



What is Asset Based Community Development?

Asset Based Community Development (**ABCD**) and asset-based approaches begin by finding out what the people living in a community care enough about to work on together to change, develop and/or sustain. Key to the approach is finding and recognising the assets of an area and the gifts that people have; these can be anything that can be used to benefit the local community. Local assets could be a patch of unused land, a neighbour who knows the local baby groups, a local business who is happy to share their office space, a fast-food restaurant where young adults meet or a retired teacher looking to meet new people. They will be different in every area, but whatever they are these community assets are the key building blocks of sustainable community building efforts. **The assumption is that, given the tools and the opportunity, small groups of local residents can change the things that they believe need changing in their community better than anyone else.**

ABCD and asset-based approaches are about building sustainable communities, building connections between people that live in the area so that people can act on things that are important to them. The things people choose to act on are often very different to what statutory/public sector agencies would prioritise.

For a service driven organisation such as a Local Authority, **ABCD** includes a desire to move from 'doing to' people, or 'for people' or even 'with people', to done by the people.

Deficit / medical model	Charity / Social model
TO	FOR
Co-production	ABCD
WITH	BY

Four Ways of Serving People
(Source: Nurture Development)

The story so far...

The ABCD programme in Leeds has developed steadily over the last few years, from three test and learn Pathfinder sites in 2013 to currently having thirteen with five of these starting in January 2022. Pathfinders are hosted by third sector organisation who employ a Community Builder to develop, and asset map their community, support Community Connectors, and manage a 'Small Sparks' fund to kick start ideas from the community in the community. In addition to this, the 'Hey Neighbour' programme trialled a way to encourage neighbourliness through a city-wide small sparks scheme. This proved so successful that 3-year funding has now been secured.

We have a strong Third Sector in Leeds and many of our partners are working with us to develop ABCD and asset-based approaches and create opportunities for people to come together to share ideas and showcase work. Leeds City Council has a vibrant steering group with teams across the Council represented offering an opportunity to share learning and collaborate.

Although the geographical footprint of the ABCD programme is still relatively small, the impact of ABCD has been far reaching. An evaluation by Leeds Beckett [University Asset Based Community Development: Evaluation of Leeds ABCD - Leeds Beckett Repository](#) and the stories and case studies coming from the Pathfinders demonstrate the impact on people and neighbourhoods and the value of this way of working.



So, what next?

The pandemic impacted everyone, but with a responsive Third Sector working in partnership with the Council to set up community volunteer hubs and an amazing response to a call for volunteering with over 8000 people signing up, the experience highlighted the fantastic community spirit in Leeds.

The recently published [Best City Ambition \(leeds.gov.uk\)](https://leeds.gov.uk) puts a strong emphasis on working with Communities in a different way. ABCD and asset-based thinking run throughout the ambition.

Our Team Leeds approach

Investing in prevention and using asset-based approaches to build community capacity, focusing on what people can do, not what they can't.

Living well – Thriving communities

Ensure the sustainability and self-reliance of communities through asset and strength-based approaches and meaningful community engagement, that builds community capacity and resilience, promotes good friendships, and inspires people to find their own solutions and change the things they believe need changing in their community

Achieving our ambition: Strategies, partners, and evidence

Draw on the evaluation of ABCD and working in communities' reviews to work with people, the third sector, community committees, local care partnerships, and other key stakeholders to ensure the ambition is meaningful at a local level and rooted in Leeds communities, guiding prioritisation and investment

We know that taking an asset-based approach in working with communities will prevent and delay people needing formal services and mean they live more independent and healthier lives for longer and it will shift the emphasis on communities identifying the solutions and doing things by themselves.

We will work at strategic, operational, local levels to really embed ABCD and asset-based approaches as an ethos and a way of working that the whole city adopts and have set out our direction for delivery in the plan on a page below.

For more information about ABCD in Leeds please visit: www.abcdinleeds.com

You can also follow us on Twitter at: @ABCDinleeds

For any general enquiries please email us at: abcd@leeds.gov.uk

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) in Leeds

Why?

Our ambition

To expand Asset Based Community Development across Leeds, shifting power to people and supporting communities to thrive.

Our priorities

Raise the profile

This will include championing the approach, utilising the ABCD website and social media presence, celebrating success and showcasing our work nationally and internationally.

Build on the 'pathfinder' model

This will include expanding the number of ABCD 'pathfinders', working with partners to develop new ways of working and identifying opportunities for external funding and innovative investment.

Focus on social capital, community building and neighbourliness

This will include developing city-wide opportunities to work with public sector colleagues, support voluntary, people led action within communities.

Asset-based approaches underpin and transform ways of operating in Leeds

This will include, establishing a clear narrative for asset-based working, developing community champions, shaping strategies, implementing a new citywide training and development offer, and strengthening ABCD networks and events.

What?

Our key principles

People driven

People are the instigators of change not passive recipients

Relationship oriented

Relationships and friendships drive the approach not systems and processes

Asset-based

We focus on people's gifts and talents - what's strong, not what's wrong

Placed-based

The person defines their neighbourhood or Community of Interest which will have the biggest impact for change

Inclusion focused

Everyone has gifts and all will be welcomed to contribute

How?

Our values

Being open, honest, and trusted

People and communities generate change and are at the heart of every decision
We will provide clear messaging on any developments and opportunities for ABCD

Treating People fairly

We recognise that every person has a voice and will seek to hear those voices to make change

Spending money wisely

We will use resources in the most practical and efficient way

Working as a team for Leeds

We will work together with organisations, groups, and people on developing the asset-based way in Leeds

Working with communities

We recognise that people and communities are the best placed to understand what works best for them and will be guided by them.
We will pursue what we can do with and by communities rather than to and for.

Who?

Our Team Leeds approach

This way of working is led by people. We will work with people and our partners including the Third Sector as a team to develop ABCD and asset-based working in Leeds.

Where?

We will work across the city but prioritise areas with higher levels of poverty and inequality.
We will work in partnership to complement existing community building activity.
We will aim to work within neighbourhoods and communities including the Local Care Partnership footprint.

So?

Outcomes

People have good friends.

Communities identify and work to bring about the changes they want to see.

People and communities are better connected and more resilient.

People live happier, more independent lives for longer