

HVDA Update



JANUARY 2011

Council Budget Cuts impact upon the Voluntary and Community Sector

The Council published its draft budget on 22 November 2010. The final budget will be agreed in February 2011. Some of the key cuts which relate to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) are outlined below.

- The Community Pool which currently supports 28 groups is recommended to be cut by £134k (a cut of 30%).
- In other areas it is more difficult to identify the impact of cuts on the VCS as particular budget headings include local authority and VCS services. An example of where it is possible to see the cut to the VCS is the funding from the Children's Fund for preventative services which is to be reduced by 20%.
- Smaller groups could well be impacted upon by the closure of Community Centres who let their premises for VCS group activities.
- The Council has now received a settlement for what were previously ring fenced grants. Cuts to these grants will also lead to a loss of service delivery and a further spate of redundancies to those already announced with a further impact on services.
- The above cuts are in addition to the Government's decision to abolish the Working Neighbourhood Fund, which provided £5m for Hartlepool including £2m allocated to projects undertaken by the VCS.
- Many contracts are frozen at 2009 levels.

When it comes to the cuts that are over and above the level of cuts being imposed on the Council by Central Government, HVDA is keen that the value of the VCS services are properly evaluated. This involves looking at the outcomes and value for money in relation to the level of financial investment in service delivery. In other words how many people benefit and how much do they benefit, and what will be the impact of any cuts. This approach should be adopted whether looking at Council delivered services or those being delivered by the VCS.

These issues were raised at a meeting of VCS groups with the Mayor on 13 December 2010. Groups which received Community Pool support in 2009/10 which could be impacted upon by cuts to the Community Pool are listed:

West View Advice & Resource Centre
Hartlepool Citizens Advice Bureau
Harbour Support Services (SEARCH)
Hartlepool Access Group (Shopmobility)
Hartlepool Credit Union Forum
Owton Fens Community Association
Hartlepool Voluntary Development Agency
Hartlepool People Centre
Wharton Trust
Headland Development Trust
The Salaam Centre
Radio Hartlepool
Hartlepool Carers
West View Project

The Orb Centre
Headland Future
Hartlepool Community Studio
Epilepsy Outlook
Hartlepool Catholic Boxing Club
Belle Vue Community Sports & Youth Centre
Hart Gables
RESPECT
Making A Difference
Voluntary Wheels
Hartlepool Families First
ADDvance
Wynyard Café.com
Hartlepool Sports Council

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Many of the services delivered by Voluntary and Community Sector Groups include services which were prioritised by local residents through the Viewpoint Survey held in 2010 on budget projects. For example, residents were asked to identify areas as unacceptable to cut. Examples of Voluntary and Community Sector Groups delivering services in the relevant areas are shown below:

- Support for children with disabilities and special needs—(88% of residents thought this was unacceptable to cut) Hartlepool Families First
- Support for children and young people in need—(85% unacceptable) Hartlepool Carers
- Improved opportunities for employment—(73% unacceptable) OFCA
- Working to reduce drug and alcohol misuse—(72% unacceptable) ADDvance
- Sport and physical recreation—(69% unacceptable) Belle Vue Community, Sports and Youth Centre
- Working with young people to reduce offending—(64% unacceptable) West View Project
- Youth services—(63% unacceptable) West View Project
- Provision of advice to encourage self help—(59% unacceptable) HVDA

Most of the support provided by Voluntary and Community Sector Groups is to people who live in the Neighbourhood Renewal areas of Hartlepool, in addition to which a number directly deliver to equality based groups.

Volunteer Centre facing closure in April 2011

As previously reported the loss of Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) will impact upon 12 VCS groups delivering services in Hartlepool. For HVDA the loss of the Volunteer Centre (VC), which provides a volunteer 'job centre' type of role, will bring to an end services which have been provided in Hartlepool for 24 years. Over this time 10,000 volunteers have been interviewed. In 2009/10, through a mixture of funding sources, 759 volunteers were interviewed. The Volunteers Centre's role provides a service for those who wish to volunteer by providing them with the necessary guidance to make informed decisions on where to volunteer. Without the Volunteer Centre service:

- Many VCS groups will find it more difficult to recruit suitable volunteers
- Many who wish to volunteer will not be able to be fully informed on the available opportunities
- The possibility of many unemployed people being gainfully engaged in society as volunteers delivering important services will be reduced
- The recognised route of volunteering and it being used as a pathway leading to further training, education and employment will be undermined.

In 2009/10, HVDA interviewed 759 volunteers of which 359 were people aged under 25, 58 people volunteered from the non-neighbourhood renewal area of Hartlepool and 342 people were interviewed from the Neighbourhood Renewal areas.

From the WNF project (342), 173 were unemployed and 49 had health problems. 37 found paid employment; 99 went into training of which 27 gained NVQ level 2 or equivalent or are working towards a qualification. Given the cuts in public services, and reduced level of service delivery, the role of volunteers and the capacity of volunteers to be involved in community issues and responding to local needs will be diminished if the Volunteer Centre closes in 2011. This is particularly disappointing in that 2011 is the European Year of the Volunteer and that it is the Governments stated aspiration of increasing volunteering.

Hartlepool Voluntary Development Agency



Rockhaven, 36 Victoria Road, Hartlepool TS26 8DD

Telephone: (01429) 262641 Fax: (01429) 262641

E-mail: info@hvda.co.uk Website: www.hvda.co.uk



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