

Community, asset and strengths-based approaches: a guide to terminology

This short guide explains what we mean by some of the most commonly used terms for community working. We sometimes talk about how we work, in different ways – often these terms can mean similar things, overlap with each other and can be connected.

Here is a brief explanation of some of the terms that you might hear to describe working in a community, asset and strengths-based way:

- asset-based approaches
- community capacity building
- person-centred care
- skills mapping and development
- strengths-based approaches.

Asset-based approaches

Asset-based approaches refer to ways of working that emphasise peoples' and communities' assets (including their strengths, abilities, experiences and resources), alongside their needs, for example:

Personal Assets

e.g. the knowledge, skills, talents and aspirations of individuals



Social Assets

e.g. relationships and connections that people have with their friends, family and peers



Community Assets

e.g. voluntary sector organisations, associations, clubs and community groups



Neighbourhood Assets

e.g. physical places and buildings that contribute to health and wellbeing, such as parks, libraries and leisure centres



Community capacity building

Community capacity building is about supporting and strengthening the skills and abilities of people and groups to develop their communities. The aim of community capacity building is participation and empowerment. A community does not have to be geographical – it can be a community ‘by interest’.

There is a twofold benefit to this approach – it enriches the community *and* supports people to develop their skills and confidence and be an active participant in their community, rather than just a recipient.

Person-centred care

Person-centred care is about focusing care on the individual person, their needs, wishes and strengths, rather than on the needs of the service or taking a traditionally needs-led approach.

It involves understanding what’s important to people and including them as equal partners in planning, delivering and monitoring care and support. This means seeing people as experts in their own care, putting them in control and at the centre of making decisions.

When delivered in-line with person centred principles, each person’s support should look different, as each individual is a different person.

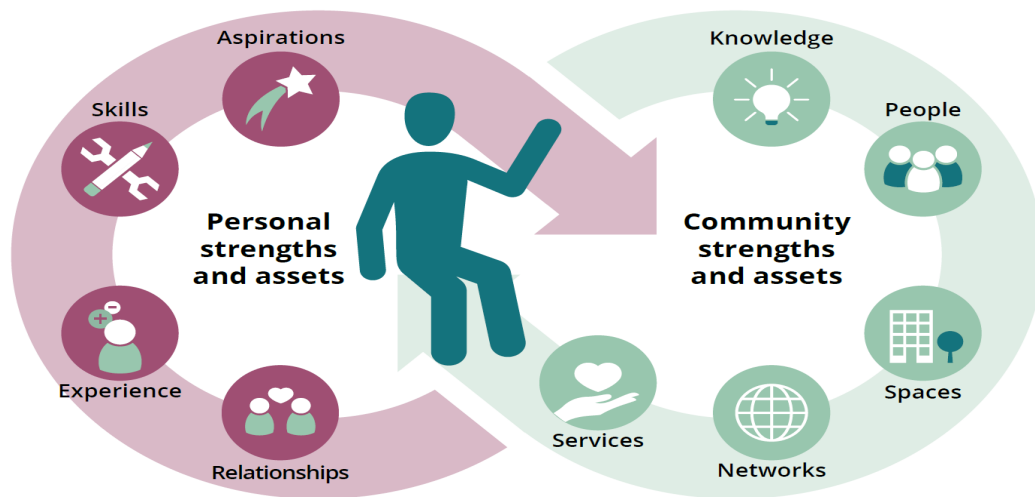
The principles of person-centred care link closely with asset and strengths-based ways of working, as they both focus on the individual. Click [here](#) for information about person centred approaches in social care.

Strengths-based approaches

Strengths-based approaches focus on an individuals’ strengths, rather than their deficits, to enable them to achieve their desired outcomes. It’s underpinned by the idea that everyone has something to offer.

It involves looking at things from an individual perspective and drawing on people’s skills, knowledge, experiences and attributes to enhance their own lives, as well as the lives of others.

Taking a strengths-based approach is both person-centred and asset-based. This diagram from the NICE and SCIE ‘[Quick guide for strengths and asset-based outcomes](#)’ is a helpful way of showing how the person is at the centre, with their personal and community strengths and assets around them.



Working in a strength-based way is not just about working with people who need care and support – you can use this approach to support staff learning and development, in supervisions and when working with community groups. You can adapt it as a management style, to explore the strengths in your workforce and enhance them for the benefit of the people that you support and the workplace.

When working with individuals, one strength that is regularly discussed in social care environments is resilience.

Research has shown that resilience is made up of different elements in each individual person, but one constant contributing factor is the support that people have or do not have around them. This is particularly relevant if you are building community capacity, as a person’s network of support can include community members and groups, or if you are using it for workforce planning and are thinking about the support your staff may need to maintain their resilience.

Skills mapping

Skills mapping is a way of working with someone to explore, identify and understand the skills, experiences and strengths that they already have.

This is achieved by talking to the person about what they can do, rather than just focussing on their needs. Sometimes people don’t recognise what they can do as being a skill or a strength, or haven’t used particular skills for some time, so it’s helpful to take some time to get to know the person and explore this in more detail.

It can also be useful to take the mapping a stage further; if one of a person’s strengths is the ability to learn new skills at their own pace, you can also focus on what the person wishes to do and to achieve in the future. This approach can lead to an increase in a person’s skills, development of knowledge and confidence and can open up new avenues in a person’s life.

When undertaken in a person centred way, skills mapping can support people to achieve outcomes, increase their quality of life and improve their wellbeing.