



South West Advocacy Network

Annual Report for SWAN 2024-2025

Vikki Holloway, CEO
August 2025

Chair's introduction to the Annual Report and Financial Statement 2025.

The 2024–25 financial year marked a period of consolidation and reflection for SWAN, following the rapid expansion and contract awards of 2023–24, which saw the addition of West Berkshire, Portsmouth and Dorset to our portfolio. This year, our focus turned inward—welcoming new teams into SWAN and ensuring they were supported through high-quality induction and training programmes.

Our CEO and Executive Team have worked diligently to strengthen the operational and quality frameworks that underpin our service delivery. This included laying the groundwork for a forthcoming reorganisation of our management structure and introducing new metrics and assurance mechanisms to enhance strategic oversight by the Board.

In October 2024, we successfully handed over the Bristol contract, while also engaging in competitive tenders for the East Sussex advocacy service and the re-tender of our Somerset service. We are proud to report that both were awarded to SWAN and are scheduled for implementation in the 2025–26 financial year. This year also marked the conclusion of our Victims of Crime Advocacy Service (VOCAS), which came to a close after six impactful years. During this time, SWAN provided enhanced adult advocacy to 1,695 victims of crime and anti-social behaviour across Avon and Somerset. Although the new service was not re-tendered, we remain proud of the legacy and outcomes achieved through VOCAS.

Our commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) was reaffirmed in 2024–25 with the re-establishment of the EDI Group and a refreshed, more accessible bi-annual workforce EDI survey. These efforts support our ongoing work to monitor and improve diversity across both our Board and workforce. Co-production continues to be a cornerstone of our approach. This year, the Somerset Co-production Group emerged from our Autism Project, with a mission to improve accessibility for clients with diverse communication needs across the region.

Finally, we began our AQPM (Advocacy Quality Performance Mark) assessment. Early feedback from the draft report has been encouraging, highlighting the value of our services and the positive experiences of those we support. One comment particularly stood out: "Feedback from people who had accessed SWAN's advocacy services was very positive and indicated a much-valued service. There was a strong thread of good support being provided with people feeling listened to and empowered."

As Chair, I am proud of the resilience, dedication, and compassion shown by our teams throughout this year of consolidation and together, we have laid a strong foundation for the future. This has been achieved through the hard work and dedication of Vikki our CEO, her Executive Team and the SWAN workforce who work tirelessly for their clients, all supported by our Board of Trustees who have also supported me throughout the year. I extend my thanks to all at SWAN and all of our involved partners.

Claire

Introduction

SWAN's Vision:

SWAN is committed to furthering the human rights of individuals by empowering people to lead the lives they want to lead, without fear of discrimination and to be as independent and autonomous as possible. SWAN Trustees and workforce are passionate and committed to the work that SWAN does recognising that 'everyone needs someone on their side'.

SWAN's Vision is:

'A world without discrimination, with true social justice, where people are treated as equals and have influence on the decisions that affect their lives'.



SWAN's Mission:

SWAN operates in a competitive environment, delivering services to the most marginalised people in society and striving to ensure that access to rights operates on an equal basis. The people delivering SWAN services are passionate about their work and SWAN is an organisation that cares deeply about justice, fairness and independence.

SWAN's Mission is:

'To be a fair and inclusive employer, respected by all stakeholders for delivering high quality, person centred and innovative services that ensure equal access to rights'.

What We Do:

Advocacy has its foundations in Human Rights; we support people to get the information they need to understand them. Everyone has the right to ensure that their wishes are at the centre of decisions being made about them.

Advocacy helps people to have their voices heard so that they can achieve the outcomes they want in their life. SWAN provides different types of advocacy to people in a variety of different situations and always seeks to enable as much independence as possible for every individual.

Victim of Crime Advocacy Service (VOCAS):

VOCAS provided enhanced adult advocacy alongside practical and emotional support to victims of crime and anti-social behaviour across Avon and Somerset. The service empowered and enabled individuals to cope and recover from their experience as a victim of crime.

"Everyone was very friendly and accommodating, and I enjoyed the responsibility of getting involved with my own cases."



VOCAS
Volunteer

Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA):

Our IMCA service provides independent advocacy for people who are deemed to lack capacity and have no-one else to represent them in decisions being made about their life. This may include where they live, what medical treatment they receive, what care and support they need or as part of 'protective measures' to ensure they are safe from harm or neglect. IMCA advocates also work with people who are subject to a Deprivation of Liberty Order (DoLS)



Professional

"Your contribution to G's improved situation can't be underestimated. I've witnessed how comfortable she is in your presence, and you ensure her voice is heard in discussions regarding her future accommodation"

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS):

Advocacy is provided for people who experience deprivations of liberty through their living accommodations and/or their care planning approaches. Advocates ensure that restrictions are necessary and proportionate, and that mental capacity and best interest decisions have been fairly made, or whether an application to the court of protection is necessary to challenge a decision. Some advocacy for DoLS is provided by IMCAs and some can be provided by a paid or volunteer advocate who is appointed as the Paid Representative.

"Emma was a good person to work with over the past year. She always ensured the residents needs were being met, and any additional things were completed ASAP."



Professional

Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA):

IMHA's have a regular presence on mental health wards to support people at tribunals, appeals, care plan meetings and those on ward rounds who have been detained under a Mental Health Section, a Community Treatment Order or Guardianship, an informal inpatient at a mental health hospital or the Carer of a

qualifying patient. Advocates help people to access records and legal support; communicate with professionals and understand their rights in relation to their legal situation, their medication, and their right (or not) to temporarily or permanently leave the place of detention. IMHA's also facilitate 'Have your Say' meetings on wards to provide feedback on their experience and raise any issues to the ward.



"Part of the reason for me feeling better is what the advocacy service and all of you have done for me especially the level of understanding and patience. So the advocacy service has some part to play in this. It's had a massive impact on the few relationships I have at a time I needed it. So I want to just say thank you all of you. You all have made a positive difference in my life."

Independent Care Act Advocacy (Care Act):

The Care Act of 2014 ensures that people who have 'substantial difficulty' in understanding the Care Act processes and have no other appropriate person to support them is entitled to an independent advocate. 'Substantial difficulty' may be due to a learning disability or a physical or mental health condition. The aim is to ensure an individual's wishes are at the heart of the process and to enable them to be involved as fully as possible.

Independent Health Complaints Advocacy (IHCA):

This service is provided to anyone over the age of 18 who has a complaint about any NHS funded service within the previous year. We support people to consider the outcome they would like from making the complaint and we adapt the level of advocacy support required during the complaint process to suit the individual. SWAN provides a range of self-advocacy tools for people to pursue their own complaint if they feel able to do so. Health complaints can be long and complicated with many cases staying active for more than 12 months.

"Thank you for being my voice when I lost the ability to speak. You honestly made such a difference, and I can wholeheartedly say that you made me feel heard."



"I do appreciate all your help & being with me in the meeting. I have never had confidence to talk up like that before in my life but with you by my side I felt I could do it, once again thank you"

Community, Self or Generic Advocacy:

Community advocates work with individuals who have difficulty being involved in decisions that affect them due to learning difficulties, physical or mental health issues, acquired brain injury or dementia. Advocates ensure that individuals are afforded fair and equal treatment through knowledge of all available options and access to relevant information and professional advice. This includes a wide variety of issues including benefits assessments, medical appointments, employment issues, gaining access to care and support, working with their care provider and making complaints. Other community advocates work to promote and support self-advocacy within their localities for people with a range of disabilities, commonly shared experiences and concerns. This advocacy support is accessed through our Be Heard projects.

"I just wanted to say again, thank you for today. It was lovely to meet you and to feel empowered to say what I've wanted to for some time. I really appreciated the support."



Client

Non-instructed Advocacy:

Non-instructed advocacy uses different approaches when an advocate is representing a person who is unable to instruct and/or consent to advocacy provision. The approaches used focus on all or some of the person's circumstances, for example, their unique needs and views or the appropriateness of their care or accommodation services or as part of formal health and social care decision making to ensure the person's views are at the heart of these processes. Not all advocates will use non-instructed advocacy, but it is an important part of independent advocacy knowledge and non-instructed advocacy training is provided to all active advocates.

"I had been non-verbal for 2 weeks whilst in hospital on section. I was using some sign language and my text app to communicate. She was able to help me communicate my needs and look at what support I need when I was discharged."



Client

Children and Young People's Advocacy (CYP):

CYP supports children and young people who are looked after, within child safety legislation or who are receiving health & social care services. SWAN IMHAs work with young people detained on ward and young people who are transitioning to adult social care services and have a right to access a Care Act Advocate. IMCAs may also work with young people aged 16yrs+ as Be Heard Community Advocates.

Performance Report

Our Goals and Performance during 2024-2025:

SWAN has developed the following strategic goals to further the charitable objects of the organisation and deliver its Vision and Mission.

1. Embed organisational resilience by generating financial and people capacity to increase its outcomes and impact
2. Enhance our profile, build our reputation and expand our geographical footprint in the South-West and nationally
3. Increase our influence, capacity and ability to act through the development of strategic alliances and partnerships

The achievement of the strategic goals will increase revenue, efficiencies, collaboration and advocacy awareness through a broader geographical footprint. Furthermore, it will encourage a healthy workforce through strong retention and cultural cohesion. The cultural foundations of SWAN are of vital importance and built on trust, accountability and personal responsibility which is a tangible thread through all that we do, underpinning relationships, decisions and behaviour.

Top Issues Supported



Rights under the Mental Capacity Act

Supporting people to be at the centres of decision-making processes



Rights under the Mental Health Act

Supporting people to be fully involved with and challenge their care and treatment



Access to Health and Social Care

Supporting applications for Needs and Care Assessments



Parents Advocacy

Supporting parents with additional learning needs who are within children and family services



Health and Social Care Complaints

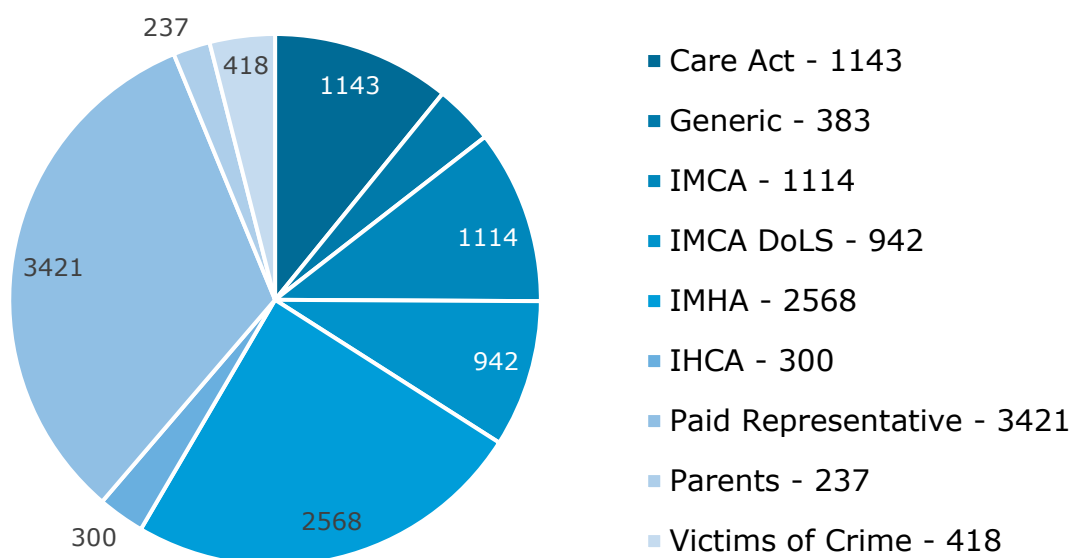
Supporting people to use formal processes regarding their health or social care experience

During 2024-25 SWAN delivered advocacy throughout Bath & North East Somerset; Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole; Bristol; Dorset; Isle of Wight; North Somerset; Portsmouth; Somerset; South Gloucestershire and West Berkshire. SWAN was also awarded the advocacy contract for East Sussex during the financial year, but the implementation will occur during 2025-26.

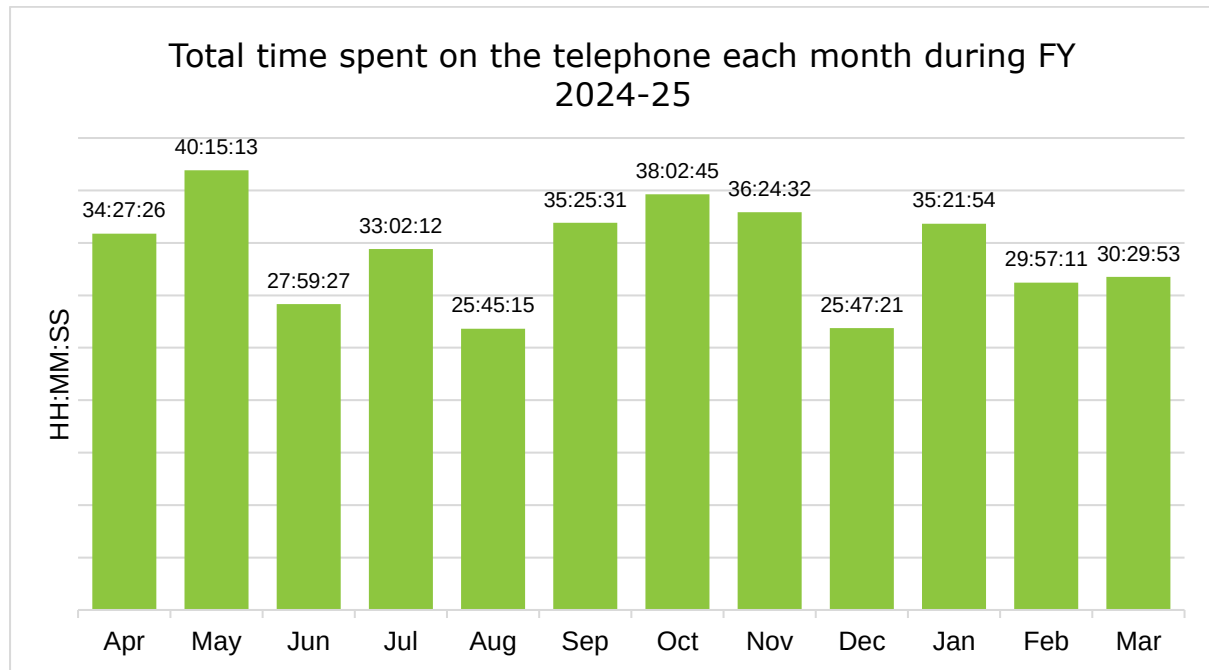
We aim for a local and responsive approach with hub and office spaces where appropriate, working closely with Commissioners and tailoring the services to the individual requirements of the contracts.



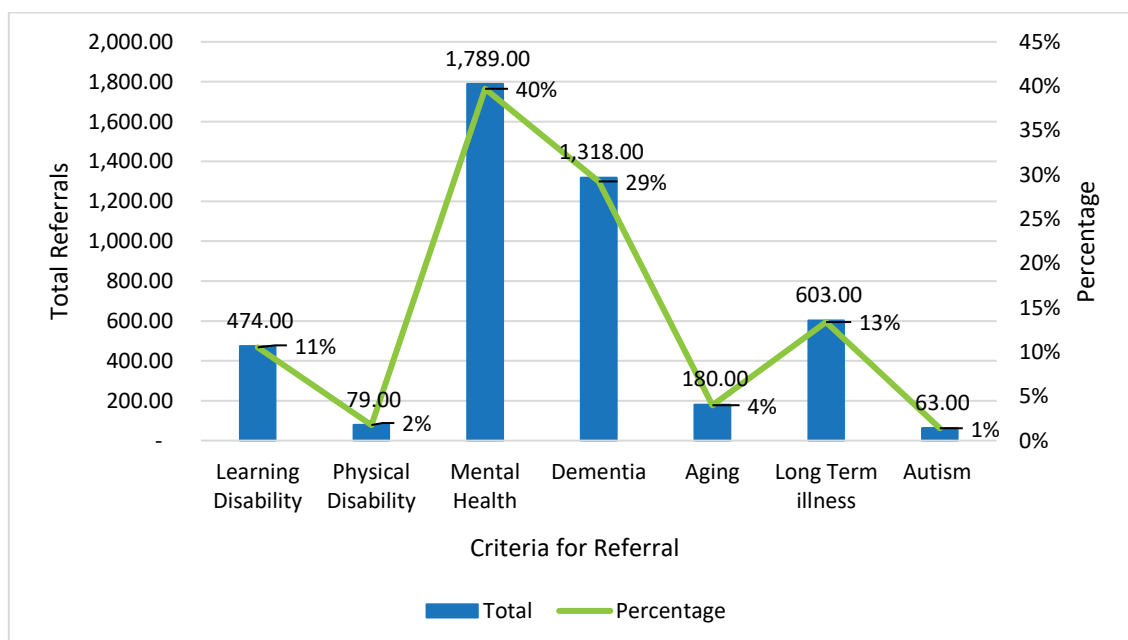
In working toward achieving the strategic goals during financial year 2024-25 SWAN held 10,526 active cases and received 7,365 referrals from partner organisations and self-referrals amounting to 77,133 total advocacy hours. During this time SWAN supported clients through the following themes:



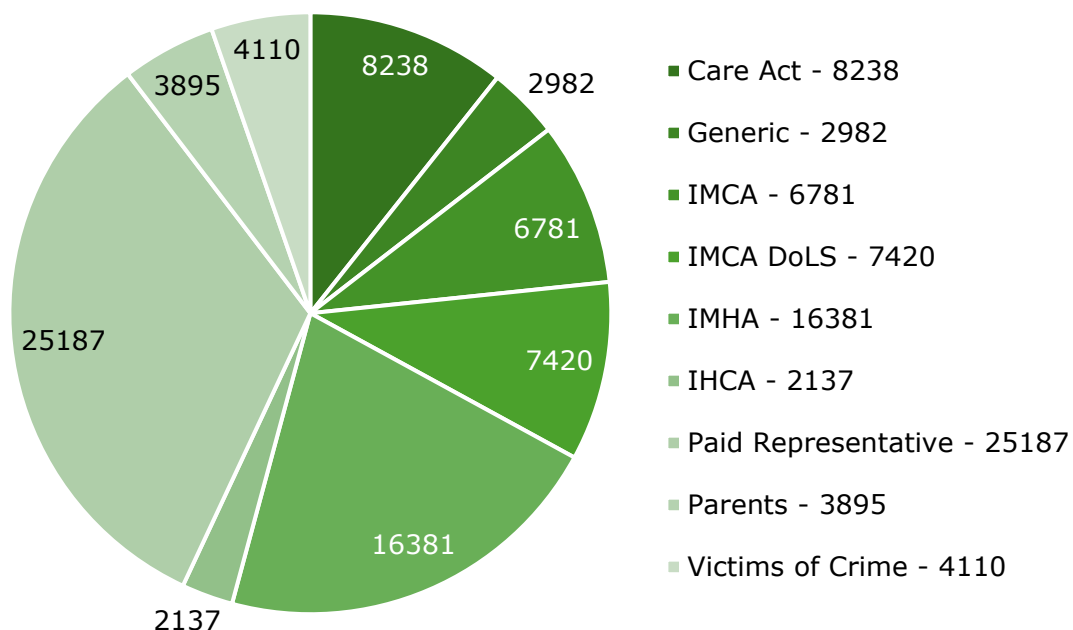
SWAN operates a 'no wrong door' ethos and individuals can access our services through a variety of means. Our **Advocacy Support Team** who receive referrals into SWAN are highly experienced in assessing eligibility and communicating with vulnerable people. They provide support to clients through first response advocacy, triage and expert signposting. During the financial year the team answered a total of 5507 calls and spent the equivalent of 16 days, 8 hours and 58 minutes talking time with clients.



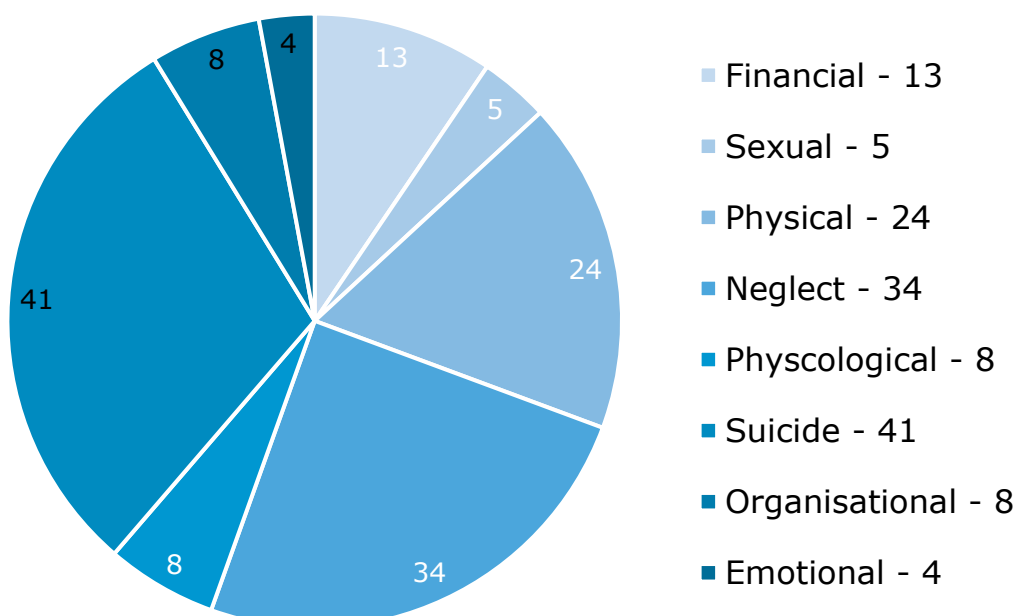
During 2024-2025 our largest number of referrals related to mental health, followed by dementia, as seen below:



Over the financial year, SWAN spent a total of 77,133 hours on the different types of advocacy, categorised below:



Safeguarding our clients is an important part of our work and advocates remain vigilant in raising safeguarding alerts. During 2024-25 advocates raised 137 concerns in the following categories:



Victim of Crime Advocacy Service (VOCAS):

During our 6-year contract VOCAS empowered and enabled 1695 victims of crime and anti-social behaviour to cope and recover from the impact of their experience.

1070 of the individuals supported experienced mental health issues, others had physical and/or learning disabilities. VOCAS also worked with victims who experienced crime and discrimination based on their gender, gender identity, race and disability. Many of the cases were complex with multiple issues to be addressed.

"[The crime] led to me having Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and severe anxiety Throughout the experience [with VOCAS] I have been reassured, supported professionally and with empathy at all times"



Client

Pro-active Safeguarding:

All Service managers are members of their local Safeguarding Adults Boards. In September 2024, SWAN was thanked for delivering an Advocacy presentation to the SSAB tailored to the participants, with a remit to inform the board of the different types of advocacy provided by SWAN and how to refer into the service. SWAN takes pride in its approach to Safeguarding. The following comment is taken from the draft AQPM report 2024:

"SWAN evidenced there was robust approach to safeguarding throughout the QPM assessment. The advocates we spoke with were all able to describe clear and consistent approaches and had a good understanding of the organisations' expectations and the mechanisms in place in relation to safeguarding reporting, recording and best practice. Site visit conversations indicated that staff were also mindful how utilising SWANS's safeguarding policies and procedures strengthens their ability to safeguarding people in mental health settings"

AQPM comment from 2024 draft report

How SWAN lived its Values:

Our Values are central to our approach and the work we do on a daily basis. We work hard to ensure that we demonstrate our commitment to them in all of our work:



Inclusivity

We work with people to find the best way to deliver advocacy to them and their communities. In 2024-2025 we delivered Be Heard Projects to support people who weren't entitled to statutory advocacy to develop their self-advocacy skills and confidence.

We are independent from other agencies meaning we can determine new ways to deliver advocacy in the way that people need it. During the reporting period we supported individuals to develop person directed Advocacy Plans and provided advocacy coaching sessions.



Innovation



Impact

We find new ways to measure our impact and use that information to improve what we do and how we do it. During the financial year, in partnership with Experts by Experience to ensure accessibility, we launched our bespoke online client outcomes surveys for all contacts and projects.

In 2024-25 we continued efforts to ensure advocacy is accessible to everyone to ensure everyone can access social justice. This included prisoners, homeless people and those at risk of homelessness and individuals subject to hate crime.



Impartiality

Volunteering and Co-Production:

SWAN is complimented by our volunteers and Experts by experience, who selflessly give their time to provide support to individuals and add value to our services. Our volunteers progress through a bespoke and dedicated volunteer induction and training programme and some volunteers go on to become paid members of staff. During 2024-25 SWAN volunteers contributed 667 hours.

In February 2024 SWANs office team was joined by an Expert by Experience, with a learning disability, to work with us to create easy read referral forms and ensure our easy read documents are accessible. The Somerset co-production group launched in May and met every two months. The group emerged as a result of our learning from our autism project where a co-production group of Experts by Experience were involved throughout. The group aims to increase accessibility across Somerset for clients with different communication needs.

One of our Experts by Experience from the autism project has remained with us to provide consultancy on cases where there is an autistic client and where their autism could be a barrier to advocacy engagement. Our consultant also helps us to reviews our documents to ensure they are autism friendly.

Be Heard Programmes:

A variety of Be Heard self-advocacy programmes were run throughout the service areas, all of which were well received by the attendees. Staff ensured the sessions were tailored to individual need to afford everyone the best possible experience. These programmes are designed to increase self-advocacy and empowerment for members of the public.

Staff on the Isle of Wight ran four Be Heard programmes for general public access during 2024-25. In January the programme was advertised and attended by people who were contacted prior to the workshops to ensure the sessions were tailored to meet individual needs.

Outcome	% Agreement
Learnt new ways to self-advocate	100%
Feel more confident planning how to get what they need	100%
Confidence to self-advocate increased	100%

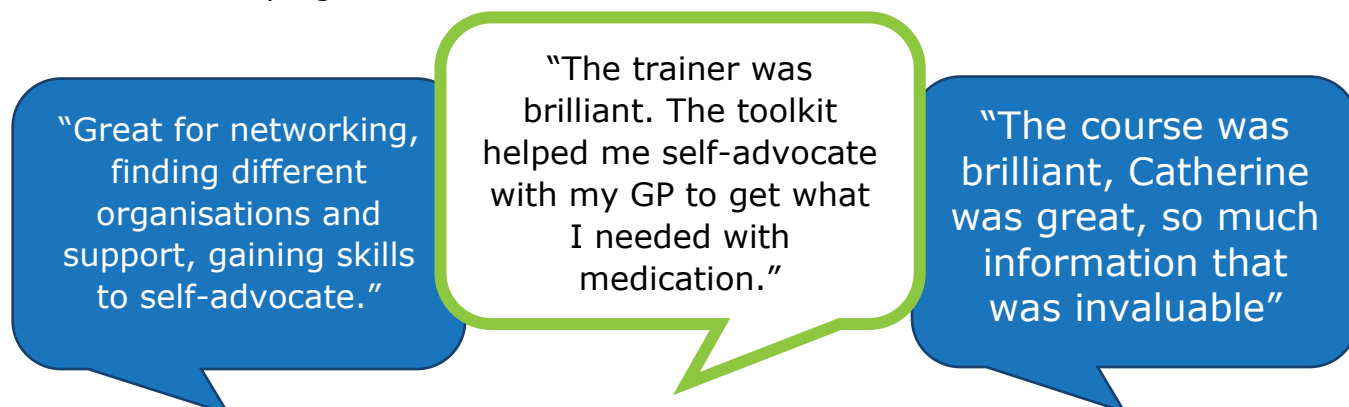
The August programme had five attendees. People shared their experiences and what they hoped to achieve. This ranged from individuals needing to support clients, to others needing self-empowerment to deal with issues in their own lives including more knowledge about The Human Rights Act.



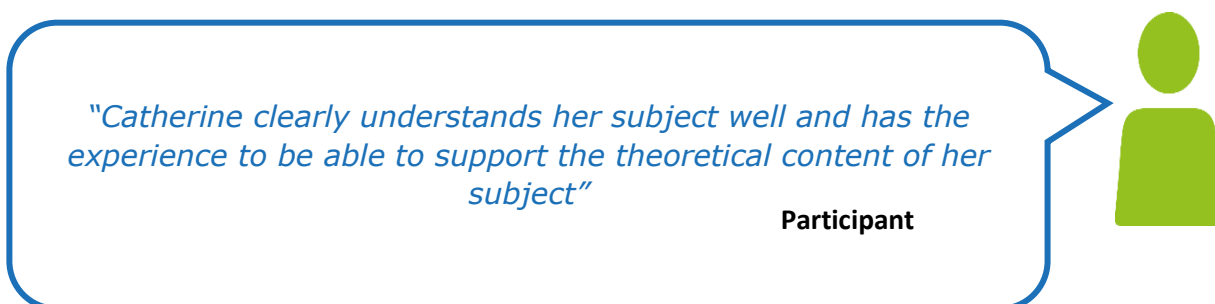
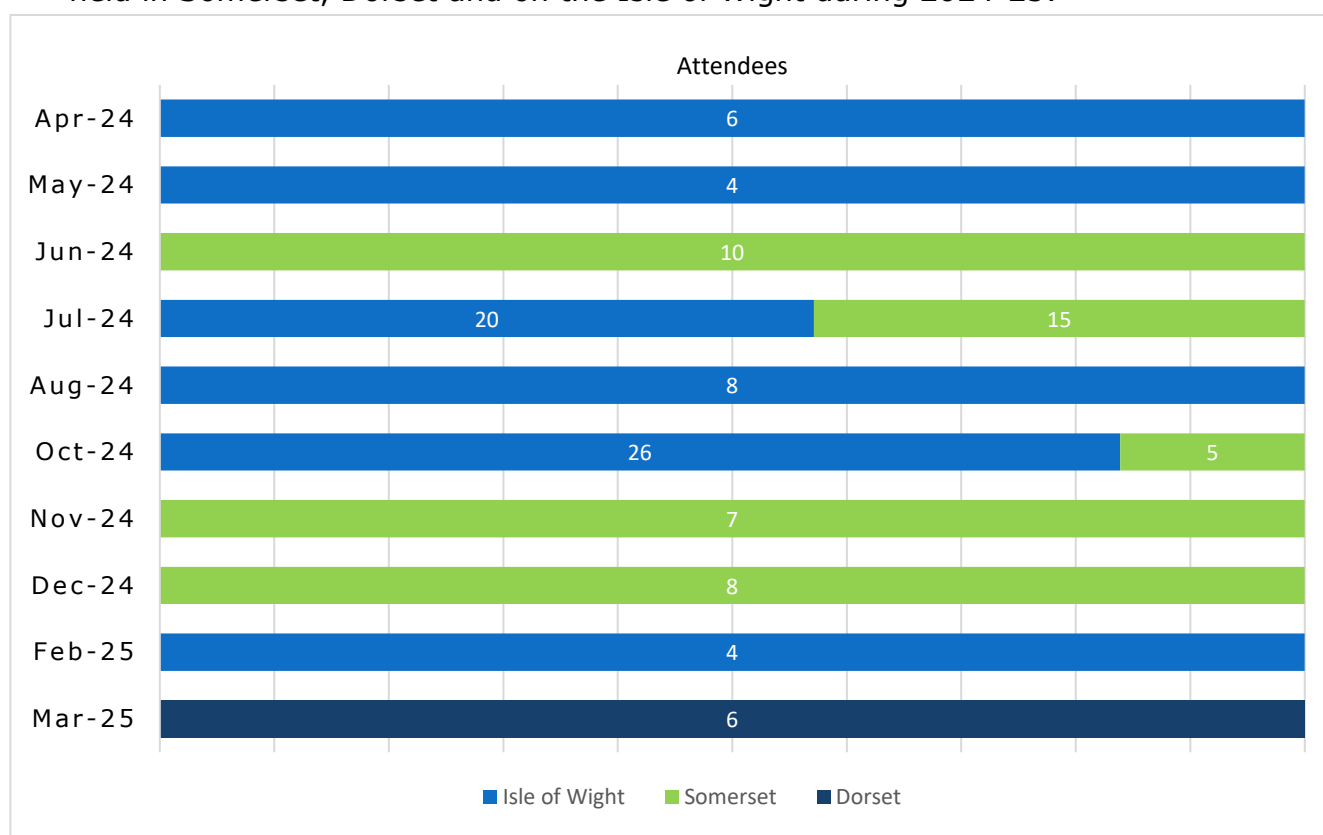
"Thank you again for the Be Heard self-advocacy course, which was excellent. I thought you might like to know that I've got involved with the traveller dispute and thanks to you, I gained the courage to submit a formal complaint"

During the financial year, SWAN ran Be Heard programmes at Albany and Parkhurst Prisons which afforded opportunities for co-production with prisoners; a full Be Heard in Somerset programme at the Recovery College for people with mental health issues and a Be Heard workshop in Bridgwater for ten people with

hearing loss. Feedback from the participants indicated that individuals found real value in the programmes.



The chart below shows the number of attendees to our Self-Advocacy sessions held in Somerset, Dorset and on the Isle of Wight during 2024-25:



Training, Education and Addressing Communication Barriers:

We identified the need for a refresher training session on 'total communication', to assist advocates when working with clients with communication impairments. We explored ways to communicate with clients with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD). This developed transferable communication skills with other non-verbal clients including those experiencing impairments in verbal communication resulting from physical causation such as dementia or a stroke. Our trainer explored a variety of communication strategies which advocates found particularly useful, giving them the practical skills and confidence to use different approaches to communication in their practice.

Deaf and Hearing Impaired:

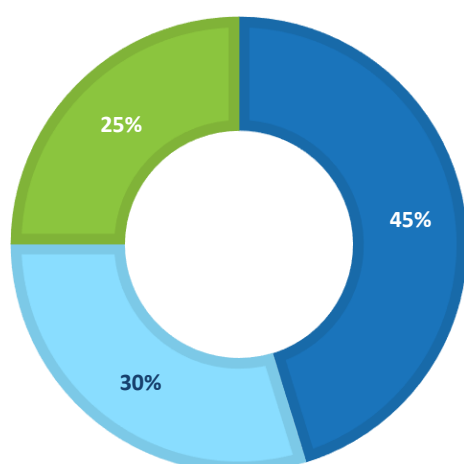
To improve the quality of our advocacy for deaf and hearing-impaired clients, we approached Expert by Experience and Director of Deafinite to provide deaf awareness training for advocates and a member of the support team. As a result, we have trained a member of the Somerset team to become a Deaf Awareness Champion.

Independent Advocacy Qualification Training:

SWAN has successfully provided internal training for many years and continues to be an excellent resource ensuring that all advocates are appropriately trained in Independent Advocacy and receive regular workshops to upskill on all disciplines. ARC England are partners with SWAN enabling the in-house assessment for the Level 4 Independent Advocacy Qualification from two internal assessors. Three quarters of staff providing direct advocacy or advocacy management are qualified or qualifying. New advocates and experienced advocates joining the service without a qualification commence their qualification following a successful induction period. The following chart shows the number of staff qualified or in qualifying phases.

ADVOCACY QUALIFICATION 24-25

■ Qualified ■ Qualifying ■ Induction or other



Key:

Qualified

Advocacy staff who hold a Diploma, Certificate or Level 4 Independent Advocacy qualification.

Qualifying

Advocacy staff who are actively completing their Level 4 Independent Advocacy Qualification.

Induction or other

Advocacy staff who are currently not qualified, for example, new starters in induction processes.

Workforce Development:

SWAN is committed to developing its workforce and provided Management Training accredited by the Institute of Leadership for two Service Managers and supervisor training for three Team Supervisors. This training is bespoke to the needs of the organisation and is developed by Access2 Human Resources, our human resource partners and SWAN's Chief Executive who is Fellow of the Institute of Leadership.

SWAN continued refresher training sessions on 'total communication' to assist advocates when working with clients with communication impairments. Deafinite for deaf and hearing impaired clients also continued with Lunch and Learn training for the workforce.



"The team have been very supportive, kind, respectful and understanding of my learning needs."



"The availability of shadowing opportunities and vast range of clients I was able to access."

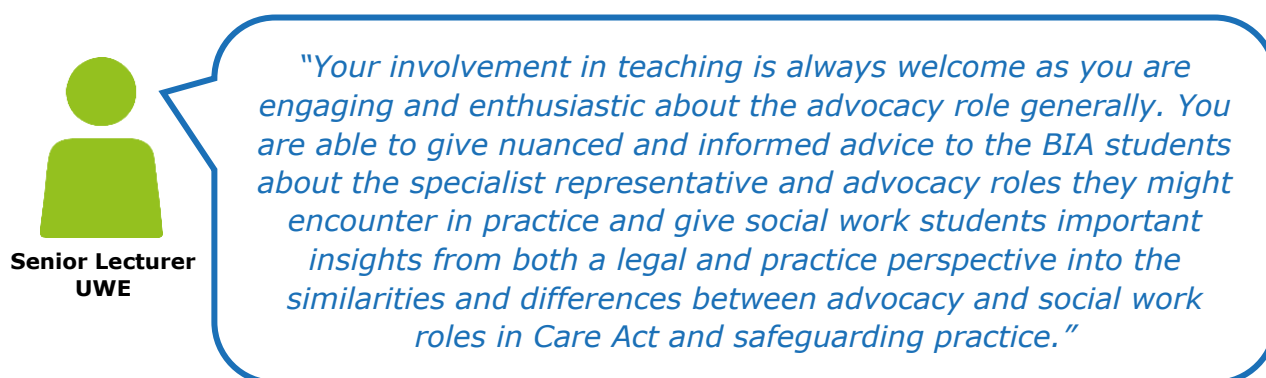
Partnership Working:

During 2024-25 SWAN contributed to a range of engagement and development work including:

- Leaders in Advocacy Group – SWAN formed part of the Ethical Commissioning Group which evolved from Leaders in Advocacy Group scrutiny of the NHS and NDTi Review of Independent Advocacy document (published in 2023)
- SCIE Providers Group – meetings to feedback and consult with SCIE on a range of health and social care provider themes.
- Mental Health Act Reform Consultation in partnership with the Leaders in Advocacy Group. A wider consultation and feedback forum from advocacy providers for the White Paper process in Mental Health Act legislation.

SWAN have maintained contact with stakeholders and partners and supported an understanding of independent advocacy practice through event speaking & training including:

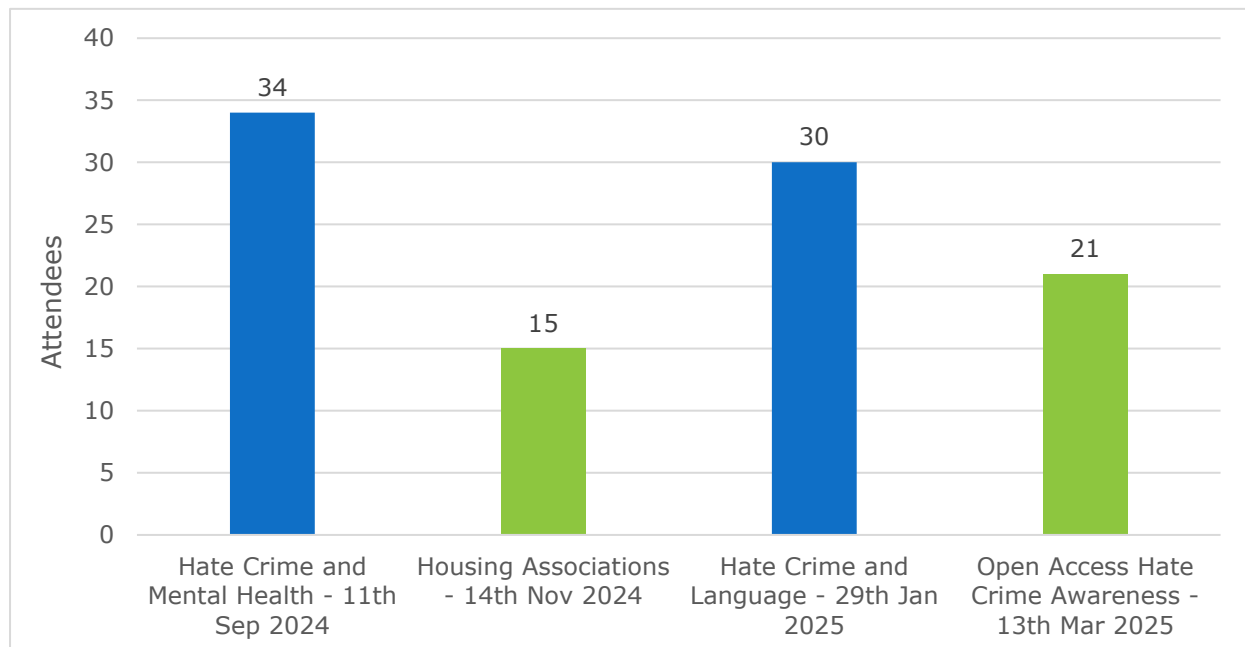
- Carnival of Practice - Speakers for Independent Advocacy – topic '*MCA and Communication*' – arranged by Somerset Local Authority
- Statutory Advocacy training delivery for Bristol Royal Infirmary Discharge Team
- *The Independent Advocacy Role* in Safeguarding for a Safeguarding Adults Board
- Co-teaching partnership with University of the West of England. Sessions for social work students re: *role and benefits of advocacy & IMCA role in Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards*.



Every Victim Matters:

Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI)'s National Lottery funded Every Victim Matters (EVM) service continued this year. SWAN partnered with SARI and The Diversity Trust delivering sessions for professionals and members of the public in Somerset, North Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset (BaNES) throughout 2024-25

SWAN were able to demonstrate our expertise in working with people with disabilities and our experiencing of supporting people with additional needs to cope and recover from the impact of hate crime and anti-social behaviour. These sessions, which ran for either 1 or 2 hours, attracted a greater number of attendees than the previous financial year. We also experienced improved attendee engagement and more positive feedback regarding the impact of the training. During 2024-25 SWAN supported the development and delivery of the following:



SWAN look forward to working with SARI and the Diversity Trust in 2025/26 to further improve Every Victim Matters provision and achieve even better outcomes.

"Partnership working came across as very strong, with commissioners, partner providers and with some community organisations and almost without exception there is positive feedback from external stakeholders who reported teams to be reliable, responsive, helpful and collaborative with a transparent and open, solution orientated approach."

AQPM comment from 2024 draft report

Student placements:

SWAN benefits greatly from the dedication of our students during their social work placements. During financial year 2024-25 Student Social Workers contributed 1306 vital hours of advocacy. Placements, for both 70 days and 100 days, occurred on the Isle of Wight in partnership with Solent University and in Somerset in partnership with the University of West England.

Students learn about advocacy, application of legislation and how to ensure the persons views are respected. Some students go on to take casual work as an advocate. SWAN is very grateful for the time and commitment offered by our students and the invaluable partnerships with the University's.

One student provided the following feedback:

"The Somerset team are incredibly knowledgeable, and every member of the team works hard to support their clients fully, maximising both their time and extensive knowledge by working together and sharing expertise. As a student on placement with the Somerset Team, I was welcomed with open arms and integrated into the team; people took the time to teach me, spend additional time with me shadowing them and help whenever I needed some guidance. SWAN, as an agency, is incredibly supportive, but the kindness and knowledge I worked alongside will be a guiding force in my practice going forward. Thank you, Somerset!"



Somerset Social Work Student

SWAN is grateful to all its partners for the work we do together.



SWAN's Governance and Management

Legal Status and Charity Objectives:

Swan Advocacy is a company limited by guarantee 06599429 incorporated on 21st May 2008 and registered as a charity 1125679 on 1st September 2008 with the legal framework set out in the governing documents, the Memorandum and Articles of Association. Prior to this, from 1999 Swan Advocacy operated as an unincorporated charity under the name of South Wiltshire Advocacy Network. For the purposes of the registered company and legal requirements, it is referred to as "Swan Advocacy", however the charity now trades as 'SWAN' (South West Advocacy Network).

Objectives of the Charity:

SWAN's objectives are expressed in the governing document, as follows:

The objects for which the Company is established are:

- a) the relief of those in need, by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship, or other disadvantage in particular but not exclusively by the delivery of advocacy, money management and debt counselling.*
- b) the advancement of education in particular but not exclusively through the delivery of self-advocacy, training and end of life planning.*
- c) the advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation or the promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality and diversity, in particular but not exclusively by the provision of statutory advocacy and victim support services.*

Primarily, but not solely, in counties across the South West of England or adjoining the South West.

Under Charities Act 2011, Public Benefit requirement, Trustees have a duty to report on how SWAN meets its charitable objectives for the public benefit. The strategic report provides information on how SWAN has achieved this primarily delivered through the provision of advocacy and during 2023/24 SWAN held 10,526 active cases and received amounting to 77,133 total advocacy hours.

Governance:

The Trustee Board is responsible for the governance of the Charity and ensuring that it delivers its objectives. Operational management is delegated by the Trustees to the Chief Executive who is accountable to the Board. The Trustees are also Directors of the Company for the purpose of company law. All Trustees are appointed through a transparent recruitment and selection process and are elected to the Board at the annual AGM. The skills and experience required for the organisation is reviewed through annual board appraisals; continued governance improvements were made via refined reporting and assurance mechanisms.

During the reporting period, the Trustees met formally four times for Board meetings and held an AGM in November. The meetings were all in person at the Head Office in Taunton. The Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Central Services attend all Board meetings and other members of the Senior Leadership Group attend as required. The Board held an evaluation day in May 2024, enabling more detailed discussion and information sharing relating to newly awarded contracts, and our new ethics policy.

Due to the size of the organisation and the Board, there are no sub-committees, and all information is discussed at Board level. This is kept under review as SWAN continues to grow. A Trustee Task and Finish Group with members from the Board is enacted when there are specific pieces of work to undertake. In February 2024 Trustees attended a Governance Workshop facilitated by an external Governance specialist.

Risk Management:

A comprehensive Board Assurance Framework and Strategic Risk Register is in place and is agreed on an annual basis. Trustees review the major risks to the organisation on a quarterly basis at Board meetings. Systems are in place to monitor, and control identified risks to mitigate the impact they may have on the Charity. The Senior Leadership Group review the operational and strategic risks on a systematic basis by way of standing agenda items to ensure that current and emerging risks are considered regularly and raised to the Board if required. During November and December 2024 SWAN prepared for, and engaged with AQPM reaccreditation, the only accreditation specifically aimed at Advocacy organisations. Assessment and interviews with the workforce, senior managers, CEO and Trustees took place during 2024-25. It is anticipated that SWAN will be reaccredited during Q2 of the financial year 2025-26.

SWAN partners with SSG Health and Safety advisers who conduct a comprehensive annual audit of the organisations Health and Safety policies, procedures and processes. The 2024-25 audit demonstrated that SWAN is compliant with no major issues and that minor areas for improvement are addressed.

Organisational structure and people:

The operation of the organisation is delegated to a full-time Chief Executive who is supported by a Senior Leadership Group including Director of Business Development and Marketing and a Director of Finance and Central Support; two Head of Services who lead on day-to-day operations, a Volunteer Manager and a Training Manager. SWAN has a head office in Taunton, an office in Dorset and three hub offices, in Bristol, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight. In October 2024 SWAN TUPE'd the Bristol team out of SWAN and the VOCAS contract expired in March 2025, resulting in a decrease in personnel on the previous year. During 2024-25 SWAN on average employed 109 staff which equated to 77 full time positions which was enhanced by 667 volunteer hours. SWAN staff and volunteers have a wide array of skills and experiences;

all advocates are either qualified or registered to complete the required level of training in Independent Advocacy.

A year of consolidation ensued following the previous year of considerable change and geographical expansion. SWAN is committed to ensuring that all staff and managers have the skills required to enable them to thrive and enjoy their working life within the organisation. The workforce EDI Group, which includes a Trustee and workforce members from all delivery areas, representing all diversity streams met and revised the bi-annual Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Survey to ensure accessibility and increase response levels. The Group also reviewed progress against SWAN's EDI strategic goals.

Remuneration Policy for Staff:

Employee salaries are set at a specific scale and level, which allows for progression in the role at a salary which is reflective of similar organisations pay. An incremental rise is considered every April following the completion of a positive appraisal review and subject to affordability. Any substantial changes to remuneration are agreed by the Board as required. During the financial period the handover of contracts, significant changes to employers national insurance contributions and national minimum wage increases meant that whilst salary uplifts were considered, the organisation was unable to award increases except to those on the lowest pay scale to ensure that all employees receive more than national minimum wage. SWAN staff pay is determined by the pay scale for all employees except for the Chief Executive whose pay is determined by the Board.

Responsibilities of the Board:

SWAN Board of Trustees, who are Directors of the Company, work closely with the Chief Executive to set the strategic direction of the organisation. It is their responsibility to safeguard the assets of the Charity and ensure the financial statements comply with the relevant acts and legislation. Trustees volunteer their time, skills and expertise freely and receive no financial benefit from the charity, expenses that are incurred may be reclaimed and these are disclosed as required.

Company law requires that Trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a 'true and fair' view of the income and expenditure and financial state of affairs of the Charity. The Trustees must keep proper accounting records that disclose the financial position of the charity with reasonable accuracy at any given time. Each Trustee confirms that as far as they are aware there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware; also that individually, all steps that should have taken to be aware of any relevant audit information have been taken and to ensure the charitable company's auditor is aware of information that comes to light. This is confirmed in accordance with the provisions of s148 of Companies Act 2006.