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For immediate release

Employers unaware of talking computers

Action for Blind People, based in Cumbria, invites employers across the region to open their eyes to the potential of the blind and partially sighted workforce. The visual impairment charity is holding an Employers' Business Breakfast on Friday 29 June, 9am -11.30am at Carlisle Racecourse. Eric Martlew MP will be attending and companies across the region are invited to book their free place.

Despite advances in assistive technology, such as talking computers (known as screen readers), two thirds of visually impaired people of working age are currently unemployed. Many potential employers are simply unaware of the technical assistance and support available to a visually impaired member of staff, as well as the financial assistance available to employers through Access to Work*. Action's Employers' Business Breakfast is aimed at making local companies aware of the skills visually impaired people bring to the work place.

Action for Blind People's Employment Coordinator, Angela McLaughlin, says:

"We want to engage with local enthusiastic employers, who want to diversify their workforce, in order to provide better employment opportunities for visually impaired people. There will be presentations from local employers and blind and partially



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sighted employees, who have overcome many of the barriers in the work place. There will also be an opportunity to view the assistive technology available to visually impaired people and, of course, everyone gets a free breakfast.”

Eric Martlew MP, added: “I congratulate Action for Blind People on this initiative. I believe it is vital that blind and partially sighted people are given every opportunity to develop their talents. It is only through government and employers working together with organisations such as Action for Blind People, that we shall start to tackle the unacceptable level of unemployment amongst visually impaired people”

Action for Blind People’s Employers’ Business Breakfast will be taking place at Carlisle Racecourse, Durdar Road, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA2 4TS. Interested organisations should call Angela McLaughlin on Tel: 01228 595121 or email: angela.mclaughlin@actionforblindpeople.org.uk to book their free place.

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

*Access to Work’ (AtW) is a national scheme run by Jobcentre Plus, who are part of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), designed to assist employers and people with disabilities in overcoming barriers to work. Access to Work can help with: A support worker, which allows the individual to use the services of a helper; Assistive Technology (AT) equipment to support the individual function in the



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workplace; adaptations to premises or to existing equipment; help with additional costs of travel to, or in, work for people who are unable to use public transport.

Notes to editors:

- Action for Blind People Carlisle and Dumfries can be found at Suite 2, Second Floor, English Gate Plaza, Botchergate, Carlisle, CA1 1 RP. Tel: 01228 595121 or Fax 01228 595089
- Action for Blind People is an expert national organisation, ensuring blind and partially sighted people get practical support in all aspects of their lives. Contact Action for Blind People's National Freephone Helpline on 0800 915 4666 or www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk
- Action for Blind People is breaking down barriers that prevent visually impaired people from achieving the same opportunities as sighted people.
- 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.