

VOLUNTARY ACTION WAKEFIELD DISTRICT

# We believe in Wakefield

VAWD ANNUAL REPORT 2010 -2011



# Chair's statement

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The last year has been a very difficult one for Voluntary Action Wakefield District (VAWD). At the start of the year we were anticipating the outcome of the election and faced the news that no single political party had a majority. A new Government was formed by a coalition between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats.

A few weeks into the new Government we found ourselves in a nightmare situation. We were informed without any notice that the Government was cutting the Performance Reward Grant to the Council which was the main source of VAWD's funding. Sadly this cut meant that we had to make some staff redundant. But this was the time when our services were needed more than ever to provide a voice to the voiceless and we have worked hard to maintain our priority services to Wakefield groups.

I want to thank our staff and Board members for all their hard work during the last year. Our Chief Executive Gill Thornton has had to deal with the pressures of not knowing what would happen with our funding from one moment to the next, but somehow she has managed to provide a positive approach to us all. This year Lister Baynes will be leaving the Board. He has been a great friend of VAWD and he will be sadly missed. Without Lister's contribution we would not be as strong as we are.

This is my second term as Chair and I decided that it was time to let someone else have the privilege of being the Chair. I will also be leaving the Board as a Trustee. I would like to wish VAWD well and good luck to the next Chair. I want to thank all those people who have supported us, particularly local councillors and MPs, and especially Mary Creagh MP. My last few words are addressed to Councillor Peter Box, Leader of Wakefield Council, who has provided us with support and most importantly, friendship. Thanks Peter. Goodbye.



**Nesar Rafiq** Chair

# Chief Executive's statement

2010 was my first full year as Chief Executive at VAWD and it has been a memorable year. We began the year with great confidence in our future. We saw the full launch of the single portal website and were planning a new volunteer strategy and group development approach. The Wellbeing Consortium became autonomous and the Third Sector Strategy was adopted by the Wakefield Together Partnership.

However, by July we were looking at a very different future following a huge cut in our funding. I am very proud that we got through that bad patch with renewed energy and enthusiasm, and with a plan for a long term future for VAWD in Wakefield. Like many organisations we had to make cuts in staff and services and I was very sorry to say goodbye to valued and esteemed colleagues. VAWD staff and Trustees have pulled together, working closely on restructuring and securing funding. We know the next few years will be challenging but we have an organisation that is in shape to deal with those challenges.

In spite of the cuts we have delivered a vast range of services and projects to groups in the district this year - highlighted in this report. I was particularly pleased to see our work with black and minority ethnic (BME) and migrant communities develop so strongly and we continue to support the groups. We secured the Digital Outreach project working

for the first time across West Yorkshire and we established the Wakefield Assembly - the voice of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in the district.

We have prioritised our work with groups - much needed in the world of the 'Big Society'. I am optimistic about VAWD's future as we develop our work with other groups in the district. We continue to have good relationships with the statutory sector working together to develop strategic responses to the civic society agenda. We will continue to promote the value of volunteers and community action - the bedrock of the strong and healthy societies we all want to live in. And we do this because we believe in the people of Wakefield.



**Gill Thornton**  
Chief Executive

# Supporting groups in Wakefield District

## *We believe:*

Wakefield's voluntary and community groups provide the strength that keeps our communities together and helps our citizens have a voice.

We supported hundreds of groups in Wakefield in 2010-11 through the wide range of funded projects. We had the final year of Basis offering specialist advice to groups. Our Rural Infrastructure Support Service helped to link rural groups into new services and networks. With partners across West Yorkshire, the Community Cascade project helped groups running community buildings to improve their access, carbon efficiency, marketing and fundraising.

Our core aim was for more groups to be properly constituted, to plan and deliver their services more effectively and to get help finding funding. Our work makes the greatest impact where we see the groups grow, take the reins themselves and show a measurable increase or improvement in what they do.

We organised funding fairs, workshops, one-to-one support, funding surgeries and provided access to specialist support services from our West Yorkshire partners: West Yorkshire Community Accounting Service (WYCAS), the Pay and Employment Rights Service (PERS) and fit4funding.

We covered the district and all the communities in Wakefield. Feedback from these many and wide-ranging groups has been very positive about VAWD's contribution. This work is what makes a difference and we plan to do it for many more years.



## *How do we know we're getting it right?*

*"I would like to thank VAWD and Peter Foyle (Healthier Communities Fund Coordinator) for all their advice, guidance, and support during the past three years. They believed in our project and ability to make a difference and change the life's of people living in deprived communities. Without VAWD's support organisations such as ours would cease to exist".*

**Adam Redfern**

SESKU Academy Senior Manager 2011



# Volunteering

## *We believe:*

Wakefield's volunteers who give their time and effort freely to support people and communities across the district are the backbone of community activity in Wakefield.

Through the do-it.org website we aim to help groups and volunteers to find each other, match their needs and get the right support to make a volunteer placement successful.

We seek to promote the value of volunteers and make sure proper training and support is provided.

We offer advice to other sectors and work with partners in developing new volunteering projects - for example with Wakefield College and the Council. Early in the year we had the first meeting of the Volunteer

Managers Forum and we aim to keep the network going through the Wakefield Assembly.

Our volunteer centre ran a very successful project with the Department for Work and Pensions offering volunteer tasters to unemployed people. Most of the participants felt it was a positive experience.

Civic Society will make volunteer involvement much more important to groups and we will lead new work to support this in Wakefield.



## *How do we know we're getting it right?*

*"The help has been invaluable to the organisation. We are a small organisation with limited staff resource. To be able to rely on help, advice and guidance from experts has led to an increase in capacity for workers and the organisation as a whole, and means that we feel more comfortable as an organisation in our recruiting, supporting and working with volunteers."*

**Dom Charkin**

*Development Worker at Eastmoor  
Community Project Ltd/  
St Swithun's Community Centre*

# Supporting learning and development

## **We believe:**

Affordable and accessible training and development opportunities are crucial to enable Wakefield groups to build the skills and knowledge they need to effectively plan and deliver their services.

**V**AWD's training co-ordination ensured that groups in Wakefield had access to a wide range of training opportunities and were able to let us know what they needed. We commissioned training from specialist providers and training for group development. We conducted surveys to establish the training needs and responded by offering new and exciting opportunities.

We had several projects which offered some of this new learning. Our ICT project staff ran UK Online sessions getting basic Internet skills across to new users. Our Neighbourhood Learning for Deprived Communities (NLDC) project took it a stage further by offering qualifications.

We worked with the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) on the Take Part project running sessions for people interested in civic engagement and representation. We also ran our first Big Society session. This was very well attended by a range of people seeking to know more.

As part of the Generations Together project which created inter-generational volunteering opportunities, we helped to find accreditation for the volunteers and pathways to further qualifications.



## **How do we know we're getting it right?**

*"The training was very useful. I felt at ease with the group and able to express my opinions."*

*Participant at the Take Part 'Get Involved & Make Changes' course*

*"Interesting course. Trainer very knowledgeable."*

*Participant at the Take Part 'Take a Lead in your Community' course*

# Wakefield Assembly

## *We believe:*

Wakefield Assembly is the most important step forward in Wakefield in developing a strong, credible and coherent voice for the sector.

Working with partners on the Commissioning Improvement Project funded by the Targeted Support Fund it became obvious that a clear line for communication with the sector was needed. Out of this grew the proposition that a body to bring VCS groups together was the solution.

Our role has been to establish and support the Assembly. We have led on organising Assembly events. This includes facilitating Assembly communications and supporting the steering group.



sector to represent the voice of the VCS in the district.

The Assembly is now ready to move into the next phase. Some networks meet regularly and new ones are developing, building links across the sector to create better communications and representation. We will work to support these networks and to develop new ones.

The Assembly is well and truly up and running. Events have brought more than 100 groups together. The establishment of the Assembly has been widely welcomed by both VCS groups and by the public sector organisations we work with. We are regularly asked by the statutory

## *How do we know we're getting it right?*

*"Wakefield Assembly is a key development for the district of Wakefield enabling groups to communicate and work together better to create positive change in our community. We have established our terms of reference and our steering group meets regularly each month to build links across the sector to ensure better communications and representation."*



**Paula Bee**  
Chair Wakefield Assembly

# Health and wellbeing

## *We believe:*

Wakefield's voluntary and community groups make a huge positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of groups and individuals in the district through the services and support that they provide.

The final year of the Healthier Communities Fund project saw many of the groups really develop and extend their work. They used new evaluation tools to measure the impact of their work and were able to demonstrate real health improvements in the groups they worked with. The project exceeded its targets and most of the groups reported increased capacity, improved links with the NHS commissioners and new funding.

The Wellbeing Consortium was formally launched in 2010 to bring together groups to secure contracts with the public sector in delivering health based services. VAWD worked with the steering group to develop the consortium and we continue to work closely.

In our role on the Wakefield Together Partnership we worked with partners on the Health Inequalities task and finish group. We identified a clear role for VCS groups in achieving the outcomes for this work.

Our future relations with a reshaped NHS will continue to be a priority working closely with partners to achieve improved health and wellbeing in the district.



## *How do we know we're getting it right?*

*"I believe that health agencies will now realise that small local charities are professional organisations who deliver first class services to the more vulnerable in our society and that we are needed in order to help deliver preventative services needed within our communities."*

**Helen Smith**  
Re-Connect

# Partnerships and projects

## *We believe:*

Working together in Wakefield we have developed relationships of understanding and trust. This, with VAWD's flexible and responsive approach, will allow us to jointly meet the challenges ahead.

**V**AWD works with partners in every area of our delivery and we see this as a great strength. In the last year we were a partner in several stand-alone and continuation projects. Some of these are featured below.

2010 saw the launch of the single portal website - established by a partnership steering group and managed by VAWD. During the year we merged VAWD's old website with the [www.wakefieldvcs.org](http://www.wakefieldvcs.org) single



portal website to improve communications and offer a single source of online information and support for groups. We also set up our Facebook and Twitter sites providing regular information.

VAWD secured the contract to deliver the Digital Outreach project helping to get the message on digital switchover across to thousands of target groups across West Yorkshire. The project started in January 2011 and lasted until the switchover in September 2011.

We worked with a range of partners on the Commissioning Improvement Project to open up public sector contracts to VCS groups. The project led directly to the setting up of the Wakefield Assembly and also created the groundwork for new and better relationships between commissioners and VCS groups.

## *How do we know we're getting it right?*

*"In many ways the Healthier Communities Fund was*



*ahead of its time. Its aim when it was launched was to build capacity*

*within the VCS to be able to work with public sector commissioners to deliver local services. This is the very approach now being promoted through the Big Society agenda.*

*"The experience gained through these projects will serve both commissioners and providers of services well into the future."*

**Dr Andrew Furber**

*Executive Director of Public Health  
NHS Wakefield District/Wakefield  
Council*

# Migrant groups and BME communities

## *We believe:*

Bringing diverse communities together and strengthening their organisations helps to create a more cohesive district in which everyone is valued.

**W**ith funding from Improving Reach and Migrant Impact Fund we worked with groups in Wakefield to develop their organisations. Several new groups were established and assisted in adopting policies and procedures which allowed them to gain the PQASSO quality mark. We helped groups to create contact databases and to develop websites.

The project workers supported a range of projects including Wakefield English Language Project, Black History Month and Refugee Week. Diverse BME and migrant groups got together for the first time, celebrating and sharing cultural activities and experiences.



Wakefield launched the Stop Hate UK provision in the district and we were very pleased to support and speak at the event. We sponsored the cultural calendar and continued to work with the Hate Crime Working group.

Links created through these activities remain and the groups continue to meet and develop their work. VAWD supports BME and migrant groups through our group support service. We continue to work in partnership with the various groups and we are seeking further funding to develop this area of our work.

## *How do we know we're getting it right?*

*"VAWD has put us in contact with many people who have been able to help us with different things. We also value the training that VAWD provide on management committees. It has helped to have a dedicated staff member to help migrant community groups and provide regular advice and support."*

**Marta Anayat**

*Chair and Founder of the Polish Community Association Wakefield District*

*"Excellent - very well organised and a great range of specialist speakers, personal stories, entertainment and food."*

**Jeni Vine**

*Northern Refugee Centre*

# VAWD Trustees

The Board of Trustees steered VAWD through some choppy waters in 2010-11. They had to deal with huge funding cuts and manage reductions in staff and services. It would have been a much more difficult task without the time and effort from members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GP), funding group and staffing review group. The Board faces more challenges ahead and our next task is to strengthen and include Board members more in VAWD's strategic work.



Above: Some of VAWD's current Board members - September 2011

- **Nesar Rafiq** (Chair 2010-11) • **Paula Bee** (Vice Chair 2010-11) • **Lister Baynes** (Chair of F&GP) • **Penny Carter** (Treasurer)
- **Chris Hollins** (Vice Chair 2010-11) • **Marie Nixon** • **Abdul Aziz** • **Jo Jones** • **Michael O'Donnell** • **Douglas Dale** • **Masoud Maddah** • **Fergus Donnachie** • **Julie Baker**

Observers from Wakefield Council - Councillor Olivia Rowley and Mark Cranmer

# VAWD Staff

We are very proud that all VAWD staff rose to the challenge of the new funding regimes and the direct impact on our work. We have worked together to streamline our services and prioritise the key roles - working with groups and volunteers. We were very sorry to lose esteemed and valued colleagues and thank them for all their efforts over the years they worked for Wakefield's communities.

**Gill Thornton** - Chief Executive

**Alison Lofas** - Director of Operations

**Maria Langham** - Team Leader - Development

**Sarah Moverlay-Brown** - Office Manager

**Ann Tosta** - Development Coordinator - Group Support

**Sarah Burden** - Development Coordinator - Volunteering

**Peter Foyle** - Development Coordinator - Rural Support and Networks and Healthier Communities (Resigned in August 2011)

**Peter Skinner** - Digital Outreach Coordinator

**Karen Nicklin** - Administrator

**Linda Wainwright** - Receptionist

**Edith Waterhouse** - Cleaner

Left this year: **Ayo Bakare** - Improving Reach Coordinator

• **Oshione Ekpeh** - Improving Reach Coordinator • **Nathan Smith** -

Development Team and Communications Administrator • **Susan**

**Speight** - Training Coordinator • **Dave Florence** - ICT Coordinator •

**Ann Ablett** - ICT Coordinator • **Liam Slevin** - Future Jobs Fund - ICT

Service • **Chris Jackson** - Future Jobs Fund - Volunteer Centre

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### **Finance and company information 2010-11**

Total income: £713,978

Total expenditure: £810,582

Full audited accounts and directors' annual report available on request.

Voluntary Action Wakefield District is a company limited by guarantee no 01878287 and a registered charity no 516150

Registered office: 11 Upper York Street, Wakefield, WF1 3LQ

President: Baroness Masham of Ilton Vice President: Lord Lofthouse of Pontefract



### **Voluntary Action Wakefield District**

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### **Thank you to our funders**



Thank you also for the support received from Neighbourhood Learning for Deprived Communities.