



# NEWS RELEASE

02/01/08

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## THOUSANDS OF BLIND PEOPLE ATTACKED EVERY DAY

A survey published today by national charity Action for Blind People has revealed that 1.2 million blind and partially sighted people in the UK have experienced physical and/or verbal abuse:

- In one day nearly 20,000 (4%) blind and partially sighted people were physically abused, compared to less than 1% of sighted people.
- In one week almost 180,000 (16%) blind and partially sighted people were verbally abused, compared to only 7% of sighted people.

Denise Jarrett, registered blind is currently being supported by Action and will be rehoused this month, as a result of abuse and harassment she has received from local youths in her neighbourhood. She said: "I have 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 confident again and will be able to get on with my life peacefully."

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The survey also revealed that a visually impaired person is three times more likely than a sighted person (24% v 8%) not to know where or who to turn to, and almost twice as likely not to be taken seriously (31% v 17%) if they told anyone about their experiences.

Stephen Remington, Chief Executive at Action for Blind People, said: “Unfortunately visually impaired people can be seen as vulnerable and an easy target for anti-social behaviour. The impact this can have on a visually impaired person, who may already feel vulnerable can be devastating, perhaps even more so than for a sighted person. Many people in society will be as horrified by these results as we are. All of us; parents, teachers, employers, neighbours and even passers-by can play a role in helping to combat such disgusting behaviour.”

Action for Blind People is raising awareness of the unacceptable levels of verbal and physical abuse towards visually impaired people and would like to work with more police, schools and employers to address the problem. Action offers visual awareness training tailored to help gain a greater understanding of the disability and the every day issues faced by visually impaired people.

Bromley Borough Police Community Officers have already received visual awareness training from Action. Martin Hills, Partnership Inspector at Bromley Police, comments: “Bromley Police is committed to helping staff improve their



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knowledge and understanding of the issues affecting those people in the local community with disabilities. As part of this commitment, we arranged for Action for Blind People to deliver Visual Awareness training to over 50 of our local Safer Neighbourhood officers. The training was extremely well received by our officers and found to be very useful. We are now more aware of the issues faced by visually impaired people and feel a lot more confident in approaching people with a visual impairment and understanding their needs.”

If you or anyone you know is experiencing verbal and/or physical abuse please contact Action for Blind People on our National Freephone Helpline 0800 915 4666 or visit Action’s website at [www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk](http://www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk) for information and support.

**-Ends-**

For further media information please contact Action’s press office on 020 7635 4921/ 3027/4898 or 07739 819954 or email: [debbie.flatley@actionforblindpeople.org.uk](mailto:debbie.flatley@actionforblindpeople.org.uk)

### **Notes to editors:**

- Action for Blind People compiled the survey with Tickbox.net, a leading market research organisation.
- The summary of findings is downloadable from Action’s website [www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk](http://www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk) . The statistical report is available on request from Debbie Flatley on 020 7635 4921.
- Visual Awareness training provides you with an understanding of visual

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impairment and the challenges faced by a visually impaired person

- 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](http://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.

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