

Looking Ahead: our continued journey in developing and supporting a thriving local VCS – an initial briefing note (June 2016)

MVDA is embarking on a significant exercise to develop an understanding of the long-term aspirations for the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in Middlesbrough, which will contribute to an ambitious whole system approach to supporting a thriving local VCS.

We expect to work with a wide-range of stakeholders to complete this work on the basis that it will:

- shape MVDA's long-term strategic plans in supporting an effective and enterprising VCS;
- provide the basis for discussion around the actions that others, such as public sector agencies, can take to support a thriving local VCS;
- provide a tool to support individual local voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) of all sizes with their own organisational development and business planning activities;
- highlight and profile good practice across the sector and demonstrating the impact of VCOs;
- provide a robust evidence base for future planning and support, as well as for promoting investment in the VCS and strong partnership working across the sector and with stakeholders.

We will do this by looking through different lenses: of VCOs; of public sector bodies (such as the local authority, NHS organisations and those working in the areas of welfare and criminal justice); and arguably most importantly, of local people and communities.

We know that demand for services provided by VCOs continues to significantly increase at a time when resources to meet that demand continues to decrease. The continued transformation of public services is resulting in both a wide range of structural challenges and significant opportunities for the VCS. Local VCOs are rising to many of the challenges facing Middlesbrough and the sector is taking the lead in many areas.

Through our work with VCOs and others, such as through partnership groups, we know that there is a strong desire to explore ways of collectively and collaboratively working to improve outcomes for Middlesbrough's people

and communities. The roadmap for doing so is as yet to be defined. What is clear is the need for a *whole* system approach. We are keen to develop new thinking, new approaches and new partnerships that will form a roadmap for the future.

Through our *Looking Ahead* programme of work, we will be working intensively from June 2016 to spring 2017 to produce a thorough and comprehensive needs assessment setting out the support and development needs of Middlesbrough's VCS over the next five years or so.

We expect to develop this in a number of ways:

1. MVDA will facilitate a series of round tables, action learning sets and workshops as well as publishing discussion papers and other briefing notes, providing the opportunity for us to consider and explore issues in greater detail. At monthly intervals, we will be taking stock of emerging themes from our engagement work and feeding ideas, views and outcomes back to stakeholders.
2. We will work with stakeholders through a task and finish approach to explore key issues. An early example will be around the potential to attract additional investment to Middlesbrough to support VCOs in delivering on local priorities.
3. All of this work will provide insight that will contribute to a robust needs assessment report. We will publish the needs assessment as a report in early 2017, providing the basis for discussion around how we can all support the continued development of a thriving VCS that continues to deliver for Middlesbrough people and communities.