

# Corporate Social Responsibility Activities Annual Report 2013



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## Foreword

I am delighted to present this report on our community activities during 2013.

After developing and improving our CSR activities since the turn of the millennium we are genuinely proud of the scope of our activities and the impact of our work.

As one of the region's leading commercial law firms, we firmly believe that we cannot view our success in isolation from the broader communities in which we all live and work. We want to contribute to those communities and that's the primary motivation behind all the activities that you will see in this report.

We would not have achieved nearly as much without the hard work of a great number of people within the firm. I would like to thank them for what they have done and I hope that you see that there's real passion behind all of the activities featured in this report.

Plans are already afoot to make 2014 even better but, for the moment, let's reflect on what we've achieved during 2013.

*Hugh Welch.*

**Hugh Welch**  
**Senior Partner**  
**Muckle LLP**

# 1 Charitable fund

**Originally set up in 2000 and managed for us by the Community Foundation, our charitable fund is one of the cornerstones of our work. Each year we donate a sum equal to 1% of our annual profits to that fund. In 2013 that equated to a contribution of £30,395. Since the creation of the fund we have donated in excess of £350,000 and we now operate an endowment, revenue and grass roots fund with the Foundation.**

Pausing there, we must thank Rob Williamson and all his colleagues at the Community Foundation for all their hard work. Their management of our charitable fund has been a huge benefit to us and their support and guidance has been invaluable.

In the early years of our fund we simply made grants to the causes that the Community Foundation recommended. While this policy led to us make some great grants,

it became clear that there was some dissonance between where these funds were going and the causes for which our people had deep, and often personal, feelings. The realisation of this caused us to change our focus and we now primarily support local charities or projects for which our people and their families have genuine affections. This means that the firm can truly support charities with the energy that stems from an engaged team.



Muckle LLP has had a long association with the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland and has developed innovative and thoughtful approaches to giving through funds established with us. These have connected the firm to its local area and engaged people at all levels. A great example of the firm's recent support is the grant for £3,000 which went to Windy Nook Methodist Church for renovations to its hall.

The church hosts a variety of activities including the Girls Brigade, a youth club, a ladies' circle, Gateshead Festival Chorus, meetings of the nature park, local fundraising events and the local councillor's surgeries. Around 150 people use the building each week. The grant will ensure it continues to benefit people in the area for years to come. In addition to its funds, Muckle LLP has been a stalwart supporter of the Foundation's wider effort to grow philanthropy to benefit Tyne & Wear and Northumberland through in-kind help provided by partners and associates and through support for all our events.



**Rob Williamson, Chief Executive at Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland**

During the last 12 months we have made grants totalling £38,080.40 to the following – all of which were recommended by people within Muckle as being a cause or community activity with which they have some link or involvement:



**We also helped:**

Friends of High Borran  
 Art Studio  
 Hazelwood Community Primary School  
 Painting for Fun  
 North East Legal Trust

Ryhope Allstars Marching Band  
 Newcastle East End Juniors  
 Northern Access Scheme  
 Calderwood Residents Association  
 Moorside Allotments Association

## 2 Green team

**Back in 2007, there was a growing demand amongst our people to look at our business and see how we could incorporate some greener practices. This desire directly led to the formation of our Let's Think Green Team (LTGT) in the same year and, ever since, they've constantly been there to encourage, motivate, challenge and enthuse the Muckle team to "think green."**

The team has progressed a long way since its inception and now, after a number of fun awareness-raising activities, the firm recycles everything possible, such as waste paper, electrical items, printer toners and mobile phones. However, we certainly haven't stopped there and 2013 has shown that despite our successes we can always think greener!

The firm is a member of the Legal Sector Alliance (LSA) which is an inclusive movement of law firms and organisations committed to working collaboratively to take action on climate change by reducing their carbon footprint and adopting environmentally sustainable practices. Membership of the LSA commits us to seven key principles, one of which is to annually calculate our carbon footprint. The LSA has its own calculation tool, provided through Greenstone Carbon Management.

We have calculated and published our carbon footprint since 2009 and have recorded significant drops each year, with 2012 showing the biggest drop yet, down almost 30% on our

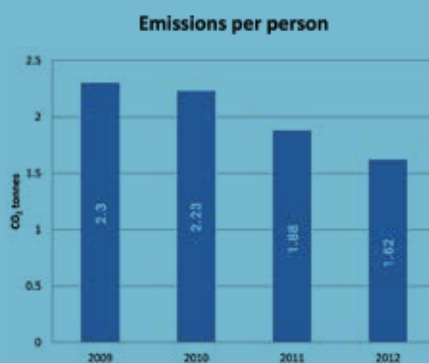
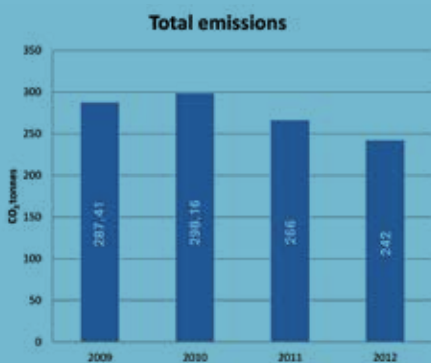
original calculations. Of course, these calculations demonstrate our continuing collective efforts and show that the implementation of various policies and initiatives are really making a difference and, importantly, guard against complacency by giving us clear targets to beat each year. We fully expect to be able to add 2013 to this trend and will continue our hard work to drive the emissions down further.

Although we aren't required to offset our carbon emissions the partners have chosen to do so. We have collaborated with LEAF (Local Environment Action Fund which is the environmental branch of The Community Foundation) to set up a scheme where businesses like ourselves can choose to offset their emissions through local schemes. This fits perfectly with our desire to make a difference to our local community.

LEAF propose to us a selection of projects which fit with their criteria; we then circulate those projects around the Muckle team to vote on

and the scheme which earns the most votes receives our donation. We were delighted last year to be able to support Stamfordham First School in the creation of their "kiddie and community garden," a real local success story.

One of our key achievements in 2013 was replacing our petrol-chugging company pool car with a Nissan LEAF electric vehicle. When the general consensus on the consumer market seems to indicate that the public at large is not quite ready to go electric, our firm has embraced this clean, green machine with zero CO2 emissions. To facilitate this change we paid for the installation of an electric vehicle charging point within our building so that it is available to all tenants of the building in the future and not just us, broadening the reach of our green thinking and encouraging others to join the electric future.





We have actively promoted our Healthy Living Week which comprises a whole host of activities to encourage people to walk, exercise more or simply use the car a lot less. By encouraging our people to think about how they get to work we hope to introduce a gradual change in travel choices and attitudes towards less environmentally-friendly transportation.

To support this, we have a car share scheme and have recently introduced a cycle to work scheme, providing more options for our people and making being green that little bit easier.

From an operational point of view we are one of only a handful of North East law firms who have the ISO14001 Environmental Management System certification. Although we are required to have a set of policies and procedures in place for this standard it is the activities driven by LTGT which really do underpin these policies.



Certificate No. EMS 558231

Finally it's worth mentioning that in 2012 we were winners of the Law Society Excellence Awards in the category of Legal Sector Alliance Awards for Excellence in Environmental Responsibility. We were short listed alongside some prestigious large London law firms and were absolutely thrilled to win as it was a real testament to the effort and enthusiasm that the whole firm has invested in green issues.



Matfen 10K, September 2013

# 3 Pro bono work

**It's an unfortunate fact that many smaller charities simply don't have the resources to pay for sound professional advice, often when they need it most.**

Even though we are not able to assist with some deep rooted social issues, we can make a real difference to a number of charities by providing legal advice on an unpaid basis. We can use our skills as a commercial law firm to advise them on aspects such as their governance and to

help with employment, property and commercial arrangements that they might enter in to.

Disappointingly, we haven't retained records of all the charities that we have helped in this way over the last 20 years, as these figures would be

pretty impressive. However, just in the last 12 months we have provided advice that, on a chargeable basis, would have been worth in excess of £120,000 and over 32 charities have benefited from our services.

Some of those that we have helped are mentioned below:



**We also helped:**

Audio Visual Arts North East  
 St Chad's Community Project  
 Forma Arts & Media

Stirling Newall Trust  
 The Station Masters  
 West Wylam Community Centre





Hugh Welch's leadership of the Trustees of the Archbishop of York Youth Trust has enabled the Trust to grow from idea to vision to a highly effective charity reaching tens of thousands of young people across the North of England. The legal support offered by Hugh's colleagues, initially with the setting up of the charity and subsequently with staffing and other issues has been a major plus as the Trust has moved forward. Effective governance and mentoring of key staff has been critical to the success of this small and growing charity and we are thankful that Muckle LLP have been able to offer this invaluable support.



**Malcolm Macnaughton, Chief of Staff to Dr John Sentamu,  
The Archbishop of York**



The trustees feel themselves to be extremely fortunate to benefit from Muckle's commitment to the charitable sector, its pro bono work and its corporate social responsibility. This has been a tremendous help – and relief – to them at what has proved to be a very stressful and difficult time – especially over the past couple of years. May I also take this opportunity to extend my personal thanks to you for all the support and assistance you have given to me over this period. I cannot imagine how a successful conclusion to the dissolution of the charity and the disposal of its land could have been reached without your expert advice, your understanding of a difficult situation and the promptness and efficiency with which you dealt with the process. It has been beyond measure.



**Melanie Hall, Community Action Northumberland, on  
behalf of the Trustees of West Wylam Community Centre**

## 3 Pro bono work

**In addition to our pro bono work, our charities team also acts for a number of the regions largest charities.**

Clearly, we are unable to offer to every charity the benefit of unpaid advice because, at the end of the day, we still need to run a successful and profitable firm; not least so that we can make further investment in our community activities.

We have therefore developed a pro bono policy to clarify the criteria that we apply in deciding which charities we can support with unpaid advice. It isn't always an easy balance and we don't always get it right but we hope that that does not detract from the good work that we are doing.



### **Pro Bono – Law For the Public Good**

We at Muckle LLP are committed to being a responsible law firm at the heart of the local community.

One reflection of this is that, in appropriate cases, we take on work on a pro bono basis – that is, work for which we do not charge professional fees.

We do this because we believe that, as lawyers, we have a moral duty to use our position for the benefit of the community. This firm's success cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader community in which we live and work. We also recognise that pro bono work brings its own rewards for those who get involved.

### **Criteria**

At Muckle LLP we seek to focus our pro bono activity to ensure that our efforts and expertise can have the widest impact. Consequently, we use the following criteria to assess whether or not we are able to work on a pro bono basis:

1. **Resources and financial means** – many of our clients are larger charities, social enterprises or educational institutions undertaking important and worthwhile work. However, the main focus for our pro bono work is on individuals and smaller organisations who cannot afford to pay for specialist legal advice.
2. **Area of legal specialism** – the proposed work must fall within our expertise. We are a commercial law firm with a broad range of legal specialisms. However, we do not, for example, have the skills to assist with some serious social issues such as domestic violence or personal debt.
3. **Workloads** – sometimes we cannot accept new pro bono instructions because our lawyers are already committed to other projects and we will only take work on if it can be done to the highest standards.
4. **Public interest** – we may be willing to take on a matter pro bono if it raises important or novel legal questions of public interest.
5. **Viability** – we are more likely to be willing to give pro bono advice if we think some initial pro bono support would help an exciting or worthwhile project towards self-sufficiency.



6. **Conflicts** – our professional duties require us to act in the best interests of our clients. This means we cannot assist if the work would involve us in a conflict of interests with a client.
7. **Personal interest** – our pro bono work is undertaken by individual lawyers on a voluntary basis. If one of our lawyers has a personal interest in a particular project, it is more likely to be accepted on a pro bono basis.
8. **Referrals from other organisations** – we often taken on cases which are referred to us by LawWorks or other third parties. Such referrals will already have been assessed and are more likely to meet our pro bono criteria.

#### Contact

We want to help as many organisations as we can as part of our commitment to this great region where we are based. We can therefore be flexible in our application of these criteria. If you think we may be able to help, please speak in the first instance to your usual contact at Muckle LLP. Alternatively, Hugh Welch or Chris Hook would be more than happy to discuss things with you. Their contact details are:

**Hugh Welch** – 0191 211 7903 or [hugh.welch@muckle-llp.com](mailto:hugh.welch@muckle-llp.com)

**Chris Hook** – 0191 211 7929 or [chris.hook@muckle-llp.com](mailto:chris.hook@muckle-llp.com)

#### Trustees, Governors and Volunteers

Almost every department at Muckle LLP has charity or education clients and we actively encourage our staff to get involved in the local community as trustees, governors or volunteers. Everyone here is entitled to take up to four half days' paid leave each year for this purpose.

If you are looking to add to your body of trustees, governors or volunteers, please speak to your usual contact at Muckle LLP or Hugh Welch or Chris Hook (see above).

#### Corporate Social Responsibility

Giving pro bono legal advice is only one part of our wider Corporate Social Responsibility programme. If you would like more information about how Muckle LLP supports our community and the environment, please see the Being a Responsible Business page of our website in the Who We Are section.

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32 Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4BF. A list of members is available for inspection at this address.



Gold

## 4 Volunteering

**When it comes to helping charities, one of the easiest things for us to do is to provide legal advice. It's of real benefit to the charities and is, naturally, what we do best. At the same time, many of the charities that we speak to and deal with mention that they would particularly value time and support, sometimes more than anything else.**

We therefore actively encourage our people to take up roles as charity trustees, management committee members and also volunteer helpers. As a result of this encouragement, we currently have 34 members of the firm involved with 75 charities, providing at least 3,500 hours of support throughout the year.

To support and encourage this further, everyone in the firm is entitled to an additional 2 days' paid leave per annum to use in whatever way they want for community activities and a total of 52 days were taken by Muckle team members during 2013 to help various local projects.

We have also organised some more structured volunteering. A couple of groups from across the firm have worked at Shepherds Dene, the diocesan retreat house for The Newcastle and Durham Anglican Dioceses. They helped to clear an area of ancient woodland by removing non-native trees with a view to replanting this space with the help of a Forestry Commission grant.

“ Two teams from Muckle have spent a day building a path through the woods for our guests to enjoy. It wasn't intellectually demanding or even that glamorous a job but they worked hard and tackled the task enthusiastically and with good humour. We could not have done it without their hard work. They were determined to see the job through and even helped with a grant from their community fund. It takes a lot of bottle to get out of the office and work clothes to tackle a job where you could make a fool of yourself but the people from Muckle were up for it. They even looked like they were enjoying themselves. The man from Muckle on our trustee board is about as good as it gets. Never lets us down and is always thoughtful and perceptive in his comments. He pops in from time to time to see how we are getting on as well. Some “suits” make you feel they have all the answers and that big business solutions must be right. Not so with Muckle; they listen and ask good questions and want to see it your way

**George Hepburn OBE, Warden at Shepherds Dene**





# 4 Volunteering

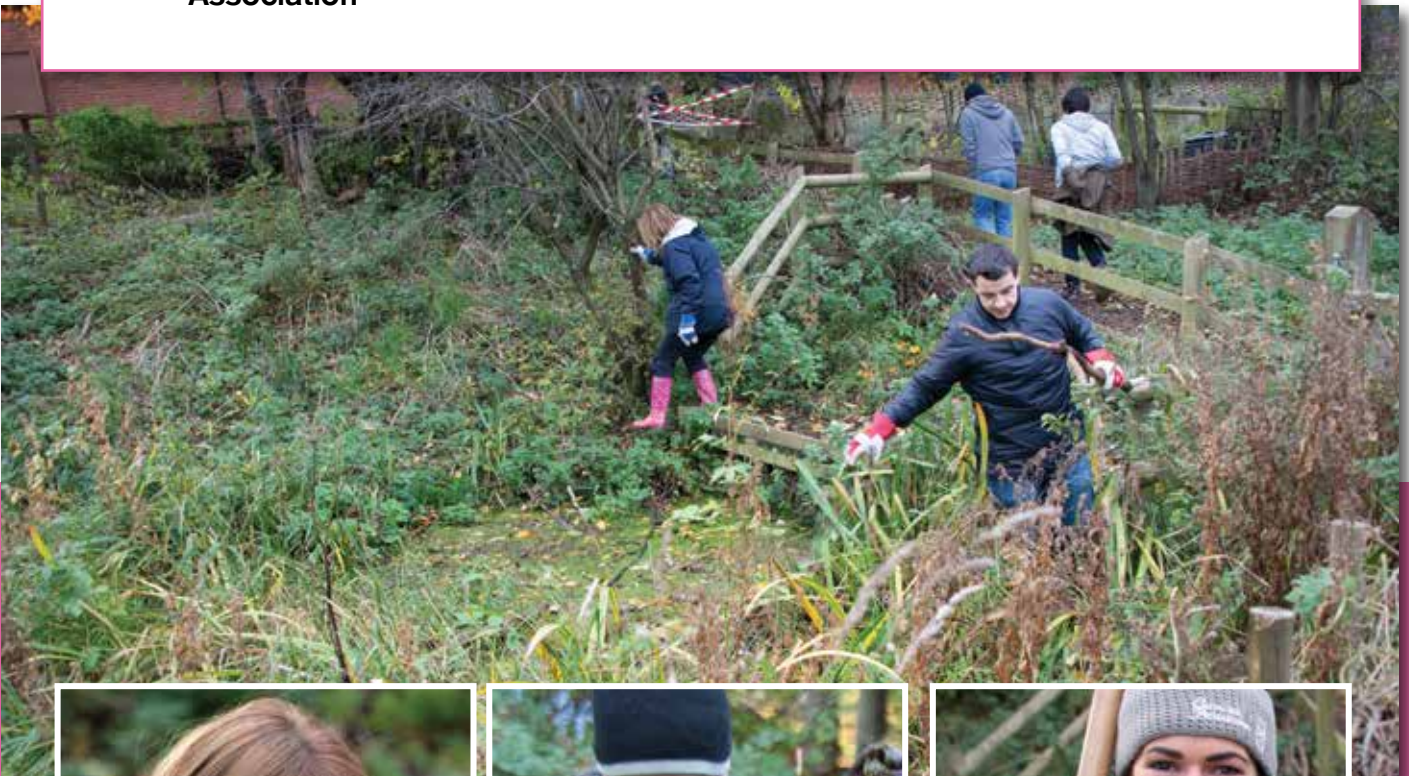
In November a group of our people also went to work at Bill Quay Community Farm to clear a substantial part of the wetland and wildflower garden area and reduce the height of the overgrown hedgerows.

This work made a real difference to this community resource and opened up a viewing window on the Tyne.

“ The team from Muckle LLP has made a significant difference here at Bill Quay Farm. The clearing of the wildlife pond has been a major catalyst in the development of this area as a habitat for a number of species of wildlife. Reducing the height of the overgrown hedge around this area has vastly improved views down the Tyne. Many visitors to the farm have commented on how beautiful the area looks now. This hard working team has really made a difference in such a short space of time.

”

**Craig Bankhead, Chief Executive at Bill Quay Community Farm Association**





# 4 Volunteering





**During 2013 we played a major role in organising a charity match for former Newcastle United Football Club goalkeeper, Steve Harper.**

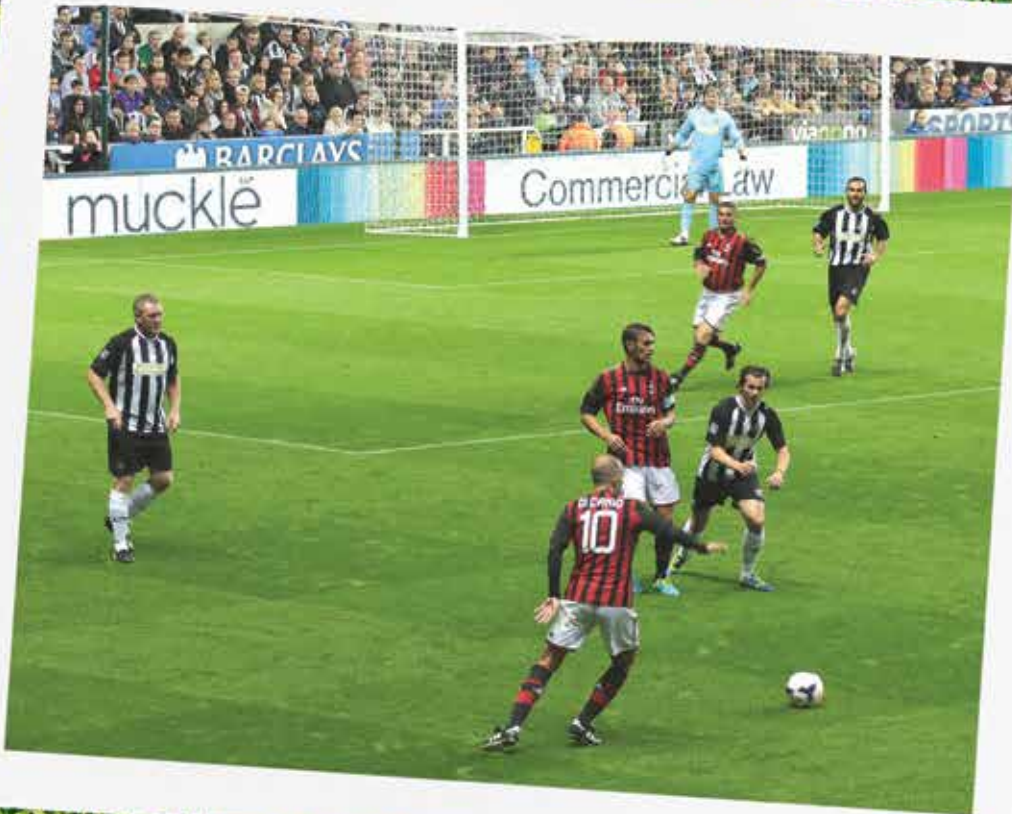
As the longest serving player, Steve was marking his 20 years at the club in September 2013 with a match involving 30 Newcastle United legends against 19 former players of AC Milan.

The match was a huge success, achieving an almost capacity crowd of over 51,000 at St. James' Park and raising over £300,000 for The Sir Bobby Robson Foundation, The Great North Children's Hospital and Newcastle United Foundation.

“ John Devine and the Muckle LLP team were involved right from the start, helping me to pull the event together and arrange a formidable opposition team in AC Milan Glorie. Thanks again to everyone at Muckle for your help and support.

**Steve Harper, former NUFC goalkeeper**

”



# 5 Charity of the year

Our fundraising work has always been wide ranging and varied, tackling a number of causes throughout the years.

Spreading this fundraising across multiple charities often meant that our contributions, while still appreciated, were sporadic. With this in mind, in 2011 we decided to focus our efforts on one charity for the entire year, dedicating our general and individual fundraising activities to help a specific charity achieve greater benefits and allowing us to make more of a difference.

To choose each charity of the year our people are involved in creating a shortlist which is then followed by a firm wide voting process. Our first charity of the year in 2011 was St. Oswald's Hospice, in 2012 we selected Heel and Toe in Durham and in 2013 our efforts were dedicated to the North East branch of NSPCC.



“ Heel & Toe were lucky enough to be appointed Muckle LLP's chosen charity of the year in 2011/12. We quickly realised how committed the fundraising committee and the team were as a whole in supporting our charity. Over the months that followed we were astounded by the amount of fundraising events the committee organised. We were delighted to receive a final cheque for over £8,000, which totally exceeded our expectations. We can't thank them enough for their hard work and commitment to our cause. This money made a huge difference and helped us continue providing free conductive education sessions to children across the whole North East with cerebral palsy or other physical disabilities

**Amanda Tweedy, Development & Fundraising Officer at Heel & Toe**



Our fundraising activities have been very varied including walking on broken glass, skydiving, running, growing moustaches, baking and a whole load more of other imaginative initiatives. Any individual funds raised are matched by the firm to encourage further activity and we are on course to raise £10,000 from efforts during 2013, surpassing the totals of £6,049.95 in 2011 and £8,397.34 in 2012.



“ On behalf of NSPCC Newcastle can I extend a huge thank you to everyone at Muckle who have come up with such a variety of fundraising ideas month after month since our partnership began in April 2013. Our partnership hasn't just been about raising valuable funds, staff have volunteered their time cheering on NSPCC runners at support points at the Great North Run and spending the day helping at our first corporate golf day at Slaley. We also have three volunteers currently being trained to deliver our Childline School's Service in schools across Newcastle. We also have pro bono support in the form of the use of the Muckle training room for an NSPCC training course for delegates from all over the UK in the New Year. All of this activity has helped to raise our profile as a local charity, delivering support to vulnerable children here in our city from our base in Sandyford.



**Janet Richardson, Regional Corporate Manager at NSPCC Newcastle**

## 6 Inspiring Careers

The futures of both our firm and the legal profession are dependent upon attracting the best and brightest young people. However, we are concerned that the considerable cost of university education plus the difficulty of obtaining a training contract may be discouraging many able young people from considering law as a career. This situation is exacerbated if they come from schools in the less affluent areas of the region.

In direct response to this we created our Inspiring Careers programme. Working in conjunction with 8 schools operating in some of the toughest areas of the North East, we devised an annual programme for young people in years 11 and 12, giving them a taste of life in a law firm and, hopefully, showing its accessibility to all.

2013 was the second year of the programme. Five of the schools that took part previously participated again and we also offered an additional place to three new schools. We already have an academy seeking a place for one of their students next time, demonstrating that the reputation of this programme is growing and is clearly valued by the schools and students involved.



As a school, we have been benefited tremendously from Muckle's approach to engaging the community. Specifically, the Inspiring Careers programme has proven to be the most effective work experience initiative that we have been involved in. The opportunity for a student in the sixth form to experience all aspects of a legal firm's work in an intense period, and to be expected to be proactive in their approach during the week, is invaluable in both raising aspirations for some and also widening horizons for others. The firm's initial interest in the work we are doing to develop a Record of Achievement for the North East, followed by its commitment to support the process at Park View, has not only brought a business eye to our product but also increased its credibility in the eyes of the children, their parents and others in the business community.



**Iain Veitch, Headteacher at Park View School**

Here's a selection of the thanks we received from students after their week in our office:



To Claire Atkins and all of the staff at Muckle LLP: I would just like to say a really big thank you for allowing me to have an amazing opportunity and for taking your own time to make sure I had a really beneficial work experience – it was truly inspiring. Thank you.

**A pupil from Kenton School**



Thank you for this amazing week. It's been brilliant and I'm so glad I was able to be part of it so thank you. Also thank you for being kind and helpful. Thank you to everyone at Muckle LLP for being really friendly and helpful.

**A pupil from Park View School**



I am writing this email to once again thank you for the opportunity and experience at Muckle. It was one of the best things I have taken part in and helped me a great deal. Reflecting on the week, I have learnt so much and have gained invaluable experience. I really appreciate the effort and time that Tracy and Claire took out to organise and help us throughout the programme. The experience has made me aware of how difficult the legal industry can be to break into as a solicitor, but has made me more determined and is a source of inspiration and motivation for me to achieve my goal to work in a professional environment in the legal field.

**A pupil from Joseph Swan Academy**



I participated in the Muckle Inspiring Careers programme and not only enjoyed it but found it a thoroughly valuable experience. The programme included a range of activities such as work experience in the different legal teams every day, talks with many people through the company and preparation and guidance for CV writing and interviews. Overall, I learned a considerable amount from my time at Muckle. Before the programme I was rather clueless to the different types of law, the different routes into the law profession, the amount of careers there are within a law firm and the competitiveness of a career in law. However, at the end of the week I felt as though I had gained a lot of knowledge on all of these aspects as well as gaining skills from the legal teams which will benefit me in the future.

**A pupil from Churchill Community College**



# 7 Improving people's employability

Several years ago, we decided that we wanted to try and create employment opportunities for people who might otherwise be disadvantaged in gaining employment. Rather than merely contribute to a charity or initiative, we wanted to get actively involved and so this led us to establish a relationship with Momentum Skills in 2008.

Momentum Skills provides vocational rehabilitation and training services, empowering people who are otherwise excluded due to their disabilities to gain the skills they need to live independently and to gain access to employment. Since the beginning of our relationship with Momentum we have been delighted to offer 7 of their clients with a range of disabilities the opportunity of a work placement with the firm for up to 12 weeks. The placements have typically been within either our Business Lounge or Business Support Teams with an individual nominated as

coach/mentor during the placement. The individuals on placement have had disabilities including brain injury, multiple sclerosis and cerebral palsy.

A real success story out of our relationship with Momentum came about in 2009. We offered a placement to a candidate who had suffered a stroke, having previously had a successful career in hotel management. The individual was placed within our Business Lounge Team and arrived at a time when we were reviewing our resource requirements.

The individual impressed us to the extent that even before his placement completed he was offered a permanent role within the team. We're pleased to say that four years later he's become a highly valued member of the team.

Although we cannot promise each individual a permanent role at the end of their placement, we can ensure that each leaves us with a better understanding of the workings of a law firm and with confidence in themselves that they are employable and have a valuable contribution to make to society.

## Momentum Skills

Investing in People, Changing Perspectives



Over the last 5 years, Muckle LLP has developed a relationship with locally based charity Momentum who provide both community and employment support to individuals across the North East with neurological conditions such as stroke, acquired brain injury and cerebral palsy. S..., who completed a work placement within the business support team, described the experience as "hard work but really rewarding." S... was supported by the team at Muckle to enhance her administration skills which have in turn led to S... securing employment as an administration assistant. Momentum firmly believe that S...'s success is thanks to the support and opportunity offered by Muckle. We are very grateful and proud of the relationship we have developed with Debbie McCormack and her teams. Everyone we have come into contact with at Muckle is very supportive of the work we are doing at Momentum and in turn make every effort to ensure that our service users who spend time on work placement with them are given the opportunity to develop their skills, grow in confidence and enhance their employment prospects.

**David Haxon, Momentum**



# 8

## Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. We hope that you have enjoyed it and that our enthusiasm for contributing to this great region shone through. It is our belief that businesses have a significant role to play in strengthening our communities and we hope that Muckle LLP plays an appropriately full part.



### Heart of the Community Award North East Business Awards 2013 winner – for the second year in a row

We won the “Heart of The Community” award for the Tyneside and Northumberland regions of the North East Business Awards. This was awarded in recognition of the care that all of our people have shown in helping the communities where we live and work. It is an award that is aligned closely to our belief in the importance of being a responsible business and it reflects what has been done by a huge number of people across the firm.

We won the overall “Heart of the Community” award in 2012 for all regions across the North East.

We were also short-listed in the “CSR and Environmental” category for the Northumberland and Tyneside region in the North East Business Awards 2013.



Healthy living week - Ramble



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