



WHAT'S UP ACROSS WAKEFIELD DISTRICT?

Background

Wakefield and District Health and Community Support (WDHCS) is an independent grant making organisation funding charities and community groups that support people's health and wellbeing across the Wakefield district.

This project will map capacity, capability and need in relation to health and wellbeing provision across the third sector in the Wakefield district. The research will be delivered by [Rocket Science](#), an independent research, policy and grant making consultancy.

Who are Wakefield and District Health and Community Support?

Wakefield and District Health and Community Support (WDHCS) is one of the largest independent grantmaking organisations in the Wakefield district and is deeply rooted in philanthropy. The charity founded Clayton Hospital in the mid 1700's, an early example of an NHS model providing free support to the poor and sick. In the 20th century, the charity delivered a health cash plan for working people across the whole of West Yorkshire. More recently, the charity ran a day nursery and delivered a complimentary health service from our premises at 35 Peterson Road.

Today, the charity focusses on supporting the third sector in the district, primarily through grant making. In the past 16 months, we have worked with Leeds Community Foundation as part of the Covid Response to distribute more than £600,000 of National Emergency Trust and Department for Culture, Museums and Sports grants, in addition to more than £250,000 of our own funding. This vital support has funded 40+ different charities and community groups across the district who have stepped up to help local residents in a time of great need, and when the emotional, social, mental and physical health and wellbeing of our communities has suffered like never before.

We know how much the third sector contributes to improving health and wellbeing in local communities across the district, whether this be through strategic commissioned work, through the work of volunteers or at numerous stages in between. The community response during the pandemic clearly evidences the strength and commitment of the sector. However, we also know that Wakefield has far fewer charities operating in the area compared to the national average and one of the lowest per capita rates of grant funding income in the country. This research will help us focus our future grant making activities and ensure that we put resources where they can have the greatest impact.

Who are Rocket Science?

Following a competitive tender, [Rocket Science UK Ltd](#) have been appointed to deliver the research project. They are an independent values-led policy, research and grant management organisation, with offices in London, Newcastle and Edinburgh, working across the UK. Rocket Science use tailored approaches to help clients to transform the lives of people and communities they work with.



Why commission this research?

WDHCS wants to ensure that its grant making reaches the people and organisations most in need to deliver the greatest impact. The findings of the research will also strengthen the case for more external funding to be put into the district.

What we know so far:

- The amount of external funding the Wakefield district receives is far lower than in comparable demographic areas of the country
- The economy of the Wakefield district has been adversely affected by the pandemic, resulting in greater health inequalities in our most deprived communities
- The third sector has stepped in to provide essential support in our communities, and yet the Wakefield district has only half the number of registered charities per 1000 head of population, compared to the national average
- Over many years, the Wakefield district has received millions of pounds in funding (including ERF, Coalfields), but in many communities the quality of life has not improved significantly.

This research will help us to better understand the third sector in Wakefield, including its make-up, strength and weaknesses. It will also talk to people from local communities using new approaches such as peer researchers to find out what would make a difference and improve their lives and health outcomes.

The picture of health and inequality in Wakefield

Wakefield has some of the most deprived communities in the country, with a wide variety of needs and health inequalities. Nearly 16% of the population lives in the top 10% most deprived areas in England, with earnings lower than average and increasing child poverty. There are a higher number of people who are long-term sick and in workless households. The population is ageing, with a rapid increase of people aged over 80, indicating that needs are only going to grow and expand across a wider age range. Although the Wakefield district has a relatively small ethnic minority population, it does vary by ward, with Wakefield East having more than one in five ethnic minority residents. This highlights the importance of bespoke engagement strategies, tailoring these to ensure we reach groups, that tend to be more difficult to engage with.

During the pandemic, Wakefield recorded some of the highest infection and death rates in the region, with death rates doubling in more deprived areas, related to crowded living conditions, residents more likely to be essential workers and high levels of manufacturing workers. Wakefield has taken an economic hit: its economy fell by almost 12% in 2020. As part of the Levelling Up agenda, one of its priorities will be to tackle unemployment and create an inclusive and healthy economy. It is also as much about tackling economic inclusion and skills development, with just 28% of the population of Wakefield educated at Level 4 and above, as it is about addressing entrenched inequality.

Within all this data, there is a need to consider the capacity and capability of the voluntary sector as a key enabler and provider of support for communities. Data from the UK Civil



Society Almanac indicates that there are 366 general charities registered in Wakefield, which is about 1.1 charities per 1,000 people. This is much lower compared to the [national average in England of 2.4](#). In addition, Wakefield receives relatively little voluntary sector funding compared to other areas. Rocket Science's research into regional grant funding in 2019 found that the Yorkshire and Humber region received proportionally the *lowest* level of voluntary sector funding in England. Between 2015 and 2018, Wakefield received £24.21 of grant funding per head, *the second lowest* number of any area, and compared to a regional average of £55.52. [Data on volunteering rates](#) suggests that slightly fewer people are formally volunteering in the Yorkshire and Humber region on a regular basis (20%) compared to the national rate in England (23%).

About this research

The research will:

- **Map the breadth of the third sector**, where the community organisations and charities are based and what issues they are tackling; where there may be cold spots or capacity gaps in provision in terms of geography and theme (eg young people, homelessness) or structural gaps (eg fundraising/bid-writing and governance)
- **Understand the strength of the sector**, the level of resilience information, the impact of Covid-19
- **Provide a portrait of the overall health and wellbeing of the local communities** through combining existing data around health inequalities with ethnographic field research to capture the lived experience within communities
- **Deliver recommendations** that are useful and contextual for partners across Wakefield to be able to better support the health and wellbeing of people across the district, and to influence and guide our future grant making strategy and focus.
- **Catalyse real change in way grants are awarded** that enables capacity and greater access to voluntary sector services.

This is an ambitious but important programme of research which can only be successful with the support and input of statutory, health and third sector organisations who are already supporting the communities of Wakefield. We are keen to collaborate and engage meaningfully with partners and stakeholders from all sectors, bringing people together to ensure that we can find some different insights into what is needed to improve health outcomes in the most deprived communities, and to provide evidence to enable us to try new and exciting interventions.

WDHCS and Rocket Science want to work in partnership across the district to capture insights on the strengths, needs and challenges organisations face as well as support the research and co-develop insights and recommendations that are useful across the stakeholder groups.

The approach

Rocket Science's approach to the research is a four stage one:

1. **State of the Sector review** using data from a range of sources to understand the voluntary and community sector landscape and create a centralised database of organisations. This data analysis will be supported by surveys and focus groups with local third sector organisations.
2. **Peer research.** Rocket Science will train 20 individuals in community research techniques who will, between them, speak with at least 200 people from different communities across the district. These Peer Researchers will be compensated for their time and will provide very local insights in to the communities of which they are members and the strengths and challenges facing them in relation to health and wellbeing.
3. **Needs consultation.** The peer research will be supplemented with in-depth interviews and conversations with key partners and stakeholders to understand the experiences of those delivering 'front-line' services and support. This will also include focus groups in five areas to explore specific challenges and themes in communities.
4. **Design workshop.** Bringing all of the three previous stages together these workshops will be an opportunity for partners to explore and discuss the findings within the context of their own organisations and communities. Through these we will co-produce conclusions and recommendations.

We are currently in the Inception and Planning phase of the research and anticipate that the whole programme will take 9 months to complete with Design Workshops being held in March 2022. We expect to be in a position to start training peer researchers in October and hope to be able to start conversations with partners as soon as possible.



Over the coming weeks Rocket Science will be in touch to talk to you about the research project and discuss if and how you, your organisation or the people who access your services could be involved. In the meantime, though if you have any questions or would like to be involved, we would love to hear from you.

Contact

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