**2017 Peter Scott Award – Yakub Patel**

The third person to receive the Peter Scott Award for Outstanding Contribution to Charity is Yakub Patel. It celebrates his 16 years at the helm of Lancaster’s Marsh Community Centre and his role in helping to create the four year-old Lancashire Youth Challenge.

Yak was the first manager of the Marsh Centre, a community hub in the city’s most deprived district. Yak’s dedication and determination meant the Centre had the funds and resources to make it a popular, well used youth and community facility with daily activities. Programmes to protect children at risk of harm were set up and Yakub provided mentoring and guidance to young Asian men at the height of the race riots. His work to tackle territorial tensions resulted in sport, music and educational projects, including a cross community sports programme bringing together 120 young people.

Yak is the now the Chief Officer for Lancaster District Community Voluntary Solutions (CVS), an infrastructure organisation supporting over 800 bodies. He devotes his time to strengthening the sector, building partnerships and influencing local policy so that the voices of young people and the community are heard and their needs are met. Yakub is also a founder and trustee of Lancashire Youth Challenge whose aim is to change the lives of disadvantaged young people, aged 13-19, through once in a life time expeditions. The youngsters are helped to tackle transformational experiences like cycling from Blackpool Tower to the Eiffel Tower in Paris and conquering the three highest peaks in England, Wales and Scotland in 24 hours.

Yak Patel is a nationally qualified community youth worker with a degree from the University of Cumbria in Lancaster. He has 21 years’ experience in working within communities, particularly with young people, in highly challenging circumstances. Yakub’s own personal journey is also remarkable. Aged 17-years-old and having left the care system, Yak was living in a bedsit in an area of extreme deprivation in Morecambe. His only possessions were a bag of clothes and a sleeping mat. After being made redundant four times, Yak decided to study a full-time one year course in health and social care. This realised his ambition to work with young people, inspired by the experience he gained helping his foster parent who was a child-carer. By the time he was 22-years-old he was a degree graduate, volunteering, working two jobs and, with his now wife, raising their two children.

Career highlights for Yak include the first £1,000 he raised as an 18-year-old, to help problematic young men on a Lancaster estate, and meeting the Olympic gold medal winning cyclist Jason Queally, when Sport England recognised a project of Yak’s to improve the lives of 40 hard to reach young people.

Yakub is truly deserving of the Peter Scott Award. His relentless energy and commitment over a long and sustained period of time has helped many people in desperate situations. He continues to campaign and raise awareness of the needs of his community and bring practitioners together to provide the best support possible.

With the award comes a grant of £2,500 which Yak will use to develop his long term vision to create an incubation centre for people embarking on social action programmes in the Lancaster District. The centre will provide a free space for people to develop their ideas with the support of trained development workers. They will receive support around business and financial planning, funding, policy development and training to fulfil their ideas in an environment that is inspiring, inclusive and supportive.

On receiving the Peter Scott Award for Outstanding Contribution to Charity Yak said: “I am sincerely grateful to receive this award from an organisation as amazing as the Scott Trust. I am humbled to accept this on behalf of the people that I work with who support me and who also make a difference to so many lives. As a young man I was given an opportunity to change my life and I want the same for others. In Lancaster and Morecambe we face some tough health and equality challenges. We will only address them if we can come together to build a momentum for change and a society where everyone has an equal chance to be happy and fulfilled.”