

## RNIB calls for polling station improvements

A survey has revealed only 19% of blind voters and 46% of partially sighted voters were able to vote independently and in secret under the current system.

Action to improve the voting experience was urgent, according to the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), which also called for the government to introduce new ways to vote.

Accessible voting was trialled in Norfolk during May's elections with audio devices (pictured) at polling stations and of the 11 participants, 10 said they were satisfied with their experience.

Mike Wordingham, policy and campaigns officer at the RNIB, said: 'It is crucial that these devices are rolled out nationwide for May 2022 so people with sight loss know they can vote independently and in secret when visiting the polling station.'

The RNIB carried out the voting trial with the Cabinet Office and the partnership would



continue to ensure audio devices were available at the next elections.

Its survey also revealed that the introduction of photographic voter ID would risk marginalising voters with sight loss as 1.3% said they did not have a form of photo ID, such as a passport or driving licence.

Results of the RNIB's Turned Out survey were available on its website <https://bit.ly/3wOVtUt>.

inated by General Practice with no input from other primary care professions.

A joint statement from the associations said: 'Optical practices and other primary care providers are vital to population health and care, and need a voice at all levels of the NHS in England.'

## GOC assesses progress

The General Optical Council (GOC) considered its progress on several targets at its second annual council meeting on July 14.

On the agenda were qualifications for approval, fitness to practise performance, the OCCS and a report on the sector's education providers.

University level qualifications for optometry, independent prescribing for optometrists and ophthalmic dispensing were approved at the University of the West of England, Hertfordshire and Central Lancashire respectively.

The council also noted an improvement in the number of fitness to practise investigations, with cases opened down from 161 in 2019-20 to 65 in 2020-21.

The full set of council papers has been made available on the GOC's website.

## Accessible radio launched

A new digital radio designed especially for blind and partially sighted people has been released by the Royal National Institute of Blind People.

The DAB+ and FM radio featured simplified tactile buttons and voice prompts to help users with major functions, such as tuning. Audible confirmations of button presses also helped blind and partially sighted people to navigate the device.



RNIB's accessible DAB radio

2020-21 compared to 2019-20.

The OCCS received 1,411 complaints during the period of April 2020 to March 2021, which fell into two main categories: 'customer care' and 'goods and services'. The five most common complaint scenarios were incorrect prescriptions, dispensing issues, delay in supply, fees and charges and attitude of practice staff. The number of monthly complaints were highest in October 2020 and again in March 2021.

A future In Focus will cover more of the data from the OCCS annual report.

## Low vision services review recommended

Commissioning and provision of low vision services should be reviewed to deliver more accessible and integrated care for patients in England, a survey has found.

The Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning (CCEHC) explored the impact of the pandemic on low vision assessment services between April 2020 and March 2021.

In its five-week survey carried out in April 2021, it found a variation in the use of service specifications, protocols and thresholds

for low vision assessments.

## Hertfordshire Uni's new glaucoma certificate

Accreditation of a new professional certificate in glaucoma has been granted to the University of Hertfordshire by the College of Optometrists.

The university's course has been designed to prepare optometrists with the core knowledge and practical skills required in the detection of glaucoma within a primary care setting.

Optometrists Colin Davidson, programme lead and principal lecturer at the University of Hertfordshire, said: 'With the knowledge gained through this certificate, optometrists can work safely and confidently to manage stable glaucoma patients in the community or co-manage complex glaucoma in hospital clinics.'

The course will start in January 2022 and last for 15 weeks.

## Change at BCLA

The British Contact Lens Association's (BCLA) has announced that its new president Neil Retallic will formally take over from Indie Grewal after its annual

general meeting on September 7.

At Retallic's inaugural presidential address, he will present a webinar on how practitioners could adapt to a post-pandemic world.

He said: 'The pandemic has given us an opportunity to think differently and reflect on how we utilise technology as eye care professionals, to keep pace with the evolving needs and behavioural changes of our patients.'

Registration for the event is available to BCLA members at the association's website.

## Associations rally for primary care

The Association of Optometrists (AOP), Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) and the Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians (FODO) have joined forces with other primary care providers to lobby the government.

The Health and Care Bill being debated in Parliament would shift responsibility for managing primary NHS services, including primary optometry services, to Integrated Care Boards (ICB).

The bill only required that each ICB includes a representative nom-