

WIRRAL SOUTH ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT- BREIFING PAPER

What is it?

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is based on extensive inquiry into the characteristics of successful community initiatives in North America and more recently around the world. In particular, marginalised and struggling communities who have successfully raised themselves out of the usual cycles of disadvantage.

ABCD builds on the assets that are already found in the community and mobilizes individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to build on their assets, not concentrate on their needs.

ABCD includes the following steps:

- **MAPPING-** an extensive exercise identifying the assets of individuals, associations, and then institutions within the local area
- **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS-** joining local assets together to utilise them to build safer, healthier and more prosperous and inclusive communities. Taking action for everyone's benefit and creating mutually beneficial problem-solving within the community
- **BUILDING COMMUNITY VISION-** Convening as broadly representative a group as possible for the purposes of building a community vision and plan. Leveraging activities, investments and resources from outside the community to support asset-based, locally defined development

ABCD is different to the traditional deficit approach that views communities as problematic or needing to be 'fixed'. ABCD takes a strength based approach which recognises

- We can not know what a community needs until we know what it has
- Every community has more gifts, skills, talents and resources than any one person or organisation can know
- These gifts, skills, talents and resources need to be identified, brought together and converted into inclusive action to improve people's lives and economic opportunities

The principles of ABCD include:

- 'Inside out' development
 - Building on existing skills/capacities and initiatives
 - Focus on relationships, away from 'donor/recipient'
 - Sustainability
- ABCD can achieve outcomes that Wirral are aiming to achieve through the new Neighbourhoods working model and the Constituency Committees. These include:

Better analysis of social issues, with the starting point being strengths and potential, rather than deficiencies and problems

Better social systems, in which the government shares its power and responsibilities with citizens

Better community building being driven from within communities.

Better quality of life, people are more connected to support and challenge each other

Better Society, with clear identification of existing skills and assets within communities

Better democracy, empowering citizens to develop their own community plans

" The theme of my work in community for my entire life is that there are assets and gifts out there in communities, and that our job as good servants and as good leaders is not only just being humble, but it's having the ability to recognize those gifts in others, and help them put those gifts into action. Communities are filled with assets that we need to better recognize and mobilize if we're really going to make a difference."

First lady Michele Obama, June 16, 2009, referring to the ABCD Approach. "

Progress of ABCD in Wirral?

- There have been 3 workshops delivered in Wirral attended by local councillors, local authority officers and voluntary sector organisations. These have been delivered by an organisation called Nurture Developments who specialise in Asset based approaches. The 4 hour sessions have aimed to introduce people to the principles of ABCD, apply a practical understanding and share examples of successful implementation in other areas.

- Following this the Birkenhead Constituency Manager drafted the benefit of adopting an approach using ABCD principles within the new neighbourhood working approach in Wirral.
- This was discussed with Leader of the Council the Director of Policy, Performance and Public Health who agreed this approach should be developed in Wirral.
- Funding is being sought from the Public Health budget to progress this approach. The Birkenhead Constituency Manager and Head of Public Health met to discuss a specification for a support programme to develop this approach in Wirral. This is to be finalised and is likely to include:
 - Support with a thorough mapping exercise to identify assets and developing an approach for this to be maintained and renewed.
 - Wirral wide workshop sessions regarding principles and practical working.
 - Constituency based workshop sessions to apply the working specifically to each area.
 - Peer facilitated sessions with practitioners and agencies who have successfully implemented this approach share their learning, support and innovation.
 - Ongoing mentoring and support to embed the principles.
 - Practical tools to be used.
- The vision is for the principles of ABCD to be embedded into Wirral through the constituency committees to achieve the desired outcomes.