

NEWS RELEASE

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One in five losing sight lacks critical support

In the time it takes for one revolution of The London Eye, two more people in the UK will begin to lose their sight*. Shockingly, one in five people newly-diagnosed with sight loss has to wait more than a year for any advice or support.*

Action for Blind People believes that everyone has the right to high-quality information and support services at the point of diagnosis. The charity has successfully piloted such schemes, called EyePod, in partnership with eye clinics and hospitals in the North of England. To mark **World Sight Day (9th October)**, Action is launching the success of its EyePod service at the London Eye and will be highlighting the desperate need for more of these services to be rolled out across the country. This aim specifically supports the recently launched **UK Vision Strategy**.

Stephen Remington, Chief Executive at Action for Blind People says: “The EyePod service bridges the gap between being told you’re losing your sight and being able to make the practical and emotional changes necessary in learning to live with a visual impairment. Without the right support at this most crucial moment the consequences can be devastating. We want everyone in the UK diagnosed with sight loss to get the support they need and deserve. This means that every eye clinic in the country needs a dedicated, quality service and EyePod is Action’s contribution to achieving that aim.”

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One person who has benefited greatly from this service is 61 year old, Joseph Thompson, he said: “Driving was my job and my life and to have that taken away from me was devastating. When I lost my sight, Action for Blind People was the first organisation I came into contact with and when they stepped in, they filled in a gap. They were there when I needed them the most and helped me through a very bad time and made things a lot easier for me.”

If you or anyone you know needs support with sight loss, please call Action for Blind People’s National Freephone Helpline on 0800 915 4666 or visit our website at: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk. Action’s pioneering mobile Sight Loss Information Service packed with the latest aids, equipment and specialist advice for blind and partially sighted people, their friends and family will be welcoming aboard visitors to the London Eye throughout the day.

-Ends-

* based on National Statistics on Registered Blind and Partially Sighted People

* RNIB’s ‘Changing the way we think about blindness 2002’

For further media information please contact Debbie Flatley, press office on 020 7635 4921 or 07739 819954 or email: debbie.flatley@actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Notes to editors:

- World Sight Day (WSD) is the international day of awareness, held annually by Vision 2020, to focus attention on the global issue of avoidable blindness and visual impairment.

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

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- Action for Blind People supports the UK Vision Strategy which aims to:
 - Improve the eye health of the people of the UK
 - Eliminate avoidable sight loss and deliver excellent support to those with a visual impairment
 - Enhance the inclusion, participation and independence of blind and partially sighted people
- 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.