

## **Appendix 2 – MHCLG Community Recovery Fund (CRF) performance feedback November 2025**

*How has the Council allocated and utilised the Community Recovery Fund? What specific projects or initiatives were developed as a result?*

- Middlesbrough Council developed Gold (strategic) and Silver (operational) Groups to support the recovery from the riots. Silver group consisted of a range of key partners and community group representatives who were consulted on how they thought the CRF should be spent. Recommendations were made from Silver to Gold and a set of allocations agreed.
- £10k - Develop a self-sustaining Community led Forum, giving VCS groups a voice to inform statutory services community sentiments and ideas on community needs.
- £30k – Grant application process VCS led consortium to map existing assets to establish current community offer throughout Middlesbrough, identify unmet needs and gaps in delivery.
- £75k – Grant application process VCS groups to deliver joint engagement activities and events throughout Middlesbrough.
- £20k - Communications – Develop a process for statutory services to use 'trusted voices' within the VCS community to deliver regular clear joint messages to the wider community, promoting cohesion and working together narratives.
- £150k CRF (plus £55 CCRP) - Youth related assertive outreach and centre-based activities throughout Middlesbrough. Identify key areas of concern, and individuals, engage young people in the community, develop relationships and signpost young people to existing and new youth related activities. Work 121 with those most disengaged young people and existing initiatives to maximise resources.
- £80k - Council to employ Community Development focussed posts to work across all services and projects supporting LA/Police/VCS services ensuring a fully joined up approach is embedded, and identify and develop sustainability community opportunities.
- £30k - Support for grassroot community groups, identify informal groups provide support and resources to develop, advertise and become constituted. Develop Social Action projects - Fund for community members to develop projects to solve problems and improve their local community.
- £20k - Fund experienced specialist facilitators in Hate rhetoric to develop and deliver Community Conversations throughout Middlesbrough, linked to riots and Community Cohesion.
- £50k - Building resilience in vulnerable communities and members to develop confidence and improve engagement in wider community activities.

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- £45k - Educational resources to be delivered in schools and colleges exploring and challenging ideas around Islamophobia, Antisemitism and Right-Wing narrative around migration.
- £40k - Invest in environmental equipment to improve aesthetics, related to broken window theory.
- £50k - Target Hardening reconnaissance and works to the physical environment, design out crime, increase lighting, open up areas.

### *Examples of events and projects*

- A Primary School developed a 'We love Middlesbrough' Family Challenge in which families are challenged to consider all that is great about living in Middlesbrough and showcase in poster, video or presentation format.
- Umbrella Hugs - Through a series of workshops we introduced the young people of Middlesbrough to the heritage of their town, highlighting all the positive aspects of living in Middlesbrough. Giving them the tools to challenge many of the preconceived negatives surrounding our town.
- Curious Arts - Pride drop-in sessions in 5 secondary schools (LGBTQIA+).
- MELA Event: Celebrating food and culture, uniting diverse residents through real life stories.
- Adolescent Hercules - Host events with community engagement, focusing on Middlesbrough's history, migration, and culture, culminating in a published book.
- Middlesbrough Art Weekender - The project involved a 7-day festival with 15 workshops, bringing communities together through art, play, and food, while reflecting on Middlesbrough's shared migration history.
- Middlesbrough Football Club - Promote culture through music, food, and workshops, engaging diverse groups. To host an Eid party at MFC Stadium promoting diversity, inclusion, and tackling extremism through workshops and celebrations.
- Friends of Hemlington Library and Hub – Diverse community members to design, create and installation of a mosaic mural on Hemlington Library Hub's wall.
- Creative arts project - Pieces of Us, bringing together schools and community groups across Middlesbrough to explore identity and societal challenges through art and writing. Working alongside local artists, participants will engage in open discussions about identity, individuality, and community worth. through poetry and the creation of large, individual jigsaw Pieces, participants will express their thoughts and feelings. These Pieces will culminate in a

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public exhibition where all the jigsaw Pieces connect, symbolizing unity and will be displayed in Neighbourhood Hubs throughout the town.

- Open Door North East - Host training events to increase cultural literacy, with a particular focus on employers (private, statutory and charitable) in the town to increase confidence in understanding and employing a diverse workforce. Promote diversity in the workforce and build confidence in hiring from diverse backgrounds.
- North East Opera - The project will involve a series of creative workshops across Middlesbrough, including taster sessions, community discussions, and collaborations with various groups such as inmates, students, and people in recovery. These workshops will focus on the history of migration and the cultural identity of Middlesbrough. The project will culminate in two final performances of "My Great Folk - We Are Middlesbrough" at the Town Hall, featuring a diverse group of participants. Key activities include planning and resourcing workshops, ensuring wide promotion, documenting progress, and gathering feedback to measure impact.

*What key milestones or deliverables have been achieved within each funded project or initiative?*

- Middlesbrough Mela objectives were to promote inclusive music education and community engagement- This was achieved with over 14000 people attending the 2-day festival. Feedback from attendees is available via short reels for social media on request.
- Middlesbrough Environment City hosted a Flavours of Middlesbrough event which brought together people from different cultures. Many of the people that attended had not eaten the diverse food available. This helped MEC reinforce a shared vision of change through the community along with educating residents on the cultural history of Middlesbrough through guest speakers, information boards and stalls.
- Pieces of us have created an art piece that will be split around different hubs in the area. This project worked with groups of all ages at 6 different locations in Middlesbrough to create 6 pieces of art. The pieces were used to discuss important themes with the groups such as We Are Middlesbrough, built from steel, resilient & recovering, loyalty & kindness, one of a kind. Attendees reported an improved sense of belonging to the local community.

*What challenges or barriers have emerged during the implementation of these projects, and how have they been addressed?*

- Getting a consensus on themes by the Silver Recovery attendees. This was overcome by reporting ideas from Silver to Gold Group to make executive decisions on funding themes and allocation.

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- Concerns were raised by VCS organisations about fairness and transparency in funding allocation. We agreed on £195K to be made available to VCS groups by establishing a small grant process allowing all VCS organisations to apply for funding, all applications were assessed by a diverse panel including VCS representatives.
- A small number of VCS organisations complained that they were not aware of the funding opportunity, so we extended the application deadline by 10 days, ensuring equal opportunities for all.
- Some projects struggled to engage communities, these issues were raised at Silver Recovery group and through project monitoring. By collaboration and partnership working organisations were able to increase capacity and outreach to ensure wider engagement.

*What impact have these projects had on local communities, particularly in terms of cohesion, resilience, and engagement?*

- During a recent Silver Group meeting attendees were asked how well the funding had been distributed and the quality of the projects, all attendees agreed that the recovery process had been implemented well. However, when asked about the sentiment in the community had changed since the riots, they reported that it had not changed. We feel that more work needs to be done to maintain momentum and increase the impact of cohesion work in the community. We also feel that the displaying of Union Jack and England flags throughout Middlesbrough and the sentiment behind this has had a detrimental effect on progress.
- The feedback from project participants has been positive with lots of different communities interacting with each other for the first time. This has been seen in localised areas such as North Ormesby, Hemlington and wider across the town such as Middlesbrough MELA. These interactions have been welcomed by residents who attended the events with Middlesbrough MELA showing that 66% of people felt an improved sense of belonging in their area.
- We are building on this further with educational events to help schools strengthen resilience, challenge mis/dis/mal information, and build a greater sense of belonging for all pupils. The sessions are being delivered in January 2026 and are aimed at primary and secondary school colleagues and pupils.
- For community activators and VCS colleagues we are delivering Community Bridge Building training running throughout January and February 2026. The training sessions will teach participants how to communicate with people who have different perspectives, how to deal with difficult conversations and encourage positive changes in their own community, organisation or group.

*What best practices or lessons learned have been identified through the delivery of these projects, and how might they inform future community cohesion work?*

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- We recognise that the CRF was a short-term initiative to support communities recover from the riots. However, many VCS organisations feel longer term funding is required to make sustainable change.
- Participants have suggested that events ran and promoted by community groups have a greater engagement and wider reach in the community.
- The newly implemented Neighbourhood model in Middlesbrough has supported the recovery process significantly by improving partnership working with VCS organisations and engagement with the wider community. This has enabled residents to become more involved in local decision making, codesign, develop and deliver activities that are relevant and meaningful for their needs, building resilience.