

VOX COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT NETWORK

for the Wakefield District



408

separate groups, organisations and individuals as registered members

1525

individuals on the mailing list for VOXPop

114037

hits on our website since its setup in January 2008

490

people attended a Network for the first time in 2008/09

17

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VOX has just experienced a very difficult year but, because of the wholehearted commitment of its staff and Directors, has continued to deliver the programmes that we promised to our partners at the beginning of the year with some considerable successes. The detail of the work can be found elsewhere in this report.

It must be obvious to all that next year will be no different and may even be harder. However, driven by the positive impacts that have been made in the last few years, we must look forward with a positive frame of mind to the potential changes that lie ahead as we work in a new and rapidly changing landscape.

Wakefield Together, the Local Strategic Partnership made up of the Police, Health, Schools and Colleges, and all other public service providers, has agreed that service delivery should reflect needs at a much more neighbourhood level than the whole of the District. As a result it is agreed that there will be service delivery by all partners related to seven areas. The detail of this delivery is being worked out currently. Parallel to this detailed work there is discussion as to how this delivery work should be framed so as to meet local need and, in particular, what the form of governance should be. Area Management Boards would seem to be appropriate vehicles, drawing upon the pilot Neighbourhood Management Boards where VOX has continued to play an important role in helping the community appointees to play a full and understanding role in their governance.

Running parallel to this work is the need to integrate and make best use of the Duty to Involve legislation which affects our statutory bodies. A new engagement framework is currently in draft. No doubt some existing mechanisms will continue, but

hopefully new methods will be developed so as to ensure that all ages and all interests are involved and feel that they have appropriate opportunities and forums to express their views. Engagement however is a two way process and it is clear that although progress has been made there is a long way to go in persuading our Statutory Bodies to explain why decisions have been made.

All of this work has begun to demonstrate that there is a serious lack of detailed knowledge about the size, structures, needs and abilities of the third sector. It is essential that the Partnership understands this sector and what it can help the District achieve in the coming years. It is a piece of work that is not unrelated to all those areas mentioned previously. To move forward requires an understanding of needs at an individual level; in geographical communities at whatever level is deemed appropriate; and also in the many and varied communities of interest which exist in our District.

VOX is determined that it should continue to play a role in this challenging new world.

Robin Barron
Chair of VOX





Message from the Chief Officer

VOX

Community Empowerment Network



This was a year in which VOX positively contributed to the life and social glue of the District and enabled voices from communities to be heard and listened to despite the vagaries of our funding situation. We continued to grow the number of VOX neighbourhood Networks and Community Partnerships across the District. Three new Networks were developed during the year and VOX also entered into a partnership with an existing organisation to promote community partnership working in that particular part of the District; demonstrating once again that VOX works with what's already in place and doesn't engage in duplication.

We began the production of a quarterly intelligence report, 'VOX Feedback from Communities and Neighbourhoods', for our statutory partners during the year, which has been well received by colleagues, who recognise the importance of the dialogue.

During the year, the three Neighbourhood Management Pilots really began to take off. This was due in no small part to the dedication and commitment of the Board Members, particularly the Community Board Members, as they began to adjust to their new roles. In March 2009 the Airedale and Ferry Fryston Board delivered a Participatory Budgeting Pilot event with funds provided by the Home Office. Through the process £20,000 was allocated by the local community to support local projects to improve the quality of life of people living within the area.

During June 2008 we were informed by the Wakefield Together Board that funding to VOX would be reduced. This resulted in the loss of Carol Dickinson, our Community Engagement Officer, after working for VOX for five years. In her time with VOX, Carol made a sterling contribution to a number of key work programmes including the management of the Neighbourhood Support Fund and Community Learning grants, the development and delivery of the VOX Community Networks and Partnerships, and latterly the development and recruitment of the three Neighbourhood Management Pilot Boards.

Our budget for the year from the Local Area Agreement Funds was set at £239,000. This clearly represented value for money to our partners given the contribution that VOX made to the work of Wakefield Together Partnership, both in enabling and supporting community and voluntary sector involvement in strategic bodies, facilitating and supporting communities of interest networks, forums and consortia; as well as giving a

voice to the different communities of geography that make up the Wakefield District.

The Place Survey was carried out between September 2008 and January 2009. The response rate by residents of the District was very positive, with over 47% of the sample population returning the questionnaire, and demonstrating our citizens' willingness to get involved. The Wakefield return was the seventh highest response rate of all Local Authority areas surveyed. However, the results of the survey, which were not published until June 2009, were not so positive. The emerging picture about the District showed citizen satisfaction rates around citizen's ability to influence decision making in their locality and the percentage of people from different backgrounds who get on well together in their local area declining. Improvement targets were subsequently agreed with Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber for the next Place Survey in 2010.

The National Survey of Third Sector organisations ended in November 2008 and the initial results were published in January 2009. The results for Wakefield were similar to elsewhere in many respects. However, only 16% of the groups and organisations responding to the survey believed that local statutory organisations contributed to their success, providing a low base in relation to National Indicator 7: Environment for a Thriving Third Sector. As the organisations that were part of the national survey were only those who were registered Charities, VOX subsequently took the national questionnaire and surveyed the wider community and voluntary sector of the District. This exercise produced some positive and interesting results. In answering the same question about statutory bodies in our local area influencing an organisations success, 32% said they had a very positive influence.

At the end of the year the results of the surveys identified key issues that needed to be addressed, and the distance the District needs to travel to meet the aspirations of both the citizens and service users as well as the community groups and organisations that make up the third sector.

In the coming months it is critical that whilst the engagement and area based delivery reviews are taking place, we continue to engage and involve our community activists. Their contribution has been, and continues to be invaluable in taking this journey forward.

Tony Dean, VOX Chief Officer



VOX is the Community Empowerment Network for the Wakefield District and has a membership of hundreds of community and voluntary groups and individuals throughout the local area. VOX works to give these groups and people a united voice to influence the way the District is run. VOX is a Registered Charity, No: 1124787 and a Company Registered in England and Wales, No: 06038344.

Objectives

The objects of VOX Community Empowerment Network are the promotion of the voluntary and community sectors in the Wakefield area for the benefit of the public by:

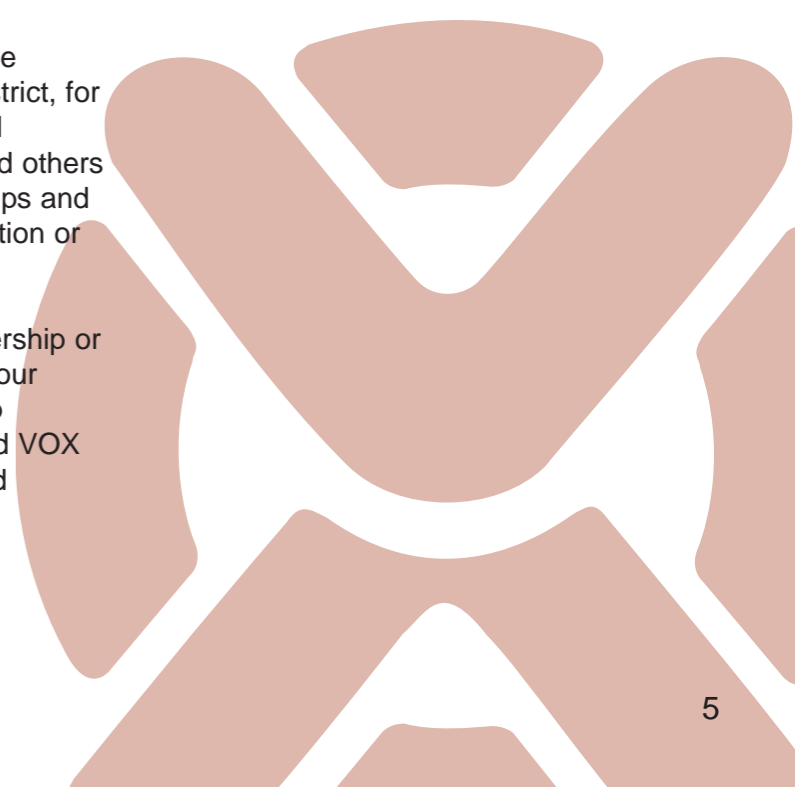
- Providing a forum in which representatives from the local voluntary and community sector in the Wakefield area, without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race, political, religious, or other opinions, can come together and express views on matters of local interest, and the conveying of such views to local planners and decision makers;
- Identifying needs in the voluntary and community sectors and establishing projects or policies to address them; and
- Acting as a representative of the voluntary and community sectors in relation to government policies and legislation.

What can you expect from VOX?

We are here to provide you with all the information you need for your network, partnership or group. We can be your one stop shop for independent news and views, and helping you to work smarter in your community. We can also signpost you to other organisations that can help you with your group, with funding and finance, with volunteers or equipment. We're here to help.

What can we do for you?

- We can provide you with information about how Wakefield works and 'Who's Who?' in your area
- We can provide you with access to news from all the organisations that provide services in Wakefield District, for example, the Local Strategic Partnership: Wakefield Together, the police, the council, health services and others
- We can put you in touch with other community groups and tell you where to go in different services for information or answers
- We can help you with free equipment loans
- We can promote and publicise your network, partnership or group and the projects you are involved in through our e-bulletin, website and quarterly magazine VOXPop
- We can help you with easy read policy briefings and VOX Reports on what is happening locally, regionally and nationally.



Getting on well together



Indicator The percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area

VOX identified a number of ways to try and increase this percentage by:

- **Working with partners to create opportunities for different groups and communities to work together**
- **Supporting the development of community activities and initiatives which build a sense of community pride and civic ownership and responsibility**
- **Encouraging activities which highlight the historical, cultural and social contributions of different communities**
- **Identifying and removing barriers to participation, encouraging diversity and increasing accessibility**
- **Distributing information and meeting community representatives and activists and encouraging them to participate in networks and other meetings that are occurring around the district**

Throughout 2008/09 VOX worked with partners to create opportunities for different groups and communities to work together by supporting various community events and activities. VOX supported and helped publicise World Mental Health Day through VOXPop magazine, its Neighbourhood Networks and the VOX website. VOX also worked with Pride not Prejudice to support Wakefield Pride 2008 and designed the posters for the event. VOX supported Refugee Week Celebrations by getting involved in the planning, promotion and publicity, and commissioning refugee Chawapiwa Faith Muvengwi to write an article for VOXPop about the event and wider issues faced by refugees. We were also involved to a great extent in producing the Refugee and Asylum Seekers Myth Busting Leaflet in partnership with Wakefield Council, RASA, the Refugee Council and Wakefield District CAB.

Over the course of the year, VOX also worked with smaller individual community and voluntary groups like Wakefield's Talking Newspaper, the African Women's Support Project and Wakefield Sea Cadets in promoting and publicising their work. This helped to provide opportunities for different community groups to talk about and share their experiences with others.

Through partnership working with NHS Wakefield District, Wakefield and District Housing, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council's Open Door Project and

the Refugee Council, we supported groups such as the African Women's Alliance and the Kurdish Community Peer Group. With the former, we helped them arrange an event and networked them with other groups and statutory partners who could help them with their development.

We identified and removed some barriers to participation by using local venues, rotating dates and meeting times of Networks and events in a bid to increase the amount of people able to attend. The VOX Community Engagement Team also undertook extensive outreach work within different communities to raise awareness of local issues, and directed people to appropriate statutory partners or other voluntary and community organisations where needed.

VOX was instrumental in organising and supporting showcasing events across the District, which allowed local community and voluntary groups to display information about their history, heritage and culture to other people in the local area. We used the Neighbourhood Networks and Partnerships to identify a common cause or common community issue which would bring different groups and individual activists together. We also helped encourage a sense of community pride and civic ownership by focusing campaigns around civic or historic exhibitions or buildings, for example Ossett Town Hall's Centenary celebrations.

VOX have supported the development of new groups and organisations in the different Ward areas, along with Ward Councillors and other voluntary and community sector infrastructure partners, for example the Newmillerdam Conservation Community Association and the Lofthouse Colliery Action Group.

We also supported partner organisations such as Wakefield and District Housing, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Services, West Yorkshire Police, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, NHS Wakefield District, Mid Yorkshire NHS Trust and South West Yorkshire Mental Health Trust, in advertising and developing community based activities which would encourage different community groups to come together, for example, the 'You can Kick Racism Out' sporting events.

In the first six months of the 2009/2010 year VOX have continued this work by...

Supporting and participating in various events and activities across the District including the Wakefield Pride event, Mental Health Awareness Week, National Refugee Week and various other community showcasing activities, galas and events. We have offered support through funding, staff time and expertise, for example, press and publicity support. VOX was instrumental in planning the Week of Wellbeing event in the Lupset and Flanshaw area in April 2009, producing the Week of Wellbeing booklet and attending the event and follow up meetings. We also encouraged and participated in the District wide celebration events taking place in local Children Centres. We also helped with the development of an action group in Altofts that came out of discussions in the Normanton and Altofts Neighbourhood Network, where four local community groups came together and worked with the relevant statutory bodies to develop a local play area. The group have been successful in securing £90k of funding for this project.

Others examples of support to community events this year include:

- Ossett Summer Fair
- Horbury Street Show
- Featherstone Party in the Park
- Featherstone Street Gala
- Featherstone Street Games
- Knottingley Street Games
- Ossett Churches Together Community Day
- Wrenthorpe Flower Show
- Wrenthorpe Meadows Launch Event
- Soul Portobello 09 Event
- Crofton Carnival
- Knottingley Festival
- 'Ossett through the Ages' Community Event
- Wakefield District Play Day Events
- Newmillerdam Community Day
- Lofthouse Colliery Party in the Park

Promoting and publicising networking between the town centre partnerships, civic societies, historical societies and communities of interest groups including faith groups. For example, VOX Networks have provided a platform for community groups to debate and suggest ideas on

regeneration projects and current Town Centre Partnership Plans in Ossett, Horbury, Wakefield Central, Featherstone, Normanton, Knottingley and Castleford.

Continuing to work with and disseminate information to local schools, mosques and churches ensuring activities heed the diverse needs of individuals and communities, for example time of day, venues, locations, types of activity, language and so on.

Continuing outreach work with local community groups, activists and local residents and signposting these people to partners including the wider VCS, VAWD, Groundwork, Age Concern and the Citizens Advice Bureau amongst others. VOX also supported the re-launch events for two new tenants and residents groups in the Wakefield Central area, which are KATRA (Kirkgate Apartments Tenants and Residents Association) and Eastmoor.

Continuing to provide information and feedback from partners such as the Youth Development and Support Service, West Yorkshire Police and Metro to community groups and activists which included developing the transport consultation activity in Crofton. VOX supported the launch of the Policing Pledges by distributing information through the Networks and encouraged community groups to have stalls at launch events in their local Neighbourhood Policing Areas. We also promoted local PACT meetings across the District and encouraged groups and community members to attend and contribute.

Participation



Indicator The number of people involved in Civic Participation

In 2008-2009 VOX agreed a number of ways to address this target with partners:

- To develop an action plan and activities with partners to promote citizen governance
- To develop further governance promotional materials
- To identify, recruit, select or elect, and support community and voluntary sectors reps onto strategic decision making bodies of the Wakefield District Partnership
- To identify, recruit and support community reps in the Neighbourhood Management Pilot areas to represent communities on the Boards

Governance

VOXPop magazine was used throughout the year to promote citizen governance opportunities with local organisations. This information was also distributed through our Networks, VOXNet website and VOXNow e-bulletin. We also produced a second edition of the popular Governance Booklet giving people information on the various roles available in the District. This revised edition included new information on roles available with the Wakefield District LINK and Parish and Town Councils. We also published an article on Parish and Town Councils after the then Communities Secretary Hazel Blears outlined plans in November 2008 to encourage new Parish and Town Councils to be set up so that more decision making powers are placed in the hands of local people.

Following the successful BME Governance Event in March 2008 we developed further activities by supporting the development of inter mosque and faith group meetings. We also fed into the 'Community for You' DVD produced from the event and helped distribute it to interested communities. We have a dedicated governance area on our website and have received 2,868 hits on the digital version of our Governance Booklet and 1,701 views of the 'Community for You' video streamed on VOXNet.

The VOX Neighbourhood Networks were used as a vehicle to recruit people to different governance roles in organisations such as Wakefield and District Housing, South West Yorkshire Mental Health Trust, West Yorkshire Police, Overview and Scrutiny Committees,

schools, the VOX Board and the LINK. They were also used to encourage a dialogue between community representatives and statutory organisation in what the different governance roles involved.

VOX has continued to encourage and support community members to get involved in governance roles in the first half of 09/10 by:

- Working with Young Lives to develop their governance and accountability systems.
- Continuing to distribute the Citizen Governance booklet.
- Continuing to disseminate information on vacancies with regard to community governance on a regular basis through the Networks, VOXPop, VOXNow, VOXNet and VOX events.

Representation

VOX actively promoted and recruited representatives to the VOX Board, and also dedicated the Autumn 2008 edition of VOXPop to Representation. This allowed people to find out who their VOX Board reps were, who their reps on Wakefield Together were, how to find out what they'd been doing, how to contact them and how to feed their views through to them. In doing this we set up specific areas for rep reports on the VOX website where people can get involved in discussion forums, and set up new dedicated email addresses for the Board and Reps so that they can be contacted directly.

VOX identified and recruited community and voluntary sectors reps onto strategic decision making bodies of Wakefield Together including the Board, the Thematic Partnerships and sub/delivery groups including 'Skills and Work' and 'Knowledge and Advanced Economies'. Other representatives were recruited to the: Cultural Partnership; Safeguarding Children Board (Extended); Mental Health Partnership Board; Learning Disability Partnership Board; Older Peoples Board; Wakefield Together Duty to Involve Group; Wakefield Together Communications Forum; Wakefield Together Partnership Information and Intelligence Group, Wakefield LINK; NHS Wakefield District; Mid Yorkshire NHS Acute Trust Board and the South West Yorkshire Mental Health Trust Members Council.

As part of our ongoing work to support these representatives we developed and provided robust induction and support services to reps on the strategic decision making bodies and partner organisations structures. We developed and supported communication, and reporting and accountability processes between reps on Wakefield Together decision making bodies and the sectors, communities of geography and the communities of interest they represent. This includes website discussion forums and reports on the Thematic Partnerships, and reporting back mechanisms through the Neighbourhood Networks, Communities of Interest and other Partners.

VOX has continued to encourage volunteers to represent the community and voluntary sectors on strategic decision making bodies in the first half of 2009/2010 by:

- Continuing to improve and support communication, and reporting and accountability processes between representatives on decision making bodies and the communities they represent with: pre-meeting briefings; post meeting reports; feedback to communities; and Neighbourhood Network Intelligence Reports to representatives and partners.
- Working with representatives to identify and address their training and development needs in their roles, for example Young Lives.

Neighbourhood Management

VOX actively recruited Resident Board Members onto the three Neighbourhood Management Boards in Kinsley and Fitzwilliam; Airedale and Ferry Fyston and Agbrigg and Belle Vue. During the formation period VOX worked with the Boards to identify the key priorities for the area which then informed the selection of key representatives from priority service providers such as the Police, Health, Education, Environmental and Young People's Services

During 2008/09 VOX effectively supported the Resident Board Members in adapting to their new roles through both the initial induction phase and ongoing support for Board members. Since their formation all the Boards have made enormous progress with Members

recognising their roles and responsibilities. Three different collections of individuals have begun to develop their own corporate local identity, establish their local priorities and have been ably supported by their teams of officers.

VOX have helped develop and support communication, and reporting and accountability processes between community reps on Neighbourhood Management Boards and the communities they represent; and developed recording systems and evidence gathering to demonstrate that as a result of community engagement, service priorities and service delivery has changed in Neighbourhood Management Pilot areas.

In 2009-2010 VOX are:

- Continuing to identify, recruit, brief and support community reps in the Neighbourhood Management Pilot areas to represent communities on the Boards.
- Supporting Resident Board Members on Neighbourhood Management Boards to communicate, engage and be accountable to the communities they represent.
- Implementing recording systems/gathering evidence to demonstrate that as a result of community engagement, service priorities/service delivery has changed in Neighbourhood Management Pilot areas.
- The VOX Chief Officer is continuing to regularly support the Resident Board Members on all three Neighbourhood Management Pilots, and recruitment of new reps is undertaken by VOX when vacancies arise. The VOX Chief Officer continued to support the work of the Engagement Group of the Airedale/Ferry Fryston Board and a programme of regular engagement activity with the community has been developed. Furthermore, the Chief Officer advised the three Boards on governance matters on behalf of Wakefield Together.

Influence



Indicator The percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality

In 2008/09 this indicator had a number of VOX targets attached to it, which were:

- To increase the number of independent Communities of Geography networks by 4
- To increase the number of independent Communities of Interest Networks by 6
- To increase the number of adults in neighbourhoods who feel empowered as a consequence of Community Empowerment Network support

Communities of geography 08/09

VOX worked towards increasing this percentage by developing new Neighbourhood Networks in September 2008 for Featherstone, Streethouse and Purston Jaglin; and for the Hemsworth area, working in partnership with the existing Hemsworth and District Partnership. VOX also developed new Neighbourhood Networks for the Portobello, Sandal and Pledwick areas; and for the Ackworth, North Elmsall, Upton, Badsworth and Thorpe Audlin areas, whose first meetings were in December 2008.

Maintaining and developing the existing Neighbourhoods Networks and Partnerships was also a priority and we undertook membership reviews, development of Constitutions, recruitment of Chairs and Secretaries, ongoing outreach work, promotion of Networks at local events and recruitment of statutory representatives. We also continued to develop the Networks and Partnerships as the key engagement vehicles for our Wakefield Together Partners working with local communities.

VOX also worked with elected members to promote their role as Democratic Community Champions; recruiting new Councillors to attend Network meetings; and recruiting Parish Council representation into the Networks.

In the first six months of the 2009/2010 year VOX have continued this work by:

- Developing a new Neighbourhood Network for Wakefield Rural Ward. Development work commenced in April 2009 on the new Wakefield Rural Network and the BASIS bid to support the development of the

Network was officially signed off in early June 2009.

- Maintaining and developing the Neighbourhoods Networks and Partnerships as a community engagement tool.
- Revising the priorities of the Networks to reflect the Partnership's members' Duty to Involve; including a drive towards coordinated and integrated community engagement, including engaging with the most deprived communities.
- Working with partners to deliver the Engagement Action Plan and the best practice model for the District.
- Producing quarterly summary reports for partners, with issues of concern from communities sent to partners following individual Network Meetings. Feedback from partners is also given to the Networks at regular meetings.
- Undertaking a range of activities with the new and existing Neighbourhood Networks and Partnerships to increase participation including: identifying common issues or concerns as well as encouraging the development of community projects; liaising with other partner organisations in developing community focused activities; and ensuring that a timely and appropriate feedback process is established between statutory and community groups and individuals.
- Working with Elected Members to promote and support them in their role as Democratic Community Champions. Elected members are invited to all Network meetings and provided with agendas and minutes. All Elected Members are provided with the quarterly VOX 'Feedback from Communities Report'.
- Maintaining and developing regular communications between Neighbourhood Networks and community of interest groups that are geographically based, for example, Disabled Peoples Partnerships and the Older Peoples Forums.

Communities of interest 08/09

VOX worked towards increasing this percentage by undertaking development work on existing and new community of interest networks, including work on the Disabled Peoples Partnerships in conjunction with Wakefield Council's Community Cohesion Team and NHS Wakefield District. The new partnerships of Pontefract and Knottingley; Normanton and Altofts; and

Wakefield have all been established. VOX has produced Constitutions, recruited new members and volunteers, and provided staff to help support meetings.

Two new community of interest networks have been developed with partners relating to Learning Disability/Mental Health Service Users and Young People. VOX supported the Young Lives Consortium in the process of becoming an independent Company Limited by Guarantee and a Charity; and began working with both the Mental Health and Learning Disability Partnership Boards to develop communication and engagement opportunities with local communities. We also developed links with schools and the Young People's Service to promote governance and empowerment, and worked with the Involving Children and Young People's Group to link together work being done by partner agencies in engaging children and young people. In addition VOX worked with the Healthy and Active Life for Older People Group as well as the ongoing support of the strategic Older Peoples Forum.

VOX supported the Primary Care Trust in developing four communities of interest groups, which were the Trans Cultural Mental Health Group; the Religion, Spirituality and Health Focus Group; the Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Transitory Population Health Focus Group; and the Trans Cultural Alcohol and Drugs (Dual Diagnosis) Focus Group. We did this by helping them develop links in the community.

To increase the level of engagement with more diverse communities and the never heard communities VOX developed a series of key actions with partners as part of the review of the engagement activities of partner agencies. This work was developed by the Engagement Advisory Group, on behalf of Wakefield Together.

In the first six months of the 2009/2010 year VOX have continued this work by:

- Undertaking development work on existing and new community of interest networks, for example, working with partners in supporting the development of the Wakefield Polish Community Association.
- Continuing to support the existing Disabled Peoples Partnerships and supporting the development of the Wakefield Central Disabled Peoples Partnership.

- Contributing to the work of both the Learning Disability Partnership Board and the Mental Health Partnership Board, providing information and signposting Voluntary and Community Sector members.
- Developing and maintaining a dialogue between the community Networks and the Health Services' Local Involvement Network (LINK).
- Working with the Involving Children and Young People's Group to promote governance and empowerment through schools and the Youth Development and Support Services; contributing to the MY Life Event at the National Coal Mining Museum in April; and continuing work with the Young Lives Consortium including providing regular feedback on the work of Wakefield Together.
- Implementing a series of key actions with partners arising from the Engagement Review to increase the level of engagement with more diverse communities and the seldom heard communities. VOX is contributing to the work of the Duty to Involve Group to develop new approaches in reaching these groups.
- Maintaining the current dialogue with, and promotion of, the Older Peoples Group.
- Maintaining the current communication flows between VOX and the Young Lives Consortium.
- Continuing to engage with the faith leaders of the District and promote their engagement with the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- Working with partners to signpost partner organisations to community and voluntary sector opportunities and to service providers for ex offenders. VOX represents the community and voluntary sectors on both the Strategic and Tactical Integrated Offender Management Groups.

Empowered adults 08/09

VOX worked towards increasing this percentage by working with partners to develop jargon free, plain English briefings on key policies plans and strategies, for example, The Path to Citizenship and the Localist Sustainable Communities Act amongst others.

We continued to use and develop our communications tools VOXPop magazine, VOXNow e-bulletin and the VOXNet website as a way of communicating important issues and information to communities, and as a way of getting information back from communities, for example,

by setting up dedicated discussion areas for separate issues on our website. This ensures community members who cannot attend meetings can still have their say. In VOXPop we covered issues ranging from empowerment to representation. We provided information on many and varied consultations to communities for all partners on subjects such as the Local Development Framework, the Learning and Skills Development Plan and the Positively Ageing Strategy.

We continued organising well attended events on issues relevant to those in the District alongside showcasing events to address local issues and needs. These included 'Handing back Power to the People?' in October 2008 around the Draft Legislative Programme: Preparing Britain for the Future, and 'Partners in Tackling Crime?' in March 2009 giving communities the chance to speak to local police and other agencies engaged in the criminal justice system. Local 'Showcasing Events' organised by the Neighbourhood Networks in Ossett, Horbury, Normanton and Altofts attracted over 55 community groups as well as infrastructure partners and representation from key statutory partners including WDH, NHS Wakefield District, various departments from Wakefield Council, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, West Yorkshire Police, Mid Yorkshire NHS Trust and South West Yorkshire Mental Health Trust.

We enhanced communication links between representatives, board members and individuals, communities and other interested parties by: promoting and recruiting into specific Board vacancies; providing dedicated pages on the VOX website; providing new and dedicated email addresses for board members and reps; producing VOXPop magazine around 'Representation' with details of all Directors and Reps, what they do and how to contact them; and website discussion forums on the Thematic Partnerships including reports from all meetings from the Reps.

In the first six months of the 2009/2010 year VOX have continued this work by:

- Working with partners to increase the percentage of people in the District who feel they can influence decisions in their locality.
- Working with partners to deliver their Duty to Involve.
- Working with partners to deliver their Duty to Promote Democracy.
- Working with partners to assist with issues around service transformation and efficiency.
- Working with partners to develop new mechanisms for engaging those harder to reach groups.
- Providing information about opportunities to get involved and make a difference.
- Working with partners to ensure that those opportunities are inclusive and accessible to the community, especially the more deprived communities.
- Continuing to liaise and work with community development workers from partner organisations to bring together residents and groups within a locality.
- Working with partners to raise aspirations of individuals and groups in their communities by increasing their knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence, for example by providing information on good practice and innovative or successful activities and utilising the opportunities provided by partners.
- Working with partners to develop the capacity of individuals to understand and influence local decisions.
- Working with partners during the economic downturn to promote 'informal' volunteering as a form of capacity building.
- Working with learning providers to develop programmes of learning to contribute to the Take Part and Together We Can agendas.
- Working with District Councillors to enable them to deliver in their Community Champion role.
- Working with Parish and Town Councils to integrate their work streams with those of Wakefield Together.
- Continuing to act as a vehicle for involving the Community and Voluntary Sector in consultations for Partners.
- Responding to the draft papers on area based delivery and engagement.

Indicator Environment for a thriving third sector

Thriving Third Sector

VOX has always worked with the community and voluntary sectors but has now been tasked with helping to address the target, 'Environment for a thriving third sector'. As such we have only been measuring our work against this target since April 2009.

The work we have done during the first half of 2009/10 includes:

- Contributions by VOX members and staff to the consultation event on the Volunteering Strategy produced by Family Services.
- Working with the Community Foundation in promoting Grassroots Grants opportunities to the wider voluntary and community sector, and participating in Grassroots Grants Panel Meetings.
- Continuing to provide a voice for the Voluntary and Community Sector at meetings of key decision making Boards.
- Planning and delivering the event on the Third Sector, 'Not the Usual Suspects?' in July 2009, which was well attended with over 100 third sector partners and others, including faith and trade union representatives discussing relevant issues and the way forward.
- Continuing to work in partnership with VAWD and NHS Wakefield District in the delivery of the Healthier Communities Fund to increase the capacity of the third sector. In June 2008 VOX organised the launch of the Healthier Communities Fund Event at St George's in Lupset. Over 100 representatives from community and voluntary groups came together to hear about the fund from Roger Grasby and Alan Wittrick, Chair and Chief Executive of Wakefield District Primary Care Trust; Mary Creagh MP; Mike Robinson then Director of Public Health; Julie Wilkes, Chief Executive of Voluntary Action Wakefield District and Tony Dean, VOX Chief Officer. VOX supported representatives on the Fund panels and continues to attend and contribute to Healthier Communities Fund Development Meetings and Board Meetings. Our role also involves leading on the promotional and publicity work for the Fund and we are continuing to build a

specific area on VOXNet to inform people about the projects.

- Working with VAWD, the Compact Group, Wakefield Infrastructure Partnership and others to assist them in involving other third sector groups, particularly community groups and individual community members, in their work.
- Working with partners on the Third Sector Review. VOX staff commenced the mapping of the Third Sector in Wakefield District in June 2009 as part of the Third Sector Review and this work is ongoing.
- Using VOX communication channels to inform, promote and provide a forum for the Voluntary and Community Sector, for example dedicated sections in VOXPop, VOXNow and VOXNet.
- Developing a dialogue with non Voluntary and Community Sector members of the local third sector.
- Working with partners to consider a Third Sector Assembly and the development of a third sector awards scheme to raise the profile of third sector organisations and their contribution to the life of the District, amongst other mechanisms.
- Continuing to signpost community groups and individuals, and partner agency staff to other Voluntary and Community Sector organisations relevant to their enquiry.

VOX Governance

Trustees are recruited from community and voluntary groups and organisations, community of interest groups and organisations and individuals from across the Wakefield District. VOX recognises the need to have a range of skills represented amongst the directors and will, wherever possible, seek to ensure that each director who is appointed will add to the skills of the board as a whole. VOX is proactive in finding and encouraging suitable individuals to join the board, particularly if they come from under represented areas or groupings.

The maximum number of directors is 24 unless the board decides otherwise. They are appointed so that there are up to:

- 6 Community Directors covering six geographical areas which make up the whole of the district;
- 6 Voluntary Sector Directors;
- 6 Community of Interest Directors;
- 3 Independent Directors; and
- 3 Chair Directors

Elections are held annually whereby Community Directors are elected by Community Organisations; Voluntary Sector Directors are elected by Voluntary Sector Organisations; Community of Interest Directors are elected by Community of Interest Organisations; and Independent Directors are elected by Individual Company Members. They are appointed on a three year cycle.



Robin Barron
Chair



Keith Aaron
Vice Chair



Ken McRitchie
Vice Chair



Paula Bee
Voluntary Sector
National Director
Chief Officer,
Age Concern



Ken Taylor
Voluntary Sector
National Director
Chief Executive,
Groundwork



Liz Halliday
Voluntary Sector
National Director
Chief Executive,
Wakefield District
CAB



Mary White
Voluntary Sector
Local Director



Jan Power
Voluntary Sector
Local Director



Wendy Wilson
Voluntary Sector
Local Director



Peter Savage
Individual
Director



Ken Wild
Individual
Director



David Mitchell
Individual
Director



Darren Byford
Community of
Interest Director



Abdul Aziz
Community of
Interest Director



Bill Storey
Community of
Interest Director



Tony Howell
Community of
Interest Director



Masoud Maddah
Community of
Interest Director



Tom Longfield
Community
Director



Denis Leek
Community
Director

Thank you....

During 2008/09 we also said goodbye to three of our Directors VOX would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their input and hard work during their time on the Board.

David Rowland, resigned February 2009

John Anderson, resigned May 2009

Gill Laidler, resigned September 2009



The VOX Annual Report 08-09 including the Directors' Report and Audited Accounts are available on request. Contact details are on the back cover.

VOX Staff

Tony Dean	Chief Officer
Helen Watkiss	Partnership & Policy Officer
Abby Oliver	Communications Officer
Wajid Khan	Community Engagement Worker
Lis Heptonstall	Support Assistant

<i>Carol Dickinson</i>	<i>Community Engagement Officer</i>	<i>until August 2008</i>
<i>Julian Glover</i>	<i>Community Engagement Worker</i>	<i>until July 2009</i>

VOX would like to thank Carol Dickinson and Julian Glover for their hard work as part of the Community Engagement Team over the past few years.

VOX

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