

PRESS RELEASE

VAST CEO Honoured for Services to the Voluntary Sector

VAST are delighted to extend hearty congratulations to our Chief Executive Sajid Hashmi who has been awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to the voluntary sector.

He has been working as a Chief Executive in the Voluntary and Community Sectors (VCS) for over 15 years, and has extensive experience of managing and developing the third sector. Currently Sajid is a serving executive director and treasurer of NAVCA, (National Association of Voluntary and Community Action), and a strategic advisor to the board of the Staffordshire Community Foundation.

Speaking about the MBE, Sajid says, "I'm completely taken aback, but also delighted, honours are something other people get so I hadn't expected to receive one myself. Needless to say, I'm very pleased. I am particularly delighted that the hard work of dedicated staff at VAST has been recognised by this honour and hopefully will enable me raise the profile of the third sector."

This honour is a culmination of many years of hard work and effort, Sajid has an outstanding record of achievement throughout the third sector including

- Development of VAST into a robust social enterprise
- Sajid was the driving force in the development of the Staffordshire Community Foundation, setting up a £1m endowment fund to provide grants.
- Sajid played a significant and key role in the setting up the Staffordshire Credit Union - now a well established organisation - to provide financially excluded communities an alternative to loan sharks.
- In Halifax he was instrumental in setting up and developing the Calderdale Community Resource Centre from concept to reality providing Voluntary Action Calderdale with a much need long term source of income and a resource centre for the third sector.
- At KYP in Rochdale he transformed the organisation and was successful with the acquisition of freehold assets and set up the first ever day care centre for Asian elders – Apna Ghar.

Most recently he was appointed by the then minister of Local Government Rt. Hon John Denham MP on to the Stoke on Trent Transition Board to assist in the development of Stoke City Council. He was also involved in the panel that produced the Funding Diversification Report in 2006 'Believing in Local Action', which was commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Sajid also served on the Community Cohesion Panel, which was set up by her in Fiona Marget MP 2004. This produced the report "The End of Parallel Lives?" a report in response to public disturbances in northern towns.

Neil Dawson Chair of VAST said: "We would like to congratulate Sajid and take this opportunity to thank him for his dedication and hard work. He joined VAST at a time of severe crisis with organisation facing a huge financial deficit, within 3 years he has transformed VAST into a robust social enterprise."

Ian Dudson CBE Chair of the Dudson Centre Trust said, "I am extremely pleased with the recognition of Sajid work with this honour. Sajid took over at VAST at probably the lowest point in its history, with several issues. He has transformed VAST and also overseen developments at the Dudson centre including a major refurbishment".

Graham Stowe Chair of the Staffordshire Community Foundation said, "We are delighted that he has received this award. The foundation had been trying to get off the ground for several years and Sajid took this on and made it a reality. This is now fully operational and has distributed over three quarters of a million pounds to local community groups. We now have a Permanent Endowment Fund of a million pounds proving grants for eternity, obviously this would not have been possible without the generosity of local people to whom we are extremely grateful."

Notes to editors:

1. VAST is a Local Support and Development Organisation, providing capacity building and development support to non profit organisations, and representing their interest at a strategic level. For more information www.vast.org.uk <<http://www.vast.org.uk>>
2. VAST services include – Business Development Support, Business Planning, Capacity Building, Funding Support, Training, Accounts, Bookkeeping, Payroll, Printing, Marketing and Graphic Design.
3. The Dudson Centre is a community resource centre managed by VAST providing fully serviced office space to 18 organisations, meeting rooms, training, resource library, cafe, and a museum. For more information www.dudsoncentre.org.uk <<http://www.dudsoncentre.org.uk>>
4. Staffordshire Community Foundation has set up an endowment fund, (currently £1 million). Donations are pooled to form an endowment fund, the capital fund is invested and never touched the income is provides grants indefinitely to local to the local VCS. Information www.staffsfoundation.org.uk <<http://www.staffsfoundation.org.uk>>
5. The voluntary and Community sectors in North Staffordshire consists of over 2000 organisations, employing over 6500 paid staff, a combined annual income of over £90 million and it has over 17000 volunteers, giving us a real vibrant social economy.