

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

New service for blind people in the West Midlands

Visual impairment charity, Action for Blind People, is launching a new service for blind and partially sighted people on Monday 14 January. Action for Blind People's new service in Birmingham will offer the West Midlands' 32,000* visually impaired people support with everything; from finding work or setting up their own business, to applying for benefits or sorting out housing difficulties.

For the past five years Action for Blind People has been supporting visually impaired people in the area to either find work or keep their current job. The team will continue to offer support on work issues, but now also offers help with housing problems, advice on self-employment and has two 'Action Coordinators' who can help with a whole range of issues affecting those who are blind or partially sighted.

Denise from Erdington, who is visually impaired, was struggling to find work and had an ambition to work in radio. Over the past few months, Denise has been supported by Action for Blind People West Midlands to enrol in training and take up voluntary work experience at Birmingham City Hospital radio station. Denise is also being abused by local youths. Action is working with Denise to help her move home, away from her abusers. Denise says:

"I've had bricks and stones thrown at me, a football kicked at my face, eggs thrown at my window and kids spitting at me. I cannot wait to get away from this abuse and live in an area where I can feel safe. Thanks to Action for Blind People I will feel

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

Website www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

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

Registered Charity no: 205913

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confident again and will be able to get on with my life peacefully.”

The launch of Action for Blind People West Midlands, which will take place at Birmingham Volunteer Bureau, 138 Digbeth, Birmingham, B5 6DR, on Monday 14 January at 10am – 12 noon. The Deputy Mayor of Sandwell, Councillor Margaret James, will be attending on the day. The launch is supported by Clare Short, MP for Birmingham Ladywood. Claire Short MP comments:

“I am delighted to be associated with Action for Blind People and in particular with the launch of their latest service. This will offer support to blind and partially sighted people throughout the West Midlands. I have tried to be an advocate for improved rights for minority groups throughout my time in Parliament and I support Action for Blind People to improve the opportunities of my visually impaired constituents.”

Cormac McCarthy, Service Manager for Action for Blind People West Midlands, added: “With our expanded team and working in partnership with other organisations we can now offer a complete service that will enable us to reach out to even more blind and partially sighted people within the area. We have a great team in place who all have the drive and commitment to make a real difference to the lives of those in need.”

For support and advice on any issue, blind and partially sighted people, along with their friends and families, can contact Action for Blind People West Midlands on 0121 200 3930, email westmidlands@actionforblindpeople.org.uk or visit www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

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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

Notes to editors:

* National Statistics, 'Registered Blind and Partially Sighted People: Year ending 31 March 2006', 31 October 2006

- The Launch of Action for Blind People West Midlands takes place at Birmingham Volunteer Bureau, 138 Digbeth, Birmingham, B5 6DR on Monday 14 January, 10am – 12noon. Journalists are welcome to attend.
- Action for Blind People West Midlands is based at Galbraith House, 141 Great Charles Street, Birmingham B3 3LG
- 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.
- If abbreviating "Action for Blind People", please use "Action" rather than AFBP or ABP.