

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.
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[Press release: Nominations open for 2017 awards celebrating police volunteers](#)

Nominations for the 24th annual Lord Ferrers Awards to recognise the outstanding contribution of Special Constables, Police Support Volunteers and Volunteer Police Cadets opened today (Friday 18 August).

This year a new category, the 'Technical Innovation Award', has been introduced to encourage recognition of 'cyber specials' and volunteers using technology creatively to combat the changing nature of crime.

Last year almost 300 nominations were submitted by police forces across England and Wales, and for the first time, members of the public could also recommend volunteers for their service, 43 exceptional candidates were shortlisted.

Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, Nick Hurd said:

Policing has a long and proud history of volunteers and the Lord Ferrers Awards are an opportunity to recognise and celebrate their achievements.

Every day Special Constables, Police Support Volunteers and Volunteer Police Cadets make a selfless contribution to tackling crime and supporting police forces.

I urge police officers and members of the public to nominate police volunteers who they think have made an outstanding contribution to their communities for an award.

The awards are named in honour of the late Lord Ferrers, the former Home Office minister and founder of the awards, who died in November 2012.

The awards ceremony, sponsored by Police Mutual, will take place in central London in November 2017. Winners will be presented with their awards by Home

Officer Ministers, senior officials and Chief Police Officers.

Members of the public have from [Friday 18 August until midnight on Sunday 17 September to make nominations.](#)

Lord Ferrers Award categories are:

- Ferrers Special Constabulary – Individual Award: celebrating Special Constables who have demonstrated a sustained and significant contribution to policing in their local communities.
- Ferrers Special Constabulary – Team Award (Sponsored by Police Mutual): recognising teams of Special Constables who have demonstrated a sustained and significant contribution to policing in their local communities.
- Police Support Volunteer – Individual Award: celebrating Police Support Volunteers who have demonstrated a significant and sustained contribution to policing in their local communities.
- Police Support Volunteer – Team Award: recognising teams who have worked together to make a significant and sustained contribution to policing in their local communities.
- Volunteer Police Cadet – Individual Award: celebrating individual Volunteer Police Cadets who have demonstrated a significant and sustained contribution to policing in their local communities.
- Volunteer Police Cadet – Team Award: open to teams who have worked together to make a significant and sustained contribution to policing in their local communities.
- Employer Supported Policing Award: open to individuals and teams of employees who support their local police force through volunteering. The award recognises the contribution of both volunteers and their employers and will now be open to those accredited under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme.
- Leadership Award (Sponsored by ASCCO): open to individual Special Constables who have demonstrated a significant and sustained contribution to leadership.
- Technical Innovation Award – Team or Individual: open to Special Constables, Police Support Volunteers or Volunteer Police Cadets. The award recognises the contribution volunteers can bring to using IT and

technology to support policing

[Press release: Councillors see plans for reducing flooding in Mytholmroyd](#)

A guided walking tour of Mytholmroyd to share plans for the new £30m flood alleviation scheme proposed for the village has been hosted for ward councillors.

They were invited to meet the Environment Agency's project team on Friday 18 August to share their plans for the project on site and ask any questions.

Mark Tupman, senior advisor with the Environment Agency, said:

Our aim is to explain to the local councillors, who represent the people of Mytholmroyd, our plans for the scheme so that they fully understand the timing of various activities and have a point of contact throughout the two-year project.

We would like to give them an opportunity to ask any questions and raise any concerns and see first-hand the plans by taking a walk around the site.

The Calderdale Flood Partnership Board recently approved the allocation of funding of the major flood scheme to improve the protection for homes and businesses in Mytholmroyd

The Environment Agency will be submitting a series of submissions for planning permission this week, with further submissions planned for September and construction is expected to commence in the Autumn.

The scheme for Mytholmroyd has been developed in partnership with Calderdale Council, the local community, and partners. As design work is finalised, the current options for the scheme include:

- New, raised flood and improved walls
- The relocation of Caldene Bridge
- Widening of the river channel at key locations
- Strengthening and waterproofing of buildings next to the river.

The Leader of Calderdale Council, Cllr Tim Swift, said:

The works in Mytholmroyd are part of an ongoing programme to reduce

the risk of flooding across Calderdale. We're keen for people in the local community to keep up to date with the work, which they can do by visiting www.eyeoncalderdale.com or popping in to the Mytholmroyd flood information centre during opening hours.

The second phase of a demolition is currently being carried out at a site on the main A646 Burnley road through the village which is expected to take a further six weeks. This involves demolishing three two-storey buildings, including a former post office, which has been relocated to the nearby Grange Dene complex.

The demolition of the buildings is being done carefully in order to deal with the constraints associated with their proximity to the highway, the river, and the fact they are within a conservation area. Historic England, the Environment Agency and Calderdale Council are all keen that the stone is re-used. The properties are being demolished to prevent any further collapse during another flood event.

Plans are for the scheme to be completed in phases and widening the river at Greenhill Industrial Estate will continue to be explored.

A flood information centre is open in the village offering the public advice on flood resilience and the opportunity to speak to Environment Agency staff about plans for flood schemes in Calderdale.

Following the flooding of December 2015, the Environment Agency has completed six new schemes, reducing flood risk to 500 homes as part of a £9million recovery programme across Calderdale. In Mytholmroyd, significant work to clear the channel, repair damaged walls and make safe damaged buildings has already been carried out.

[Press release: Young people to benefit from new mental health awareness course](#)

Thousands of teenagers will receive additional support to improve their mental health as part of a new youth initiative, the Prime Minister announced on 17 August.

On A Level results day, Prime Minister Theresa May unveiled a new course is to be developed by National Citizen Service (NCS), to raise awareness of mental health among young people and improve their knowledge of how to get help.

Mental health issues disproportionately affect young people, with over half of mental health problems starting by the age of 14 and 75 per cent by the age of 18.

The course will be developed with mental health experts and NCS graduates and be delivered as part of the organisation's programme to prepare young people for the challenges of adult life and work.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

Mental health issues can have a devastating effect on young lives and that's why making sure young people are fully supported both inside and outside of the classroom is a key priority for me.

It is not only the pressures of school and exams, though that is in the front of our minds today, but also self-esteem issues, struggles with home life or friendships, and getting into university or finding a job that can all affect mental wellbeing.

We know that early intervention, along with giving young people the confidence to access support, is key – that's where NCS plays such a vital role. NCS helps young people forge friendships across social divides and enhance their confidence and self-esteem.

This excellent enhancement to the NCS programme will build on the work we are already doing in schools and ensure young people get the knowledge and help they need.

The package of measures delivered by NCS will include:

- a dedicated mental health awareness course for teenagers taking part in NCS
- new mental health training for more than 10,000 frontline NCS staff to improve support to young people
- a new network of young NCS graduates to champion mental health awareness

Michael Lynas, chief executive of NCS, said:

NCS brings young people from all backgrounds together for a shared experience that changes their lives for good.

By experiencing the great outdoors, building new friendships and serving their community these young people not only build important

skills for life and work, they also improve their health and wellbeing.

As our country's flagship programme for sixteen year olds, we know just how important the issue of mental health is to this age group and we hope this initiative will help the next generation to live healthier and happier lives.

On 17th August, the Prime Minister met young people who are benefitting from the NCS programme as well as graduates of the scheme and staff.

The new mental health initiative being delivered by NCS, which is fully funded by the government, builds further on the Prime Minister's existing commitment to improve mental health training within schools.

The first training sessions for secondary school teachers and staff on how to identify and respond to the early signs of mental health problems began in June. All secondary schools will be offered this training by 2020, and all primary schools by 2022.

In 2017 more than 100,000 young people will take part in an NCS programme. Independent evaluations of NCS have shown it has positive impacts on young people's confidence as well as their mental wellbeing.

Press release: Highways England gearing up for CarFest fun

Traffic officers will be at the three-day event next week, organised by BBC Radio 2 DJ Chris Evans in aid of Children in Need, to run a kids' driving school.

Motorists heading off on long journeys and holidays this summer are being urged to make sure their vehicles are ready for the road in a bid to cut the number of breakdowns.

And Highways England will be challenging both children and their parents at CarFest South to learn what vehicle checks need to be completed before they go on long journeys, to keep them safe.

Highways England chief highways engineer, Mike Wilson, said:

We're delighted to be supporting the kids' driving school at this year's CarFest South event.

It will be a great opportunity for families to meet our traffic officers who provide vital support to the travelling public, keeping our network moving and our customers safe.

We're also asking motorists heading off on holiday this summer to get their vehicles ready for the road in a bid to cut the number of breakdowns by undertaking a few simple checks focusing on tyres, fuel, water and engine oil.

CarFest South takes place at Laverstoke Park Farm in Hampshire from 25th to 27th August. The brainchild of Chris Evans, it combines cars, food, live music and family entertainment and, in the last five years, the annual events have raised £7.4 million for BBC Children in Need.

Highways England has produced five short instructional videos on how to check tyre pressure, tyre tread, oil and water levels and lights to help prevent needless breakdowns and cut the unnecessary delays they cause.

Almost half of all breakdowns are caused by simple mechanical problems which could be avoided with simple checks and nearly a quarter are caused by tyre problems.

Meanwhile, around 22 motorists broke down each day during July and August last year because they had run out of fuel.

The videos cover:

- checking tyres – prior to setting off on a long/significant journey, check your tyre pressure and the condition of your tyres, including the spare. Look out for cuts or wear and make sure the tyres have a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm, which is the legal limit
- checking engine oil – use your dipstick to check oil before any long journey, and top up if needed. Take your car back to the garage if you're topping up more than usual
- checking water – to ensure you have good visibility, always keep your screen wash topped up so you can clear debris or dirt off your windscreen
- checking lights – if your indicators, hazard lights, headlights, fog lights, reverse lights or brake lights are not functioning properly, you are putting yourself and your family at risk. In addition, light malfunctions can be a reason for your vehicle to fail its MOT
- checking fuel – before setting out, check your fuel levels and make sure you have enough to get to your destination.

For more detailed information on how to carry out your vehicle checks, visit the [Think campaign page](#).

Those wishing to find out more about driving on smart motorways can head to guidance on [GOV.UK](#).

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.