



# NEWS RELEASE

15/01/07

For immediate release

## **£100,000s up for grabs for blind people in Cumbria**

Over 90% of older blind and partially sighted people live on less than half the national average income - a widely accepted definition of poverty<sup>1</sup> - yet many are not claiming the benefits they are entitled to. Five days of Benefits Surgeries run by **local societies for the blind and partially sighted, The Cumbria Initiative and Action for Blind People** will help local visually impaired people identify the money they are missing out on.

Blind and partially sighted people are failing to claim a whole range of benefits such as Incapacity Benefit, Disability Living Allowance or Pensions Credit. From Monday 29 Jan to Friday 2 February, 10am-4pm each day, visually impaired people from the local area are invited to attend the Benefits Surgeries. They will receive the most up-to-date advice and people found not to be receiving the correct benefits, will be offered further appointments to complete the necessary forms and make their claim.

Nick Kennon, Project Take-up Officer at The Cumbria Initiative, said: "We are striving to work in partnership with other organisations and are pleased to work with those such as Action for Blind People and the blind societies. It is through these partnerships that we are finding new ways of getting our message through. We would like to encourage people in Cumbria with visual impairments to come along and see the wealth of support and services that we can all offer." M/f...



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Wayne Van Tilburg, Action for Blind People Coordinator, commented: "In Cumbria over three thousand people are registered as blind or partially sighted<sup>2</sup>, yet only 6% of visually impaired people are claiming the benefits they are entitled to<sup>3</sup>. Local societies, The Cumbria Initiative and Action for Blind People hope the Benefits Surgeries will help to address this situation."

## **ITINERARY:**

### **Monday 29 January**

Where: Cumbria Deaf Association, 3 Compton Street, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA1 1HT  
Local Blind Society: Carlisle Society for the Blind

### **Tuesday 30 January**

Where: Forum 28, 28 Duke St, Barrow-In-Furness, LA14 1H  
Local Blind Society: Barrow & District Society for the Blind and Partially Sighted

### **Wednesday 31 January**

Where: Penrith Methodist Church, Wordsworth Street, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 7QY  
Local Blind Society: Eden Voluntary Society for the Blind and Partially Sighted

### **Thursday 1 February**

Where: Stricklandgate House, 92 Stricklandgate, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 4PU  
Local Blind Society: South Lakes Society for the Blind

### **Friday 2 February**

Where: Age Concern, Old Customs House, West Strand, Whitehaven, CA28 7LR

Action's mobile sight loss information service, with the latest technology for visually impaired people, will also be present at the surgeries. For more information people can contact their local society or contact Wayne Van Tilburg or Samantha Dawson on Tel: 01228 595121 or email: [wayne.vantilburg@actionforblindpeople.org.uk](mailto:wayne.vantilburg@actionforblindpeople.org.uk)



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**-Ends-**

For further media information please contact Zoë Patel, press office on 020 7635 4898/ 07739 819954 or email: [zoe.patel@actionforblindpeople.org.uk](mailto:zoe.patel@actionforblindpeople.org.uk)

## **Notes to editors:**

### **Carlisle Society for the Blind**

The society is a local registered charity offering social events, a home support service and visual awareness training. They also have a selection of specialised equipment at their office for people to try out and a children's room equipped with special toys. The society is open Weds, Thurs and Fri, 11am-3pm. **Contact:** Mrs A Robson, 9 Brunswick Street, Carlisle, CA1 1PB, Tel: 01228 593104 or email: [info@carlisesb.f9.co.uk](mailto:info@carlisesb.f9.co.uk)

### **Barrow & Districts Society for the Blind and Partially Sighted**

Services provided by the society include: Advice & information, craft groups, provision of aids, social and leisure activities, social work support, talking newspaper and respite and day care in the Society's residential home. **Contact:** Mr W Proctor, 67/69 Cavendish Street, Barrow-in-Furness, LA14 1QD. Tel: 01229 820698, email: [info@barrowblindsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@barrowblindsociety.org.uk) or visit [www.barrowblindsociety.org.uk](http://www.barrowblindsociety.org.uk)

### **Eden Voluntary Society for the Blind and Partially Sighted**

The Society aims to assist and support visually impaired people in the Eden district by raising awareness, providing information, offering leisure activities, and helping with grants, equipment and transport. The society has a number of sighted and visually impaired volunteers who can provide home visits, letter writing assistance and advice. The Society is open every Tues 11-3pm. **Contact:** Brian Pudner, 1 Mostyn Hall, Friargate, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 7XR, Tel: 01768 891724

### **South Lakes Society for the Blind**

The Society offers people a Sight Advice Centre with a range of equipment, information in alternative formats and regular Friday drop-in sessions. The society runs an outreach service for anyone unable to visit the centre and a hospital

14 - 16 Verney Road London SE16 3DZ Tel 020 7635 4800 Fax 020 7635 4899

Website [www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk](http://www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk)

Patron HRH Princess Alexandra, the Hon. Lady Ogilvy, GCVO

Registered Charity no: 205913



**Action for blind people**

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information desk at Westmorland General Hospital. They also produce a bi-monthly newsletter and weekly social and leisure activities. **Contact:** Margaret McClure, Stricklandgate House, 92 Stricklandgate, Kendal, LA9 4PU. Tel: 01539 742633 or email: [info@slsb.org.uk](mailto:info@slsb.org.uk)

### **Cumbria Initiatives**

The Cumbria Initiative (TCI) is a partnership of the six District Councils in Cumbria who are working together to ensure that those entitled to Housing and Council Tax benefits are claiming. The Cumbria Initiative started in November 2005 and was formally launched in Carlisle in February 2006 and will in its present form run until March 2007. To date there have been over 2,300 enquiries about housing and Council Benefits. The TCI also signposts to other benefits and has formed close working relationships with the Pension Service and Job Centre Plus to enable potential claimants to get information about other benefits such as Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, and Carers Allowance amongst others.

### **Action for Blind People**

- Action deals with over 2,500 benefit enquiries every year. During 2005/6 Action's Welfare Rights Team ensured that over £1,350,000 worth of benefits went to people that really needed them.
- Action for Blind People supports over 20,000 blind and partially sighted people in the UK every year. Contact Action for Blind People's National Freephone Helpline on 0800 915 4666 or [www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk](http://www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk).
- Action works to inspire change and create opportunities to enable blind and partially sighted people to have equal voice and equal choice and to live a full and valuable life.
- Action provides visually impaired people with opportunities through employment, housing, leisure and information and support.
- 2007 marks Action's 150 years of transforming the lives of blind and partially sighted people.
- If abbreviating "Action for Blind People", please use "Action" rather than AFBP or ABP.

<sup>1</sup> RNIB, 'Changing the way we think about Blindness', 2002

<sup>2</sup> Figure as of March 2006, The Information Centre, Adult Social Services Statistics



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<sup>3</sup> Disability Care and Mobility Benefits - Nov 2002 Quarterly Statistical Enquiry