

Developing an Asset Based Approach to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Purpose

The purpose of this item is to:

- **To decide whether an asset based approach should form part of the JSNA development.**

Background

The shadow Health and Wellbeing Board is responsible for leading on the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). Traditionally JSNAs have been developed using a deficit approach by focusing on problems, needs and deficiencies in communities, such as deprivation and illness. The information provided meant that commissioners were likely to design services to fill the gaps and fix the problems. This can lead to individuals and communities feeling disempowered and dependent, becoming passive recipients of services rather than active agents in their own and their families' lives.¹

The asset based approach, outlined in this paper, provides a new way of challenging health inequalities, valuing resilience, strengthening community networks and recognising local expertise. Using an asset based approach can allow commissioners to re-evaluate how services are delivered in a locality and to build upon the strengths that already exist.

What is an asset based approach?

“A health asset is any factor or resource which enhances the ability of individuals, communities and populations to maintain and sustain health and well-being. These assets can operate at the level of the individual, family or community as protective and promoting factors to buffer against life’s stresses.”

Antony Morgan, associate director, National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), 2009

An asset is considered to be any of the following:

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| i | The practical skills, capacity and knowledge of local residents |
| ii | The networks and connections – known as ‘social capital’ – in a community, including friendships and neighbourliness |
| iii | The effectiveness of local community and voluntary associations |
| iv | The resources of public, private and third sector organisations that are available to support a community |
| v | The physical and economic resources of a place that enhance well-being |

An asset approach starts by asking questions and reflecting on what is already present:

- What makes us strong?
- What makes us healthy?
- What factors make us more able to cope in times of stress?
- What makes this a good place to be?
- What does the community do to improve health?

¹ [A Glass Half-Full- How an Asset Based Approach Can Improve Community Health and Wellbeing, IDeA, 2010.](#)

Techniques for an Asset Based Approach

The following techniques are often used in different combinations:

a. Asset mapping

Participants map resources and skills. Links between different parts of the community and agencies are made. There are six levels: assets of individuals; assets of associations (including informal ways people come together); assets of organisations (including assets controlled such as parks and community centres); physical assets (green space, unused land, transport, markets etc); economic assets (potential for more local jobs and local spending by community?); cultural assets (music, drama, art etc). This is best carried out with a clear focus.

b. Asset based community development

Build up community groups and voluntary organisations, as well as their informal associations and networks, shared knowledge, and shared power. Asset mapping is followed by relationship building between (a) residents and (b) residents and agencies. Common interests are identified, a core group of residents identify the core theme or issue that will inspire communities. External resources are used only for those things the community can not do for itself.

c. Appreciative enquiry

Appreciative enquiry starts by appreciating the best of a current situation, thinking about what could and should change. It ends with a shared commitment to achieving a shared vision. There are 5 common stages: define the focus; discover common themes about what works; dream about what could happen; design from collective experience what could achieve this; deliver what is needed.

d. Participatory appraisal

Local people are trained to collect and analyse information about the needs and priorities in their area. It aims to describe the current situation and why/how it came to be like this. Information is collected by talking to people on the street, going to meetings and analysing events.

e. Open space technology

A meeting is organised to enable a diverse group to work on a complex and real issue. The agenda is not fixed and is determined by the participants. It works best when representatives of the “whole system” attend. A central and open-ended question frames the event, and individuals use a “marketplace” to propose topics they want to discuss.

A recommended approach:

- Find out what is already working and generate more of it;
- Promote the project based on what it is trying to achieve, not what the problems are, e.g. ‘Salford: a smoke free city’ rather than ‘reduce the high number of smokers in the city’;
- Actively build capacity and confidence among communities and staff involve the ‘whole system’ from the beginning – those left out will be left behind;
- Design in what is needed to achieve the desired future;
- Design out the structures, processes and systems that are stopping this future being achieved;
- Ensure the long-term sustainability of the solutions and the project

A Joint Strategic Asset Assessment in practice

Most of the content of this paper was taken from a 2010 IDEA publication “A glass half full: how an asset approach can improve community health and well-being”. A range of initiatives are being developed in the North West of England, including asset mapping, production of asset directories (Stockport), strengthening connections for the mental health and well-being network (Manchester), social prescribing (Halton & St Helens), tackling smoking (Salford), and reducing substance misuse (Wirral).

Buckinghamshire's 2010 JSNA highlights positive views from residents about living in Buckinghamshire. But more than two thirds of residents (70%) did not feel they could influence decisions affecting their local area. The same proportion did not feel informed about how to get involved in local decision making.

A few questions to consider

- **How practically would we do this?**
- **One approach would be to choose a theme to pilot the approach e.g. Wakefield (link to report included in appendix 1) used a mental wellbeing theme to make the size of the task manageable. Alternatively this could be piloted in a small local area.**
- **What resources would be required?**
- **What synergies exist?**
- **How would we evaluate the success of such a pilot?**

Examples of Assets in Buckinghamshire:

Bucks Community Car Federation- is a network of community car schemes, providing an opportunity to share information and good practice and access support with operational and administrative needs: <http://www.communityimpactbucks.org.uk/pages/buckinghamshire-community-car-federation.html>

Pub Lunch Club project- the project as part of a programme to tackle social exclusion among our ageing population especially in rural areas where there are few local services and poor public transport links. It's aimed at the over fifties and especially those who may have been missing out on regular social contact: <http://www.communityimpactbucks.org.uk/pages/pub-lunch-club.html>

Bucks Connect- a directory of services, groups and activities that are offered in Buckinghamshire. <http://www.bucksconnect.org.uk/>

Bucks Voice- is a website, including a directory, updated by community groups and organisations in Buckinghamshire: <http://www.bucksvoice.net/directory/>

Age UK Bucks- Build community capacity through providing access to befriending services, gardening and handy man services: <http://www.ageconcernbucks.org.uk/>

Open Space, Sports and Recreational Facility Audits- All local authorities were tasked with carrying out assessments of all of the facilities used by the public in 2007/08. This is an example from Chiltern District Council that used audit information to inform an open space, sports and recreational facility strategy: http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/leisure_culture/parks_and_open_spaces/open_space_sports_and_recreational_facilities_strategy.aspx

Bucks Sport- Provide a directory of sports activities and clubs: <http://www.buckssport.org/en?t=/network/account/index&action=category&cid=1208961729131>

Links to national documents:

- A Glass Half-Full- How an Asset Based Approach Can Improve Community Health and Wellbeing: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/18410498>
- Development of a Method for Asset Based Working: <http://www.nmhdu.org.uk/silo/files/development-of-a-method-for-asset-based-working.pdf>
- The Asset Approach to Living Well: <http://www.nwph.net/hawa/writedir/2fa6The%20Asset%20Approach%20to%20Living%20Well.pdf>
- Growing Communities from the Inside Out- Piloting an asset based approach to JSNAs within the Wakefield District: Methods and Findings: http://www.wakefieldtogether.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/900EC43C-588A-44CA-9416-599BAD269B8C/0/2_Growing_Communities_from_the_Inside_Out.pdf
- Appreciating Assets: <http://www.champspublichealth.com/writedir/2e60Appreciating-Assets.pdf>