



Sandwell Visually Impaired Newsletter issue 14 Winter 2011

Welcome to our winter newsletter

Warm welcome to new faces at SVI

We are pleased to welcome Tony Averis as SVI's new Chair. He takes over from Graham and pledges to keep up the hard work, saying, "I would like to take the history of SVI with its wealth of knowledge and experience to shape the future for improving services for all people with impaired vision in Sandwell."



New Chair Tony (left) takes over the reins from Graham (right)

Tony has been a Trustee of Ideal For All for some time and has trained in visual impairment rehab, so we are in safe hands. Also welcomed to the committee are:
Liz Hammer – many of you will

know Liz from her work organising the theatre trips; Val Humphries – brings a wealth of experience and knowledge of training, employment and support; and Ray Middleton – newly visually impaired, he is keen to work hard for people living with sight loss.

We also have a new worker, Scott Price, who will be helping in the office, so you will hear his cheery voice when you call. Scott and Sandra will be contacting you over the next month or so to check that we have your details correct and the information we send you is what you want.

Graham is standing down as Chair so that he can spend more time at home with his wife Maureen. But don't worry, he will still be on the committee and flying the flag for SVI. Thanks to Graham for all his hard work since SVI was set up in 2004.

Featured in this issue:

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SVI aims to make living and/or working in Sandwell better for people coping with sight loss.



Your sponsorship has helped get a sensory garden in Dartmouth Park

Well it's been a long cold winter but now birds are singing their dawn chorus, buds are bursting, spring is on its way. In celebration of brighter, warmer days, SVI have joined with the Friends of Dartmouth Park, Sandwell Council and Mansells contractors to design and plant a sensory garden in the park.



The sponsored walk SVI did with the Friends last year raised over £1000 to help cover the costs of plants. We are meeting with the landscape architect to design a raised bed for all to enjoy. Would you like to help? You could ring us at the SVI office, letting us know what your favourite sensory plants and flowers are. The green fingered amongst you could help with the planting of the bed. Or just come along once it's finished and enjoy the fragrance, texture,

colour, and sounds that a sensory garden provokes. We'll keep you informed, and if you want to help, just ring us on **0121 525 4810**.



Little Shop of Horrors review, by Liz Hammer

Last September a group of SVI members when to the Birmingham Rep to see this splendid audio described performance. Before the show we all went on stage to look around the set so that we had an idea how the stage is laid out – this is called a 'touch tour'.

The three plants that are the centre of the show were very scary for some people especially the large one that swallows members of the cast during the story. I have seen this show before but this time the actors pulled out all the stops to make it the best one I have seen for a long time.

A big thank you to the Rep staff on behalf of SVI for making this such an entertaining and humorous evening.



If you would like to go to the theatre, contact me on **0121 429 8104** or by email to lizannhammer@talktalk.net. I will be happy to tell you about upcoming audio described shows.

Sandwell Council ASSIST – help at the end of your phone

Sandwell Council ASSIST
0845 352 2266
 for all your adult social care needs

If you are experiencing sight loss, disabled, ill or are taking on new caring responsibilities, you can get advice and practical help on a variety of services to assist you. Contact the new Sandwell Council ASSIST service – it's one number for all your adult social care needs, making it quicker and easier to access services.

Experienced and knowledgeable staff will guide and support you and your family to get the services you need. They can help you with:

- advice, information and access to specialist social care support
- access to the Vision Services Team to meet your sight loss related needs
- equipment to support you in your home, including mobility

and daily living aids

- Blue Badges.

Phone lines are open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday.

If you prefer, email:

sandwell_assist@sandwell.gov.uk

Getting around made easier

If you are registered blind, you are eligible to apply for a Blue Badge. This enables a driver to park in designated spaces, provided that you are present. If you are registered partially sighted with other health issues, you may also be eligible to apply.

For more information or to apply. Please contact Sandwell Council ASSIST on **0845 352 2266**. Book a telephone assessment appointment with a Blue Badge adviser. You will need a passport size photo of yourself plus a cheque to cover administration costs.



World Sight Day spectacular success



SVI led an inspiring campaign from August to November 2010, urging people to 'Love your peepers', while carrying out a far-reaching consultation to determine priorities for a Vision Strategy for Sandwell.

The 'Make a Spectacle of Yourself' campaign urged people of all ages to find out about sight loss prevention and eye health. SVI members dressed up in extravagant glasses and bright clothes when engaging with the community on this important topic.

Thursday 14 October marked World Sight Day 2010, an annual day of awareness about blindness and visual impairment.

SVI visited a range of venues on the day, including West Bromwich town centre, Asda stores in Blackheath, Cape Hill and Great Bridge, Morrisons in Wednesbury and Sandwell Council House. The public were entertained with soundbites broadcast from the mobile library van and healthy lifestyle team's mobile unit, featuring a range of topical tunes, such as 'Jeepers Creepers,' interspersed with important messages about eye care.

Graham Price, who stood down as chair of SVI at the end of the campaign, said: "We appreciate all the hard work and effort that has gone into supporting World Sight Day. This wouldn't have been possible without the advice and support we've had from Sandwell Council staff, including The Sensory Service, Ideal for All, the Police and other local agencies.

"Over 40 activists were out promoting sight loss prevention on the day, and all were magnificent!"

Launch of Sandwell's Vision Strategy

Following consultation with a wide range of community groups, people who use adult social care services, carers and members of the public, a new vision strategy is coming soon to Sandwell.

The organisations that helped to create it are reuniting to launch the strategy from the end of March.

A series of events will be taking place throughout the year, with more information available on SVI's website soon.

Important changes to Disability Living Allowance (DLA)



If you are in receipt of DLA and aged under 65 on 11 April 2011, you may be eligible to receive the higher rate mobility component.

From November 2010 through to

April 2011, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will be calling everyone currently receiving DLA lower rate mobility whose main disabling condition is recorded as sight loss. If DWP can obtain sufficient evidence to show that you would qualify for the higher rate mobility component under the new rules, your award can be changed in time for April 2011. This will give those people who are eligible an extra £30 a week. If you feel that your eyesight has deteriorated since you were registered, please mention this when you are contacted.

Those people who DWP are unsuccessful in contacting by telephone will receive a letter and a claim form (DLA 77). If you have any difficulty completing the form or are unsure of your eligibility please contact the Disability and Carers Service (DCS) on **08456 000033** – they will assist you in completing the form over the telephone.

If you are unable to locate your CVI or BD8 or your documentation is illegible you should also contact the DCS on the above number.

There has been no guarantee of a claim being backdated to 11 April 2011, so please don't delay in returning your form.



SVI goes touch typing at the library



SVI is working in partnership with Sandwell Council's Library Service to run touch typing and IT awareness sessions for visually impaired people living in the Smethwick area.

Thanks to a grant from Sandwell Homes, we have been able to bring a fun and easy to use CD keyboard instruction pack to the fingertips of over ten local visually impaired people.

Being able to type is the first step towards a whole new world of communications – there's more to come and we plan to offer this valuable course in other libraries across Sandwell – we'll let you know when we are at a library near you.

30 Years of SAIBA...and they said it wouldn't last!!

Way back in 1981 a few of us 'young' visually impaired people got together to form Sandwell Active Independent Blind Association. Back then, SAIBA was one of the first user led groups in the country and from a rocky beginning, where the council thought that visually impaired people shouldn't be organising things for themselves, SAIBA has gone from strength to strength. With activities over the years such as; tandeming, canoeing, sponsored walks, fancy dress pub crawls, days and evenings out, holidays at home and abroad – with a whole lot of fun and the odd challenge we made it.

To celebrate our 30th we are inviting current and ex-members to a party in May. The Busby Babes, a local band will be helping us to sing and dance the night away.

Are you, or do you know any ex-members? Interested in joining? Ring Stuart on 07766 704 070 – email stuart@saiba.org www.facebook.com/saibagroup

Sandwell Public Transport Conference



On: Tuesday 15 March 2011,
Time: 10.30am to 4.30pm
At: The Council Chamber,
Sandwell Council House, Oldbury.

A free conference for all bus, rail and Metro users – open to all. We want your views on the quality of public transport in Sandwell so that it can be developed.

The all-day event will include updates on public transport usage and a lively debate.

Participants will be able to help shape the future direction of public transport in Sandwell. The event includes FREE lunch and refreshments.

Call the Transportation Planning Team on **0121 569 4894** for more details.

Mary's chicken and sweetcorn oatie pie

(Serves 4)

Filling

12 oz cooked chicken
1 medium tin sweetcorn
Quarter pint boiling water
1 chicken stock cube
1 teaspoon cornflour
(Could use gravy granules.)

Topping

4 oz plain flour
2 oz porridge oats
3 oz block margarine or butter

Oven gas mark 6 or 200 c

Method

Mix cornflour and a little water to a paste. Dissolve stock cube in remaining water. Combine with Paste in pan. Heating gently, stir until thickened. Grease medium pie dish. Place chopped chicken, drained sweetcorn and stock in dish and mix well.

Sift flour into a bowl and rub in the fat to resemble breadcrumbs. Stir in the porridge oats. Place this topping over the chicken mixture in dish and press down lightly. Place in the centre of the oven for 25 to 30 minutes until golden brown. Serve with green vegetables or a crisp salad.



SVI open meeting 16 March

Don't miss our next open meeting on Wednesday 16 March, 2pm to 4.30pm.

The meeting is about changes to the welfare benefits system, something that could affect us all. It's your chance to find out more about the changes to Disability Living Allowance too.

Guest speakers include representatives from Sandwell Council's Welfare Rights Unit and the Regional Disability Network.

To book your place and for details contact SVI on **0121 525 4810**.

SVI membership continues to rise

SVI now has over 470 members. It's amazing to think that when we started in April 2004 there were only 12 of us! It just goes to show what can be achieved with hard work and determination. We hope that SVI is helping to make a real difference to visually impaired people in Sandwell. If you are not a member already, please do get in touch. Ring us on **0121 525 4810**.

News on our website

Did you know that you can listen to the Sandwell Talking Newspaper on our website every week?

We will be updating the site over the next month or so, so tell us what you would like us to include. www.sandwellvisuallyimpaired.org

Your hearing matters – check it today!

Did you know that many people with sight loss also have some level of hearing impairment? In most cases this can be corrected through using a hearing aid. Take the RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf People) online test by visiting the link below:

http://www.rnid.org.uk/howwehelp/hearing_check/take_online_hearing_check/

You can also phone **0844 800 3838** to take the test. Calls cost 5p per minute from a BT line.

This issue – thanks to:

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