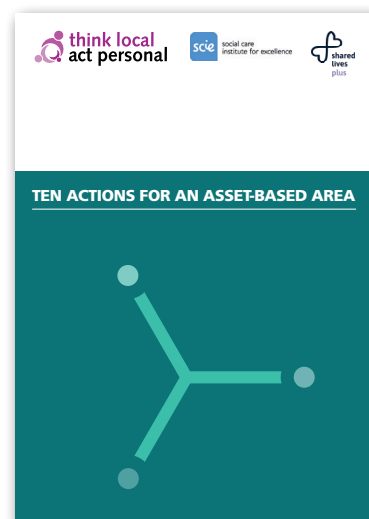


TEN ACTIONS FOR AN ASSET-BASED AREA



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- 1 What is whole-system change and why do we need it?
- 2 What will we all do differently in the asset-based area?
- 3 First steps
- 4 Local areas putting the asset-based actions into practice



SUMMARY

TLAP's first paper on the **asset-based area**¹ laid out a clear case for adopting an asset-based approach to care and support. This is founded on the belief that every area and its citizens can achieve more when they combine their expertise, time, creativity and resources. The two core aims were to make more visible and value the skills, knowledge, connections and potential in the community, along with a need to redress the balance between meeting needs and nurturing the strengths and resources of citizens. The **model has continued to evolve**² as it is tested in practice.

This expanded version, written by Alex Fox, is action oriented, with examples of where councils and other organisations are taking practical steps to shift in the direction of an asset-based area. The resource will interest people working in councils, those who run organisations that provide support, and people who draw on care and support, including organisations that represent their views and interests. It is intended as a practical glimpse of what is being made possible in some areas and organisations, rather than a detailed blue-print.

Much discussion about the social care White Paper, *Putting people at the heart of care*, (December 2021) has been focused on how care is paid for, but it is also an opportunity to re-think what social care could look like: not just the role of public services and how they are paid for, but the huge potential for people themselves, their families and communities, to work together to create better lives and more inclusive and supportive communities.

¹The Asset Based Area, Think Local Act Personal, 2017

²The Asset based 2.0, Social Care Innovation Network, SCIE, TLAP, Shared Lives Plus, 2019

1 WHAT IS WHOLE-SYSTEM CHANGE AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?

We have all lived through a period in which many public services and charities have had to limit their work or close completely. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, years of funding cuts for some services, and rising demand for many, had already brought home the limits of what public services can do on their own. But during this period we have also seen people and communities step up and offer help to an unprecedented degree.

This makes it vital to understand what the organisations and people of each local area can do now, and what they could be able to do if we had the best possible relationship between public services, voluntary organisations and communities.

Whether we are people and families who draw on support, people who lead services, people who work in them or just people who want stronger, healthier communities to live and grow old in, we all need to combine our expertise, insight and creativity to make our areas the best they can be in tough times.

In the **Asset-Based Area**, we set out ten steps for every area to find and value the skills, knowledge, caring capacity and potential within the community. These steps are updated into ten broad commitments that we invite local areas to discuss and adapt into a local action plan drawn up by and with local people.

This is what we call taking an 'asset-based' approach: not just looking for the problems, needs or challenges that people and communities are facing. Instead, we look first for their strengths, capabilities, resources and creativity. To do this, we need to co-produce all of an area's plans and services. This means that people with power, frontline workers and volunteers, and people who use (or could use) the area's services, facilities and public spaces need to be able to meet as equals to identify what is needed, what goals we share as an area, and the best ways to achieve them together. State resources are vital, but so is the capacity of the community and the often-undervalued contributions made by families, carers and volunteers.

We have learned that successful areas start by building a clear story about change from the contributions of a broad range of people, agencies and community groups. That story is then put into practice through new systems and building the capacity and resources that every area has. The ten actions can be summarised into three big changes in how everyone in this area works and thinks.

Three big changes

Diversifying workforces and building **local enterprise**: developing individual employers, mutually and community owned support organisations; growing the employment and self-employment of local people from diverse communities, including people with experience of accessing services.

Co-production, partnership and power sharing: an ongoing approach to understanding, building and valuing the capacity, resources and current/potential contribution of local people and groups to creating inclusive and safe neighbourhoods, and better services and systems.

A **strategic approach** to being asset-based: wellbeing, resilience, independence and connection are embedded as outcomes across the whole system. This needs to be expressed in a clear narrative, underpinned by shared measures and use of the Social Value Act³ principles in provision, grant-making and commissioning, and building a diverse range of support providers.

We have broken down those changes into ten more specific actions:

Ten actions for an asset-based area		1 We have a clear, shared story about how we work and what we want to change	2 We are always looking for, connecting up and investing in community assets
3 We co-design with people who use services and groups who miss out	4 At work we can be ourselves, connect, be creative and act with autonomy within an agreed framework	5 We make systems and services simple and human, so that people stay in control and can make choices	6 Wherever we can we plan and act early, assess later
7 We co-commission a wide range of local enterprises and back entrepreneurs and innovators	8 We plan and organise with the neighbourhoods, communities and groups that people feel they belong to	9 We share power, resources and risks fairly and openly, learning when we get things wrong	10 We use shared measures of wellbeing, resilience and equality

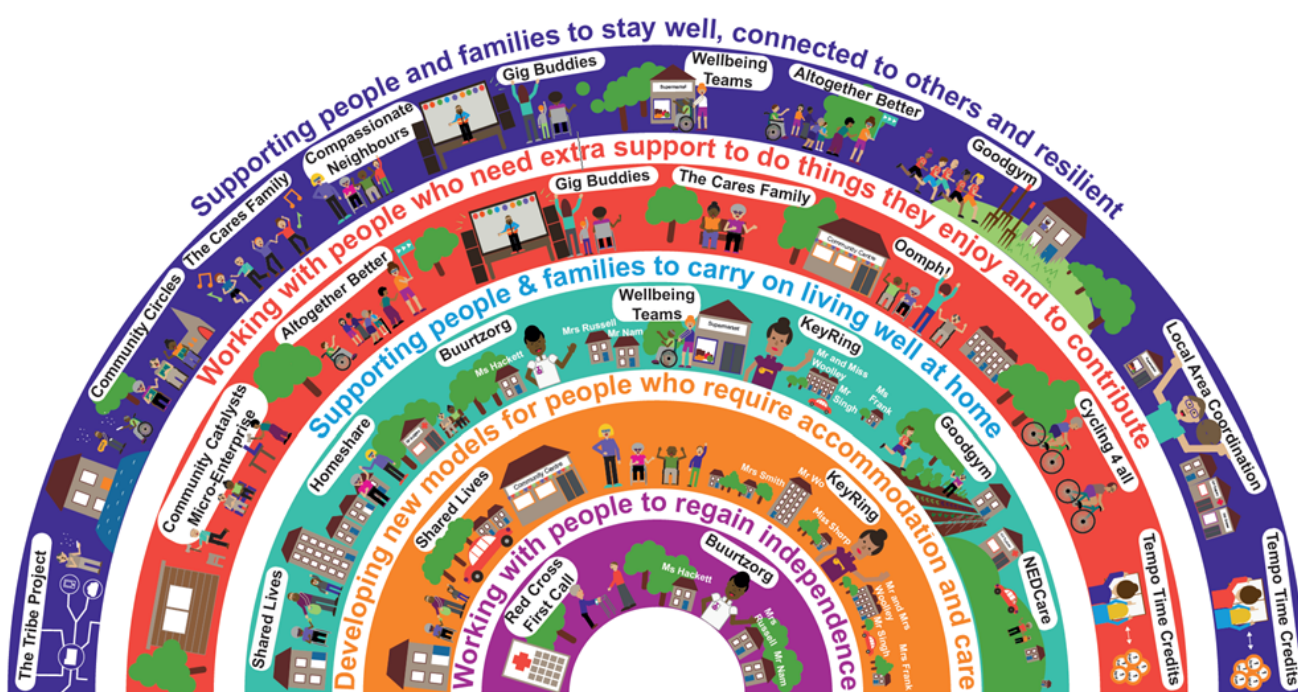
³The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 widened the criteria for public service contracts beyond seeking the best economic value, so that all public sector commissioning must 'have regard to economic, social and environmental well-being in connection with public service contracts; and for connected purposes.'

In this document there are:

- examples of asset-based support organisations and initiatives, which are likely to be part of creating an asset-based area
- ways in which three key groups of people (people with power, people in frontline roles, and citizens) would start to behave differently in an area moving towards becoming asset-based
- examples of local areas using or developing the ten actions in the pandemic era
- some first steps to take.

1.2 Asset-based organisations

Asset-based areas are likely also to be commissioning a range of the types of asset-based organisations in Think Local Act Personal’s **directory of community-centred support**. This features organisations that range from community-based regulated care services providing crisis support or regulated care, through to lower-level support initiatives, daytime activities and whole-community initiatives. The ‘rainbow’ illustration is intended to show that local areas can build a range of asset-based services to meet every level of support need within a community from the preventative end of activity to acute services and crisis-response.



Innovations in community-centred support

There are many community centred approaches out there: this is a tiny selection. More information can be found on the Think Local Act Personal website.

The model can be used by commissioners in two ways:

- to map organisations which you are already commissioning: do they cover every stripe of the rainbow, from prevention to crisis response, or are there are some levels where you are not yet commissioning an asset-based community initiative?
- the model can help you identify approaches that reach similar groups of people, and which you might therefore wish to choose between. Conversely, organisations in different levels of the rainbow are likely to be making different kinds of offers: how are these combining to create support pathways and ultimately whole-system change?

Here are some examples of organisations making offers at each of the rainbow’s five levels:

ACTION	EXAMPLE ORGANISATIONS
Staying well, connected, resilient: whole-community and preventative work	Local Area Coordination, Cares Family, Tribe, Compassionate Neighbours
Meaningful daytime activities: support with leisure, work, education and inclusion	Gig Buddies, GoodGym, Dance Syndrome
Support to live well at home: help to remain independent for those who need it	Community Catalysts, Homeshare, Buurtzorg, Wellbeing Teams, Community Circles
Support offered along with accommodation, which may be an alternative to care homes	Shared Lives, Homeshare, KeyRing
Regaining independence: support for those in crisis, or using in-patient or institutional care	British Red Cross, Mayday Trust, Recovery Connections

2 WHAT WILL WE ALL DO DIFFERENTLY IN THE ASSET-BASED AREA?

The table on the next page sets out some new behaviours you would expect to see in areas that are adopting the ten commitments above. There are some behaviours such as showing empathy and humanity, that you would expect to see from everyone, and others which would vary according to the roles in which people found themselves, so the table below looks at behaviour changes for three groups:

- people with power
- workers and volunteers
- citizens

Kevin Caulfield from Hammersmith and Fulham council says, "Leadership has to be seen to lead to change where residents can see their input. This takes commitment from councillors, council officers and from residents who can only lead if they are supported to participate and make decisions together."

The behaviour changes in each row are linked. For instance, some citizens can only take a more active role in their communities, if workers and volunteers are more willing and able to share resources and support that activity, which in turn only happens if people with power create more autonomous roles and are willing to share state resources.

Equally, for leaders to share their power requires people who deliver and use support services to have the skills and confidence to be able to take on more responsibility. So these behaviour changes will happen together or not at all: key to success will be the new relationships you build between the different stakeholders.

People move between those groups and can occupy more than one of those roles at any one time. And there are many different kinds of power and influence: asset-based areas look for and build leadership outside of traditional leadership roles.

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Leadership has to be seen to lead to change where residents can see their input. This takes commitment from councillors, council officers and from residents who can only lead if they are supported to participate and make decisions together.

Kevin Caulfield, Hammersmith and Fulham council

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You will want to adapt this table for your area, into a version which feels jointly owned by all the local partners. It can then be used as a framework for regular discussions about how you are approaching this new way of working, which will be as important as what you do.

PEOPLE WITH POWER	WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS	CITIZENS
We show empathy and humanity, and feel valued	We show empathy and humanity, and feel valued	We show empathy and humanity, and feel valued
We are open to change and being led by others, and are present in our community, and build alliances	We work alongside (not for) citizens, connecting ourselves and others	We are active – doing and starting stuff in the community, and we are well-connected with others
We are happy in our roles, creating healthy, learning workplaces, and roles in which people are able to thrive and build deep relationships	We are happy in our roles and help people to live good lives, working with their capacity not just their needs	We pursue good lives and are happier, and expect support to help us live our idea of a good life
We aim for wellbeing and measure the good and bad impacts of our work	We are confident we do what matters to people rather than the system, showing humility and courage at the right times	We define the lives we want to live and the roles we want any organisations to play; feeling confident to feed back and take the lead
We build systems and services that fit with people's individual and family lives	We are free to be led by people, not a system; we can work whole-family and with carers	We're in control of our lives and support plans and who sees our information; we can make choices and take responsibility
We share our resources, responsibility and power	We support people to make choices and take risks	We share ownership of our neighbourhood and its organisations and resources

3 | FIRST STEPS

If you are starting from scratch, then start as you mean to go on through co-producing your vision and then your plans. Social Care Future⁴ has developed a vision which could be a good starting point. TLAP's **Making it Real** describes what good care and support looks like and can help conversations over what needs to change. It is likely that your area will have a range of existing strategies, plans and service reviews, so you will need to introduce more co-produced ways of working into those processes. A good starting point will be to:

- ensure you have enough senior leader buy-in to this process to give it a good chance of success, and aim to broaden that buy-in during the process
- map your local assets, expecting that list to change and grow as you build new connections and conversations during this process
- look for groups and communities with whom you already have a relationship and introduce the idea of moving towards an asset-based area with them. What do they want to contribute? What resources will they need to do so?
- identify the people and communities you are poor at reaching. Talk with their community groups and organisations about how best to reach them. What does a good life look like and how can we get there? What do those community organisations want to contribute and what do they need to do so? Where will these resources come from? The move towards genuine co-production with its clear focus on inequalities may require a willingness to shift limited resources towards organisations that can demonstrate they reach least well-engaged groups and places.
- start to build your clear, shared story about the place you are now, and what kind of place you want to be in future. What goals do people share? What commitments are you and your partners willing to make this vision a reality?

It is likely that you will want to act on the different aspects of the asset-based area in parallel, rather than sequentially. The ten points (or your local version of them) can act as a checklist for ensuring that you are covering the different cultural and practical aspects of creating this complex transformation, alongside the behaviour change table for keeping track of the values you are demonstrating and the culture you are building. An exciting vision needs to be complemented by clear resource commitments and changes to key processes and systems: those different kinds of change cannot happen meaningfully without each other.

⁴Social Care Future is a growing social movement which wants to bring about major changes to social care with a shift in power to people and communities. They have developed a shared vision with people who draw on care and support: *'We all want to live in the place we call home with the people and things that we love, in communities where we look out for one another, doing the things that matter to us'*.

4 LOCAL AREAS PUTTING THE ASSET-BASED ACTIONS INTO PRACTICE

4.1 WE HAVE A CLEAR, SHARED STORY ABOUT HOW WE WORK AND WHAT WE WANT TO CHANGE

The most famous example is the **Wigan Deal**. Here, the council has sought to re-define its relationship with its residents. The 'Deal' is between the council and communities: each promising to be positive and engaged, open to doing things differently, and sharing responsibility for the results. This is about creating together a shared story that develops over time, a key element of building an asset based area.

The City of York Council has been using the original version of the asset-based area framework over several years to re-write the relationships between state, citizen and community and the story that they tell together about what kind of a place they are aiming to build. Joe Micheli, Head of



[The asset-based area framework] has acted as a catalyst for change, creating the conditions for success, informed by shared values and stories of impact.

Joe Micheli, City of York Council



Commissioning for the council, says "it has acted as a catalyst for change, creating the conditions for success, informed by shared values and stories of impact." The use of stories and storytelling is a strongly recurring theme and a key approach to creating change.

The Deal Wigan Council

Our part

- Keep your Council Tax as one of the lowest
- Help communities to support each other
- Cut red tape and provide value for money
- Build services around you and your family
- Create opportunities for young people
- Support the local economy to grow
- Listen, be open, honest and friendly
- Believe in our borough

Signed *David Molyneux*
Councillor David Molyneux, Leader of Wigan Council

Your part

- Recycle more, recycle right
- Get involved in your community
- Get online
- Be healthy and be active
- Help protect children and the vulnerable
- Support your local businesses
- Have your say and tell us if we get it wrong
- Believe in our borough

Signed _____

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4.2 WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR, CONNECTING UP AND INVESTING IN COMMUNITY ASSETS

Asset-mapping should not be seen as a one-off task to produce a 'map' or guide. It is an ongoing process: any map, catalogue or guide should be a living and constantly updated resource. Asset-mapping is also an ongoing change in mindset. This ensures that people who have previously thought mainly about public services as an area's assets, start to recognise a much wider pool of community assets, resources and leaders. It means that an asset-map will be co-produced with local people, not based around a council or NHS's preconceived ideas of what counts as an 'asset'.

Community Catalysts are experts in asset-mapping and often find that a community's leaders and 'go-to' people are not even known to the council.

A good example of how an asset-mapping mindset can change practice, is the 'Camden mile', in which (pre-pandemic), Camden Council staff were encouraged to go out of their offices into the local area regularly, to talk to local people, organisations and businesses, and to be open to finding community assets where they may not have looked before.

Taking a wider view of what counts as an area's assets can reveal abundance where state resources are scarce or over-stretched. Loneliness is reaching epidemic proportions for older people, and growing amongst all age groups. Affordable housing for younger people is scarce. Homeshare programmes take these two groups of people with problems and brings them together to provide each other's solutions.

“

Any map, catalogue or guide should be a living and constantly updated resource.

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After careful vetting, recruitment and preparation, an older person who is looking for companionship and low-level practical help is matched with a younger person who needs somewhere affordable to live, and moves in, providing help rather than rent. Both find companionship and learn from each other. Where before we might have seen a 'lonely, vulnerable older person', now that person is someone who is giving a younger person a start in life.

4.3 WE CO-DESIGN WITH PEOPLE WHO USE SERVICES AND GROUPS WHO MISS OUT

Genuine co-design with citizens, starting the decision-making process from what matters most to them, rather than improving existing public services, remains rare.

In 2017, disabled people successfully campaigned against systemic barriers to independent living, such as charging for home care which, uniquely, Hammersmith and Fulham Council abolished in 2015. The council's **Disabled People's Commission** of ten local Disabled residents produced a report 'Nothing About Disabled People without Disabled People' and recommended that the council should embed co-production into all its work. The Commission gathered evidence on the many barriers still facing local Disabled residents, often **systemic barriers**, to having a good life and concluded that systemic barriers required systemic change through co-production. The Commission was a practical demonstration of what became the council's key priority: 'Doing things with residents not too them'. The Commission also concluded that "Non-disabled people almost always make the decisions which impact on Disabled people lives every day and that just cannot be right or acceptable." As a result, embedded co-production has become the mechanism to make this priority real.

Hammersmith and Fulham council's approach includes, facilitating a **strategic co-production group** made up of paid Disabled residents, strategic directors, senior staff, four councillors, three of whom are Cabinet members. The council

also developed a new Council Strategic Co-production lead post which is held by two Disabled people, Kevin Caulfield and Tara Flood. The group and the strategic lead steer and lead on co-production across the borough. As the embedding of co-production grows, the understanding is becoming broader than the barriers encountered by Disabled people.

The group oversees and steers wide-reaching co-production on all aspects of local life. The group has been key to **inclusive re-design** of the area's flagship town hall and civic campus, which includes housing and a cinema. This requires less contract-based thinking and more creativity, and the results have been **award-winning**.

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Get it right for disabled residents and you get it right for all residents.

Kevin Caulfield, Hammersmith and Fulham council

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Kevin Caulfield says, placing disabled people within the decision-making of such a central project means is "emblematic of co-producing everything with disabled people who are now thought of as colleagues rather than labelled as 'service users'". The council has signed up to implement the **UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and the social model of disability**, but Kevin adds, "Get it right for disabled residents and you get it right for all residents."

4.4 AT WORK WE CAN BE OURSELVES, CONNECT, BE CREATIVE AND ACT WITH AUTONOMY.

Most people start public service and charity careers because they are caring, compassionate people who want to help others. But too often, social care workers are tasked with rushed, narrow roles, supporting a large number of people with basic practical tasks, and little opportunity to form real relationships. Health workers often work within services which are focused on very specific medical problems and goals.

Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living (CIL) has started working with eight of Wiltshire's 12 Primary Care Networks (PCNs) providing Community Connectors (social prescribers – a term they avoid because of its medical connotations). PCNs gather health usage data and identify and refer people who use the NHS most. The CIL then takes a 'social model' approach, which means not giving people medical labels but focusing on what they identify as their strengths, goals and support needs, and helping them make meaningful links into their community.

Geraldine Bentley, the CIL chief executive, says "our NHS colleagues were initially surprised that we did not require medical records, but now we play to our strengths and NHS colleagues play to theirs." Mary Reed, deputy chief executive officer says that: "I have learned how person-centred GPs are, because they get to know people as people within their communities." This partnership approach has led to social and community-based support for people who were attending GP practices very regularly,

but often for non-medical reasons. Some GP practices were initially sceptical of work that was not going to be practice-based, but are now seeing impressive health and wellbeing outcomes for this very community-rooted model. "We have no lanyards, no leaflets - just go out and talk to people. Our workers can make decisions without permission: as long as it's legal, they can just be human."

“

We have no lanyards, no leaflets - just go out and talk to people.

Mary Reed, Wiltshire CIL

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Choice Support's Chief Executive Officer, Sarah Maguire, describes her organisation having to face up to the realisation that their work, while highly-rated, was not achieving the kind of lives for people nor the truly fulfilling job roles that it aspired to. Sarah, working with colleague Dave Jackson, an expert in behaviour and teams, decided to explore 'self-managing' teams, which organisations like Buurtzorg⁵ have pioneered. This model gave great autonomy to frontline teams with a small central management operation. Choice Support saw this self-management approach as a means to end, which was to create teams with purpose, who can 'create opportunities for happiness' for the people they support.

Choice Support trialled purposeful, autonomous team working with one team, and now has 21 using the approach. They

⁵Buurtzorg Britain & Ireland is a partnership of two social enterprises, Buurtzorg in the Netherlands and Public World in Britain and Ireland. It provides consultancy and learning and development services to public and third sector organisations to support the creation of better services, jobs and organisational performance through self-managed team work and workforce and community involvement.

have re-imagined regional management posts and are exploring how central support teams can best support this devolved way of working. They expect some areas of devolved responsibility, like finances, to be the most challenging, to marry the ‘non-negotiables’ of the organisation’s governance, regulation and compliance with the ideal of autonomy. However, they view this challenge as surmountable, informed by the experience of the pandemic, when people have been able to work more creatively and to connect with each other much more readily across a large operation.

Reflecting on the transformation so far, Dave says, “The journey is moving from fear to freedom. Our teams have become more creative. Rather than people being

afraid of being judged or looking stupid if they say what they mean, we are creating the psychological safety for teams to be purposeful. People didn’t need a manual, they needed a foundation of purpose, values and behaviours.”

Sarah says, “A family wrote to us the other day to say that while they had been happy before with the support they had, now they were seeing the strong relationships their son has with each and every support worker, and the close communication between those workers, which enable him to have what they describe as a fun life where he is in control. Our team working with their son have been able to make the switch from ‘doing’ care, to being caring in everything they do.”

4.5 WE MAKE SYSTEMS AND SERVICES SIMPLE AND HUMAN, SO THAT PEOPLE STAY IN CONTROL AND CAN MAKE CHOICES

Leeds City Council has committed to working together with people to find out what they want to achieve and the best way to do this by building on their own strengths, as well the strengths of their family, friends and the local community. The aim is to enable people to achieve their goals, reach their potential and reduce reliance upon traditional services. Social workers will build relationships directly with people, replacing a traditional care management approach.

A 52-page assessment record has been reduced to a two-page conversational record. This helps drive the change that Cormac Russell describes as being from ‘What’s wrong?’ to ‘What’s strong?’, through conversations about what matters to people, rather than to organisations. The ‘front doors’ that the council offers people

are organised around 13 Neighbourhood Teams. These Talking Points are organised to have useful conversations quickly at a local hub, then acting on them.



Reduce process. Reduce bureaucracy. Get to people quickly.

Cath Roff, Leeds City Council



There is a strengths-based Social Care board of senior leader who meet with frontline workers to track implementation of the new approach from the ground up; it also awards small funding grants for innovative ideas.

The learning disability strategy, Being Me, is based around three priorities identified

by people with learning disabilities: being safe, well and connected. Council workers have increased their knowledge of local informal networks and groups and the Being Me project group includes community organisations. Leeds is part of NDTi's community-led support network, which starts system change with co-production, building trust and recognising that each place and community is different.

The Director of Adult Services, Cath Roff, has given this clear steer to the council's workforce: "Do no harm. Don't break the rules. Don't break the budget. Otherwise go for it and feel free to innovate. Reduce process. Reduce bureaucracy. Get to people quickly."

More human planning and information systems need to be matched by scaling up more people-shaped support models, not just for those with low levels of support need, but for everyone.

For instance, in Shared Lives, an adult or young person who needs long term support

is matched with a carefully approved Shared Lives carer, by their local shared lives scheme. Together, they share family and community life. Currently there are schemes in virtually all parts of England, with 10,000 Shared Lives carers and 15,000 people supported in this way; approximately half live as part of their household, whilst the other half visit for day support or overnight breaks.

All the carers are approved following rigorous recruitment and training by one of the UK's 150 local schemes, regulated by the Care Quality Commission, which report consistently high ratings (96% good or outstanding). Shared Lives carers report huge satisfaction from the role and turnover is tiny.

During a period of lockdowns, four Shared Lives schemes and shared Lives Plus developed an **online recruitment and approval approach** which recruited nearly 200 Shared Lives carers in less than six months, and set up over 100 matches. Councils in the North East are currently working with ADASS to scale up Shared Lives in the region.

4.6 WHEREVER WE CAN WE PLAN AND ACT EARLY, ASSESS LATER

A good example of this approach is Local Area Coordination that Derby City Council first adopted in 2012, growing it across the city by 2020. Council-employed Local Area Coordinators are based in neighbourhoods and have an open door to people already accessing services, those seeking support for the first time, and people at risk of needing external input if things don't change. Avoiding detailed assessments of needs and problems, they help people identify their individual, family and community assets and solutions before looking at what funded supports and services (if any) could enable them to live a good life.

“

[helping] Derby's communities to become more connected, inclusive and self-supporting.

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The approach helps Derby's communities to become more connected, inclusive and self-supporting, supporting local organisations and community groups to connect with people who will value them, and to grow their activities. As this 2021 evaluation shows, this is contributing to reduced demand on services and more efficient use of public resources.

4.7 WE CO-COMMISSION A WIDE RANGE OF LOCAL ENTERPRISES AND BACK ENTREPRENEURS AND INNOVATORS

The TLAP innovations model is an online directory of approaches, which can be combined together to offer asset-based support to the whole community, including people who have no formal support needs, and those who are currently in crisis or using in-patient NHS care. York's strengths-based community operating model for adult social care has led to the city investing in a number of these and similar organisations.

Ruth Redfern, Director of Policy at North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA), created by three councils in the North of Tyne for economic development and other region-wide initiatives, has been bringing an asset-based approach to work which can traditionally be 'deficit-focused', for example, areas of greatest deprivation, poverty and unemployment. NTCA builds three kinds of assets:

- 1 local economies
- 2 local enterprise
- 3 local communities

This approach stretches beyond a single preoccupation with social care. The synergy between these goals and a focus on an inclusive economy has meant 97,000 people joining the NextDoor platform⁶ and using the SpaceHive⁷ crowd funding platform. This has already kick-started fifteen projects which met their fundraising targets in a short space of time, including a beekeeping group who have developed their hives, teach kids about bees and produce and share honey; and yoga for women who have been isolated and who wanted to get fit socially. These are

not ideas the authority would have come up with itself. Each has had to reach 50 local people donating at least £2, matched by up to £2,000 authority funding, depending on the level of community enthusiasm and the context of local people's means.

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[we] will focus on the issues they feel are most important, building people's capacity to participate and lead.

Ruth Redfern, North Tyne Combined Authority

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Co-production and co-design have been reimagined for a regional combined authority, which is one step removed from local people, working through councils and other local agencies. Ruth Redfern says “Following robust recommendations from our Overview & Scrutiny Committee we have been exploring TLAPs ladder of co-production in a much more tangible way. Not least, identifying which of our programmes can be co-produced with participants. We are already co-designing with local authorities and the voluntary and community sector and have co-designed skills project with family carers but there is more we can do. With Joseph Rowntree Foundation and our Community Foundation, we are designing a long-term post-pandemic commission with people in poverty that will focus on the issues they feel are most important, building people's capacity to participate and lead.”

⁶A social platform that connects neighbours based on their location. <https://nextdoor.co.uk/>

⁷SpaceHive is a crowdfunding platform that supports ideas to improve local places. <https://www.spacehive.com/about>

4.8 WE PLAN AND ORGANISE WITH THE NEIGHBOURHOODS, COMMUNITIES AND GROUPS THAT PEOPLE FEEL THEY BELONG TO

Swindon Borough Council has developed a programme focusing on community groups with a local parish council at the centre. The National Development Team for Inclusion is supporting the Pinehurst Community Led Support Programme to shape a 'Talking Point' programme where a social care, health or housing officer can be found at a community centre to offer advice to people in their local community space.



Each community group and parish council operates differently... We are rolling out our Team Swindon programme in a way that's tailored to them.

Dr Sue Wald, Swindon Borough Council



The council is also bringing its staff out of offices and into the community using local centres: multi-agency innovation teams include a social worker, team manager, housing worker, parish council clerk and a commissioner to build multi-agency support plans for individuals and to link with residents groups and start new conversations. A peer forum brings local people together to problem-solve, building on each other's strengths, such as a retired

artist matched with a disabled person who with the support and encouragement of their match is now selling their paintings.

Dr Sue Wald, Corporate Director of Adult Services, Housing and Health at Swindon Borough Council, says "Each community group and parish council operates differently. Some have more resources than others, generating income from a parish levy. We are rolling out our Team Swindon programme in a way that's tailored to them. We are seeing GP surgeries engaging now, with one exploring a surgery-based social worker and the Primary Care Network and Integrated Care Alliance developing a strategic plan which will feed into the region's larger Integrated Care System."

City of York Council is increasingly focusing its work at the neighbourhood level. For example, a community mental health model, based on an **'open door' approach from Trieste, Italy**, was developed in eight wards of the city's 'northern quarter', and Community Mental Health Transformation Funds were used to scale this up city-wide. Community mental health teams are moving towards community and asset-based approaches rather than medical approaches. Stories of facing mental health issues and from mental health practitioners have been shared as part of helping people to understand this change.

4.9 WE SHARE POWER, RESOURCES AND RISKS FAIRLY AND OPENLY, LEARNING WHEN WE GET THINGS WRONG

At Kirklees Council ward councillors have their own devolved budget which they make available to organisations and groups to support local people in their wards. The democracy services department supports councillors to manage this funding, which is intended to connect democracy with community development. This provided a good platform when the Covid pandemic struck.

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As a council, we could implement a new process in the morning and get feedback directly from citizens later the same day.

Tamsin Macdonald, Kirklees Council

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As the council went in to the first lockdown they paused normal roles and organised around four place-based teams, bringing together officers from across the council including democracy services, children's and adult's social care, local area coordination, public health and libraries. Nine local 'anchor' community organisations also participated, with support from an organisation called Third Sector Leaders. The aim was a single community-based response which connected anyone who contacted the council for help with people who wanted to help.

Tamsin Macdonald, Local Areas Coordination Manager at the council says that “When the pandemic hit - we had to act fast and work with our network of community groups and organisations. We worked closely with many of the new mutual aid groups who were responding to whatever people in their neighbourhoods needed. We were able to

establish neutral spaces to meet online with groups using Zoom. The council officers involved didn't try to control what people in communities were doing but instead listen and learn from citizens about what we could do better to support people who were risking infection to look out for their neighbours. Officers were not expected to respond instantly to what they were hearing, which could have turned into a more oppositional process, but instead listen, reflect and come back with an answer or solution the next day. Groups asked us to bring things like our IT resources, infection and prevention knowledge, free parking and volunteer ID badges to access supermarkets. In return, groups had a route to share their local knowledge and insight. As a council, we could implement a new process in the morning and get feedback directly from citizens later the same day.”

Ward councillors also played a critical role, using their localised ward knowledge and resources to work alongside residents to respond in whatever way was needed in each place.

Reflecting on this experience Tamsin says: “As an organisation, we have been astounded by the power of communities across Kirklees and we are continuing to build on our trusting relationships with local groups and organisations. They have been instrumental in shaping our collective approach to improving uptake of the vaccine and community testing in Kirklees as well as supporting the wider local vaccination programme. Groups continue to turn up to our shared online listening spaces and tell us that they want to be part of the solution to the challenges we will face together, now and in the future.”

4.10 WE USE SHARED MEASURES OF WELLBEING, RESILIENCE AND EQUALITY

A number of the areas featured above are using a combination of traditional evaluations and research, data collection and story curation to develop a rounded picture of what is working and what needs to change.

The Local Area Coordination performance framework includes a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures of impact, including individual outcomes, the numbers of people worked with, costs avoided in other services, and culture or system change. Reports start with a narrative as well as a table of quantitative results.

York's Local Area Coordinators gathered stories to demonstrate their qualitative impact on people's lives. This demonstrated capturing stories methodically. Joe Micheli says: "Now the supporting people team, housing and voluntary organisations feel

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More professionals are now talking about citizenship, community development and strengths-based approaches with passion.

Joe Micheli, City of York Council

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they have permission and some ideas for using this way of working as a legitimate approach. We are using layered stories: the difference for the individual, community, organisation and wider system. This levels the playing field: every organisation including small ones can use stories as evidence. The ripple effects mean more professionals are now talking about citizenship, community development and strengths-based approaches with passion.”

Conclusion

We hope that this report succeeds in showing how it is possible to make tangible progress towards realising the vision of an asset-based area. Whilst the examples featured differ in form and scope, all of them demonstrate the imagination, commitment and resolve needed to make better places for and with people. This should inspire and inform others to make the change to asset-based areas or to continue and redouble the work they have already started.



Useful resources:

[The Asset Based Area, Alex Fox OBE \(2017\)](#)

[Innovations in community-centred support](#)

[Social Care Innovation Network \(SCIE, TLAP, Shared Lives Plus\)](#)

[How to create an asset-based area – Clive Miller and Alex Fox \(2018\)](#)

[Making it Real](#)

Think Local Act Personal is an alliance of over 50 national social care, health and housing partners committed to improving the delivery of personalised, community-based care and support. It brings together people who use services and family carers, central and local government, provider bodies and other key groups to work together to ensure people live better lives.

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