

19 January 2011

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Dear MCN member

MVDA has been informed by the Local Authority that no further funding will be made available to support Middlesbrough Community Network beyond 31 March 2011, when the current agreement ends<sup>1</sup>.

MVDA was established during the early stages of MCN's development, through the joint efforts of Middlesbrough Council and the local voluntary and community sector (VCS). Since 2003 we have provided support for MCN's development through a small team of staff, initially funded directly by Government and subsequently by Middlesbrough Council.

The early days of this work were fraught with difficult relationships and MVDA worked with key officers from Middlesbrough Council and the local VCS to effect a major change in local arrangements, shifting the focus from how the VCS organises to what it contributes to partnership activity. The result has been a model of VCS engagement of which Middlesbrough can be proud. Together we have set new standards for the influence and impact of the VCS across a range of partnership activity.

Membership of MCN now stands at 247 organisations. Last year a total of 85 organisations actively engaged in MCN and 34 individuals were involved in governance, through MCN Steering Group, or as Representatives.

In the light of the local commitment to working in partnership with the VCS, recognised over recent years in a range of inspections and good practice guidance<sup>2</sup>, it is particularly disappointing that Middlesbrough Council does not see support for the continuation of MCN as an affordable priority for the future. MVDA believes that in future this work will be more important than ever to mitigate the effects of public sector cuts and to maximise the capacity of the local VCS to continue to deliver the components of a Big Society.

MVDA will be meeting with MCN Steering Group and Representatives to discuss the future, in the light of the current review of Middlesbrough Partnership. We will keep you informed of developments through postings on our website: [www.mvda.info](http://www.mvda.info)

In the meantime, if you would like to make your views known or to speak to someone about this, please contact either Mark Davis or me through the above number or email addresses.

Yours faithfully

Dinah Lane  
Chief Executive Officer

<sup>1</sup> Core support for MCN is currently funded through the Working Neighbourhoods Fund

<sup>2</sup> Middlesbrough Council Comprehensive Performance Assessment (2008), Joint Area Review (March 2008); local process for Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2010)