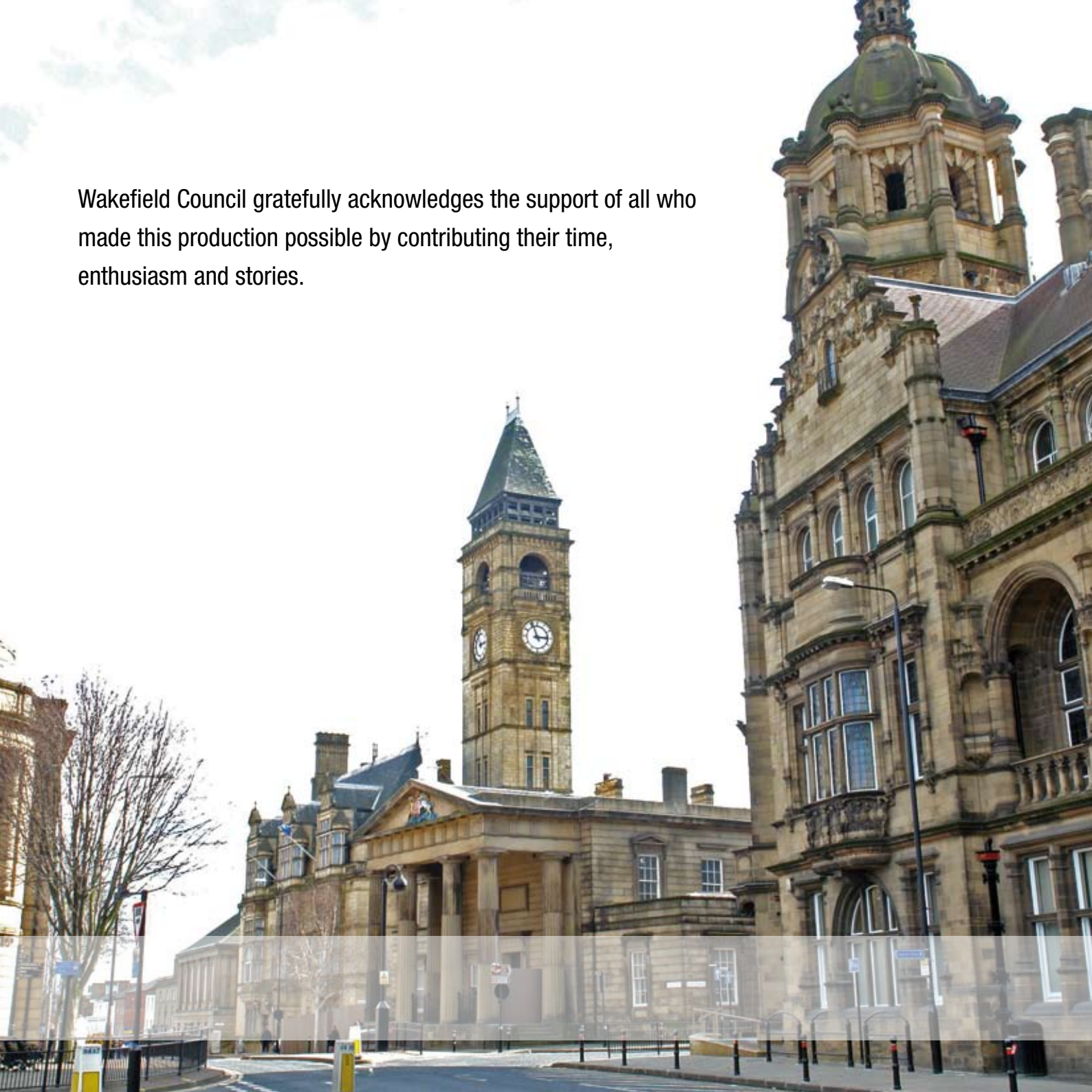




Wakefield Stories

Our People, Our Places

Wakefield Council gratefully acknowledges the support of all who made this production possible by contributing their time, enthusiasm and stories.



Welcome

Welcome to *Wakefield Stories*.

This document presents a selection of personal stories showing how the quality of people's lives have been improved as a direct result of the services of Wakefield Council, working either alone or in partnership with others.

That residents recognise and appreciate the difference we make is testament to our continued focus on improvement and delivering the high quality services that citizens expect and deserve.

I am pleased that this booklet provides the opportunity for local people to speak for themselves.



Clr Peter Box
Leader, Wakefield Council



Contents

A Safer and Stronger Community

Ruth Amos

Chair, Friends of Green Park, Ossett

Emma Fletcher

Youth Parliament

Rev. Edward Woodcock

Tackling anti-social behaviour, Ferrybrige

Developing Skills, Enterprise and Work

Geoff

Positive Opportunities Scheme,

Nick New

Cambridge Correlators, Cedars Business Centre

Creating Healthier Communities

Rebecca Haigh

Gymnast, Community Sports Coach Scheme

Agnes Cunningham

Independent living through the
Telecare scheme

Delivering Organisational Capacity and Transformation

John Elliott

Working smarter in Benefits

Toby Lancaster and Disabledgo

Improving access to services



A Safer and Stronger Community

Ruth Amos

Chair, Friends of Green Park, Ossett

Led by Ruth Amos, the Friends of Green Park Group in Ossett secured £70,000 to make sure the community's vision for the Park's rose garden became a reality.

The Council provided funding for the scheme, along with Waste Recycling Environment Limited (WREN) and Biffawards, to transform a disused, derelict space into a spectacular 'oasis of enjoyment' for the whole community.

The makeover has included re-surfacing paths and introducing a central gazebo to encourage plant growth and act as a focal point. Rebuilding the garden's northern wall and installing new fencing has helped define the area as a quality public space and new seating has been installed to encourage residents to stop, sit and chat. New litter bins are helping keep the space clean and tidy.

The Council's Environment Service is now helping maintain the garden, ensuring the area remains a space everyone can enjoy and of which the whole community, Friends of Green Park - and the Council - can be proud.

"The Council has really helped us secure our vision for the Rose Garden which has brought the whole community together. We are looking forward to continuing our partnership with the Council to develop other areas of the Park in the future."

Ruth Amos

Chair, Friends of Green Park, Ossett





A Safer and Stronger Community

Emma Fletcher

Wakefield Member UK Youth Parliament

The Council undertakes proactive engagement with all its communities to measure how well its services are being run and whether they are meeting the needs of local people.

Part of this work includes getting the views of young people. The Council is well known for its good work with the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) and was awarded Beacon status for the way in which it involves young people in decision making.

Twelve year old Emma Fletcher first got involved with UKYP through school and now represents the Wakefield district, along with Chandler Burns in the national Parliament. With the support of the Council's Children and Young People's Service both have embraced their important roles which sees them representing the views of thousands of young people across the district.

Emma's biggest achievement since being elected has been debating at the House of Lords on environmental matters and addressing the issue of how young people are represented in the media.

Emma is proud to be a representative of the district and recognises the value of her role and says;

“Young people have the most knowledge about other young people. People like us can represent their views in a way that adults can't, so it's important we have our say.”





A Safer and Stronger Community

Rev Edward Woodcock

Tackling anti-social behaviour in Ferrybridge



After a spate of anti social behaviour in Ferrybridge, the Reverend Edward Woodcock decided to take action. He called together a number of meetings with local residents and the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, which is run jointly by the Council and the Police, to discuss local issues.

The meetings provided a sounding board for troubled residents to share their experiences and provide information on concerns such as underage drinking and related crimes.

The Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Unit used the information from residents to target action, identify those individuals responsible and hold them to account through parent warning letters and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC's).

This hard work has led to three, post-conviction anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) being served on the main offenders.

To help prevent future anti social behaviour, the ASB Unit has undertaken work with schools in the area to educate local children on the impact and consequences of crime, anti-social behaviour and environmental issues, helping make sure the residents of Ferrybridge continue to enjoy safe and peaceful lives.

Reverend Woodcock has noticed the difference made by this collective work and said;

"Thanks to Ferrybridge citizens, the Council and the Police working together, we are now enjoying a safer and less fearful life in our community."



Developing Skills, Enterprise and Work

Geoff

Positive Opportunities Scheme



Geoff, and many others like him, has seen his confidence come on in leaps and bounds thanks to the Council's work in addressing skill levels and work opportunities in the district.

Having previously undertaken several unsuccessful jobs, Geoff was understandably lacking in confidence and approached Positive Opportunities for help. The project was set up in by the Council in partnership with charity Mental Health Matters and helps give individuals the skills and confidence to take control of their lives.

Geoff worked with Employment Coach, Tracey McHale, who helped him get a placement with Howarth Environmental as a yard hand. The placement provided Geoff with a supportive environment in which to develop his skills and experience and helped him develop a weekly routine.

During the placement, he developed an interest in fork lift truck driving and thanks to the Positive Opportunities programme, he has succeeded in learning this new skill. Geoff is now looking to the future and his long term goal is to gain part time employment in this area of work. The Council will continue to support Geoff in his personal development and in working towards the new goals in his life.

"The programme has made a real difference to Geoff's life, providing him with a dynamic and trusting environment where disability is not a label."

*Tracey McHale
Employment Coach*



Developing Skills, Enterprise and Work

Nick New

Cambridge Correlators, Cedars Business Centre



By leveraging £2m of external funding, the Council has developed state-of-the-art resources at the Cedars Business centre, to provide specialised business support and guidance for new and developing businesses.

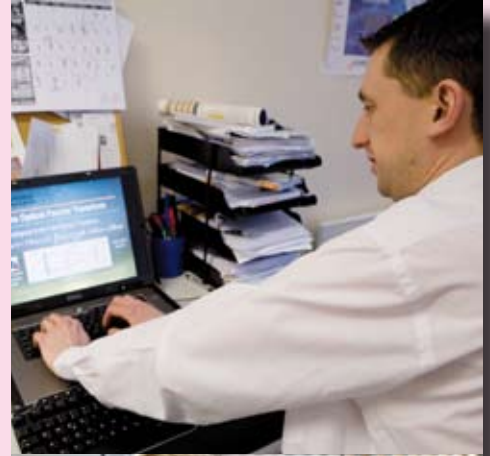
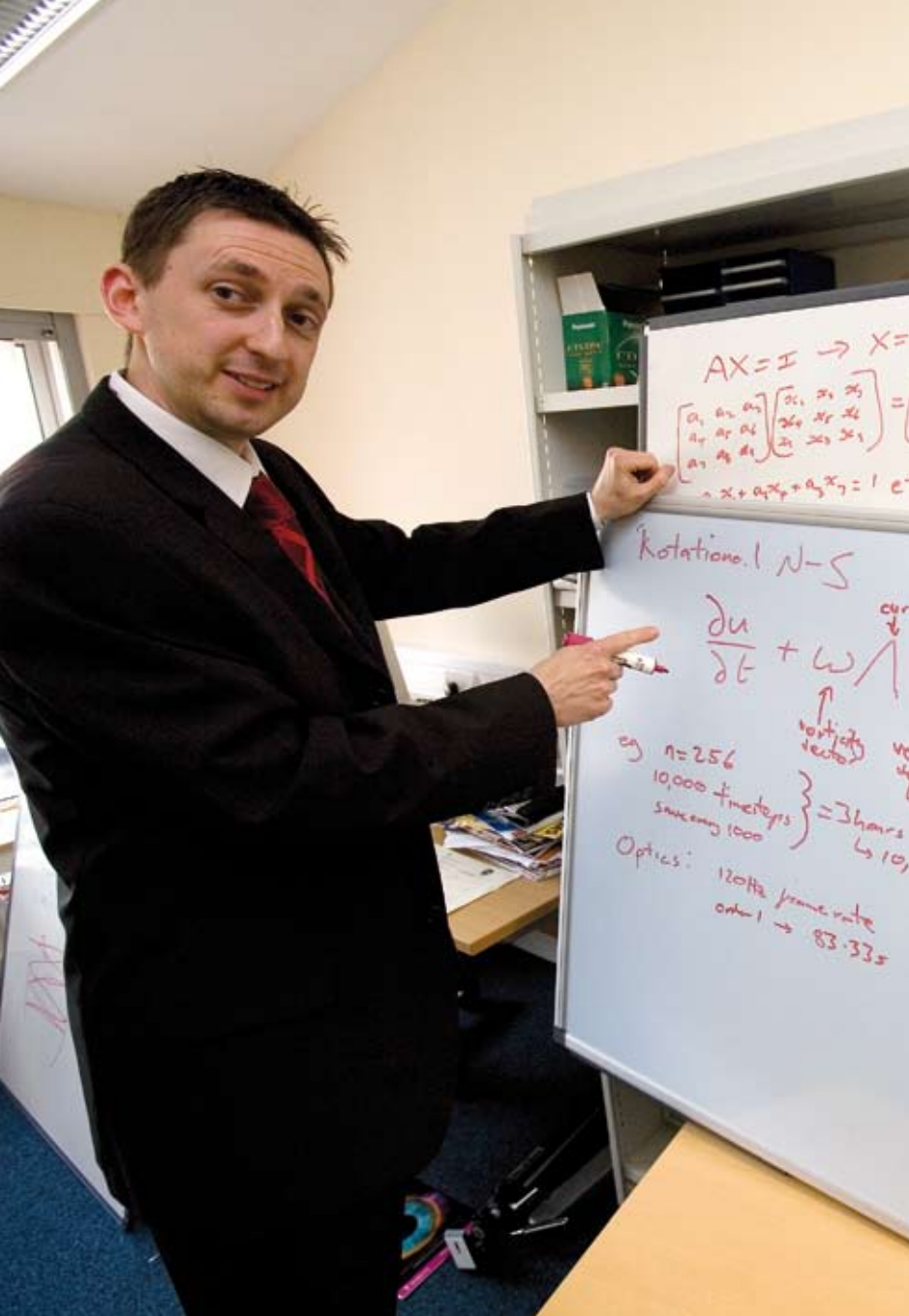
Established in 2006, the Centre has helped develop numerous successful organisations and current tenants, Cambridge Correlators, are no exception.

The company is well-suited to Cedars' modern facilities as it develops solutions based on patented optical processing technology to perform calculations far in excess of standard methods.

Wakefield born entrepreneur, Nick New, originally developed his company in Cambridge but the facilities at Cedars gave him the opportunity to move back to the district. By sourcing all parts and equipment from local suppliers he is contributing to the local economy, supporting local people and is now looking to expand his business.

The Cedars Business Centre itself continues to go from strength-to-strength too, incubating new and growing businesses and helping promote the district as an attractive place in which to invest. Nick says;

“Cambridge Correlators is indebted to the Council’s team at Cedars for their help and advice in establishing a professional base of operations for the company. Without this it would not have been possible to make the progress we have achieved over the past 12 months”.



Creating Healthier Communities

Rebecca Haigh

Gymnast, Community Sports Coach Scheme



Wakefield gymnast Rebecca Haigh is fast becoming one of the region's most promising sports stars with the help of the Council's Talent ID programme and the work of the Community Sports Coach Scheme.

Rebecca first became involved with the sport through her school, where she was selected for the Talent ID programme. Council coach, Zoe Styles quickly identified her potential and worked with Rebecca at Wakefield's Thorne's Park Stadium to develop her skills, resulting in some fantastic achievements. After six month's intensive training, Rebecca exceeded expectations winning several medals, including two golds at regional competitions.

The Community Sports Coach Scheme provides gymnasts such as Rebecca with more intensive attention and coaches have been able to fast track their development up to senior and international level.

With a bright future ahead of her, Rebecca and her peers are champions for the Council's vision of a healthier district and will no doubt help put Wakefield district on the map for sporting excellence.

"We set ourselves the highest goals. I know the people of Wakefield district expect great things from this club and we will continue our success through nurturing promising talent like Rebecca's."

*Zoe Styles
Community Sports Coach*



Creating Healthier Communities

Agnes Cunningham

Independent living through the Telecare scheme

Last year, 86-year-old Agnes Cunningham suffered from a stroke which severely limited her mobility and independence. During a stay in hospital, Agnes expressed a strong desire to return home where she felt comfortable and safe.

With the support of the Council's Home Care and Telecare schemes, she is now living comfortably once again in her own home which has made a dramatic difference to her confidence, speed of recovery and overall wellbeing.

Agnes has benefited from the use of a carephone and neck pendant so that she can call for help if needed. She also has a bed sensor to monitor activity during the night and bring help if, for example, she falls. Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors linked directly to the Contact Centre mean she is safe from other serious accidents.

Without Telecare being installed, Agnes may not have been able to live at home safely and it's possible that she would have been put forward for residential care, something she and her daughter were desperately keen to avoid.

Agnes' daughter, Sheila, is really pleased with the Telecare service and believes it is making a big difference to both their lives. She said;

"My mother is so happy to be living at home and I've got peace of mind knowing that if anything happens, help will be available as soon as the sensors are triggered. The Council's work has made my mother very happy and has granted her wish to continue living at home."





Delivering Organisational Capacity and Transformation

John Elliott

Working smarter in Benefits



The Council's new Worksmart Programme is transforming the way we deliver services across the district for the benefit of citizens.

The award winning initiative has introduced flexible ways of working for staff and means the Council is able to take key services out to communities and direct to people's homes. The use of new technology has reduced paperwork and increased efficiency, ensuring the Council provides the best possible service.

At 86, John Elliott was facing difficulties with his new Council Tax benefit claim. Rather than having to visit the Council offices to deal with his query, the new scheme meant that Benefits Officer, Malcolm Banks, could visit him at home.

Malcolm works with a tablet computer which means he can spend more time with customers and deal with queries more effectively and speedily. This is especially valuable to customers like John who have mobility needs and find visiting the Council a struggle.

In meeting John face to face and discussing his Council Tax claim, Malcolm discovered a number of other issues where John needed help.

"The flexibility of Worksmart has meant that we can deal with queries faster and more effectively, providing a much more comprehensive, responsive and higher quality service to customers like John."

Malcolm Banks
Benefits Officer



Delivering Organisational Capacity and Transformation

Toby Lancaster and Disabledgo

Improving access to services

For two years running, the Council has received the National Customer Services Award in recognition of its work to improve customer access to services.

Working closely with Disabled Go, a company that provides electronic information on over 1,000 accessible venues in the district, disabled residents and visitors to Wakefield are enjoying increased flexibility and choice on where they shop, eat and spend their leisure time. Last year, the website www.disabledgo.info had over 47,000 visitors and feedback from users confirmed what a difference it is making to their experience when they visit Wakefield.

But the Council's work to support citizens with disabilities goes beyond providing information. Toby, and his family had their lives turned around when the Council's Blue Badge team used changes in the law to make sure Toby got a parking permit.

Toby suffers from Down's syndrome and an associated heart defect. His mother Joanne, previously struggled to find normal car parking spaces wide enough to cope with his breathing equipment and this restricted where the family could go. But now as Wakefield's youngest blue badge holder, Toby's family can use disabled spaces across the district which means they can enjoy more freedom and don't have to struggle any more. Joanne Lancaster said;

"Everyone at the Council's Blue Badge team and Contact Centre has been extremely helpful. I cannot express how much difference the badge has made to our lives."





