

# Press release: Key reforms mean big difference to sight impaired

Changes brought in by the Department of Health after a recommendation from the Minister for the Constitution, will allow local authorities to use records for those with vision impairments to support participation in electoral events – provided the person's consent has been given to do so.

As a result, people with vision impairments will have access to wider services which will assist them in voting at elections.

A new [Certificate of Vision Impairment \(CVI\) form and accompanying Explanatory Notes for Ophthalmologists](#) was launched by the Department for Health yesterday. This makes the CVI process more effective to ensure that people who are newly certified as sight impaired or severely sight impaired receive the support they need as soon as possible.

Minister for the Constitution, Chris Skidmore said:

Our reform of the Certificate of Vision Impairment will mean that, for the first time, local authorities will be able to contact those who hold a CVI in order to ask whether they need any extra help or support when it comes to registering to vote, or participating in our elections.

We want to ensure that our elections are as accessible as possible, and to remove any barriers that exist to democratic participation – every voice matters and we want ours to be a democracy that works for everyone.

Fazilet Hadi, RNIB's Deputy Chief Executive, said:

This is a really important step forward for blind and partially sighted voters. Our 2017 voting survey revealed that only 1 in 5 said they got information such as polling cards in a format they can read.

Enabling local authorities to send accessible voting information directly to blind and partially sighted people will make a huge difference. Equal access to voting starts with an accessible polling card.

## **Background information**

- when a person's sight loss reaches certain levels they are entitled, if consenting, to be certified as severely sight impaired or sight impaired by a Consultant Ophthalmologist. This allows them to receive certification and is an opportunity for the patient to access support and services.