visa fees and dedicated support to come to the UK.

Social care reform: “My ministers will seek cross-party consensus on proposals for long term reform of social care. They will ensure that the social care system provides everyone with the dignity and security they deserve and that no one who needs care has to sell their home to pay for it.”

- The Government has committed to a three-point plan:
 - Providing councils with an additional £1 billion for adults and children’s social care in every year of this Parliament. In addition, the government will consult on a 2 per cent precept that will enable councils to access a further £500 million for adult social care for 2020-21.
 - Seeking a cross-party consensus in order to bring forward the necessary proposals and legislation for long-term social care reform in England.
 - Ensuring that nobody needing care will be forced to sell their home to pay for it.

Mental health reform: “My ministers will continue work to reform the Mental Health Act.”

- In 2017, the Government commissioned the independent review of the Mental Health Act.

- By the end of this year the Government will publish a White Paper, setting out their response. This will pave the way for reform to the Mental Health Act, and tackle issues addressed by the review.
- The process of detention, care and treatment while detained will be reformed, including by providing patients with the ability to challenge detention.

National disability strategy

- The Government will publish a National Strategy for Disabled People in 2020.
- The strategy, to be developed with disabled people, disability organisations and charities, will include housing, education & transport.
- The benefits aspects of the National Disability Strategy will be considered in a Green Paper, and will consider how Government can ensure the benefits system and wider Department of Work and Pensions support can best help disabled people.
- The Government will be bringing forward detailed proposals later next year in light of feedback to the “health is everyone’s business” consultation.
- The Government are introducing a minimum award length for the Personal Independence Payment. They will aim to ensure no one will be reassessed for at least 18 months from their last review, unless their needs have changed.

Royal Commission on the Criminal Justice Process: “My ministers will establish a Royal Commission to review and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice process.”

- The Government will establish a Royal Commission on the criminal justice process in England and Wales.
- This will deliver a fundamental review of the key issues affecting the system, both today and in the future.
- The Commission’s recommendations will aim to deliver improvements to the criminal justice process to make it more efficient and effective.
- The Government will set out the terms of reference for the Royal Commission in due course, which will include details on the scope, duration and membership of the Commission.

More information on The Queen’s Speech, and the Government’s legislative programme, is available via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/queens-speech-december-2019-background-briefing-notes>