



SVI (Sandwell Visually Impaired) Annual Report

1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016

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

G Hudson

S Nasser – Vice-Chair

G Orlebar

H Rourke – Secretary

Lisa Bradshaw

K Averis – Treasurer

R Flatley

G Price

A Boston

R Gormley

M Carr

W Bowen

S Hammer

Governing document: Constitution

Trustees selected by: Election by membership

Membership: 507 (as of 1 April 2016)

Registered Visually Impaired in Sandwell (information circulation list): 1270

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.

From an initial 12 members in 2004, SVI now has a membership of 507, with an additional provision of information and peer support to the 1270 registered Severely Visually Impaired in Sandwell. The SVI office serves approximately 60 people weekly, responding to telephone enquiries, visits and organised activities. This is in addition to our work with the Sandwell Talking News to distribute approximately 125 audio newspapers weekly.

This year SVI have been preparing for premises relocation and key restructuring. We have taken a step back from some of our activities in order to consolidate the work started during the last financial year. Continuing this has been a valuable time of review and evaluation, providing time to plan for our new offices, increased volunteer base and to set key objectives going forward.

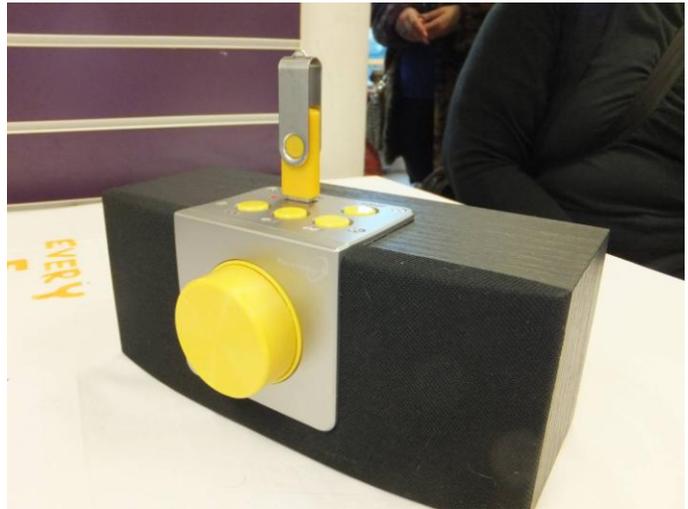
The programmes below highlight the range of key activities undertaken this year.

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 more for our community.

Summary of our main activities and achievements undertaken for the public benefit during 2015/2016

1. Sandwell Talking News partnership

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 USB stick or CD and available to all online by visiting www.sandwellvisuallyimpaired.org.uk.



We still have people on our waiting list to receive the STN and hope to provide this service to everyone on the list by the end of this financial year. Working together we have sent out approximately 125 weekly editions of the STN this year, totalling an amazing 6000 audio mail outs. We welcome new listeners so please call the SVI office to register your interest. We also thank the STN volunteers who help co-ordinate, duplicate, mail out, upload to the website, read, edit and master the weekly publication – it couldn't be done without their committed support.

SVI and the Sandwell Talking News thank the Tipton Christmas Tree of Lights Fund, along with public and listener donations that have helped finance the development of the audio publication this year.

2. Health and Wellbeing

In order to promote the importance of exercise to maintain and improve healthy lifestyles, SVI worked in partnership with MyTime Active to:

- enrol visually impaired people to the MyTime Walkwell programme
- organise health assessments at our base in Dagger Lane, the Portway Lifestyle Centre, West Bromwich Town Hall and through home visits.

Visually impaired people and their friends/carers signed up and were provided with a talking pedometer free of charge as well as a 12-week programme of support to increase exercise and improve health.



A grant from the MyTime Community Investment Fund enabled us to supply the talking pedometers and to offer additional support to take full advantage of the Walkwell programme.

3. Portway Gym Buddy scheme

As a development of the work undertaken with MyTime Health and the Walkwell programme, SVI launched a volunteer gym buddy scheme to take place twice weekly at the Portway Lifestyle Centre on Monday mornings and Tuesday and Thursday



afternoons. Over the past months, this scheme has grown from strength to strength and enabled visually impaired people to benefit from the gym at least once a week.

Sincere thanks go to our committed volunteer buddies who offer invaluable assistance for visually impaired people to access the gym equipment on an equal basis to non-disabled people.

This is a cost neutral provision, due to Sandwell Leisure Trust gym facilities being provided free of charge to people who are eligible through the Fair Access to Care Services criteria and those on certain disability benefits.

4. Indoor climbing

Building on the success of our NICAS [National Indoor Climbing Award Scheme] programme, funded through Sports Relief Community Cash grant and the Sandwell Disability Activation Funds last year, suitably qualified [NICAS level 1/2/3] climbers are continuing to climb at Portway on Monday evenings and Tuesday afternoons.

Reduced fee and free climbing with Boulder Central at Portway continues thanks to the support of Sandwell Council Adult Services and Boulder Central.



5. Aquafit programme

In response to visually impaired people's requests, SVI commenced a 12 week Aquafit programme in the Hydrotherapy pool at Portway Lifestyle Centre in July 2015. These sessions were extremely popular and enabled blind and visually impaired people to undertake water-based exercise with the guidance and support of an Aquafit instructor. We are now seeking to extend our pool activities to include water confidence, learn to swim and lane swimming next year.



This programme was funded through a small members' attendance fee and SVI Health and Wellbeing funding stream.

6. Active at 60

This is a well-established peer support group that encourages and supports SVI 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, Blists Hill Victorian Town and RAF Cosford. They have also enjoyed events in our centre, such as cream tea afternoons, quizzes, and a festive afternoon in December with a surprise guest – Santa himself! Warm 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 were funded from a grant from the West Bromwich Community Chest fund [carried over from the last Financial Year], members' raffles and collections and attendee contributions.



7. See and Hear event

As part of SVI's commitment to inform our members of specialist, services, equipment and other support to make life easier, we arranged a trip to the popular See and Hear day in Telford. This was jointly organised by Guide Dogs for the Blind and Shropshire Council and community



organisations. Members were able to find out about services to support their sight loss as well as information about hearing support – very important as many visually impaired people also have a level of hearing loss as well.

Transport costs to attend this event were partly covered by support from the Guide Dogs Shrewsbury committee.

8. UK Online Today sessions

As technology moves forward and in particular the increased use and accessibility of Smart phones, tablets and other mobile devices, SVI was invited to work with Action For Blind People's Online Today service to run a series of short half-day workshops to introduce a range of mobile devices to visually impaired people. We offered beginners sessions and intermediate/advanced sessions to meet a range of needs. These programmes were well attended and further sessions took place throughout the year.



The UK Online Today partnership work was cost neutral.

9. Arts Workshop

In January 2016 Management Committee Member/Trustee Richard Flatley offered his services as an arts instructor together with Ruth Durrent, artist and mother of an SVI member to run a six week arts taster session for visually impaired people and friends. The programme was very successful and included painting, clay



work and other arts techniques including SVI members' input to the Creative Arts, award-winning ceramic garden.

The SVI programme concluded with an audio described tour of the Barber Institute of Fine Arts at the University of Birmingham. The workshop and art gallery tour was very popular and SVI members have continued with their art work at Richard and Ruth's mainstream sessions. The Barber Institute has offered to provide SVI members with a three monthly audio described tour. Other art galleries and museums have also engaged with us to offer touch tours and audio described trips - these activities will continue next year.

This programme was cost neutral with arts tutors providing their time and resources free of charge.

10. 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 third 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.



For this year, SVI and the Challenge young people arranged an exciting multi-partnership activity. A 'pop up Curry and Quiz' afternoon took place on Sunday 27 September to celebrate the end of National Eye Health Week and to provide members, friends and young people with a fun way of raising awareness of both visual impairment and inter-generational relationships. A huge thank you to the Sandwell Yemeni

Community Association who cooked the curries for us and the Challenge young people and volunteers who so ably helped on the day.

A small grant was given to SVI by Challenge to cover the costs of resources, members paid for their lunch and the young people held a cupcake raffle to support the event.

11. General fundraising activities

As fundraising becomes more challenging in the community and voluntary sector, SVI took the decision to continue with our public fundraising campaigns.

Our successful fundraising activities included:

- in-store collections, enabling us to raise £565.49 during 2015/2016
- a Street Collection day in West Bromwich, enabling SVI to raise £176.59 from public cash donations
- SVI raffles at our Annual Forum and open meetings
- donations from SVI members and their families and from relatives and friends when loved ones have passed.

12. National Eye Health Week

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.



13. Partnership Working and Consultation Groups

SVI is a member organisation of the Sandwell Hate Crime Partnership Network and is a registered Third Party Hate Crime Reporting Centre. We attend regular meetings with the police and work to ensure that any issues of hate crime are reported to the police as well as safeguarding issues being circulated to our members as soon as possible and in their required format.

We work with the West Midlands Police Crime and Vulnerability Officer and West Midlands Fire Service to ensure that visually impaired people stay safe both in and outside the home.

SVI also has:

- an extremely successful Transport Group, working in partnership with CENTRO, National Express, Midland Metro and other transport operatives
- a Vision Access Group (VAG) seeking to address environment and access issues that affect visually impaired people.



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

14. SVI Annual Forum

In November 2015 we held our Annual Forum with the Mayor of Sandwell Councillor Barbara Price opening the proceedings.



Keynote Speaker Sandwell's own 'Blind Dave Heeley' amazed and entertained members with his account of his most recent challenge, 'The Marathon Des Sables' across the Sahara desert.

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

15. Transcription services

This year SVI recorded and produced the audio CD version of the CENTRO 'Getting around access guide 2016'. This was a wonderful opportunity to grandstand our new transcription services – we look forward to further work of this kind in the years to come.

16. 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 Housing, the Portway Lifestyle Centre Reference Group, Sandwell Council 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 local topics like bin collection issues, national organisations like Blind Veterans, as well as entertainment from local celebrities and our talented membership.
- SVI newsletters.



- Our 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

These are enviable achievements for a peer-led and managed voluntary organisation 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 2015/2016. 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 2015/2016 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 and staff

Signatures:

	
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