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Registered Charity No. 1019779

A Message from the Chair

Welcome to our 2015/2016 Annual Report. I am pleased to report that we have continued to make really good progress this year despite a background of economic uncertainty and what are difficult times for many organisations. Against this background Sandwell Advocacy has continued to deliver a quality service to those that we support, in what are often very challenging periods of their lives.

As a small charity our success and sustainability is largely due to the unwavering commitment of our staff. They never fail to deliver advocacy to the very highest standard and put their advocacy cases at the centre of their work. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dave Bradshaw, our Project Co-ordinator, for effectively managing the project and ensuring our sustainability and success for yet another year. Through the work of our dedicated staff we are able to see Sandwell Advocacy projects grow in reputation with local partner organisations and they have secured our reputation within the Sandwell borough and beyond.

I would like to thank Jodie McCaughan and Helen Charles for their successful work on our Young Carers Project. They have built the reputation of the Young Carers project and developed a quality service to young carers and their families from

its inception. Thank you to Helen Charles and Sharon Hanson for their work on the Adult Advocacy Support Service, providing valued advocacy to older people residing in care homes locally. Thank you both for your continued work and commitment.

Paddy Elmore and Juanita Williams have developed our Sandwell Cancer, Older People and Advocacy (SCOPA) project far beyond our original expectations. We are proud of the work that they have done in bringing this service to the attention of local partners, hospitals, GP's and older people affected by cancer, who need this service to support them in a very challenging period of their lives.

We continue to welcome Social Work students to gain valuable work experience with us and I would like to thank all the staff for contributing to their supervision and making it a positive experience for them. I would also like to thank the students themselves for the contribution that they make to our work during their time with us.

Thank you to all our funders and all those individuals and organisations that support us and have generously made donations to Sandwell Advocacy during this year.

Sandwell Advocacy depends on the support of our volunteers, they are vital in enabling us to provide a great service, and they are at the heart of our success. I would like thank you all for your time and commitment including my fellow Management Committee members. We are grateful for everything that you have done for us and thank you for sustaining us for another year.



Thank you to all our volunteers, including fellow Management Committee members, for your continued support, you have sustained us for another year and we are truly grateful to you all.

Lesley Donnelly *Chair of Sandwell Advocacy*



Project Co-ordinators Report

This has been a very busy and challenging year for all associated with Sandwell Advocacy in what was my 13th year managing the project. I hope that this Annual Report provides a flavour of the positive work we have delivered throughout Sandwell as well as highlighting some of our many successes and achievements.

Our contract with Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) for our Young Carers Advocacy Project continued throughout this year allowing us to provide much needed support for children, young people and their families. There has been some brilliant and innovative work conducted by our project workers Jodie McCaughan and Helen Charles. Taking into account the evaluation we have conducted it is clear that there have been many successful outcomes to the work and those who have accessed the project have provided very positive feedback. This positive feedback is further echoed by both the families and professionals who have engaged with this project. Strategically project staff were represented on SCVO's 'Children and Young People's Forum' as well as providing representation on SMBC's Children's Services Community Operating Groups. At the end of the year this project had supported a total of 237 young carers and 870 beneficiaries, a fantastic achievement.

The Adult Advocacy Support Service also continued throughout this year meaning we were able to provide support for individuals in nursing/residential care, Extra Care Scheme's and Day Centre settings. Helen Charles and Sharon Hanson worked tirelessly to deliver quite a demanding schedule of care provider visits. We agreed with SMBC during this period to vary this contract to include the safeguarding element of the newly introduced Care Act. It was encouraging to see our team of volunteers involved with this project offering much needed support to our project workers; they have become a dedicated and reliable part of the team.



It is with great delight that I report that we were awarded this contract for a further four years when it was put out to tender towards the end of 2015. Unfortunately we bid farewell to Sharon Hanson during October of this year, she had been a valuable member of the team and we wish her well. As the year concluded we had visited 44 care providers and completed 442 resident/service user questionnaires.

Our work on the Sandwell Cancer, Older People and Advocacy (SCOPA) project, funded by The Big Lottery and Macmillan under the auspices of the Older People's Advocacy Alliance continued throughout this year. Paddy Elmore (Independent Cancer Advocate) and Juanita Williams (Volunteer Co-ordinator) moved from establishing the project, to coping with the demands of the second year. Referrals steadily increased, new volunteers were recruited and a number of very successful Peer Advocacy partnerships were established matching volunteers with those we supported. We continued to receive the invaluable support of local health professionals as part of our Local Cancer Champions Board and during this year we held a Midway Review and Development meeting where we were able to agree key priorities. Other

key successes during this period included the introduction of a dedicated SCOPA website: www.scopasupport.org.uk and another very successful Macmillan World's Biggest Coffee Morning event on 25/9/15. I had pleasure in welcoming the Mayor Councillor Barbara Price and Deputy Mayor Councillor Julie Webb who kindly attended and supported this event.

Any report on the year cannot ignore the fantastic work of all of our volunteers. Our volunteers get involved for many different reasons, but all do so because they want to make a meaningful difference to people's lives. We would not be able to function in the way that we do without the commitment of our volunteers who donate their valuable time, skills and experiences. The introduction of our SCOPA project has provided an added dimension to our existing team of volunteers and it has been encouraging to witness the increase in numbers of volunteers getting involved.

Our links with Coventry University continued and we welcomed Jade Nicholls to the team for her student social work placement between September – December 2015. As well as valuable operational support this also provided her with a valuable insight into the work of Sandwell Advocacy.

Steve Leighton continued to manage our finances throughout this period and implemented much needed modernisation and streamlining of our financial systems. We embraced technology and moved towards a much more effective method of financial management.



Our strategic objectives are ably managed and supported by members of our management committee. Our management committee are a small but dedicated team who give their time and expertise freely to support and guide our work. They are a valuable asset to the organisation and an essential source of support for me.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial contribution provided to allow us to deliver all of the projects mentioned above. Other small grants and donations were most gratefully received from individuals as well as the Tipton and Coseley Building Society, Alfred Haines Charitable Trust and Tipton Civic Society (Tree of Light Appeal). Full financial details are available in our published accounts, available on request or online.

The commitment and dedication of all involved with Sandwell Advocacy is a constant source of inspiration for me. We all share a vision where people who seldom have a voice are empowered to have a voice, choice and control over what happens in their lives and an equal stake in society. These are the values that underpin the concept of advocacy and this is a vision that Sandwell Advocacy will continue to embrace.

Dave Bradshaw

Project Co-ordinator





Sandwell Cancer, Older People and Advocacy (SCOPA) Project

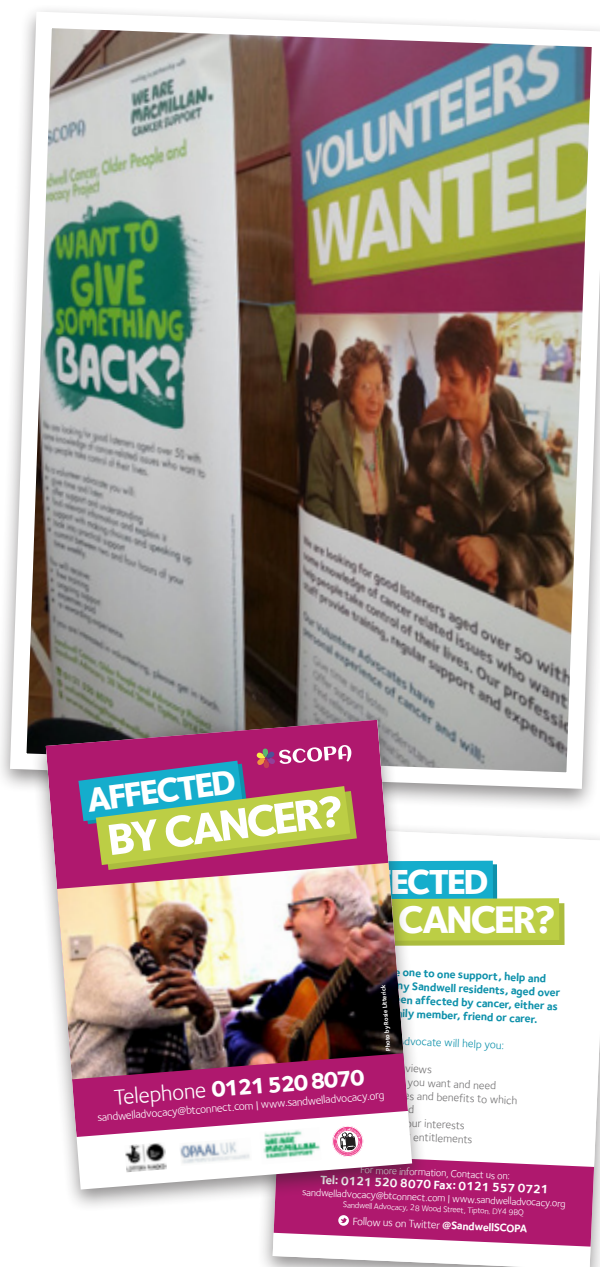
The metropolitan borough of Sandwell contains a number of areas of significant urban deprivation with poorer life expectancy compared to the West Midland average. It has a high proportion of adult smokers together with a prevalence of adult obesity. The incidence of lung cancer diagnosis in both males and females and mortality rates in the under 75's are significantly higher than the West Midlands average. Prostate cancer incidence rates and lung cancer and mortality rates in our elderly citizens are again significantly higher than the West Midlands averages.

A combination of these factors have been key in shaping and directing the work of SCOPA during the past 12 months and much effort has been focussed in identifying and challenging cancer inequalities experienced by older people within the Borough. In informing SCOPA service delivery SCOPA's Local Cancer Champions Board (LCCB) takes reference from

The Cancer Reform Strategy (2007) and it's highlighting of the existence of large inequalities in cancer incidence and outcomes across the country as a whole and within Sandwell in particular.

Although cancer care services positioned within the Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have been working toward narrowing the inequalities gap, as a frontline advocacy provider, we recognise that much work remains to be done within this area in light of the increasing pressures on already squeezed health and social care providers.

Within Sandwell cancer incidence is significantly higher in the most deprived groups, and late diagnosis and poor survival rates remain significant problems for the



Borough's poorest and most disadvantaged people.

SCOPA's role in attempting to redress some of these inequalities in cancer outcomes between the more affluent and the most deprived members of our community is essential if the Health Inequalities target to close the gap in life expectancy between rich and poor is to be achieved.

Paddy Elmore

Independent Cancer Advocate

SCOPA Volunteer Peer Advocates

During the period April 2015 to March 2016 we had 26 enquiries as a result of promoting the service around the borough at events, in local press and on the national Macmillan Cancer Support website. Five of these enquiries materialised into actual volunteers. This reflects the requirements of being a volunteer advocate within the project as the role calls for sensitivity, enhanced communication skills and dedication together with empathy and patience. Our volunteers bring with them a broad range of skills, life experiences and come from a wide range of professional backgrounds. Our volunteers have first-hand knowledge and experience of a cancer journey and are fully aware of the impact it has on people's lives. People affected by cancer often want to speak to someone who understands what they are going through. Our volunteers are best placed to empathise and support sensitively. Their knowledge of the local area and services are invaluable. We are very proud of our volunteers and the amazing work they do.

One of the first volunteers we recruited became far more active as her confidence increased and she joined our Local Cancer Champions Board and attends the National Cancer Champions Board meetings at Macmillan Headquarters in London.



The average time Peer Advocates spend with their advocacy partners varies and is dependent on the time their partners have available and their health, many are still undergoing treatment and it can be a very difficult time in more ways than one. The most common advocacy issue is around practical support, followed closely by emotional support. Our volunteers deal with these and many more issues, often sourcing information and making phone calls to arrange services.

The majority of the individuals our volunteers have supported have told us that they felt they had been treated with dignity and respect with an increase or maintenance of their independence. Often people said they felt that we had increased access to other support services.

Well over half of our referrals came from health professionals, mainly Clinical Nurse Specialists in hospitals in Sandwell, City and The Queen Elizabeth Hospital. As more and more health professionals learned about the service our visibility increased and we were able to start a meaningful relationship with the hospital staff who know they can refer their most vulnerable and isolated patients to us for the one to one support they do not have time to give. Our volunteers can identify those most at risk and can act quickly if needs be. They are often the first to notice when things are deteriorating and can prevent situations from escalating.

As we entered our second year I hope we have shown how valuable the project is and how advocacy can provide the vital support that others cannot offer. Our service is unique in that we have the time, skills and empathy in order to support older people affected by cancer and work in partnership with other agencies who sadly find their time to spend with their patients is being cut drastically in these times of austerity. We can help older people to speak out and get their views heard on decisions relating to all aspects of their lives. We can ensure they are made aware of their rights and entitlements and offer timely and accurate information so they can make informed decisions.



As we approach the third year of the project I hope that all the hard work of our staff and volunteers will be recognised and that the SCOPA project can go on delivering this bespoke and essential service to the residents of Sandwell. As one in three people are now touched by cancer at some point in their life we are needed more than ever to be the voice of those who are not able to communicate their wishes at a time when it is needed most.

Juanita Williams

Volunteer Co-ordinator



Carol's Story

In May 2015 Carol was referred to Sandwell Cancer, Older People and Advocacy Project, (SCOPA) by a support worker at Bridges Cancer Support in Sandwell. Carol was being treated for two cancer types and had recently sold her family home to move into a smaller ground floor flat which would be much more manageable for her. Carol has three sons and lives on her own. Although now frail, she was fiercely independent and was more than capable of managing her life. She was extremely active having had many jobs in her life and having many interests including walking, art and sewing. Evidence of this could be seen all around her home in many different forms. The flat she was moving into was one of around twenty homes that were being renovated by the local authority landlord and she was aware that the nature and degree of the work undertaken would

render the property uninhabitable whilst it was carried out. She had envisaged moving out during this period possibly on holiday or to a local hotel. As time ran on she became increasingly frustrated at the delays as she was unable to furnish her home in the manner to which she was accustomed. The walls required papering and painting and there were cupboards to be removed and carpet to be laid.

As her chemotherapy started she lost her appetite and her general health deteriorated resulting in her becoming increasingly anxious and upset. SCOPA had recently recruited Sharon as a volunteer peer advocate and this seemed to be an entirely appropriate match. Sharon is a breast

cancer survivor and also lived locally to Carol. Sharon was familiar with some of the emotions and issues that Carol was currently experiencing.

They were introduced and agreed to proceed with the advocacy partnership. Sharon attended some chemotherapy sessions with Carol, meeting her at the hospital and sitting with her for reassurance. Sharon ensured all the procedures undertaken were clearly explained to Carol prior to them being carried out. She was also able to ask the relevant questions that Carol didn't feel sure about asking. Sharon assumed the link worker role between Carol and the housing officer, who as a young man, struggled with the sometimes emotional and charged exchanges he had with Carol. Sharon was able to communicate in a calm and focussed manner so as to ensure that Carol was listened to and her views and wishes taken on board.

A date was set for the renovation work to commence and Sharon contacted several local care settings to ascertain if any of them were able to offer the shorter term accommodation that Carol required. Fortunately she was able to identify and contact the manager of a new care establishment who had a property for vulnerable short term displacement cases. This was obviously exactly the type of accommodation that Carol had needed. It was agreed that Carol could move in the very day the work commenced and move out on the final day of completion. She was



able to take her most personal possessions with her which provided her with some familiar comfort in her new living environment. She was able to continue to cook her own meals and use the shared laundry facilities.

Within two weeks the work was finished and Carol was able to move back into her home. She has since arranged for some snagging to be undertaken and now has a new fitted kitchen and bathroom, together with new carpets throughout. She is continuing her treatment and her sons accompany her when they are able.

Because of Sharon's interventions and the empowering nature of her approach Carol doesn't require advocacy support at the current time but takes confidence from the fact that she can re-access SCOPA support whenever she feels she may require it. She has built a trusting and positive relationship with Sharon and now knows that she can talk to her openly and in confidence about her most profound thoughts, fears and concerns should she ever feel the need.

Names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.



Young Carers Advocacy Project

We are currently progressing towards the end of the fifth year, and it has been another outstanding year.

Independent Advocates have been working as hard as ever on this project to support some of the most vulnerable and marginalised individuals to reduce inequalities, increase resilience, reduce inappropriate caring roles, engage with wider support services, increase social skills, confidence, self-esteem and build aspirations around their lives and futures.

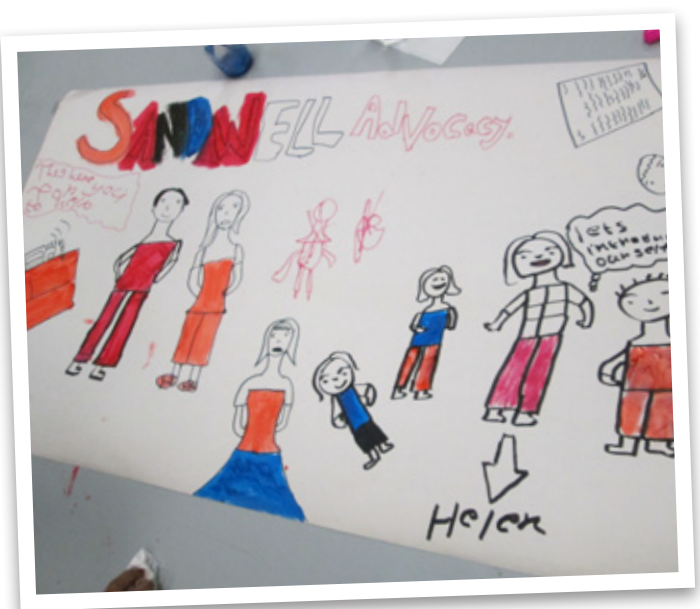
Many young carers and their families have been supported through crisis situations and others have benefited from longer term psycho-social support offered by Sandwell Advocacy's volunteer Citizen Advocates.

We have ensured that young carers have access to peer and group advocacy through their young carer user-led forums. This year's stand out forums includes our Halloween themed forum which provided an opportunity for new young carers to be introduced to those who are already actively involved in our project. All young carers stated that they enjoyed the session and were keen to do more in future. The day provided an opportunity for all involved to have fun in a safe and relaxed environment. Our Christmas forum gave all those who participated the opportunity to make gifts, cards, key rings and Christmas decorations for their families/loved ones. They took part in designing tags with their hopes, dreams and wishes for the New Year and the best designed/thought provoking gift tags were judged for a winning prize. There was also an opportunity to design a 'Young Carers Festival' T-shirt and designs were submitted to be judged by the Festival panel. A prize was also given for the best

design judged by Sandwell Advocacy staff. It was an extremely busy, but positive fun-filled day and it was really encouraging to observe individuals grow in confidence and engage socially.

We were also involved in National Young Carers Awareness Day where project workers were involved in initiatives to get everyone talking about the thousands of young carers who are so often unidentified, and who miss out on the vital services and support that they are entitled to. Therefore we chose to raise awareness by contacting COG Managers, Children's Services commissioners, various schools and school contacts. Following a meeting with one of the COG Managers it was agreed that Sandwell Advocacy would devise an easy read check list of ways to identify young carers for the manager to use during supervision. This would be used to support the team to identify young carers from the families they are currently supporting.

During this period we supported existing and previous individuals who had accessed the service to be included in a consultation event with Sandwell MBC's Children's Services commissioners. We also worked with the local authority on their young carers Memorandum of Understanding and subsequent steps that would enable young carers to receive a care assessment in their own right.



We were pleased to have been able to join the wider sectors in Sandwell in implementing an initiative: 'The Outcomes Star' which measures, supports and tracks users progress; identifies users strengths and challenges; and working together to look at what support is needed. The Stars are designed to be completed collaboratively as an integral part of key work.

To top off a fantastic and eventful year the team supported young carers to attend a local university open day to inspire aspirations and motivate them to look to a broader positive future. The young carers shared that this was a useful event to attend. One young carer saw her future in the hospitality trade as she undertook the cooking at home and had a one week taster session in school. It was what she was familiar and

comfortable with. After the open day the young carer is now looking at what qualifications/courses she will need to do in order to undertake a Social Work degree.

Helen Charles and Jodie McCaughan
Independent Young Carers Advocates



Some comments received throughout the year:

- "Their visits are very beneficial and I want them to keep coming"
- "You build a relationship" "more down to earth and understanding, helpful, funny, actually do stuff that is helpful and worthwhile." "relaxed sessions – which are not stressful or anxiety provoking"
- "I have spoken more to you two in this first short time than I have to my counsellor"
- "...he has told me he can talk to you, because he's your boss" (Parent)
- "...you give me any help and any reassurance, you can help, you tell me about the endings, what can happen"
- "Talking to you I get stuff off my mind so I don't have to worry about it"
- "I liked my advocate being here for me"
- "It's been nice knowing you were there"
- "You are the only ones that have helped us, in this whole process"
- "Thank you for listening for what we have to say"
- "...able to discuss anything"
- "Let me express my feelings, talk about home, which helped a lot" "would have took longer to get where I wanted to"(without Sandwell Advocacy) "I am going out more now"
- "They have been there every step of the way"
- "...she helped me so much"
- "Thank you for letting me talk I have had some really bad days, sorry for crying I feel better now"
- "Don't know what I would have done without her, been here when I have hit the bottom and not give up on me"
- "Didn't tell you everything at the start. I wanted people to think I was smart, if I act it they will think I am and I am ok, then I thought if I tell her the truth maybe she can help me"
- Two professionals in relation to the same family said: "At least you can show you have done this, this, this" "Thank you on behalf of the family" "We Thank you"
- Professional during Pastoral Leaders course - "I have known them for a couple of years and If any of you haven't used that service I suggest you do, it's great it's really, really great"



Young Carers Case Study

A referral for the young carer came through a Local Early Help Team. She was helping to support her mother who was in poor health and suffered from anxiety and her father who was not in the best of health. The young carer had very poor school attendance and was living in temporary accommodation with her parents and sibling; this meant they had to move around the borough regularly in temporary accommodation. The young carer felt the family had no support and due to previous negative experiences the family were reluctant to engage with services.

With the support from her advocate the young carer was able to identify and prioritise the family's needs. The family's lack of secure accommodation was the young carer's first priority. The advocate supported the young carer and her family around multi agency meetings to ensure that their needs were taken in to account. The advocate became the lead role facilitating the meetings ensuring the most appropriate agencies and professionals were invited. We provided intensive support to the father to engage with a housing specialist from Children's Services and a housing agent. The advocate was able to liaise between all parties when the relationship broke down and secured housing for the family. When the young carer's health declined we supported her to make an appointment with her General Practitioner and School Health

Nurse. Having secured accommodation the family's emotional wellbeing and health improved significantly. The young carer was able to improve her attendance at school which also had a positive impact on her own self-confidence and emotional wellbeing.

This young person and her family were facing tremendous difficulties at the point of our intervention, added to the fact that they were extremely distrustful of other services. Without our involvement it is likely that their situation could only have deteriorated.

Significant outcomes were achieved as a result of our intervention and all of the family members commented that they appreciated having independent support whom they were able to build a trusting relationship with and articulate their wishes to other agencies.

Comment from young carer:

"Being able to confide my troubles to someone and have them help has made such a big difference to us all"



Adult Advocacy Support Service

Sandwell Advocacy has been providing an independent advocacy support service to people in a variety of care settings in Sandwell since 2013. The service has been commissioned by Sandwell MBC who is responsible for monitoring standards of care.

Residents, relatives, friends and service users are invited to complete monitoring questionnaires which focus on the quality of the care provider and of the care they receive. We provide assistance to those that need it to enable people to have a voice, share their experiences and give opinions as to what they want and how far the care providers are meeting their needs. The service has been provided in a range of Nursing, Residential and Extra Care settings and other community services. Our work enables commissioners and care providers to improve services in line with feedback received.

Whilst this is quite a structured process we recognise the importance of providing the opportunity for service users, their friends and family to have a say in the care they receive. In all cases, where an advocate is involved, responses have been recorded in an accurate and unbiased manner, ensuring confidentiality at all times.

There are often occasions that arise as part of our standard visits when issues relating to individual service users are identified. Where this is the case we provide the following approach:

- Following up issues on behalf of the resident to ensure that this is resolved to their satisfaction.
- Promoting independence and empowering people to speak up for themselves and encouraging service users to self-advocate wherever possible.
- Working within a safeguarding agenda to ensure individuals are safe and free from harm and abuse.
- Provide Independent Advocacy under the Care Act 2014 where safeguarding issues are identified ensuring the service user is actively involved in the safeguarding process as fully as possible.
- Access to appropriate and relevant information to enable us to signpost and refer service users to other sources of support where such a need is identified.

Helen Charles and Sharon Hanson
Advocacy Support Officers

Sandwell Advocacy Financial Summary 2015/16	
Our income for the year totalled:	£159,923.00
Expenditure for the year was:	£136,686.00
Fund Balances at 31/3/16 were:	£57,127.00
Full details are available in our published accounts.	



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