



SVI (Sandwell Visually Impaired) Annual Report

1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014

Charity name: SVI (Sandwell Visually Impaired)

Registered Charity No: 1131021

Charity address: SVI Office, DRC, Dagger Lane, West Bromwich,
West Midlands B71 4BB

Management Committee Trustees:

A Averis – Chair	R Gormley
S Nasser – Vice-Chair	G Holland
M Howe – Secretary	S Troth
K Averis – Treasurer	W Bowen
G Price	T Orlebar

Governing document: Constitution

Trustees selected by: Election by membership

Membership: 487

Registered Visually Impaired in Sandwell (information circulation list): 1300

Charity objectives

Our overarching charitable objective is the relief of blind and visually impaired people, their families and carers in Sandwell. In particular, but not exclusively, by assistance in the provision of advice, education, information and support to enable increased independence and life opportunities.

Summary of our main activities and achievements undertaken for the public benefit during 2013/2014

1. Cathouse Drama Project

An arts, drama and identity programme taking place in partnership with Birmingham City University. Final year students have been working with SVI, Focus Birmingham and Pocklington Trust to explore how identity is shaped by the experience of sight loss.

This interactive arts project has been taking place throughout the 2012/2013 academic year and concluded in June 2013 with an arts and drama event at the Custard Factory.

The project formed the major part of students' Bachelor of Arts qualification and demonstrates how SVI works with academic institutions to promote greater awareness of sight loss and the needs of visually impaired people.

This partnership project was funded directly from Birmingham City University.

2. Young People's Project

SVI Young People's Group for people aged 18 to 30 who are living with sight loss aims to provide fun and challenging adventure activities in order to promote increased self confidence and team working.

This year our Young People's Group took part in more outdoor pursuit challenges including; bell boating, 70ft fan descender free fall and an adventure trail. Indoor activities included; wall climbing (pictured), football and a social event where young folk pitched their skills against the 'oldies' in a 10-pin bowling session.



The group provides an opportunity for young people to get together, to support each other and take part in activities and challenges they might otherwise not get the chance to try.

Further activities are planned for the coming months.

The Young People's Group was funded from a grant received from VICTA (Visually Impaired Children Taking Action).

3. Education and training

This year SVI continued IT training with a grant from Harborne Parish Lands to enable us to develop our existing IT training and build on the success of our previous AZABAT courses.



This programme has enabled SVI to offer structured tutor-led classes in email, internet and IT communications.

Sessions were supported by learning buddies and post-course guidance and support was provided for an agreed time following the course completion.

This was a modest pilot programme and we hope to build on this initial session over the coming years.

The AZABAT Touch-typing and Keyboard Awareness sessions and this new programme have enabled visually impaired people aged from 19 to 90 to increase their keyboard and IT skills. In total, over 70 beneficiaries have now taken part in SVI's IT programmes.

We thank Harborne Parish Lands for supporting this particular programme and extend our gratitude to past funders who helped us to reach such a successful stage in access to IT training provision.

4. Visual Impairment Awareness Training and Consultancy

As part of the work SVI undertakes in the community, we provide Visual Impairment Awareness Training to organisations. This year we completed a series of training sessions for care staff at Queensridge Court Extra Care Housing unit.

Our qualified Visual Impairment Awareness Trainers have worked on and further developed SVI's Sight Awareness training portfolio.

We have subsequently gone on to deliver a programme of training to almost 50 Sandwell Council and Sandwell Leisure Trust staff who will be based at the new Portway Lifestyle Centre.

This work was part of our Social Enterprise venture and generated income for SVI.

5. Active at 60 Group

This well-established SVI group for visually impaired people aged 50+ continued to flourish this year, being successful in gaining a grant from the Comic



Relief Red Nose Community Cash fund.

This has enabled SVI to continue to provide peer support; social and leisure activities that improve the general wellbeing of people aged 50+.

Activities undertaken this year have included: Line dancing, a canal boat trip, visit to Birmingham Botanical gardens, quiz sessions, a Robbie Burns afternoon, pancake day (pictured above) and much more.

6. SVI Summer Raffle and general fundraising activities

As fundraising becomes more challenging in the community and voluntary sector, SVI took the decision to embark on an increased public fundraising campaign.

Our successful fundraising activities included:

- an Easter draw, where an SVI member would win a yummy chocolate hamper
- a summer raffle open to the public, with a prize of £200 plus many more gifts, most of which were donated by local firms.
- in-store collections – the first time we have tried this approach.



SVI also helps other causes and held a collection for the West Bromwich Food Bank (pictured) and our members raised funds for other charities such as Fight for Sight.



7. Dartmouth Park Sensory Garden

As part of the partnership work that SVI has been undertaking with the Friends of Dartmouth Park, the third phase of the Sensory Garden has now been completed. SVI having obtained funds from Community First (West Bromwich Central) to install slit drums (pictured) to



complement the existing sound equipment in the Sensory Garden.

This exciting new aspect of the Sensory Garden has been a great success and further outdoor musical instruments will be located along the Sandwell Valley Nature Trail – meaning that the whole community can now benefit from the links made by SVI and the Friends of the Park, result full inclusion!

8. Health and Wellbeing programmes

By popular demand, SVI was pleased to welcome back the Slimwell, Cookwell and Eatwell team, as we commenced a Mytime health and wellbeing course that would also include health assessments, light exercise and walking.



In March 2014 a further Mytime course, Get Active Take Part commenced where SVI members will trial their skills at Boccia, Zumba Gold, gym work and more.

Funding towards these programmes came from the Mytime Community Development fund.

9. Eye Health Campaigns

SVI remains fully committed to raising the importance of regular eyesight tests amongst the general public to help prevent sight loss. This year we welcomed the support of the Challenge Intergenerational Project, which included young people aged 16 to 19 joining us to combine creative and artistic skills to design resources for National Eye Health Week. (You can see the results of their work on our stall, pictured right.)



The week itself saw SVI members and volunteers visiting each of the six towns of Sandwell to promote the message 'don't turn a blind eye to sight loss' and to have an eyesight test at least every two years. World Sight Day saw us out and about again, this time at the West Bromwich Albion and Arsenal match where our message was displayed on the big screen and at local bingo halls.

Thanks go to the Challenge Programme for funding towards this campaign and to the young people who created excellent resources which were used to promote our message and will be valuable to us for future promotions.

10. SVI Partnership Working and Consultation Groups

In October Sandwell Police and SVI launched the 'don't plonk it park it' campaign. Its aim is to raise the awareness of problems and the very real dangers faced by visually impaired people when attempting to negotiate cars parked on pavements.

This is an exciting partnership venture and forms an important aspect of the work we do to raise awareness of issues and to seek to remove barriers to full participation in society.

SVI also has:

- an extremely successful Transport Group, working in partnership with CENTRO and other transport operatives
- a Vision Access Group (VAG) seeking to address environment and access issues that affect visually impaired people
- a Housing Group, recently established with the remit to work with housing providers to identify and seek to resolve housing issues faced by people living with sight loss.



These groups and our other local and national representations ensure that SVI remains fully engaged and committed to full inclusion and equality.

11. SVI Annual Forum

In November 2013 we held our 9th Annual Forum with the Mayor of Sandwell Councillor Linda Horton opening the proceedings.

Keynote Speaker Danny Gleeson (Operations Manager, Guide Dogs Shrewsbury) pictured, gave a motivating and moving account of his journey through life, leisure and work as a visually impaired person.



Other guest speakers were Sunny Bains (Queen Alexandra College student and SVI volunteer); Sergeant Giles Dean, telling delegates of the SVI and West Midlands Police initiative 'Don't Plonk it Park It'; and SVI's Vice-Chair and Portway Reference Group member Saeed Nasser.

Delegates also enjoyed a range of exhibitors, a Sandwell Talking News demonstration of the new boombox players and a guided tour of the Portway Lifestyle Centre.

12. Sandwell Talking News

We are delighted to announce that the long-awaited Sandwell Talking News relaunch took place in January 2014 at Oldbury Library, with 40 members of the public attending throughout the day.



The event was a great success, with Councillor Susan Downing formally launching this new and exciting audio home delivery postal service, to be rolled out across Sandwell over the coming months.

Visually impaired people who are unable to read a print newspaper will be offered a specialist audio listening device called a 'boombox' and will receive fortnightly news and information straight to their homes on a USB stick. The Sandwell Talking News can also be heard by visiting www.sandwellvisuallyimpaired.org.uk

Grateful thanks go to Community First panels in Oldbury and Cradley Heath and Old Hill for their recognition of the importance of this provision and for their financial support.

Other activities this financial year

Our other activities this financial year have included:

- A Service Development Survey, sent out to all registered visually impaired people of Sandwell, seeking views and preferences from which SVI can seek funding in order to offer services that meet the real needs of our members.
- Representation on local committees, including Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO); Sandwell Homes, the Portway Lifestyle Centre and My Voice.
- National committees and partnership working with organisations including Shaping Our Lives, Guide Dogs, Sandwell HealthWatch and Scope.
- Members' open meetings, covering important topics like welfare benefits and health and social care provision as well as entertainment from local Black Country light-hearted historians and amusing poets.
- Quarterly newsletters
- A fully accessible website
- The weekly Sandwell Talking News, which is downloadable from the SVI website www.sandwellvisuallyimpaired.org.uk and soon to be re-established as a home postal service.



These are enviable achievements for a peer-led and managed voluntary group operating on such a low cost base.

SVI's work is based on true user participation. Our aim is to reduce the isolation felt by many visually impaired people; to encourage them to play an active role in the community; to support families, friends and

associates of people living with sight loss and to work with service providers to inform and educate.

We are proud to boast that all of our activities and campaigns are organised and led by visually impaired people with the assistance of our sincere and committed volunteers.

The SVI Management Committee would like to thank all our supporters who have helped us throughout 2013/2014. Challenging times are ahead for all of us, however it is also an exciting time for forward looking and innovative user-led organisations like SVI who are prepared to rise to the challenges of a changing society.

Financial review

Our financial policy is to retain 15% of our core funding to implement an exit plan. Please refer to SVI's Statement of Accounts 2013/2014 for a full summary of financial expenditures.

The Management Committee Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' Report above.

Signed on behalf of the Charity's Management Committee Trustees

Signatures:

	
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