Youth sight loss charity CEO slams controversial Bedroom Tax

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And calls on London mayor to establish business-backed relief fund to stop vulnerable young people being “sacrificed on the altar of financial austerity”

Dr Tom Pey, chief executive of youth sight loss charity RLSB (The Royal London Society for Blind People) has spoken out against the government’s Bedroom Tax, warning of its damaging effect on vulnerable members of society.

Compounded by changes to the Disability Living Allowance and the privatisation of employment assessments, Dr Pey said that the Bedroom Tax will lead to the “further impoverishment” of people with disabilities.

Many blind young people already face living their future on the margins of society due to difficulties gaining employment. It is a fact that two thirds of registered blind and partially sighted people of working age are not in employment. And 90% of those who lose their sight in youth will not work for more than six months in their lives.

Dr Pey said: “The government is rushing ahead with widespread benefit cuts without putting in place the measures that are necessary to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

“The implementation of the bedroom tax, changes to the Disability Living Allowance and the privatisation of employment assessments have all added up to further impoverishment of those who are forced to depend on benefits.

“It begs the question as to how the country can bear these divisive cuts that protect a legacy for the few.”

Dr Pey’s comments follow new research by the RNIB which shows that at least 17,000 blind and partially sighted people face being displaced from their homes due to the tax.

Thousands will be forced to choose between moving from their homes or losing part of their benefits (on average £14 a week), causing distress and forcing blind people to relearn routes to navigate their homes and surroundings.

Dr Pey is now urging London mayor Boris Johnson to set up a relief fund for vulnerable young people in the capital:

“We are now calling on the Mayor of London to face up to the hardship these cuts are causing the most vulnerable inhabitants of his city, and to establish a relief fund with contributions from his office and large business.

“This fund will secure essential support and services for vision impaired and other young citizens of the capital, so that another generation of vulnerable young people are not sacrificed on the altar of financial austerity.”

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Notes

The RNIB research was undertaken for the Sunday People. For the full story visit: http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/bedroom-tax-affect-17000-blind-1816065#.UWGKBIp7wco.mailto

For 175 years, RLSB has existed to empower blind and partially sighted young people in London and the South East to live life without limits. Through an expert blend of education, sport, arts and personal development, we help young people live and learn for the life they want. See www.rlsb.org.uk

Dr Tom Pey is chief executive of the Royal London Society for Blind People. He was previously director of external affairs at Guide Dogs and president of the European Guide Dog Federation. A father of four

and former investment banker, Tom lost his sight when he was 39. He is the author of Bang – You're Dead, an inspirational account of his sight loss and his journey towards regaining confidence and leading a fulfilled life.

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