



ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Learning Resource Pack

Developed through learning with and alongside our wonderful communities in East Sussex

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INTRODUCTION

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Who is this pack for?

This pack of resources has been drawn from our experience of delivering the Making it Happen community development programme. In the next pages, we explain the context for how we started, how we worked and what we discovered from our journey. It is designed for **anyone who is interested in making positive change** for themselves and their community. It will also be valuable to anyone interested in driving or **supporting community led development** on a number of levels:



Within a person

An individual person who wants to make changes in their life or in how they see themselves.



Between People and People

Individuals who want to change how they interact with other people in their community, and collectives of people who want to change how they connect with and relate to others within communities.



Between people and services

Anyone wanting to change how people and formal services interact, and people wanting to see changes between how community-led groups or collectives and formal services interact.



Between services and services, and beyond

Anyone wanting to see changes in how formal services and the wider system interact with each other and with the community.

How do I use this pack?

Community led development can build on any feature or aspect of a community or place, and it can touch the lives of individuals and collectives of people alike. It also isn't a linear process – so **this isn't a straightforward handbook!** One tool might work brilliantly in one context, but fall completely flat in another. It requires creativity and flexibility, so when you are working with a community or with people in a neighbourhood setting, think about:

- *What change or shift do you want to see?*
- *What does that look and feel like?*
- *What steps will you need to take to get there?*
- *Who else could you connect with to make that change?*
- *How will you connect with them?*
- *What other support will you need to make the change?*
- *Which tools, resources or examples would help you to get started, move things forward, or review progress?*

The most important piece of learning we can share is to **keep listening and learning** about what might work in your context. Involve the people you are engaging or working with in thinking about what to try, and leave time to reflect with them on **what worked or what could have been done differently.**

Be the change!



What is Making it Happen?

Making it Happen was a 5.5 year community development programme funded by East Sussex County Council. It began in October 2019 and ended in March 2025 and was delivered by a partnership of five local voluntary sector organisations, each holding responsible for delivering in one or other of the Districts and Boroughs of the county:

- **3VA:** (Eastbourne) Willingdon Trees, Shinewater and Hampden Park.
- **Action in Rural Sussex:** (Wealden District) Uckfield, Hailsham, Crowborough and Polegate.
- **Hastings Voluntary Action in Hastings:** (Hastings) Castle and Hollington.
- **Rother Voluntary Action:** (Rother District) Bexhill Central and Sackville, Pebsham St Michaels, Sidley and Eastern Rother.
- **Sussex Community Development Association:** (Lewes District): Newhaven and Peacehaven.

We owe a huge debt of thanks to the over 300 groups and projects we have worked with from across the county who have helped shape our understanding about what does or doesn't work, and who have been endlessly generous in sharing their own ideas and incredible creativity.

DEFICITS TO
STRENGTHS

CENTRAL TO
LOCAL

ISOLATION
TO
COLLABORATION

ASSUMING &
PRESCRIBING
TO LEARNING &
RESPONDING

What is Asset Based Community Development?

Making it Happen adopted the principles and values of **Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)** in its approach to working with communities. ABCD is an approach that **centres on communities themselves**: their citizens, their capacities, and their assets. The starting point is recognition that it is the assets and strengths of people and places, and not the deficits or needs, which are the true foundations for healthy communities:

"BUILDING ON THE SKILLS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS, THE POWER OF LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS, AND THE SUPPORTIVE FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL INSTITUTIONS, ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DRAWS UPON EXISTING COMMUNITY STRENGTHS TO BUILD STRONGER, MORE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE."

ABCD INSTITUTE

On the **following pages are tools and resources** which we have found useful to illustrate the key principles and values of the ABCD approach.

We have drawn from existing resources (including the ABCD Institute, the Jeder Institute and Nurture Development), in shaping this pack and have included references where the source was clear. Additionally we have also drawn on the knowledge and expertise of local community groups, organisations and development workers who have contributed examples, illustrations and tools. See the directory at the back for more information.

How to Make it Happen

ABCD is underpinned by a set of six principles and values which we have incorporated into the following illustration to explain how we work. The following page provides an example of how ABCD works in practice from the Eastbourne Scrap Store Project.



How to Make it Happen

Eastbourne Scrapstore example

Start small



Before having a base, the team began craft sessions using collected Scrap whilst spreading the word of a ScrapStore & **gathering interest** and doing community research.

Connecting with other community groups and like minded people **locally**, networking with community connectors and Councillors for support and knowledge.

Build relationships



Make connections



The team took time to **visit** other projects in East Sussex to **connect**, gain insight and receive peer **support** by attending all networking opportunities.

Taking the initiative to set up in Langney Community Centre and encourage Volunteers to **take ownership** over tasks and work to people's strengths.

Support communities to take the lead



Champion equality and justice



Everyone is welcome at the Scrap Store, the ethos has never changed and they are already seeing the physical and mental benefits of a **'welcome to all policy'**!

Workshops are facilitated but much of the magic happens when **participants lead**, connect, help each other and share knowledge, skills, experiences and often times a listening ear is enough!

Lead by stepping back

