



## **Introducing Health Sciences: Visual Impairment**

### *Retaining Independence*

#### **Man**

I think the thing that motivated me to tackle the various challenges that being totally blind represented was that I personally felt that the most disabling aspect of my new impairment would be to lose my independence. I'd already been independent prior to losing my sight and I didn't want to go back to living in a family-dependent situation because I think as an adult I wanted those freedoms which adulthood brings you, like any other person, and so the considerable hills that I climbed in terms of challenges were worth it because I could see my end goal was to get back to my flat in London, to spend my social time how I wanted, to get back into employment which was very key as well, and I did have a few desperate, or not desperate, depressing times in that journey 'cos nothing ever happens smoothly in life, does it? I suppose the one advantage I had was I had the optimism of a young man in my late twenties still. I was a bit depressed by my new situation because of course it did make life feel much more difficult, and it made every day a long and tiring experience, but I think I was sufficiently convinced that if I kept pressing ahead with the things I needed to learn – that was Braille, mobility, daily living skills, and those techniques that I would need to learn to keep myself employed – and that would actually pay dividends over the years and, indeed, that's been the case. I think my main motivation for achieving all those things was that I was convinced I wanted to remain employed because through employment comes independence of action really, and for so many disabled people, and for blind people in particular, that opportunity does not exist. It's a scandal really that in the United Kingdom four out of five blind people of working age are still unemployed, and remain unemployed for all of their economic life, so I didn't want to be part of that and, in fact, the alternative which would be to have to fill your life with leisure pursuits and going to a blind club, and not feeling fulfilled would to me have been more disabling than my blindness I think.