“We’re taking control of our future.” Ground breaking manifesto for blind young Londoners launched.

Tuesday 4 March, 2014

London based youth forum for blind young people unveils the country’s first ever manifesto, highlighting the realities blind young people face around employment, education, transport and diagnosis support.

The comprehensive document tackles issues such as the fact that a quarter of this group are dissatisfied with their life and that 90% of those who lose their sight in youth won’t work for more than six months in their life.

This last challenge is an experience keenly felt by 19-year old forum member Amy Hawkins who was told by one organisation that they wouldn’t give her a job because she would be a “health and safety risk”. 24-year old Courtney Nugent, another forum member, was told by her careers advisor at school that “blind people couldn’t go to university” and that she needed to rethink her career options. Other facts include:

• Only 8% of blind and partially sighted people reported they were offered any formal counselling at the point of diagnosis.
• Only 44% of vision impaired students got 5 A*-C at GCSE compared to 70% without a special education need.
• Nine out of 10 employers rate blind and partially sighted people as either ‘difficult’ or ‘impossible’ to employ.

In response to these actualities the RLSB Youth Forum have suggested a number of solutions they hope government, businesses and the public will adopt to turn the statistics around.

Suggested changes in the manifesto include maximising emerging technologies to improve banking accessibility and experiences in the classroom; enhancing post diagnosis support and working with transport agencies to advance their accessibility policies.

The youngest member of the forum, 17-year old Agatka Cienciala, has high hopes for the manifesto:

“We are proud to be able to launch this document. It is unique - simple and clear - and will give employers an explanation of our abilities and the support that we can get to enable us to work to our full potential. I am sure that you will able to see its potential when you read it.”

The Youth Forum works alongside The Royal London Society for Blind People which is presided over by Minister of State for Business and Enterprise, Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP.

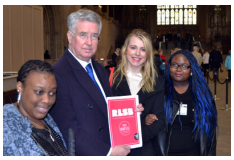
Mr Fallon said of the manifesto: “It is fantastic to see blind young people being active and vocal about the difficulties they face with employment, transport and accessible technology. The RLSB Youth Forum and their manifesto really is the Big Society in action – young people working together with the community to try and overcome their challenges and raise awareness for blind young people and I am delighted to support them as President of the RLSB.”

Dr. Tom Pey, RLSB Chief Executive added: “There is no one better qualified to speak on behalf of vision impaired young people than young people themselves. This is a manifesto that is straight from the heart and goes straight to the heart of the challenges they face. It and they deserve serious consideration by every politician and person who can influence the solutions they are asking for.”

A full copy of the manifesto can be read at rlsb.org.uk/youthmanifesto Supporters of the manifesto can pledge their support at change.org

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