



# **SVI (Sandwell Visually Impaired) Annual Report**

**1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015**

**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

S Troth

S Nasser – Vice-Chair

W Bowen

Helen Rourke – Secretary

M Howe

K Averis – Treasurer

P Cross

G Price

G Hudson

R Gormley

G Orlebar (Co-opted)

G Holland

Lisa Bradshaw (Co-opted)

**Governing document:** Constitution

**Trustees selected by:** Election by membership

**Membership:** 492

**Registered Visually Impaired in Sandwell (information circulation list):** 1,285

## **Charity objectives**

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.

This year SVI celebrated our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and from an initial 12 members we now have a membership of 492 and well as distributing our newsletter to all the 1,285 registered severely visually impaired people in Sandwell. The SVI office serves approximately 60 people weekly, responding to telephone enquiries, visits and organised activities. As well as our work with the Sandwell Talking News to distribute approximately 90 audio newspapers weekly.

The programmes below highlight the range of key activities undertaken this year.

SVI's aspirations for the future are to obtain larger premises that will enable us to grow and further develop our services to people living with sight loss, their families, carers and associates. To establish a strong volunteer's base, which will promote increased user involvement and enable SVI to achieve even more for our community.

## **Summary of our main activities and achievements undertaken for the public benefit during 2014/2015**

### **1. Sandwell Talking News roll out**

We are immensely proud of the success of this joint programme. SVI and the Sandwell Talking News [STN] have been working in partnership to ensure that a locally recorded, edited and produced weekly talking newspaper is available to every visually impaired resident of Sandwell who wishes to receive it. Currently it is provided on CD, USB stick and online by visiting [www.sandwellvisuallyimpaired.org.uk](http://www.sandwellvisuallyimpaired.org.uk) We still have people on our waiting list to receive the STN and hope to

provide this service to all on the list by the end of this financial year. We welcome new listeners so please call the SVI office to register your interest.

SVI and the Sandwell Talking News thank Community First panels across Sandwell for supporting this venture and particular thanks also go to the Tipton Christmas Tree of Lights Fund.

## 2. Health and Wellbeing

Working with MyTime we were able to offer a series of taster sessions at the Portway Lifestyle Centre. Get Active Take Part commenced in March 2014 and ran for 12 weeks. SVI members tested their skills at Boccia; Indoor Curling; Zumba Gold; gym work and more. These sessions were very successful and formed the basis for our exciting Gym Buddy Scheme.



Funded by attendees' contributions and a Mytime Community Investment Grant.

## 3. Line Dancing

Continuing the theme of keeping fit and undertaking physical activity, SVI obtained funding to run our ever-popular line dancing sessions with Ray Brookes, our caller, at West Bromwich Town Hall. The Programme ran for 20 weeks



and at the end of the programme we celebrated its success with a dissemination event; line dancing party and live band at the Woodman Corner in West Bromwich.

Funding for this programme was kindly awarded by a West Bromwich Community First Grant and continued after funding from attendee contributions.

#### **4. SVI Blind Challenge event**

In July 2014 SVI embarked on our first 'Blind Challenge' event at the Portway Lifestyle Centre. The objective of this day was to showcase the skills of visually impaired people, provide sighted associates with a chance to pitch their skills in a range of activities wearing blindfold and to raise much needed funds for SVI.



Councillor Yvonne Davies launched the day and Ruth Durrant-Jones took the lead on member Mark Durrant-Jones head shave. After which, visually impaired and sighted people – many wearing sleep shades, tested their nerve on the indoor climbing wall. With 'shot in the dark', penalty shoot offs and a virtual walk to Snowden starting that day and running right through July. The event was a new and exciting way to fund raise and increase awareness of visual impairment at the same time.

Funds raised for future activities from donor sponsorship.

#### **5. Indoor climbing and the National Indoor Climbing Award Scheme [NICAS]**

Building on the success of our young people's afternoon on the indoor climbing wall at the Portway Lifestyle Centre last year. SVI sought to obtain funding to enable visually impaired people of all ages to give climbing a try, develop



their abilities, gain confidence and team working skills and work towards a formal qualification. Climbers aged 22 to 75 went on to obtain level 2 and 3 NICAS qualifications and once qualified are continuing to climb both at Portway and on more challenging walls.

Funding for the 12-week Level 1 Course was provided from a Sports Relief Community Cash grant and a Grant from the Sandwell Disability Activation Fund enabled climbers to further develop their skills to achieve a Level 2 NICAS award, with two climbers working towards a Level 3 Certificate. Free climbing with Boulder Central at Portway continues thanks to the support of SMBC Adult Services.

## **6. Active at 60**

This is a well-established peer support group that encourages and supports our members aged 50-plus to take part in social activities to stimulate body and mind - it is proven that people who are active as they approach 60 are more likely to remain well and active for longer.



We strive to offer a varied programme and this year the Group have visited the Botanical Gardens, historic buildings like the nearby Wightwick Manor; The Big House in Oldbury and enjoyed events in our Centre like, cream tea afternoons; quizzes; a festive afternoon in December and our own Pancake Day including pancake races! Thanks go to the volunteer Community Agents who help to organise the events and come up with lots of good ideas for the Group to enjoy.

This year the Active at 60 Group was funded by a Red Nose Community Cash Grant, the West Bromwich Community Chest fund and attendee contributions.

## **7. 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 to promote increased self confidence and team working.



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. This year we have built on the Group's visit to the climbing wall at the Portway Lifestyle Centre, to offer a longer programme of mixed ages [refer to point 5]. The Group have also visited Drayton Manor for a leisure day out – over the period that this Group has been operating, we have seen the young people grow in confidence and abilities and many young people have built friendships with their fellow group members.

The Young People's Group trip to Drayton Manor was funded from a Grant received from U3 Academy.

## **8. Consultations**

SVI is part of the Speakout network and this year we have held several consultation events, in partnership with other organisations like The African Caribbean Centre and BUDS [Better Understanding of Dementia Services]. These consultations provide valued service user feedback to the Care Quality Commission and other health regulators. SVI also took the lead on a Choice in End of Life Care consultation event, seeking the views of sensory impaired people with sight and hearing loss.

This consultation took place at our Centre in partnership with the National Council for Palliative Care. We are part of the Eye Health

Network and seek to develop these important strands of our work in the years to come.

This is a commissioned or contracted activity and generates a small income for SVI.

## **9. Challenge**

An intergenerational project where young people aged 16 to 19 work in partnership with community organisations in order to promote greater mutual understanding and intergenerational awareness. This was the second year SVI have worked with the young people to provide them with Visual Impairment Awareness, sighted guide training and a chance to learn more about the needs of people living with sight loss. In the past, the Challenge have designed art work, posters, tablecloths and T-shirts for SVI to use in eye health campaigns.

We receive a small allowance from the Challenge scheme to run this project.

## **10. SVI 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:

- a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary raffle open to the public, with a prize of £200 plus many more gifts, most of which were donated by local supporters and firms.
- in-store collections, enabling us to raise £1,026.15 during 2014/2015.



- Table top sales and tombola at the Friends of Dartmouth Park Spring and Autumn fairs.

SVI also helps other causes and held a collection for the West Bromwich Food Bank and our members raised funds for other charities.



## 11. 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's National Eye Health Week took us to 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 promoting the message to look after your eyesight again, this time at the West Bromwich Albion and Liverpool match where our message was displayed on the big screen.

## 12. SVI Partnership Working and Consultation Groups

In October 2013 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.

We are continuing to promote this important message and have extended our pavement campaigns to raise the awareness of pavement cyclists and the dangers faced not only by visually impaired people but anyone who is not able to move quickly to a place of safety.



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, 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.

### **13. SVI Annual Forum**

In November 2014 we held our 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum with the Mayor of Sandwell Councillor Derek Rowley opening the proceedings.

Keynote Speaker Karl Farrell (Federation of the Blind), detailed his life from a childhood in Australia to his arrival in Britain and his subsequent life, leisure and work as a visually impaired BT telephone operator.



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.

### **Other activities this financial year**

Our other activities this financial year have included:

- Representation on local committees, including Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), Sandwell Homes, the Portway Lifestyle Centre Reference Group, SMBC Ambassadors Group, and My Voice.

- National committees and partnership working with organisations including Shaping Our Lives, Guide Dogs, Healthwatch Sandwell and Scope.
- Members' open meetings, covering important topics like safeguarding against bogus callers and fraudsters, home safety and bin collection issues as well as entertainment from local celebrities and our talented membership.
- SVI newsletters
- A fully accessible website
- The weekly Sandwell Talking News, which is available by post, on USB stick and CD or downloadable from the SVI website [www.sandwellvisuallyimpaired.org.uk](http://www.sandwellvisuallyimpaired.org.uk)



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 2014/2015. 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 2014/2015 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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