

Delivering Outcomes for the Local Voluntary and Community Sector

An Evaluation of the Value for
Money of MVDA's Work

November 2011

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1. Introduction

This report provides the findings of research to measure the outcomes and value for money delivered by Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA). The research was undertaken by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University and was linked to a pilot project to develop an outcomes framework for local support and development organisations that are members of the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA).

1.1. About MVDA

Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA) was established in 2002 to support, promote and develop voluntary and community action in Middlesbrough. Having participated in the NAVCA pilot MVDA commissioned this research to provide a summative evaluation of the outcomes and value for money achieved through their work.

1.2. About the research

The research was undertaken during September and October 2011 and focussed on three key areas of MVDA's activity:

- development support for local voluntary and community organisations (VCOs)
- engagement of local VCOs in key local policy processes, including the work of the Middlesbrough Community Network (MCN)
- support for volunteering across the borough.

It involved a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data collection: a survey of 55 MVDA beneficiary organisations was supplemented with 15 qualitative interviews that provided a series of case studies of MVDA's work. All of the research participants had direct recent experience of receiving advice, help and support from MVDA and were asked to reflect on the outcomes this led to for their organisation, and in the case of volunteers, outcomes for themselves.

1.3. About the report

The remainder of this report provides the key findings from the research:

- chapter 2 provides an overview of the types of organisation that have benefited from MVDA and the kinds of support have they received

- chapter 3 discusses the outcomes achieved through MVDA's support and development work
- chapter 4 discusses the outcomes achieved through MVDA's engagement work and the work of the Middlesbrough Community Network (MCN) in particular
- chapter 5 discusses the outcomes achieved through MVDA's support for volunteering, both for volunteer involving organisations and volunteers themselves
- chapter 6 considers the findings of the previous three chapters in terms of value for money and the types of monetary value created through MVDA's work
- chapter 7 is conclusion and pulls together a summative assessment of the outcomes and value for money delivered by MVDA.

2. Who benefits from MVDA and what kinds of support have they received?

MVDA holds data on 528 of these organisations and in 2010/11 worked with 260 of them. A of different types of advice and support were provided:

- 111 organisations received one to one development support (through 409 instances of support)
- 193 VCS employees and volunteers attended training
- MCN representatives attended 41 local partnership meetings with an average time commitment of two hours per meeting
- MVDA organised 26 separate MCN forum meetings and events attended by 277 people from 141 local VCOs
- 125 organisations received support through the Volunteer Centre

In addition **1,002 local people** received direct support from the Volunteer Centre.

All of these beneficiary organisations were invited to take part in an online questionnaire as part of the research. 55 organisations completed a questionnaire (20 per cent) and analysis of these responses provides an overview of the types of organisations that have benefited from MVDA's support and the kinds of support they have received.

2.1. What types of organisation does MVDA work with?

Organisation size¹

The questionnaire responses suggest that MVDA works with organisations of all sizes:

- 25 per cent were micro organisations with an annual income of less than £10,000
- 29 per cent were small organisations with an annual income of between £10,000 and £100,000
- 33 per cent were medium sized organisations with an annual income of between £100,000 and £1 million
- 13 per cent were large organisations with an annual income of more than £1 million.

¹ In describing organisation size this report uses the categories developed by NCVO for use in their Almanac series - this approach enables comparability with national data

Staffing

78 per cent of the organisations responding to the questionnaire employed paid staff and 63 per cent employed at least one member of full-time staff. However, it is important to note the wide range of staffing levels that exist: although 20 per cent of respondents with paid staff employed more than 15 people, 25 per cent of respondents with paid staff had only one employee.

It should be noted that these findings about organisation size and staffing could reflect the likelihood that larger organisations will have more time to respond to a questionnaire. A review of MVDA's list of beneficiaries indicated that in fact about half of 2010/11 beneficiaries operated with no paid staff and purely with the support of volunteers.

Volunteers

Volunteers are very important for the organisations MVDA works with: 91 per cent of respondents said they involved volunteers of which 67 per cent had more than ten volunteers and 22 per cent had more than 50 volunteers. Collectively the 55 organisations responding to the questionnaire involved almost 1,700 volunteers.

2.2. What types of support have these organisations received?

Of the organisations responding to the questionnaire:

- 68 per cent had received development support
- 48 per cent had received engagement support through MCN
- 70 per cent were registered with the Volunteer Centre.

Many of these organisations received multiple interventions: 11 per cent of respondents identified receiving 10 or more separate types of intervention and 41 per cent of respondents received at least five different interventions.

The types of support respondents received is explored in more detail in the following sections.

Development support

Of the respondents who had received development support:

- 67 per cent received support to identify and apply for funding opportunities
- 64 per cent accessed training
- 22 per cent received support to implement appropriate legal structures
- 22 per cent received support around quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation
- 11 per cent received other forms of legal advice
- nine per cent received payroll and accountancy support
- eight per cent received support on governance issues
- eight per cent received support in relation to employment and human resources.

This highlights the importance of funding support to local VCOs. It also emphasises the reach of MVDA's training programme and the importance of support around

specialist issues such as legal structures, quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation.

Engagement

Of the respondents who had benefited from MVDA's engagement work:

- 89 per cent had attended forums and meetings
- 81 per cent had received information about local developments
- 77 per cent had attended events
- 46 per cent had been an MCN representative
- 46 per cent had responded to public sector consultations.

This highlights the role MCN and MVDA more generally has played in ensuring local VCOs have opportunities to meet, find out about, and discuss local developments of importance to their work.

Volunteering

Of the respondents who were registered with the Volunteer Centre:

- 74 per cent had registered volunteer opportunities
- 79 per cent had received referrals of new volunteers
- 42 per cent had accessed training
- 33 per cent had received good practice guidance
- 26 per cent had attended Voices for Volunteers - the South Tees volunteer managers' forum.

This highlights the important role the Volunteer Centre has played in providing local VCOs with a means through which to attract new volunteers and receive support around volunteer management and good practice.

2.3. Summary: the reach of MVDA

This section has provided an overview of the range of local VCOs that accessed support from MVDA during 2010/11 and the kinds of support they received. It highlights the reach of MVDA's work and the breadth of support available as organisations of all size have been supported and many organisations received multiple interventions: one in ten respondents identified receiving ten or more separate types of intervention and two-fifths received at least five different interventions.

3. Development support

3.1. Aims and objectives

MVDA's development work aims to help local VCOs improve their capacity and capability in supporting local people and communities. This involves providing advice, information and support to enable organisations to become more efficient, effective and financially sustainable over the longer term.

MVDA has been delivering organisational development work since 2004. The work covers a wide range of issues related to governance (e.g. legal structures, governing documents, organisational development) and management (e.g. policy and procedures, staffing issues, business planning). However, the largest proportion of support provided by MVDA relates to funding, including support to identify appropriate sources of funding and submit funding applications, particularly when complex financial information is required. MVDA also provides a range of practical 'back office' services such as payroll and bookkeeping.

At the moment MVDA's organisational development work is funded through the Big Lottery Fund and grants from the Local Authority and Primary Care Trust to support VCOs active in the area of health and social care.

3.2. Outcomes measured

The research considered four key outcomes associated with building capacity and capability within local voluntary organisations and community groups:

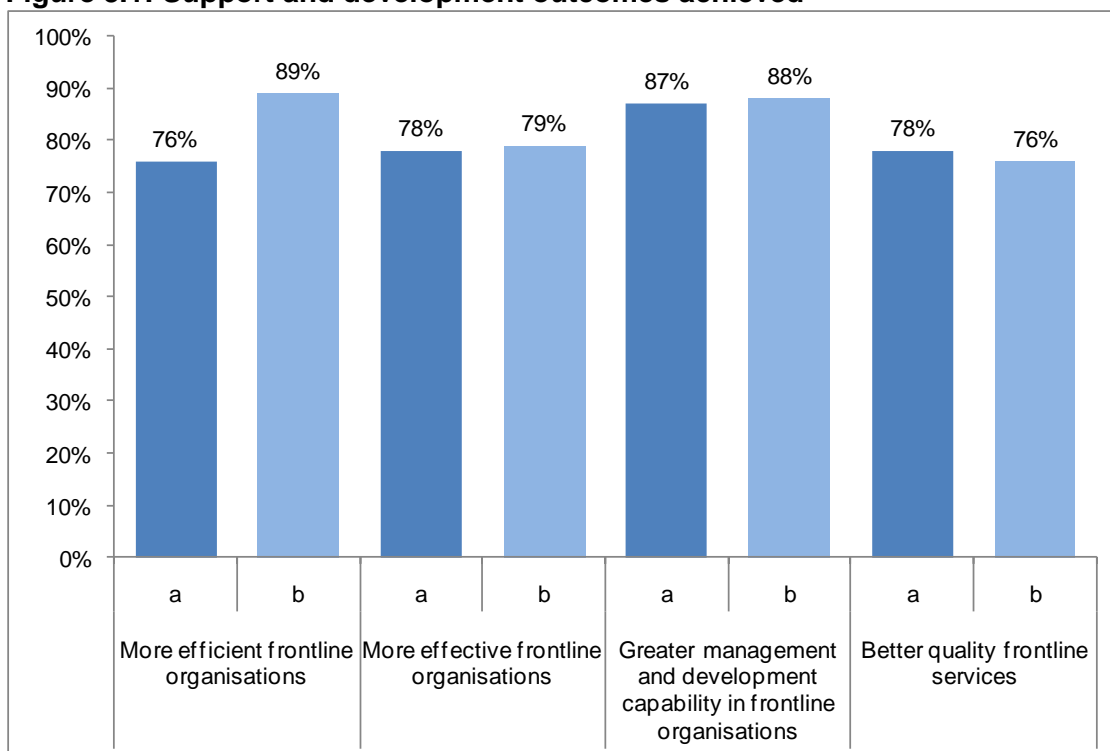
1. **More efficient frontline organisations:** the extent to which local VCOs have improved their use of resources as a result of the support received from MVDA
2. **More effective frontline organisations:** the extent to which local VCOs function more effectively as a result of the support received from MVDA
3. **Greater management and development capability in frontline organisations:** the extent to which local VCOs have greater confidence, knowledge and skills as a result of support received from MVDA
4. **Better quality frontline services:** the extent to which local VCOs deliver better quality services as a result of the support received from MDVA

The rest of this chapter discusses the evidence for each of these outcomes being achieved.

3.3. Outcomes achieved

Figure 3.1 (overleaf) summarises the outcomes achieved through MVDA's support and development work. It shows that a majority of survey respondents reported that MVDA was a positive influence on improvements in their organisation's efficiency, effectiveness, frontline service delivery and management and development capability.

Figure 3.1: Support and development outcomes achieved



Note: **Column a** refers to the percentage of survey respondents identifying an improvement against this outcome. **Column b** refers to the percentage of column a respondents who identified MVDA as a positive influence on this improvement.

More efficient frontline organisations

76 per cent survey respondents who had received development support from MVDA said their organisation's efficiency in its use of resources such as finances, volunteers and facilities had improved in the past year or so. Of those that responded positively **89 per cent** said the support from MVDA had been a positive influence on this change.

More effective frontline organisations

78 per cent of survey respondents who had received development support from MVDA said their organisation's effectiveness in carrying out its day to day activities had improved in the past year or so. Of those that responded positively **79 per cent** said the support from MVDA had been a positive influence on this change.

Greater management and development capability in frontline organisations

87 per cent of survey respondents who had received development support from MVDA said their level of confidence, knowledge and skills in managing and developing their organisation had improved in the past year. Of those that responded positively **88 per cent** said the support from MVDA had been a positive influence on this change.

Better quality frontline services

78 per cent of survey respondents who had received development support from MVDA said the quality of the services delivered by their organisation had improved in the past year or so. Of those that responded positively **76 per cent** said the support from MVDA had been a positive influence on this change.

The survey findings were very much reflected in the qualitative feedback from case study participants. Some of this is brought to life in the three case study summaries later in this section but it is also important to emphasise some common themes emerging from these interviews.

First and foremost MVDA was seen as a valuable source of **knowledge and expertise** around the day to day governance and management of a voluntary and community organisation. This included the ability to identify appropriate sources of funding and understanding of different legal forms, including incorporation and the benefits of charitable status.

"Although (our) service has a level of maturity and we don't need help filling in forms we don't always have the time to seek information for ourselves. MVDA has been very good at pointing out new funding streams as they emerge as well as carrying out bespoke searches on our behalf."

"Many organisations have no idea about constitutions and legal structures but MVDA understand the development needs of smaller groups."

"They mapped out the different (constitutional and legal) options for us and provided examples of similar organisations and the decisions they had made."

This in-depth understanding of development needs was supported by a service that was regarded as **accessible and responsive**, giving organisations the confidence that someone would be available at the point at which support was needed.

"I know I can pick up the phone when I have an issue to discuss and someone will be able to help...I am often fire fighting and might need specific information by the close of play...MVDA can provide this in a way others might not and I know I can just pick up the phone and ask for advice."

"They were responsive to our needs but made sure we understood everything along the way. This enabled us to learn."

"(MVDA services) are responsive, accessible and relevant - this is vital for the urgent needs of small organisations."

Finally the case study participants highlighted the importance of having a range of services that were provided **free of charge** and enabled them to focus resources on frontline service delivery.

"Without MVDA we would have to pay for support. We might be able to afford this on paper but it would direct money from the services we deliver."

"We were quoted three to four thousand (pounds) by a lawyer. We could have paid this out but is this the best way to use (members' contributions)?"

CASE STUDY 1

Regional Refugee Forum North East

Their work

The Regional Refugee Forum North East is the independent membership organisation of the North East region's Refugee-led Community Organisations (RCOs). The Forum supports a range of activities that aim to gather evidence about specific needs and barriers facing refugee communities; identify what works best in securing social and economic inclusion; and present a collective voice to local and regional policy makers and service providers to inform the development of evidence based policy and practice.

Involvement with MVDA

The Forum has developed very effective partnership working arrangements with MVDA. People from local refugee communities are supported by the Forum to develop ideas about how best to respond to unmet needs. The Forum then refers them to MVDA for support to develop and implement appropriate constitutions, legal structures, policies and procedures. They also receive support from MVDA to identify and apply for funding.

Outcomes

As a result of this relationship with MVDA the Forum's members are able to start-out on a firm legal footing. They have also been able to access crucial sources of grant funding that have enabled them to put their ideas for meeting the needs of local refugee communities into practice.

CASE STUDY 2

Kader Junior Football Club

Their work

Kader JFC is one of the largest Junior Football Clubs in Middlesbrough and one of the few FA Community Clubs in the North East. They run multiple junior teams catering for children aged seven upwards and aim to keep local young people engaged in positive activities and out of trouble. The club relies solely on volunteers to carry out this work.

Involvement with MVDA

Kader JFC had the opportunity to move to and develop a larger sports pitch facility with the support of the FA, the Local Authority and local charity the Hustler Trust. The new site required considerable development and maintenance but in order to qualify for grant funding Kader JFC needed to put their structures on a more formal footing. They approached MVDA for support to develop their Memorandum and Articles of Association. They also needed support to understand different legal forms and the benefits of charitable status to their organisation and its activities.

Outcomes

As a result of their support from MVDA the Kader JFC had confidence in making the correct decisions about the organisational structures necessary to take the club forward. As the support from MVDA was free it did not divert valuable funds away from the club's mainstream work.

Kader JFC is now close to concluding a deal that means they will be able to access the funding necessary to develop and maintain their new site. The support from MVDA has been crucial in helping the club get to the point where this is possible.

CASE STUDY 3

My Sister's Place

Their work

My Sister's Place is a specialist domestic violence service based in central Middlesbrough. It provides direct services to women over 16 years of age who are or have suffered domestic abuse. They aim to be a 'One Stop Shop' that meets the varied needs of women suffering domestic violence and work in partnership with a range of external agencies to ensure that the women they support have access to relevant support and protection.

Involvement with MVDA

My Sister's Place has received support from MVDA over a number of years. They have received guidance about funding opportunities on a regular basis and are a client of the payroll and accountancy services. Most recently they have received specific support around incorporating as a Limited Company and subsequent re-registration with the Charity Commission. They have also received advice and guidance about models of partnership, collaboration and merger and contact MVDA for less formal ad hoc support on a regular basis.

Outcomes

As a result of the support provided by MVDA My Sister's Place are confident that they have strong and sound governance procedures in place. The timeliness and accessibility of the support has also been important. Because they know MVDA have certain skills, knowledge and expertise in house, My Sister's Place do not need to spend valuable time finding someone to provide the support.

3.4. Conclusion: the outcomes of MVDA's support and development work

The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates that MVDA's support and development work leads to positive outcomes for a majority of the organisations in receipt of advice, help and support. Beneficiary organisations report being more efficient and effective, have greater management and development capability, and are able to deliver better quality services to local people.

The case studies and qualitative evidence help to bring the statistics to life: beneficiary organisations value the expertise, accessibility and responsiveness of MVDA's development workers, and frequently identify the support they received as a critical building block in their organisation's progress and development.

4. Engagement

4.1. Aims and objectives

MVDA's engagement work aims to ensure that local VCOs have sufficient opportunities to access and influence important local public sector decision makers and decision making forums. It also provides a mechanism through which local public sector agencies can inform, consult and involve the sector in policy making and planning.

Until March 2011 this work received considerable resources from various public sector funding streams through which MVDA facilitated the Middlesbrough Community Network (MCN). MCN was a network of local VCOs interested in engaging with the public sector on issues of interest and importance to their beneficiary groups. From 2006 MVDA's Planning and Partnership Team co-ordinated a number of thematic forums through which local organisations could network and share learning and experiences, and organised a variety of events and meetings aimed at influencing and engaging with key policy debates and consultations. In addition, sector representatives were supported to participate in local decision making forums and committees linked to the Local Strategic Partnership.

Since March 2011 MVDA's engagement activity has been supported with considerably fewer resources from the public sector and MCN has been forced to close following the loss of its core funding. MVDA is still engaging with the public sector through its Planning and Partnership Team but the level of activity has reduced considerably. There are fewer meetings and events and, with the exception of health and social care, for which MVDA has received specific grants from the Local Authority and Primary Care Trust, formal sector representative structures no longer exist.

4.2. Outcomes measured

The research considered seven key outcomes associated with local VCOs' engagement and partnership working with each other and local public sector bodies. These outcomes were contained within three broader themes.

1. **Supporting the sector to work together:** the extent to which local VCOs say their effectiveness at working together with other VCOs about issues of mutual interest has improved as a result of MVDA's work
2. **The sector's relationship with the local public sector:**
 - a. **Greater involvement in local public sector planning and policy making:** the extent to which local VCOs say the ways that local public sector bodies inform, consult and involve them in local planning and policy making has improved as a result of MVDA's work
 - b. **Improvement in local public sector engagement:** the extent to which local VCOs say the local public sector bodies listen to and act on their views has improved as a result of MVDA's work

c. **Improved ability to influence local public sector decisions:** the extent to which local VCOs say their ability to influence local public sector decisions which affect their work and/or the interests of their client group has improved as a result of MVDA's work

3. **The way the sector is represented:**

d. **Greater ability to become involved in local planning and policy making structures:** the extent to which local VCOs think their confidence, knowledge and skills to become involved in local planning and policy making structures has improved as a result of support provided by MVDA

e. **Greater understanding of local planning and policy making structures:** the extent to which local VCOs say that their understanding of local planning and policy making structures has improved as a result of the support provided by MVDA

f. **Improvement in sector representative structures:** the extent to which local VCOs say that the effectiveness of sector representative structures have improved as a result of support provided by MVDA.

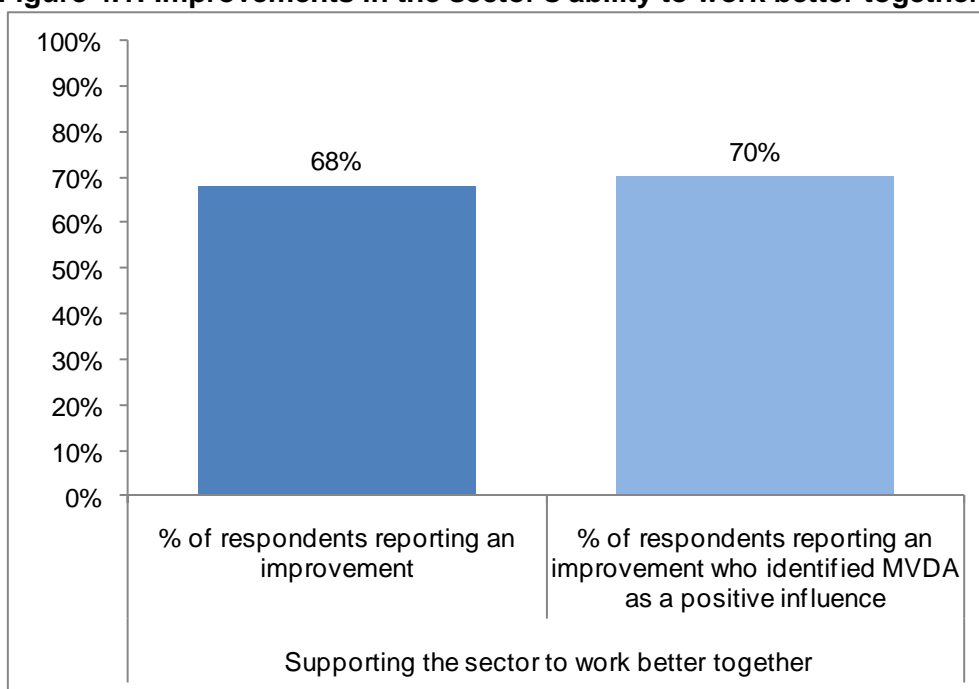
The rest of this chapter discusses the evidence for each of these outcomes being achieved.

4.3. Outcomes achieved

Figures 4.1-4.3 summarise the outcomes associated with MVDA's engagement work. They show that a majority of survey respondents reported improvements in the way the sector works together, the sector's relationship with the public sector and the way the sector is represented, and MVDA's work was consistently identified as a positive influence on these outcomes.

Supporting the sector to work together

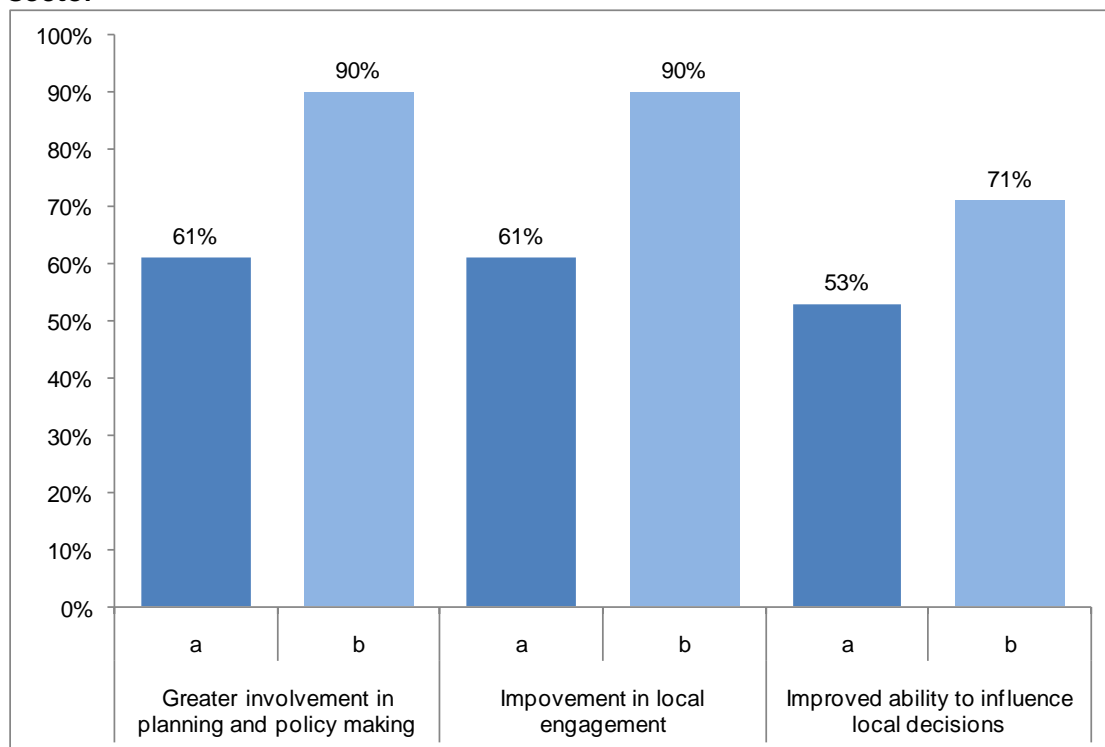
Figure 4.1: Improvements in the sector's ability to work better together



68 per cent of survey respondents who had been involved in MVDA's engagement activity said their effectiveness at working with other local VCOs about issues of mutual interest had improved in recent years. Of those that responded positively **70 per cent** said their involvement with MVDA/MCN had been a positive influence on this change.

The sector's relationship with the local public sector

Figure 4.2: Improvements in the sector's relationship with the local public sector



Note: **Column a** refers to the percentage of survey respondents identifying an improvement against this outcome. **Column b** refers to the percentage of column a respondents who identified MVDA as a positive influence on this improvement.

a. Greater involvement in local public sector planning and policy making

61 per cent of survey respondents who had been involved in MVDA's engagement activity said the ways in which local public sector bodies inform, consult and involve their organisation in local planning and policy making had improved in recent years. Of those that responded positively **90 per cent** said the work MVDA/MCN had done to represent the interests of the sector to local public sector bodies had been a positive influence on this change.

b. Improvement in local public sector engagement

61 per cent of survey respondents who had been involved in MVDA's engagement activity said the extent to which local public sector bodies listen and act on their views had improved in recent years. Of those that responded positively **90 per cent** said the work MVDA/MCN had done to represent the interests of the sector to local public sector bodies had been a positive influence on this change.

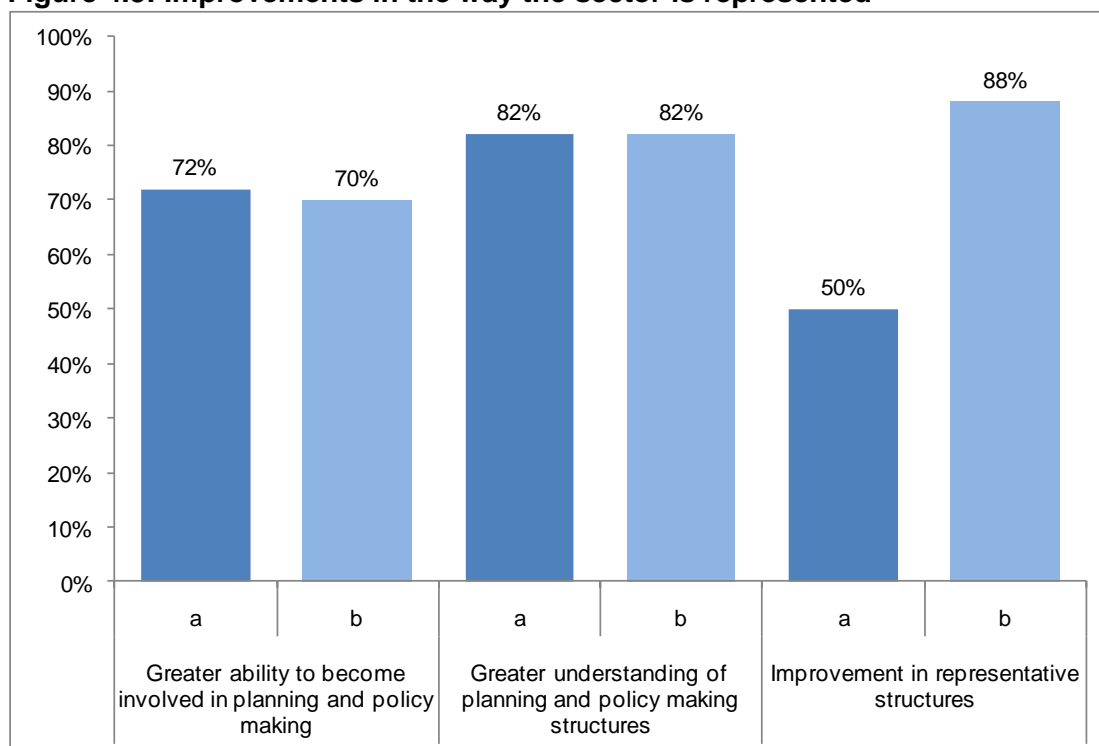
c. Improved ability to influence local public sector decisions

53 per cent of survey respondents who had been involved in MVDA's engagement activity said their ability to influence local public sector bodies when they are making decisions which affect their work and/or the interests of their clients had improved in

recent years. Of those that responded positively **71 per cent** said the work MVDA/MCN had done to represent the interests of the sector to local public sector bodies had been a positive influence on this change.

The way the sector is represented

Figure 4.3: Improvements in the way the sector is represented



Note: **Column a** refers to the percentage of survey respondents identifying an improvement against this outcome. **Column b** refers to the percentage of column a respondents who identified MVDA as a positive influence on this improvement.

a. Greater ability to become involved in local planning and policy making structures

72 per cent of survey respondents who had been involved in MVDA's engagement activity said their confidence, knowledge and skills to become involved in local planning and policy making structures had improved in recent years. Of those that responded positively **70 per cent** said the work MVDA/MCN had done to support the sector to engage with local public sector bodies had been a positive influence on this change.

b. Greater understanding of local planning and policy making structures

82 per cent of survey respondents who had been involved in MVDA's engagement activity said their understanding of local planning and policy making structures had improved in recent years. Of those that responded positively **82 per cent** said the work MVDA/MCN had done to support the sector to engage with local public sector bodies had been a positive influence on this change.

c. Improvement in sector representative structures

50 per cent of survey respondents who had been involved in MVDA's engagement activity said the effectiveness of local sector representative structures at enabling local VCOs to influence local planning and policy decisions had improved in recent years. Of those that responded positively **88 per cent** said the work MVDA/MCN had done to support the sector to engage with local public sector bodies had been a positive influence on this change.

Qualitative evidence

The **improvement in the way the sector worked together** was highlighted by participants in the qualitative interviews, who identified how attendance at MCN forums and meetings had enabled them to make links with other organisations doing similar or complementary work. Two of the organisations interviewed said they had developed close working relationships with contacts established through their involvement in MCN. Ultimately this **benefitted service users** who were able to access a wider range of services as a result.

"I now have a range of contacts that I can draw on...I can signpost service users to other services with the assurance that they will be supported properly...I wouldn't have been able to make these links without MCN."

"We can share issues with other organisations...there is no competition...all organisations have the best interests of service users at heart."

MCN was seen as crucial in providing the mechanism through which these links could be made. Participants reflected that although networking and engagement doesn't need a lot of resources on their part it *'wouldn't have happened without MVDA and the dedicated resource they had to co-ordinate and drive it forward'*.

The **improvement in the sector's relationship with local public sector bodies** was another common theme raised by qualitative interview participants. MCN was seen as providing a collective voice through which the sector's views were hard to ignore.

"The sector's involvement adds richness to statutory bodies - we challenge them to work differently and they do need to be challenged".

"MCN enabled the sector to engage more effectively - it needs a voice".

Through this voice and influence the sector was able to develop new and stronger relationships with key public officials.

"Relationships with the Local Authority are really important and MCN developed strong relationships - we were able to do more (together) because of that".

As a result, participants felt the sector was more trusted and better positioned to deliver services. One organisation cited an example where the sector now manages some social care day services on behalf of the Local Authority and NHS, including the line management of some public sector staff. It was felt that these types of advances might not have been possible without the co-ordinating and awareness raising role MVDA and MCN have played in recent years.

4.4. The future of VCS engagement in Middlesbrough

Given the major reduction in the support MVDA has been able to provide for engagement since April 2011, particularly the closure of MCN, the survey asked how respondents thought partnership working would change over the next few years.

Of the organisations that responded:

- **42 per cent** thought the ways in which local public sector bodies involved them in planning and policy making would get worse
- **33 per cent** thought the extent to which local public sector bodies took notice of their views would get worse
- **39 per cent** thought their ability to influence local public sector bodies would get worse
- **36 per cent** thought their ability to become involved in local planning and policy making structures would get worse
- **30 per cent** thought their understanding of local planning and policy making structures would get worse
- **64 per cent** thought the effectiveness of local sector representative structures would get worse
- **33 per cent** thought their effectiveness at working with other VCOs about issues of mutual interest would get worse

By comparison, an average of just **23 per cent** of respondents thought the different aspects of engagement would improve.

These findings suggest that the reduction in MVDA's ability to support sector engagement will have a **negative effect** on many local VCOs. Survey respondents were consistently more likely to think that each aspect of engagement would get worse rather than better. Of particular concern was the effectiveness of sector representative structures, with nearly two thirds of respondents fearing these would get worse now that MCN has closed.

This finding is supported by the qualitative interviewees, who each viewed the benefits of MCN positively and regretted the loss of the resource provided through MVDA to support it.

'MCN closure has had a big impact - there are fewer meetings and less capacity in the sector to get involved. However, it is good to know that they (MVDA) are still there.'

'MCN provided the sector with a framework through which to work together and engage - it's a valuable structure that could not exist without support - it's needed for all people of Middlesbrough'.

This led one participant to reflect that although public sector engagement *'appeared to improve'* over the life of MCN, perhaps it had not. They felt that since MCN had closed there was a sense that the public sector was paying lip service to the sector's involvement, regarding it as a *'tick box exercise'*. Although the public sector had to appear to engage perhaps in reality they were not supportive of the idea.

4.5. Conclusion: the outcomes of MVDA's support for engagement

The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates that MVDA's engagement work leads to positive outcomes, both for the organisations involved and the local VCS more generally. A majority of survey respondents reported improvements in the way local VCOs worked together, their relationship with local public sector bodies, and the way the sector was represented in local policy making, and MVDA was consistently considered a positive influence in these developments.

The qualitative evidence from the individuals involved and the survey responses about the future of partnership working both highlight the importance of the resource provided by MCN up to the end of March 2011. Research participants were concerned that without this resource the improvements made in engagement and partnership working in recent years would be lost, and emphasised the fundamental role MVDA played in making MCN a success. This anticipated decline in the effectiveness of engagement and partnership working is a particular concern in the context of government localism and Big Society policies which anticipate a greater role for local communities and service users, and the groups that represent them, in local level policy development and decision making.

5. Volunteering

5.1. Aims and objectives

MVDA's Volunteer Centre was established in 2005 and has traditionally focussed on two key areas of work: volunteer brokerage, matching people wanting to volunteer with suitable organisations in need of volunteers; and organisational support, helping local volunteer involving organisations develop and implement good practice in their use and management of volunteers. In addition, the Volunteer Centre is currently involved in the National Citizen Service and has previously delivered a volunteering project on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.

Potential volunteers access the Volunteer Centre through a number of routes and in a variety of different ways. People can enquire about volunteering opportunities over the telephone or via email and internet, but a large proportion of people are met face to face to assess their requirements in more detail. Organisations requiring volunteer management support are able to access a range of support including training, good practice advice, and a volunteer managers' forum.

The Volunteer Centre is in the last year of a three year commitment to core funding by the Local Authority but it currently has no core funding secured beyond March 2012.

5.2. Outcomes measured

The research considered two key types of outcome associated with the Volunteer Centre's work:

1. Effectiveness of volunteer brokerage:

- a. **More volunteers in frontline organisations:** the extent to which local VCOs have more volunteers as a result of the support provided by the Volunteer Centre
- b. **Sufficiently skilled and experienced volunteers in frontline organisations:** the extent to which local VCOs have enough volunteers with the right skills and experience as a result of the support provided by the Volunteer Centre
- c. **Improvement in volunteer management:** the extent to which local VCOs have more skills, knowledge and confidence in managing their volunteers as a result of the support provided by the Volunteer Centre

2. **The benefits of engagement in volunteering:** qualitative evidence from volunteers about the benefits of volunteering including improvements in confidence and self esteem, health and well-being, employability and skills, and involvement in the local community.

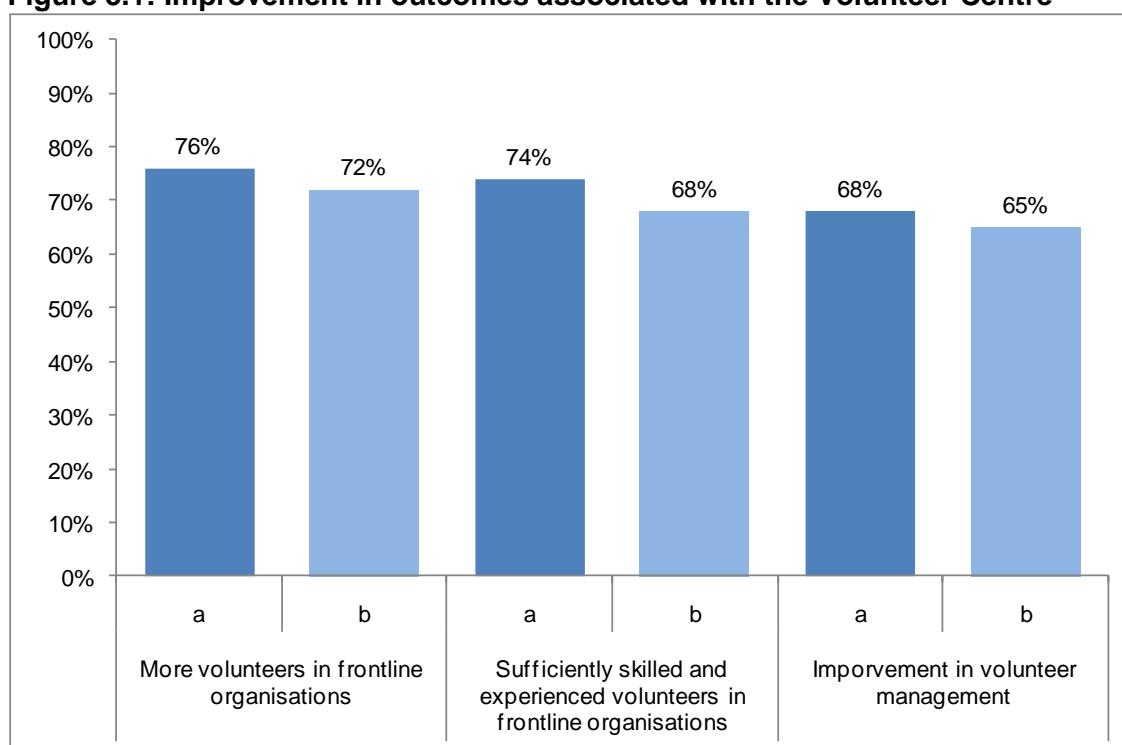
The rest of this chapter discusses the evidence for each of these outcomes being achieved.

5.3. Outcomes achieved

Effectiveness of the Volunteer Centre's support for VCOs

Figure 5.1 provides a summary of the outcomes associated with the Volunteer Centre. It shows that a majority of survey respondents found Volunteer Centre services to be effective in helping their organisation increase its number of volunteers, maintain a core of sufficiently skilled and experienced volunteers and improve their ability to manage volunteers.

Figure 5.1: Improvement in outcomes associated with the Volunteer Centre



Note: **Column a** refers to the percentage of survey respondents identifying an improvement against this outcome. **Column b** refers to the percentage of column a respondents who identified MVDA as a positive influence on this improvement.

a) More volunteers in frontline organisations

76 per cent of survey respondents who were registered with the Volunteer Centre said the number of volunteers in their organisation had increased in the past 18 months. Of those that responded positively **72 per cent** said the work of the Volunteer Centre had been a positive influence on this change. Collectively these organisations had **126 new volunteers providing 672 hours** of volunteering between them each week.

b) Sufficiently skilled and experienced volunteers in frontline organisations

74 per cent of survey respondents who were registered with the Volunteer Centre said the extent to which they had enough volunteers with the right mix of experience for their work had improved in the past 18 months. Of those that responded positively **61 per cent** said the work of the Volunteer Centre had been a positive influence on this change.

c) Improvement in volunteer management

68 per cent of survey respondents who were registered with the Volunteer Centre said their level of confidence, knowledge and skills about how to manage volunteers

had improved in the past 18 months. Of those that responded positively **65 per cent** said the work of the Volunteer Centre had been a positive influence on this change.

These positive outcomes were reflected in the qualitative interviews with organisations that had been supported by the Volunteer Centre. Overall, they were very positive about the quality of advice and support received and felt that it had generated positive outcomes for the organisation, its staff, volunteers and service users.

This included **increased organisational capacity through the recruitment of new volunteers**. All three organisations interviewed reported that a significant proportion of their volunteer base had been recruited through the Volunteer Centre with two estimating that a third of volunteers had come through this route. This support was highly valued:

'It is hard work recruiting volunteers. They really helped. You couldn't do it on your own. You need help recruiting.'

An enhanced **capacity to support and retain volunteers** was also identified as a key outcome. Organisations felt better equipped to manage and support volunteers following training and participation in the Voices for Volunteers forum. Examples include revising Volunteer Agreements to make mutual expectations clearer and gaining a better understanding of the legal requirements around volunteering. The ability to offer training through the Volunteer Centre to volunteers was also seen to aid retention:

'If we're making an effort to train them, they'll make an effort to stay.'

Linking up with other organisations through the volunteer managers' forum also provided new opportunities for partnership working: one organisation providing befriending services for older people had developed new links with organisations providing health services to which they could signpost clients.

A further benefit was the development of new roles for volunteers: one organisation had created new volunteering opportunities around designing a website for the project and a Facebook site. They attributed this to the Volunteer Centre for encouraging them to *'think outside the box'*.

Overall the support provided by the Volunteer Centre was seen to have made a positive impact on organisational development and capacity. Two organisations directly attributed growth to support from the Volunteer Centre in recruiting volunteers:

'We have really grown and moved premises. Without the volunteers and the support we wouldn't have had that growth.'

'What would I do if they weren't there? How would I recruit volunteers? We wouldn't be going without their support. With the cuts in the council it would be horrendous if we had to shut.'

Whilst case study organisations acknowledged that they also recruited volunteers through other channels, there was a common view that they could not have achieved the same level of growth without support from the Volunteer Centre. When asked to identify 'success factors' that might explain how the Volunteer Centre supports organisations to achieve positive change, interviewees noted the high calibre of Volunteer Centre staff. They also observed that the Volunteer Centre provided a holistic range of support unavailable elsewhere. For example, other agencies that

provided volunteers did not offer the on-going 'back-up care' once volunteers were in place:

'No other provider in the area provides support with training, manager volunteers and writing policies'.

The benefits of engagement in volunteering

Four interviews were undertaken with individuals who had been supported by the Volunteer Centre to become engaged in regular volunteering. These interviews aimed to understand the benefits of volunteering to each individual and the role of the Volunteer Centre in helping them achieve these. This section discusses the findings of these interviews by considering individual's motivations for volunteering, the support they received from the Volunteer Centre, the outcomes associated with their involvement in volunteering and the Volunteer Centre's role in bringing these about.

Why do people look to volunteer?

The primary motivation for volunteering for all interviewees was to **enhance employability** by developing appropriate skills and experience. Two interviewees not in paid work saw volunteering as a way of enhancing or maintaining skills that could lead to paid employment. The other interviewees had full-time employment but were looking to gain skills and experience to help them change career. One described how: *'I was looking to change jobs and thought volunteering was the best way forward'*. Both sought to move from private sector jobs they did not enjoy into work in the other sectors which they felt would provide more satisfaction.

One unemployed interviewee saw volunteering as a way of avoiding *'doing nothing'* and of *'keeping sane'* during a prolonged period of unemployment. A final motivation was to 'put something back' in to the community in the case of one individual who had himself received support from a local voluntary sector organisation.

What role does the Volunteer Centre play in supporting people to volunteer?

The individuals interviewed tended to approach the Volunteer Centre through websites such as Do-it. After the initial contact, they were provided with information on a range of volunteering opportunities, except in one case where the individual already knew they wanted to volunteer through the National Citizen Service (NCS). Placements sometimes took months to set up, either because Criminal Record Bureau checks had to be undertaken or because, in one case, English language skills were not considered high enough by a number of organisations approached.

All interviewees were **positive about the support they received** from the Volunteer Centre. It was described by one interviewee as *'a huge help'* in supporting her to successfully find a placement when she faced repeated rejections because of low levels of English. Another noted that staff were always available by phone to help. One respondent who was placed five days after first contacting the Volunteer Centre valued the speed and efficiency of support provided:

'they were brilliant, amazing. They did everything they said they would'.

What outcomes are associated with engagement in volunteering?

The interviewees reported a number of benefits from volunteering including:

- **increased self-esteem and confidence** (see case study 4)

- **improved health and well-being** (see case study 5)
- **social contact** with other volunteers and staff which was particularly valued in the absence of paid employment
- **new skills and experience that enhanced employability** in terms of either finding work or changing to a more fulfilling career: one interviewee was taken on directly as a paid worker on an NCS project for young people after volunteering for just three weeks. The position ended when the summer-long course finished and he has now found work in the retail sector. He believes that, in the long-term, the experience of both volunteering and employment on the NCS project has increased prospects of fulfilling ambitions to become a youth worker
- **the opportunity to access further training:** a volunteer for the Probation Service attended courses on Steroid Misuse and Supporting Children and valued this opportunity to *'get loads of training'*
- **a sense of satisfaction** derived from the perception that volunteering provides an important service that is valued by beneficiaries: the volunteer based in the Probation Service noted that her administrative support freed up paid staff to undertake more complex casework. This clearly benefitted Probation Service staff but also enhanced the service for offenders as it increased the time staff could spend supporting them
- **a desire to 'put something back' into the community**
- **a better understanding of service users:** the volunteer with the Probation service felt she was now better informed about the needs of, and challenges faced by, offenders.

What is the role of the Volunteer Centre in enabling these outcomes to occur?

All interviewees felt it **would have been difficult to set up a placement without the Volunteer Centre**, largely because there were not other organisations in the area that could have supported them in this way:

'I wouldn't have known who to phone. I didn't know that Probation offered volunteering opportunities. It was the Volunteer Centre that gave me the information.'

'I didn't hear about any other organisation that did volunteering.'

These comments indicate that the Volunteer Centre service is achieving additional benefits for volunteers that might otherwise not have been realised.

Case Study 4: The impact of volunteering on employability, confidence and self-esteem

Maria came to live in the UK three years ago but struggled to find work because of her level of English and the lack of convertibility of qualifications gained overseas. She has submitted 150 applications but only been invited to two job interviews that were both unsuccessful. She was advised by a family member to consider volunteering as a way of boosting her employability: *'I just needed a chance to prove I am reliable and can work.'*

She approached the Volunteer Centre through the Do-it website and was provided with a list of potential opportunities. It took nearly a year to arrange a placement due to rejections based on her level of English. She finally secured a placement as administrator at a support organisation and, later, as customer service assistant for a

health service provider.

Volunteering has had a transformative effect on Maria's confidence and self-esteem. At the beginning she found it *'shocking, scary when the phone rang'* but has since gained the skills and experience to overcome these anxieties: *'It has changed my life. I am a completely different person'*. This was reflected when Maria's volunteer role was changed from administrator to volunteer co-ordinator in recognition of her ability to take on new responsibilities.

Maria also credits volunteering with enhancing her job prospects through providing her with training and introducing her to an unfamiliar working environment: *'It gave me experience of working life in England'*. She is still looking for work but is now far more confident about her prospects of getting a job: *'Volunteering helped me see a future. I'm happy now'*.

Note: This case study uses a pseudonym to provide anonymity for the participant

Case study 5: The impact of volunteering on health and well-being

Michael approached the Volunteer Centre after a year and a half out of paid work. He had previously worked in restaurants but wanted a change of career because he disliked the insecurity of the work and the *'volatile'* and sometimes aggressive working environment. He felt he was *'good with his hands'* and wanted to become a *'handyman'*. After struggling to find paid work, he approached the Volunteer Centre to see if he could volunteer as way of acquiring new skills and experience to support his employment aspirations.

Michael quickly found a position as a handyman with a substance misuse support agency. He volunteers 1-2 days a week and feels he is benefitting enormously from the experience. It has ensured he can keep existing skills up to date whilst providing new experiences that will help him realise his ambition of becoming self-employed.

The placement has also had a positive impact on his health and well-being. The combination of meaningful activity and social contact with colleagues has helped him *'stay sane'* during a prolonged period of unemployment: *'I love it. I'm meeting loads of different people. It keeps me happy. If I wasn't doing voluntary work, I would have pulled my hair out'*.

Note: This case study uses a pseudonym to provide anonymity for the participant

5.4. Conclusion: the outcomes of MVDA's support for volunteering

The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates that the work of the Volunteer Centre leads to positive outcomes, both for the local volunteer involving organisations and local people requiring support to engage in volunteering. A majority of survey respondents reported increases in the overall number of volunteers, the skills and expertise of their volunteers, and their ability to manage volunteers, and they consistently identified the support received from the Volunteer Centre as a positive influence in these developments.

The case studies and qualitative evidence from individuals who became involved in regular volunteering through the Volunteer Centre highlight the wider importance of this work. Volunteering leads to positive social and economic benefits for individuals and the local communities in which they are engaged, but it is unlikely that these individuals would have become involved in volunteering without the support available through the Volunteer Centre.

6. Estimating Value for Money

6.1. Introduction: What is value for money?

Value for money describes the extent to which the resources expended on a service, project or programme are justified on the basis of what is achieved. It is a combination of three factors through which options for delivering a particular service, project or programme can be considered:

- **economy:** the level of resources required to produce an input. The most economic services will produce the highest number of inputs for the resources available
- **efficiency:** the relationship between the inputs used to deliver a service and the level of activities delivered (the output). The most efficient services will deliver the highest ratio of outputs to inputs
- **effectiveness:** the relationship between the intended and actual outcomes of a service, project, or programme. The most effective services will produce the largest number or quality of outcomes for beneficiaries.

In recent years considerable attention has been given to expressing value for money in monetary (i.e. cash) terms. Techniques such as social return on investment (SROI) have been developed to help third sector organisations place monetary values on the outcomes that they achieve and this type of approach is increasingly being seen as important by public sector bodies, particularly where it can demonstrate the savings to the public purse arising from a particular intervention.

This chapter therefore considers the findings from the previous three chapters in terms of value for money. Where it has been possible to produce estimates, cash values have been provided for the different types of outputs and outcomes resulting from MVDA's work. However, it should be emphasised that this type of approach has not been applied to local support and development work in this way before, so methods used were very much experimental and developmental. Nevertheless, the findings do provide a useful insight into the how this work can represent good value for money and the calculations that can be used to demonstrate this.

6.2. The challenge of 'valuing' local support and development work

The previous three chapters in this report demonstrate the range of positive outcomes that have occurred within local VCOs as a result of MVDA's work. Techniques such as SROI seek to place a monetary value on outcomes even when a market value is not evident, but typically these approaches are used to value outcomes where the beneficiary is an individual (i.e. a client or service user) or a group of individuals (i.e. communities, society in general), or where there is an obvious economic benefit or saving to the public purse (through e.g. reduced demand on various public services). However, the majority of outcomes supported by MVDA are 'second tier': that is, they primarily occur within organisations or the sector at large. This means that the 'value' of these outcomes to the funders and the organisations themselves is far less tangible: they are accepted as a public good but do not lend themselves readily to 'valuation'.

This research has therefore piloted two approaches to valuing the benefits that come from local support and development work linked to the three pronged value for money equation discussed above.

Valuing the outputs of MVDA's work

Although output measures do not necessarily tell us that an outcome has been achieved, or the quality of that outcome, they do provide useful contextual information, particularly if they can be supported by wider evidence about outcomes. They also lend themselves more readily to valuation and tend to be counted on a consistent basis.

Output valuation measures can be applied to two areas of MVDA's work:

- **development support:** in the case of organisational or business support the standard economic valuation measure is the number of jobs safeguarded or created as a result of a particular intervention². The recommended output value is £35,000 per job per year³. The net additionality ratio for this type of support - the proportion of the output that can be justifiably attributed to the intervention - is estimated to be between 0.43 and 0.7⁴
- **volunteering:** the principle output of volunteer brokerage activity is more people volunteering in local volunteer involving organisations. Volunteering England recommend that the value provided by volunteers is calculated on the basis of the contribution they make to an organisation or project. It is calculated based on the amount that it would cost to pay employees to do the work carried out by volunteers and can be calculated by multiplying the number of hours that volunteers give by an estimate of how much it would cost to employ someone to do that work.

There are a number of widely accepted hourly rates that could be used to estimate this value; these include: the national minimum wage, the local median wage, the local mean wage and the reservation wage. The reservation wage - the hourly rate associated with the actual role of volunteers - is the most accurate option but it can often be difficult to identify this. If a reservation wage cannot be identified the national minimum wage can be used to produce an estimate of the minimum value of the input provided by volunteers. This research used the later approach (£6.08 per hour for people over 21) as information on individual volunteer roles was not collected.

Valuing organisations' willingness to pay (WTP) for positive outcomes

WTP, also known as **contingent valuation** is a survey based economic technique that can be used to value non-market resources, such as environmental preservation or the impact of contamination. While these resources do provide benefits, certain aspects of them do not have a market price as they are not directly sold – for example, people receive benefit from a pleasing view of a mountain, but this is difficult to value using price-based models. In many ways local support and development outcomes are similar - frontline organisations experience benefits such as greater effectiveness or influence, but these are provided at no cost to them on

² See Tyler, P et al., (2010) *Valuing the Benefits of Regeneration*. London: DCLG. Available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/regeneration/pdf/1795633.pdf>

³ This was the average Gross Value Added per job in the North of England in 2007

⁴ See Tyler, P et al., (2009) *BIS Occasional Paper No 1: Research to improve the assessment of additionality*. London: BIS. Available at: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/economics-and-statistics/docs/09-1302-bis-occasional-paper-01>

the basis that a 'public good' is being achieved and many organisations could not afford to pay for this type of benefit from a commercial supplier.

Contingent valuation surveys are one technique that can be used to measure these types of benefits. Contingent valuation is often referred to as a *stated preference* model. Typically the survey asks how much money people would be willing to pay for a particular outcome.⁵ The survey for this research included questions that enabled contingent value estimates across all three areas of MVDA's work.

When interpreting the WTP findings reported in the following sections it is important not to confuse *willingness* with *ability* to pay. Just because a respondent said they were *willing* to pay for a particular outcome it does not mean they would be *able* to pay in reality: the WTP figure provided by respondents provided an indication of the value of the outcome to their organisation, not the amount they would actually pay for it. This distinction is reinforced by findings from the qualitative interviews reported in previous chapters in which participants emphasised an important 'value' of MVDA support to their organisation was that it meant financial resources could be focussed on beneficiaries and service delivery, rather than paying for organisational or business support.

6.3. Valuing development support

Jobs safeguarded and created

Six survey respondents reported that new jobs had been created or existing jobs safeguarded during 2010/11 as a result of the support their organisation received from MVDA. Collectively these organisations reported that **10 full time** and **13 part time jobs** had been created or safeguarded. If it is assumed that each part time job equates to 0.5 full time equivalents (FTE) it can be assumed that the support provided by MVDA resulted in **16.5 FTE jobs** being created or safeguarded. Based on the recommended output value of £35,000 per job per year, and the recommended net additionality range, it can be estimated that these outputs lead to:

- additional value of between **£243,000 and £404,000** after one year
- a return on investment of between **£2.43 and £4.04** for every pound (£) invested after one year.

If these jobs were sustained for **at least three years these figures would rise to:**

- additional value of between **£706,000 and £1.18 million**
- a return on investment of between **£7.06 and £11.77** for every pound (£) invested.

An alternative way to consider this measure is the number of outputs it would take to create value equivalent to the amount of resources expended on this area of work. In the case of MVDA's support and development work, it would only need to support the creation or safeguarding of **between four and seven jobs** each year to create value greater than the resources it consumes.

Willingness to pay

⁵ The use of WTP approaches is discussed in the HM Treasury Green Book. Available at: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/data_greenbook_index.htm

Survey respondents who reported positive outcomes as a result of MVDA's development support were asked to provide the maximum amount they would be prepared to pay each year to receive this type of help advice and support. The values provided ranged from nothing (5 cases) to £5,000 with an average value of **£868**. Overall 81 per cent of survey respondents reported at least one positive outcome for which MVDA support was a positive influence. If it is assumed that these outcomes extend to an equivalent proportion of all support and development beneficiaries in 2010/11, it can be estimated they lead to:

- additional value of **£78,042** over the year
- a return on investment of **£0.78** for every pound (£) invested over the year.

This means it would require **115 organisations** to experience positive support and development outcomes to create value greater than the resources this work consumes each year.

Although this produces a value estimate that is considerably lower than the output measure, it is important to note that the two should not be compared or added together. This estimate relates to beneficiaries *willingness to pay* for positive outcomes rather than the *economic benefits* of the outputs associated with this type of work.

6.4. Valuing support for engagement

Willingness to pay

Survey respondents who reported positive outcomes as a result of MVDA/MCN engagement work were asked to provide the maximum amount they would be prepared to pay each year to receive this type of benefit. The values provided ranged from nothing (4 cases) to £10,000 with an average value of **£1,217**. Overall 81 per cent of survey respondents reported at least one positive outcome for which MVDA/MCN was a positive influence. If it is assumed that these outcomes extend to an equivalent proportion of organisations involved in MVDA/MCN engagement work in 2010/11, it can be estimated they lead to:

- additional value of **£128,348** over the year
- a return on investment of **£1.28** for every pound (£) invested over the year
- This means it would require **82 organisations** to experience positive engagement outcomes to create value greater than the resources this work consumes each year.

6.5. Valuing support for volunteering

Additional volunteers

As discussed in chapter 5, survey respondents who said the number of volunteers in their organisation had increased in the past 18 months *and* said the work of the Volunteer Centre had been a positive influence on this change had **126 new volunteers providing 672 hours** of volunteering between them each week. This equates to **36,944 additional volunteer hours over the year** the value of which (based on national minimum wage) is estimated to be **£212,460**. If it is assumed that these individuals would not have been volunteering in these organisations without

the support of the Volunteer Centre, this equates to a return on investment after one year of **£1.82** for every pound (£) invested.

If these individuals volunteered for more than one year then the benefits would be even greater: even if half of these new volunteers stopped volunteering each year after three years their collective involvement would still create additional value of **£365,478** and a return on investment of **£3.12** for every pound (£) invested.

An alternative way to consider this measure is to consider the number of volunteers or volunteer hours it would take to create value equivalent to the amount of resources expended on the activity. In the case of volunteer brokerage each year the Volunteer Centre would need to broker **19,307 hours** of additional volunteering or approximately **10.6 full time equivalent volunteers** to create value greater than the resources it consumes.

Willingness to pay

Survey respondents who reported positive outcomes as a result of Volunteer Centre support were asked to provide the maximum amount they would be prepared to pay each year to receive this type of benefit. The values provided ranged from nothing (9 cases) to £6,000 with an average value of **£742**. Overall 63 per cent of survey respondents reported at least one positive outcome for which the Volunteer Centre was a positive influence. If it is assumed that these outcomes extend to an equivalent proportion of organisations supported by the Volunteer Centre in 2010/11, it can be estimated they lead to:

- additional value of **£58,579** over the year
- a return on investment of **£0.75** for every pound (£) invested over the year.

This means it would require **105 organisations** to experience positive volunteering outcomes to create value greater than the resources this work consumes each year.

The value of benefits to volunteers

The previous two volunteering measures value the benefits of volunteering to the volunteer involving organisations. Volunteers essentially provide these organisations with additional inputs through which to deliver their activities but this research has also demonstrated that individuals involved in volunteering also experience important benefits in terms of employment and employability, health and well-being, and community involvement. Although this research has not quantified these benefits so cannot attribute values to the Volunteer Centre's work, examples of the types of value indicator that could be used are provided in table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Possible proxy values for the benefits of volunteering

Outcome	Financial proxy	Proxy value
Volunteer moves into employment	Net improvement in financial incomings due to employment gained	c.£12,000 per year per person into employment ⁶
Volunteer experiences health and well-being improvements	Fewer visits to doctor/hospital lead to reduced healthcare	£36 per visit prevented ⁷

⁶ Based on Department for Work and Pensions estimate of gross earnings of average Jobseeker's Allowance claimant into work

⁷ The cost per GP consultation is £36, based on a 12 minute consultation where the cost of a GP in a clinic or surgery is £3 per minute (Curtis 2009)

6.6. Conclusion: the value of MVDA's work

This chapter demonstrates how the outcomes achieved by MVDA represent value for money and considers how this value can be represented in cash terms. It does this using a number of different output and outcome measures: some of these measures are based on existing practice but others are more developmental. Despite the range of measures used a clear and common theme emerges: MVDA's support for the VCS does lead to benefits with values that can be measured in cash terms, and these monetary values are often greater than the level of resource required to produce them. In this sense it can be concluded that **MVDA does provide good value for money.**

However, it is important to note that these values do not capture the full range of outcomes that have been achieved through MVDA's work and present only a partial picture of the benefits provided. They should be considered in conjunction with the wider findings of this research which provide a fuller picture of the outcomes MVDA helps local VCOs to achieve.

7. Conclusion

This report has discussed the findings of research aimed at demonstrating the outcomes and value for money of MVDA's work supporting VCOs in Middlesbrough. The findings are very positive: overall **89 per cent** of survey respondents said they thought the MVDA had been effective in achieving its overarching aim of supporting, promoting and developing the VCS in Middlesbrough in recent years. Collectively the findings show that MVDA's work does lead to positive outcomes for the majority of organisations it works with and that considerable value for money can be identified in this activity.

This final chapter highlights the key findings from the research and considers the implications for MVDA's work and the work of the local VCS more generally.

Key finding 1: MVDA's work has considerable reach

The research found that MVDA's work has considerable reach. It worked with **260 different local VCOs** in 2010/11 many of whom benefited from multiple support interventions. Beneficiary organisations ranged from small community groups and sports clubs run solely by volunteers, to large voluntary organisations delivering key public services and employing more than 50 full and part time members of staff. Many of these organisations received multiple interventions: **one in ten** survey respondents identified receiving 10 or more separate types of intervention and **two-fifths** received at least five different interventions.

Key finding 2: MVDA's support and development work leads to greater capability and capacity in frontline organisations

There is strong evidence that MVDA's support and development work leads to greater capability and capacity in frontline organisations. A majority of survey respondents reported that MVDA was a positive influence on improvements in their organisation's **efficiency, effectiveness, frontline service delivery and management and development capability**.

These positive outcomes were reflected in qualitative feedback which highlighted the **expertise, accessibility and responsiveness** of MVDA's development workers, and their crucial role as a **building block** in an organisation's progress and development.

Key finding 3: MVDA's engagement work leads to improvements in partnership working, but these are at risk following the closure of MCN

The research found that MVDA's engagement work has led to improvements in partnership working. A majority of survey respondents reported improvements in **the way the sector works together, the sector's relationship with the public sector and the way the sector is represented**, and MVDA's work was consistently identified as a **positive influence** on these outcomes.

However, there is evidence these advances, particularly in relation to the sector's representation and involvement in local decision making, are at risk following the closure of MCN. MCN was viewed as a vital resource and research participants were

concerned that without it the improvements made in engagement and partnership working in recent years would be lost. This anticipated decline in the effectiveness of engagement and partnership working is a particular concern in the context of government localism and Big Society policies which anticipate a greater role for local communities and service users, and the groups that represent them, in local level policy development and decision making.

Key finding 4: The Volunteer Centre enhances the level of volunteering in the area and enables the benefits of volunteering to be experienced by individuals from hard to reach groups

There is clear evidence that the Volunteer Centre enhances **the level of volunteering** in the area. A majority of survey respondents found volunteer brokerage to be effective in helping their organisation increase its number of volunteers, maintain a core of sufficiently skilled and experienced volunteers and improve their ability to manage volunteers.

The work of the Volunteer Centre also enables the benefits of volunteering to be experienced by **individuals from hard to reach groups**. Individuals who became involved in regular volunteering following support from the Volunteer Centre experience a range of positive social and economic benefits. This includes increased **self-esteem and confidence**, improved **health and well-being**, new **skills and experience that enhanced employability** in terms of either finding work or changing to a more fulfilling career, and a sense of satisfaction derived from the perception that **volunteering provides an important service** that is valued by beneficiaries and involves **'putting something back'** into the community.

Each case study participant emphasised that it was unlikely that they would have become involved in volunteering without the support available through the Volunteer Centre.

Key finding 5: It is possible to demonstrate the value for money of MVDA's work, but cash values do not capture the full range of outcomes achieved

The research demonstrates that MVDA's support for the VCS does lead to benefits with values that can be measured in cash terms, and provides returns on investment that are often greater than the level of resource required to produce them. This suggests that **MVDA does provide good value for money**, particularly when it is considered within the context of the broader set of outcomes achieved.

However, it is important to note that these values do not capture the full range of outcomes that have been achieved through MVDA's work and present only a partial picture of the benefits provided. More work is needed, by MVDA and local support and development organisations more generally, to understand *if* and *how* the impacts they achieve can be better demonstrated in monetary terms.

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Delivering outcomes for the local voluntary and community sector : An evaluation of the value for money of MVDA's Work

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