



NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

Lancashire's blind people pocket £800,000

With a 66% unemployment rate, and less than 10% receiving all the benefits they are entitled to, the majority of blind and partially sighted people live on less than half the national average income. But all this is changing in Lancashire. Thanks to local charity, **Action for Blind People**, and funding from the **Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)**, the lives of Lancashire's visually impaired population have changed to the tune of over £800,000.

In 2005 the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) paid for local charity, Action for Blind People, to employ a Welfare Rights Officer through a project called the DWP Pension Partnership Fund Project. The project aimed to ensure that more visually impaired people, particularly those of pension age, were receiving all the benefits owed to them. Two years on and the Welfare Rights Officer, Kevin Nuttall, has supported over 100 local blind and partially people to claim a total of £843,282.

Kevin Nuttall, Welfare Rights Officer for Action for Blind People, commented: "It's not just about money. Claiming the right benefits whether it's Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit, can make a dramatic difference to someone's quality of life.



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“Making a benefit claim usually involves filling in a detailed form – something that can be difficult if you are blind or partially sighted. We have tried to raise awareness of the benefits available by giving talks, working with Galloway’s Society for the Blind, attending local events, and by providing benefits information in large print and on tape.

“We are very grateful to the DWP for the funding and are delighted with the result. £800,000 is a life changing amount.”

Margaret Vickers is visually impaired and was renting a terraced house on a run-down estate in Lancashire. She was constantly being harassed by youths. Depressed, she was desperate to move on in her life. With the help of Action for Blind People Lancashire, she was able to move into a comfortable modern bungalow in Preston.

Kevin Nuttall assisted in getting a grant to help pay for removals and furnishings, to inform benefit departments of her change of address and to get full help with her rent and council tax. Margaret says: ‘My life has changed 100%. It is worth living now. There aren’t enough words to describe how I feel’.

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



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Notes to editors:

- Action for Blind People Lancashire can be found at Howick House, Howick Park Avenue, Penwortham, Preston, PR1 0LS, tel: 01772 320550.
- 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.