

[Press release: Minister appalled by developments in Venezuela](#)

I am utterly appalled by the decision of the sham-democratic Constituent Assembly in Venezuela to remove legislative powers from the elected National Assembly. This is a shocking blow to democracy in Venezuela, and a direct attack on a legitimate democratic institution. It ignores the will of the Venezuelan people and will only further undermine confidence in Venezuela's democracy. The National Assembly and its Deputies must be respected and their rights honoured.

Poverty in Venezuela continues to rise, with more Venezuelans being forced into poverty every day by bad governance. This is a tragedy in a country with such enormous resources. This move will do nothing to tackle the urgent economic challenges that ordinary Venezuelans face

It is time for President Maduro and the Venezuelan Government to act responsibly. They need to reduce tension, respect democracy, and take responsibility for working with the Opposition to agree a positive way forward for all Venezuelans. The UK stands with the people of Venezuela and will work with international partners in our collective response to the gravity of this situation

[News story: One million Help to Buy: ISAs opened](#)

More than one million [Help to Buy: ISAs](#) have now been opened, helping first-time buyers across the UK save towards their first home. First-time buyers have saved over £1.8 billion in their ISAs.

Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Stephen Barclay, said:

Reaching the landmark of one million [Help to Buy: ISAs](#) shows the product's success in helping first-time buyers save towards a home.

Our [Help to Buy schemes](#) continue to prove hugely popular across the country, as we support people to get on in life and achieve their dream of climbing the housing ladder.

The government's [Help to Buy: ISA](#) scheme was launched on 1 December 2015 to provide first-time buyers the opportunity to save up to £200 a month with the

government topping up their contributions by 25%, up to a maximum of £3,000.

First-time house buyers across the UK can open an [ISA](#), which is available for home purchases up to £250,000 (£450,000 in London). If you plan to buy a home with someone who also qualifies, you are each able to separately claim the bonuses on your savings and put both towards the home you are buying.

The scheme has proven to be hugely popular, with the equivalent of 1,500 [Help to Buy: ISAs](#) being opened every day since its introduction. The number of providers of the scheme, which includes banks, building societies and credit unions, has doubled since its launch to 28, with the Nottingham Building Society being the most recent to sign up.

Savings in a [Help to Buy: ISA](#) are tax-free and are also quick and easy to open. Savers can receive on average 2.4% interest rate on their savings which is typically higher than an instant access savings account.

First-time buyers will be able to open a [Help to buy: ISA](#) until 30 November 2019. Existing account holders can continue to save in their ISA account until 30 November 2029 when accounts will close to additional contributions. Bonuses can be claimed until 1 December 2030.

[Press release: 'Aid workers should never be targets' – Priti Patel](#)

Today, 19 August, is World Humanitarian Day. Thanking aid workers from across the UK and around the world, International Development Secretary, Priti Patel, said:

Today we thank the men and women who demonstrate the goodness of humanity in places shadowed by despair, poverty and violence. They selflessly choose to try and make a difference by delivering food, shelter and medicine to people whom have been denied the most basic of human necessities.

These extremely brave humanitarian heroes represent the best of us, while those who attack them represent the opposite.

As we remember those who have unfairly lost their lives doing this incredible work, I want to thank those who continue to take the risks which allow the UK to stand tall with pride and make the lives of so many better.

Aid workers should never be targets. Every effort should always be made to give them full access to disaster areas and the protection

they need to do their life-saving work.

Background

On 19 August 2003, a terrorist attack hit the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, killing 22 people.

Five years later, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution designating 19 August as World Humanitarian Day (WHD). Every year since then, the humanitarian community has organized global campaigns to commemorate WHD, advocating for the safety and security of humanitarian aid workers, and for the survival, well-being and dignity of people affected by crises.

For WHD 2017, humanitarian partners are coming together to reaffirm that civilians caught in conflict are #NotATarget.

ENDS

[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.

[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 Office 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