

**Report of Director of Adults and Health**

**Report to: Executive Board**

**Date: 24 September 2020**

**Subject: Asset Based Community Development and Asset Based Approaches**

Are specific electoral wards affected?	Yes	No
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Has consultation been carried out?	Yes	No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	Yes	No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	Yes	No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:		
Appendix number:		

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

- In 2015, Adults and Health implemented a pioneering, asset based approach to community development (ABCD) that is supporting neighbourhoods to thrive. ABCD empowers citizens to make the changes that are important to their community and facilitates change by supporting neighbourhoods to build connections and unlock assets (see 2.3). 14 communities across the city are now working in an asset based way, each covering a population of approximately 5,000-10,000. A Leeds Beckett University pilot study has estimated that £27.20 of social value is returned for every £1 invested in ABCD.
- Focussing on the strengths of communities, enabling and empowering them is not only more cost effective, by reducing the need for traditional service provision, but it delivers real social<sup>1</sup> and economic change. A key quality of ABCD practice is the strong emphasis on building and sustaining meaningful relationships within communities and developing networks of reciprocal exchange and support. With inequalities widening and set to become significantly worse as a result of Covid, asset based approaches will play an increasingly important role in building fairer communities.<sup>2</sup>
- Leeds has a long history of asset-based approaches from investment in Neighbourhood Networks, to Children’s Services adopting a restorative practice, to more latterly adult social care adopting a strengths-based approach to social work practice. ABCD is part of this continuum of asset or strength based working in the city. A strong foundation for ABCD has been established as well as a national and international profile for this work.

<sup>1</sup> Research, including The Marmot Review 2010, has emphasised the importance of utilizing local assets as key resources in tackling inequalities.

<sup>2</sup> Blickem et al. 2018, argues that asset based working is most likely to benefit more deprived communities often negatively defined as a set of problems, which leaves them feeling demoralized, disempowered, and isolated

- The value of ABCD and asset based approaches have been highlighted in the city's response to Covid 19. Areas with ABCD sites have been able to get support to where it is needed quickly. The strong community connections that have developed enabled people to effectively support each other with less demand for statutory services or formal volunteers.
- The experience of Covid has galvanised communities to engage with their neighbours and offer to help to an unprecedented degree. 9,200 people expressed interest in volunteering through the community care hubs during the pandemic with approximately 5,400 inducted and ready to be deployed into formal volunteering roles. While no figures on the number of volunteers deployed outside of the community care hubs are available, VAL has estimated that in the region of 20,000 people stepped forward within the Third Sector. The pandemic has also accelerated demand for social change, specifically from BAME communities, and interest in a different dynamic between the citizen and the state is gaining real traction.

## **2. Best Council Plan Implications**

- The Best Council plan sets out a wide, positive outlook for the role of the Council in working with communities to shape and strengthen the prospects of the city and its residents. Locality working, specifically through asset based approaches, is a core principle of the Best Council Plan. The development of asset based approaches directly contributes to the 2020/2021 Best Council Plan priorities, most specifically those related to health and wellbeing, Age Friendly Leeds, and safe, strong communities. It supports the Best Council Plan outcomes, most directly the outcomes related to 'be safe and feel safe', 'enjoy happy, healthy, active lives' and 'live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible.'

## **3. Resource Implications**

- The identified budget to support ABCD activity is £432,000. This budget includes contributions from: Public Health (£144,000), and Children and Families (£30,000). In 2020/21 there is an additional contribution of £25,000 from Communities and Environment.

## **4. Recommendations**

- (a) To note the positive impact of ABCD and asset based approaches across the city and the important role they have played in the Covid response.
- (b) To note the outline plan for the development of ABCD in Leeds.
- (c) To work with key partners across the city to develop ABCD and asset based approaches as a key vehicle for meeting the city's priority outcomes.

## **1. Purpose of this report**

1. The purpose of this report is:
  - To update the Executive Board on Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) activity in Leeds, highlighting achievements and challenges experienced to date.
  - To provide detail on the importance of ABCD in supporting the city's response to Covid 19, community resilience and the lessons that can be learnt from this.

- To provide an outline plan for further proliferation of ABCD across communities in Leeds and the potential of this way of working to deliver the Council's ambitions.

## 2. Background information

- 2.1 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach to community development that involves local people identifying and mobilising existing assets to make the social, environmental and economic changes that are important to them. The aim is to create the conditions that will enable both place and people to flourish, reduce inequalities, improve quality of life that supports communities to thrive and to reduce or delay the need for long term care and support. ABCD activity is supported by a growing body of evidence<sup>3</sup> showing it be an effective, sustainable and value for money approach to achieving thriving communities.
- 2.2 ABCD involves a shift from a top down, institution-centric approach to a bottom up, citizen centred approach, i.e. done *by*, rather than *to*, *for* or *with* the people. The approach is underpinned by 3 core principles:
- That given the tools and the opportunity, small groups of citizens can change the things that they believe need changing in their community better than anyone else.
  - That there are things best led by citizens but with support from outside agencies and organisations through collaborative partnerships.
  - There are things best undertaken by institutions and agencies with specialist expertise.
- 2.3 Community assets will be different in every neighbourhood and are the building blocks of sustainable community development. They include:
- The gifts, skills, knowledge and passions of local residents.
  - Local social networks / associations.
  - The resources of public, private and non-profit institutions.
  - The physical and economic resources of the place.
- 2.4 The ABCD programme was developed as part of the Adults and Health Directorate's approach to prevention and early intervention which recognises that the communities we live in and the relationships we have are the primary source of our physical and mental well-being. The approach to prevention and early intervention has been shaped by the outcomes identified in Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2016-21): people will live longer and have healthier lives; people will live full, active and independent lives and people will live in healthy, safe and sustainable communities. ABCD was also developed to support the delivery of the revised Better Lives Strategy, which aims to ensure that people with care and support needs are able to have a fulfilling life through its three key themes of: better lives through better conversations; better lives through better living and better lives through better connections.
- 2.5 A growing body of research shows the harmful impacts of loneliness on health and wellbeing. A 2015 study found that lacking social connections is as harmful to your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day<sup>4</sup>. The Marmot Report in 2010 concluded that social networks and friendships not only have an impact on reducing the risk of mortality or developing certain diseases, but they also help individuals to recover when they do fall ill. Loneliness is associated with an increased risk of developing coronary heart disease and

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<sup>3</sup> There is a long tradition of ABCD practice and learning led by the ABCD Institute, Northwestern University, Illinois, US. A range of reports on the effectiveness of asset based approaches to meet local needs and priorities have been produced in the UK in recent years including: NICE - *Community Engagement: improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities*; IDeA - *A Glass Half Full - how an asset approach can improve community health and well-being*; The King's Fund - *A citizen-led approach to health and care: Lessons from the Wigan Deal*.

<sup>4</sup> Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality: A Meta-Analytic Review (Holt-Lunstad et al)

stroke<sup>5</sup>, puts individuals at greater risk of cognitive decline<sup>6</sup>, increases depression<sup>7</sup> and risk of suicide<sup>8</sup>. Lonely older people are 1.8 times more likely to visit their GP, 1.6 times more likely to visit Accident and Emergency and 3.5 times more likely to enter local authority funded social care<sup>9</sup>.

- 2.6 In 2013-15, three Neighbourhood Networks (Middleton Elderly Aid, Action for Gipton Elderly and Farsley Live at Home) tested an ABCD approach by supporting older people to be more connected to where they lived. The approach involved establishing a 'community builder' role in the neighbourhood who identified, enthused and supported people in the community with gifts or talents to share ('community connectors') to get involved, provided small seed funding and developed community led asset maps. Building on the success of the pilots the Adults and Health Directorate funded three ABCD 'pathfinder' sites (Seacroft, New Wortley and Chapeltown) in 2017. The transformative impact of the initial three pathfinders led to funding being secured to establish 12 more schemes across the city (see Appendix 1). Over time Action for Gipton Elderly (AGE) changed their service delivery model so that ABCD is core to the way they work. While it no longer receives funding as a pathfinder, AGE is funded as a Community Catalyst to support other organisations interested in ABCD. It operates on the same model as the pathfinders and is included in the list of ABCD schemes.
- 2.7 All the pathfinders use the model of community builders, community connectors, "small sparks" funding and work to support communities to be inclusive and welcoming to all. A number of the pathfinders have a particular lens:
- Two have a key focus on supporting people with learning disabilities to be better connected to their community (Horsforth and Beeston).
  - One has a Carers lens (Harehills).
  - One, funded by Children and Families, has a literacy focus (also in Harehills).
- 2.8 Each pathfinder is based in a Third Sector organisation. The partnership with Leeds' strong, vibrant and diverse Third Sector, many of whom, like Touchstone, have a strong track record in using asset based approaches, has been key to the success of ABCD. Leading Third Sector organisations including VAL, Forum Central and Healthwatch have championed both ABCD and people's voice across Leeds.
- 2.9 In addition to the pathfinders, the ABCD programme includes the following:
- Two ABCD 'catalysts', organisations funded to provide peer support to the pathfinders and share learning with organisations in Leeds as well as external visitors.
  - Touchstone, an experienced asset based Third Sector provider has been commissioned to provide the tools to support organisations and individuals to work in this way. This includes facilitating a network for community builders funded through the pathfinder programme.
  - A range of activity to influence and support partners, internally and externally, to develop asset based approaches including sharing learning, activity to stimulate and develop interest and work to influence and support wider strategic plans.
  - Activity to build strong connections nationally and internationally, raising Leeds' profile as an exemplar city in its approach to ABCD.
- 2.10 A summary of outputs delivered in 2019/20 is attached (see Appendix 2).
- 2.11 The Chief Officer for Transformation and Innovation in Adults and Health, supported by the small Enterprise Team, oversees the pathfinder programme and leads the development of

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<sup>5</sup> Valtorta et al 2016

<sup>6</sup> James et al, 2010

<sup>7</sup> Cacioppo et al, 2006

<sup>8</sup> O'Connell et al, 2004

<sup>9</sup> Social Finance 2015

ABCD. A dedicated post has been established to support the programme although the team are all, to some extent, involved in developing ABCD.

### 3. The impact of ABCD in Leeds

1. The range of positive impacts from ABCD and asset based working is widely documented (see footnote under 2.1). This research has shown the impact of ABCD on building strong and resilient communities that have improved health and well-being outcomes, supported active lifestyles and reduced loneliness and social isolation (in particular for older people, people with mental health needs and people with a Learning Disability).
2. In 2019, the Council awarded a grant to Leeds Beckett University (LBU) to build an evidence base for ABCD through a robust evaluation of the programme in Leeds. This work has been led by Professor Jane South who has a national and international reputation for her research and work on community-centred approaches for health and wellbeing. The evaluation is gathering data on ABCD implementation and impact across different pathfinder sites, drawing on a range of perspectives including community builders, community connectors, LCC and VCS stakeholders. Key themes include the critical role of community builders, social activities creating pathways to wellbeing and in what ways the ABCD approach brings additional value. Although the planned activity has been affected by the Covid pandemic, LBU are working on a summative event in the autumn with a final report in December 2020.
3. A common evaluation framework has been produced with LBU to measure the impact of ABCD in Leeds. It has three key outcomes:
  - Individuals and communities are better connected.
  - Communities identify and work to bring about the changes they want to see.
  - People have good friends.Work to improve and refine the approach to measuring impact is on-going. As well as primary research, LBU team have run three workshops to develop the skills and confidence of community builders to capture evidence of change in local communities. Officers recently participated in NESTA's Upstream Collaborative which produced a paper on 'Measurement for Learning - A Different Approach to Improvement' exploring ways to measure the new operating models emerging in local government.
- 3.4 As part of LBU's work to measure impact, an initial pilot on the social return on investment (SROI) for the ABCD pathfinders has recently been completed. Social return on investment is a methodology that aims to measure social value once all the results are collected by assigning monetary values to change created by the activities of an organisation whether environmental, social or otherwise. With all the adjustments in place, the pilot study estimates £27.20 of social value returned for every £1 invested. The pilot study was based on the ABCD activity in Seacroft led by LS14 and indicates the potential SROI across all the pathfinder sites. As the LBU pilot has assumed community connectors contribute 2 hours a week and calculated the value of this using the national minimum wage, the social value is likely to be a conservative estimate.
- 3.5 The LBU initial research includes the following two case studies from community members participating in the LS14 ABCD pathfinder. The case studies use values from the Global Value Exchange and the housing sector's ideas and innovation agency to calculate the social value for individuals.

#### **Case Studies** from Leeds Beckett University pilot study on ABCD in Leeds:

Avril was referred to the centre from the GP. She went to an art therapy class and that had a huge positive effect on her mental health and whole life. She continued with arts and crafts and has set up her own business. She has done courses on massage and healing and uses those to connect with people in the community. She now feels a part of the community and has seen the difference in others who come to LS14 with no friends or interests, and then grow in confidence as they find their space and what makes them

happy. The centre has boosted her confidence greatly and she recognises that the social aspect is the foundation for all of the other outcomes. She is now very active in outreach to identify people's assets and help them to make changes to improve their community. She has built deep friendships and feels really connected in the community.

*Estimated social value:*

Employment (self)	£11,537.48
Confidence	£215
Sense of control & autonomy	£1,400
Friendship	£15,500
Sense of belonging	£1,850
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>£30,502.48</b>

Helen hadn't worked for a number of years while her children were young and initially offered to volunteer at the centre. After initially volunteering in the café, she is now employed at the centre and runs several groups. It has increased her confidence, given her purpose and cemented her connections in the community.

*Estimated social value:*

Employment (part time)	£1,176.32
Sense of control & autonomy	£1,400
Confidence	£215
Sense of purpose	£2,563.60
Sense of belonging	£1,850
<u>Social connections</u>	<u>as above (not duplicated)</u>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>£7,204.92</b>

3.6 In addition to the social return on investment pilot and in advance of LBU's evaluation of ABCD in Leeds, the table below provides a high level summary of how the programme has met key outcomes. Appendix 3 provides an overview of the range of ways that ABCD has supported communities to thrive:

Outcome	Evidence
Individuals and communities are better connected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over the past year, the Community Builders have made a total of 336 connections with other organisations.</li> <li>In 19/20, the Community Builders across the pathfinders involved 146 new Community Connectors who engaged with a much larger population in their communities.</li> </ul> <p><i>Examples of better connections include:</i> The Syrian community supporting older and disabled people in Cross Green and other parts of east Leeds through providing simple repairs in return for conversational English has helped develop relationships across communities.</p>
Communities identify and work to bring about the changes they want to see	<p>In 19/20:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>36 new self-sustaining groups were formed in the pathfinder areas.</li> <li>The total number of members of self-sustaining group developed in the pathfinder areas was 304.</li> <li>A total of 33 "small sparks" grants were made to communities to support them to make the changes they wanted to see.</li> </ul> <p><i>Examples of communities bringing about the changes they want to see include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A wide range of new, self-sustaining groups have been established delivering what people want to see in their communities. These include book clubs, social groups, gardening clubs, a local market stall and a group improving cycling facilities.</li> <li>A community builder at LS14 Trust worked with East Street Arts wellbeing programme that has springboard a group of women in the area to set up a new micro enterprise.</li> </ul>

Outcome	Evidence
<p>People have good friends <i>(the initial focus is on people having relationships with people who are not paid to be in their lives and people choosing to take part in a range of things in their leisure time).</i></p>	<p>Each pathfinder has focussed on building social connections to support friendships to develop and a range of case studies demonstrating the impact is being developed.</p> <p><i>Examples of people having good friends include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gipton AGE - Natural friendships have been formed through weekly social evenings in the 6 tower blocks, fish and chip suppers and dance evenings.</li> <li>• LS14 Trust supported families to develop friendships through sharing play equipment in Seacroft.</li> <li>• One community builder in Gipton is organising monthly social evenings for the 25 residents in his building where people are coming together to eat and make friends.</li> <li>• People have often reported feeling less lonely. One community connector said: <i>'It all started after I lost my husband, I was lost. I was lonely.....being a community connector has helped me a lot and gave me a lot of confidence and got me out of the dark side'</i></li> </ul>

- 3.7 The support for Third Sector organisations to develop their skills and knowledge of ABCD has helped to proliferate the activity across the city. In 2019/20, 25 Third Sector organisations and 326 individuals participated in ABCD training sessions. Prior to the training 65% of attendees said their previous knowledge of ABCD was non-existent or poor. After the training 100% of attendees reported their understanding of ABCD was good to excellent. The impact of this activity can be seen in the range of ways that ABCD has been embraced by the Third Sector from Neighbourhood Networks who have built ABCD into new service and grant specifications to cultural projects such as the 'High Rise' project supporting residents to develop communal spaces inside their buildings.
- 3.8 The team's work to champion asset based working across the Council and its partners has extended the impact on communities beyond the ABCD pathfinders. In 2019/20, the team spoke with 236 individuals / organisations and provided briefings and presentations on asset based principles to a range of services. The approach to workforce development in adult social care (including home care and care homes) is underpinned by strength based principles. A range of teams have adopted an asset based approach including:
- Housing Leeds have created a 'small sparks' fund for local residents through the Housing Association Panels. The Enterprise team is supporting them to develop the process and approach to monitoring. Work to embed ABCD across the Tenant Engagement Service is developing with plans to develop a dedicated ABCD role. Feedback on training has been overwhelmingly positive:  
*"It's most definitely made us feel more confident as it's moved me to just doing what we feel we need to be doing, instead of just doing."* – participant from SCOT.
  - The Active Leeds Development Team are now working with communities to better understand their needs and build capacity at a community level. Leeds Beckett University are helping Active Leeds to build an asset based framework.
  - Libraries have been actively involved with ABCD since the initial pilot when the service linked virtual and actual networks. The 100% Digital Leeds movement is taking a community approach to tackling digital exclusion with a supported network of local organisations at its core.
  - Local Care Partnerships (LCPs) are developing an asset based approach, for example a recent workshop 'What is Strong in our Local Care Partnership, People as Assets' brought five LCPs with representatives from health, care and the Third Sector together to learn more about ABCD.
  - All 6 priority neighbourhoods have developed an ABCD approach. The 'Love Where you Live' project is transforming problematic backstreets into bright and friendly communal spaces in three priority neighbourhoods. Residents have been empowered to improve their back streets through small scale repairs and improvements, for example making fencing, gates and planters out of wooden pallets and painting them bold colours, generating increased responsibility by local people to initiate further social action.

- The specification for the city wide social prescribing service commissioned by Leeds CCG requires the provider to connect with the ABCD initiative and work in an asset based way.
- Adult Social Care has developed a new, asset based approach to home care which is being tested in two areas. This different model of care and support will be embedded in communities and build on people's individual strengths.

3.9 The Council's ABCD programme has significantly raised its profile as a pioneer, an innovator and an authority with a deep commitment to tackling health inequalities. Leeds City Council is one of seven local authorities to be invited to join NESTA's 'Upstream Collaborative', a programme to support local government innovators to share, accelerate and assess new models that work upstream of social problems to help create the conditions that enable citizens' needs to be met in empowering and inclusive ways. Officers have also:

- Delivered training for several local authorities, hosted visits from other cities (nationally and internationally).
- Frequently presented at national conferences.
- Written a chapter for the Improvement and Development Agency 10th Anniversary edition of 'A Glass Half Full', one of the most significant publications on community development in the UK.
- Contributed to the Kings Fund work to develop guidance on asset based approaches.

### **ABCD and the Community Response to Covid 19**

3.10 The Covid 19 crisis has highlighted the benefits of community led initiatives, the importance of having good friends and the vital role neighbourliness plays to the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. A number of ABCD pathfinders became community hubs, co-ordinating support for communities at a local level. Communities with an ABCD pathfinder were able to quickly bring people together to establish mutual aid and strengthen the identity and resilience of communities. Community builders and connectors have grown in confidence in their use of digital technology to offer support and hear how communities are working together to offer neighbour check-ups with each other, street exercise sessions, street bingo session and dog walking. Council teams have strengthened their asset based approach in this period, for example Active Leeds engaged with communities to support them to keep fit and well at home.

3.11 The following examples highlight the range of activity undertaken in the ABCD areas:

- *Rothwell*: One of the Community Connectors set up carpark discos to keep people active and connected. Local residents have been sharing home-grown produce, unwanted books and toys.
- *Horsforth HFT*: The Community Builder has been supporting residents to 'adopt their street' and become Community Connectors. WhatsApp street groups have been encouraged. There are examples of sharing and swapping from food to jigsaws. Residents set up a Community Wellbeing Group and have organised socially-distanced events including a 'Community Day'. Work to explore how larger spaces could be utilised for the community is on-going.
- *Garforth NET*: As part of the 2020 Florence Nightingales bicentenary, NET in working in partnership with the community, Lotherton Hall and the Arts Council to knit Florence Nightingale figures. The figures have an encouraging and caring message attached to them such as 'somebody cares' and will be placed around the Lotherton estate and local community.
- *Beeston - Better Action for Families*: The Community Builders and seven residents are working in partnership with Getaway Girls and Freedom 4 Girls on the ABCD 'Pad project' making reusable cloth menstrual pads for women and girls experiencing period poverty in some of the world's poorest countries as well as in areas in Leeds.
- *Lincoln Green and LS14 Trust*: The Community Builders created weekly zoom coffee mornings to bring 10-15 socially isolated individuals together each week who did not previously know each other. New friendships have been formed and these are now continuing without the Community Builder's support.

- 3.12 Alongside activity to develop formal volunteering opportunities, the Council worked with Third Sector partners and communities to mobilise, encourage and nurture neighbourliness and informal volunteering by:
- Making use of the existing ABCD Infrastructure including 12 Community Builders each based in a local community organisation covering a specific neighbourhood, supported by a network of ABCD practitioners. The Community Builders supported dozens of Community Connectors to bring together local citizens to support others as well as nurtured the skills, knowledge and potential of people receiving support.
  - Sharing the ethos behind ABCD in a series of blogs/communications, covering issues such as being neighbourly, reciprocity and how to be socially connected whilst physically distant.
  - Sharing learning not just from Leeds but nationally and internationally through the global ABCD network. These were hosted on the Doing Good website, under the connecting heading of 'physically distant – socially connected'.
  - Identifying, sharing, nurturing, and celebrating the vast array of activity taking place in local neighbourhoods where citizens are making those vital connections with each other and providing support to people self-isolating/shielded. From writing letters to neighbours in Seacroft, to outdoor keep fit in Kirkstall, to street bingo in Richmond Hill to garden sharing in Chapel Allerton.

While the number of people supporting neighbours during this period is very difficult to measure, over 200,000 visits were made to VAL's web pages in the first 90 days following the initiation of the community care and being a good neighbour initiatives, reflecting the scale of interest.

13. Officers have contributed to a rapid response research project led by NESTA on local authority responses to Covid. A link to the latest blog is included here: <https://www.nesta.org.uk/project-updates/noms-and-covid-4/>

### **Key learning**

- 3.14 While significant progress has been made there has also been some very valuable learning which will inform how we progress ABCD in the city:

- (a) *Working differently with communities takes time*: it takes time to build trust, mobilise social capital and for communities to feel empowered to take the lead. Shifting to a new way of working can present challenges to providers. Commissioners can also find a community led approach challenging as it's not always possible to set out a clear pathway or timetable or even determine outcomes in advance.
- (b) *Traditional mindset prevails*: the default position across the Council, its partners and to a large extent the Third Sector, remains that of a 'service' provider. Although there is a good level of understanding about asset based approaches to community development, this way of working is not yet fully embedded. Devolving responsibility to citizens is seen by some officers and partners as a potential threat to their roles / funding.
- (c) *No agreed approach to prevention and early intervention in Leeds*: while there is a shared vision and often similar ways of working across Council teams, the health and care system and the Third Sector, prevention activity has been undertaken differently across the city with different principles, approaches and even language. As a result, asset based approaches are seen as one way of working, rather than the default way of working.
- (d) *Shifting resources can be complex and considered high risk*: There are insufficient resources in Adults and Health to support the wider proliferation of asset based working. Although evidence shows that asset based working offers a more effective, sustainable and efficient way of working, reducing, reconfiguring or removing existing provision to enable a shift of resources is complex. Without the certainty of what will replace it, it also presents a risk.
- (e) *There are different footprints for working in neighbourhoods that creates a complexity that must be managed*: The city has a web of networks, hubs and clusters that don't align to each other.

- 3.15 NESTA's research on the impact of Covid (see 4.4) highlights the positive way that local authorities working with partners, most notably the Third Sector, overcame key challenges for example in relation to managing risk.

**Outline plan for the development of ABCD in Leeds:**

16. The following activity is currently being undertaken to develop ABCD:
- (a) *Developing new pathfinder sites:*
    - A new pathfinder, funded by the Communities Directorate, is being developed in Holbeck that will seek to connect the community to regeneration activity in the area.
    - Work with West Yorkshire Combined Authority to use an ABCD approach in relation to their strategic framework for promoting inclusive growth in the Leeds City Region is on-going. A business case for WYCA to fund an ABCD site in Leeds for 2 years has been developed. With unemployment and poverty increasing, there is an even greater need to improve pathways into work within communities.
    - The team is working with 'Our Future Leeds' as part of the Climate Commission to explore how ABCD can directly be used as an approach to tackle the climate emergency. Lottery funding has been secured further develop this work in communities.
    - Work to identify a new provider for the pathfinder in New Wortley is underway.
  - (b) *Training and development to support Council teams, the Third Sector and the public sector adopt ABCD:*
    - Two development sessions for commissioners in Adults and Health to support them to work in a way that facilitates asset based approaches are scheduled for September. The sessions will be led by Cormac Russell, a leading practitioner in this field with a long track record of work in Leeds.
    - Training for the Service Transformation Team in Adults and Health to ensure that transformation activity is underpinned by an asset based approach.
    - Work to commission Touchstone to continue to provide training to organisations wanting to develop ABCD in being undertaken.
  - (c) *Strengthening partnerships to support ABCD to expand:*
    - A stronger partnership with the Health Partnerships team in Adults and Health to champion and better connect ABCD working to the health sector.
    - Work has been initiated to consider how the Council's People Strategy could reflect ABCD principles.
    - Work with the City Digital Partnerships Team to expand both the support for the Third Sector and the digital self-care offer through ABCD and asset based approaches.
    - Develop a partnership with primary care practitioners who are exploring how strength based approaches can be built into new service design.
    - Develop partnership working to support more intergenerational asset based approaches to improve skills sharing within communities.
    - The Council's ABCD Steering Group is being reviewed. The aim is to broaden the reach of this group, strengthen connections across the Council and beyond and ensure asset based approaches are reflected in key plans and strategies.
  - (d) *Raise the profile of ABCD and asset based approaches in Leeds:*
    - LBU will undertake an analysis of the social return on investment in a second pathfinder site and explore the potential to apply for external research funding to undertake a full SROI analysis to build the evidence base.
    - NESTA's Upstream Collaborative report and short film are both expected in September which will provide opportunities to further raise the profile of Leeds as a pioneer in this field.
- 3.17 The foundations, not least a growing appetite from communities themselves, are now in place to achieve a 'left shift' from a deficit-based approach to one that is facilitating active citizenship at pace and scale. The outline plan to develop ABCD to support communities to thrive in the medium to long term comprises the following elements:

- (a) *Articulating our ambition:*  
 There is an expectation and a desire to see a new way of working emerging in the Covid recovery phase. A system wide approach to prevention and early intervention, in which the neighbourhood is the key unit of change, will increase resilience, reduce dependency and enable communities to thrive. A clear narrative for change, reaching across the Council and beyond, will enthuse and galvanise staff, partners and citizens.
- (b) *Co-produced with communities and the Third Sector:*
- A collaborative approach between the Council, the Third Sector and communities, will facilitate a shared sense of what is best done by communities themselves, what is best done with support and what is best done by the Council and its partners. It is recognised that this way of working will evolve and develop over time.
  - It will support a spectrum of opportunities for communities to engage from neighbourliness, formal and informal volunteering to civic leadership.
  - It will involve work to develop asset based approaches in communities of interest as well as neighbourhoods.
- (c) *Mindset:*
- 'The ABCD mindset emphasises agency, individual capacity and resilience, encourages active citizenship and moves away from an interventionist, crisis-led involvement in people's lives'.<sup>10</sup> NESTA's guide emphasises the critical role of mindset in the facilitating the shift to a different way of working and the role of leaders in championing that mindset.
  - Work to build on the workforce development activity in Adults and Health with a system wide workforce plan that brings people together around a shared vision and ethos. Organisational Development activity will support culture change, giving communities, the Third Sector and staff permission to innovate. It will share success and connect to activity taking place elsewhere in the UK and beyond to inspire and inform development in Leeds.
- (d) *Using our resources differently:*
- The LBU research indicates the substantial return on investment from ABCD. Additional pathfinders will be developed by maximising funding opportunities and fully utilising existing resources.
  - Understanding what is best done by communities and what is best done by the Council will involve consideration of how reduced resources could be used differently to achieve improved outcomes. The work being undertaken in commissioning to strengthen collaborative approaches, invest to save approaches and commissioning for outcomes will be developed. The new model being developed for home care provides a key opportunity to establish a new way of working.
- (e) *Partnerships:*
- Activity will build on the strong partnership culture to develop a city wide eco-system around communities to support asset based approaches.
  - Work will strengthen cross-Council working to facilitate co-ordinated connections at a locality level, for example to support children and families, place based regeneration, pathways to employment and investment in skills development, especially use of digital.
  - Activity to strengthen the connections between communities and Local Care Partnerships (LCPs). This work will consider how asset based approaches can be used to support LCPs to achieve their outcomes and how the ABCD Pathfinders can more effectively engage with relevant LCPs to improve local health outcomes.
  - Work will be undertaken in partnership with the Third Sector to further stimulate and build on their interest in ABCD. This will focus on organisations currently delivering services and support within the social care and wider health and well-being sector.
  - A new compact between public sector, Third Sector and communities could provide a framework for future partnership working.
  - Activity to strengthen partnership working at a locality level, specifically in relation to the six priority neighbourhoods and the work of Council Committees to accelerate the council's approach to tackling poverty and inequality in the city.

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<sup>10</sup> 'Asset Based Community Development - a guide for Local Authorities' produced by NESTA as part of a series of learning products which explore the new operating models emerging in local government.

(f) *Impact:*

- Develop a shared approach to measuring the impact of ABCD, building on the work of Leeds Beckett University. LBU committed to working with Leeds City Council to identify robust approaches to the evaluation of place-based working and community resilience.
- Develop the activity with NESTA and the local authorities involved in the programme through an on-going dialogue and potentially an action learning set.

### **Looking to the future**

- 3.18 The Council faces an unprecedented financial challenge due to the impact of ten years of austerity and Covid 19. Like other local authorities we continue to research what is best practice, innovate and achieve best value in the services we commission or provide. If the scale of reductions in funding continues we may have to fundamentally reconsider what and how the council meets the needs of its citizens. ABCD can contribute to the response to this civic challenge.
19. The experience of Covid highlighted the scale of the untapped social capital in the city. Using our resources to mobilise social capital more effectively could, from the example of cities like Seattle, realise a considerable return. In the late 1980s, Seattle reorganised City Hall to strengthen communities and community organisations. A key initiative saw the city match fund the voluntary efforts of citizens to develop neighbourhood plans, enabling local people to contract technical specialists to advise them. The approach proved extremely effective in terms of mobilising communities, engaging 30,000 residents in the neighbourhood planning process and helped the city meet the needs of its citizens from a financially challenged position.

## **4 Corporate considerations**

### **1. Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 The Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adults has been briefed on the report.
- 4.1.2 By its nature, ABCD is community driven. This takes it beyond consultation to citizen and community led. Each ABCD pathfinder site also engages actively with local people to ensure people are aware of the work, particularly through using local, community led, asset mapping.
- 4.1.3 The development of ABCD has also been the subject of numerous community and engagement events in the city over the last few years.

### **2. Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

- 2.1. Ensuring ABCD and strength based social care works for all communities and protected characteristics is a Directorate and Council priority. As such officers have worked with Community Builders to ensure a strong focus on supporting work with an equality focus and to encourage community connectors to come forward from diverse groups and communities. Two of the pathfinders have been funded to strengthen the involvement of people with learning disabilities and we are currently exploring a similar approach for carers in one area. There has also been great synchronicity between the development of ABCD in Leeds and the work of the Migrant Access Project which takes a strong asset based approach.
- 2.2. The ABCD programme has been closely connected to the work on tackling inequalities arising from Covid 19 and the work developing in relation to communities of interest.

### **3. Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

3.1. As ABCD has become more embedded, the programme is meeting a broader range of outcomes that support meeting the Best Council Plan and related strategies, such as health and wellbeing strategy. As more directorates use asset based approaches, for example the community approach to improve physical activity in Active Leeds, the tenant involvement work in Housing, the focus on improving literacy, the use of asset based approaches in cultures etc., the greater the impact on the Best Council Plan.

### 3.2. Climate Emergency

3.3. As noted above, a number of the activities being developed by communities are focussed on improving the environment. There is interest from communities in strengthening the connections to locally led activity focussed on tackling the climate emergency. Work is being developed with 'Our Future Leeds' and the Climate Commission, particularly around the potential to jointly develop Community Builders across Leeds with a focus on citizen/ community led activities that help tackle climate change.

## 4. **Resources, procurement and value for money**

4.1. The identified budget to support ABCD activity is £432,000. This budget includes contributions from: Public Health (£144,000), and Children and Families (£30,000). In 2020/21 there is an additional contribution of £25,000 from Communities and Environment. This directly supports 13 ABCD pathfinders, enables ABCD training to organisations working in Leeds and a dedicated ABCD commissioning and development post in Adults and Health.

## 5. **Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

5.1. There are no specific legal or call in considerations as part of this report.

## 6. **Risk management**

7.6.1 There are no specific resource, procurement or value for money considerations as part of this report.

## 5. **Conclusions**

1. The work on ABCD and asset based approaches so far in Leeds has put us at the forefront of this approach across the country and internationally. ABCD is fundamentally reframing the relationships between the local authority and citizens with the potential to make a significant contribution to improving the Council's sustainability in the long term.

## 6. **Recommendations**

6.1. To note the positive impact of asset based approaches across the city and the important role they played in the Covid response.

6.2. To note the outline plan for the development of ABCD in Leeds.

6.3. To work with key partners across the city to develop ABCD and asset based approaches as a key vehicle for meeting the city's priority outcomes.

## 7. **Background documents<sup>11</sup>**

7.1 None.

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<sup>11</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

## 8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1: Current ABCD Pathfinders in Leeds.
- 8.2 Appendix 2: Summary of outputs 2019/20.
- 8.3 Appendix 3: An overview of the ways in which ABCD has supported communities to thrive.
- 8.4 Appendix 4: Equalities Assessment

### Appendix 1: ABCD Pathfinders in Leeds

<b>Area</b>	<b>Host Organisation</b>
<b>Beeston</b>	Better Action for Families Beeston Village Community Centre, Beeston Park Place, Leeds LS11 8DQ
<b>Beeston Hill</b>	St Lukes Cares 246-252 Dewsbury Road, Leeds LS11 6JQ
<b>Chapelton</b>	BHI (Black Health Initiative) 277 Chapelton Road, Leeds LS7 3DX
<b>Clifton and the Nowells</b>	Learning Partnership The Burton Business Park, Hudson Road, Leeds LS9 7DN
<b>Cookridge</b>	OPAL Welcome In Community Centre, 55 Bedford Drive, Leeds LS16 6DJ
<b>Garforth</b>	Garforth NET Dover Street, Garforth LS25 2LP
<b>Harehills</b> (Carers Lens )	Feel Good Factor 53 Louis Street, Chapelton, Leeds LS7 4BP

<b>Harehills</b> (Literacy Lens )	Learning Partnership The Burton Business Park, Hudson Road, Leeds LS9 7DN
<b>Holbeck</b>	In development
<b>Horsforth</b>	Hft Leeds Office 52, Sugar Mill, Sugar Mill Business Park, Oakhurst Avenue, Leeds LS11 7HL
<b>Lincoln Green</b>	Touchstone 2 – 4 Middleton Crescent, Leeds LS11 6JU
<b>New Wortley</b>	A pathfinder was established but the organisation was unable to continue so an alternative provider is being identified.
<b>Rothwell</b>	Community First Yorkshire Unit A, Tower House, Askham Fields Lane, Askham Bryan, York YO23 3FS
<b>Seacroft</b>	LS14 Trust 45 Ramshead Hill, Seacroft, Leeds LS14 1BT

In addition to the ABCD pathfinders, Gipton AGE work with the same ABCD principles and framework. They are funded as a Community Catalyst to provide support to organisations in relation to ABCD working.

<b>Gipton*</b>	Action for Gipton Elderly 5-11 Oak Tree Drive, Gipton, Leeds LS8 3LJ
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## Appendix 2: Summary of outputs 2019/20

2019 - 2020			
No.	Activity for this period	Target	Actual
1	Number of new Community Connectors	120	146
2	New self-sustaining groups formed	n/a	36
3	Total no. of members of a self-sustaining group	n/a	304
4	Small sparks grants	n/a	33
5	Pathfinder sites supported	12	12
6	Asset maps developed	11	11
7	ABCD Intro training sessions.	28	25
8	ABCD training sessions - Third Sector Organisations	n/a	25

9	ABCD training sessions - Public Sector Organisations	n/a	22
10	ABCD training sessions - Individual attendees	n/a	326
11	Leadership Academy sessions supported	8	6
12	Steering Group meetings	4	3
13	Blogs produced to promote ABCD	6	6

**Appendix 3:  
An overview of the ways in which ABCD has supported communities to thrive<sup>12</sup>**

Characteristic	What does this look like in a thriving community	Examples within the ABCD programme
<i>Control, influence and trust:</i>	Members of the community feel they have control over their own lives, and influence over their own futures; they understand their role and their contribution to the common good is recognised. Trust is fostered within/between communities/ individuals and organisation.	Action for Gipton Elderly (AGE) an early pilot ABCD site have shifted their service delivery model to ABCD, this is now the core of how they work. 16 Community Connectors live in the community, activities are ran by the community with and for the community.

<sup>12</sup> The 'Characteristics of Thriving Communities' was produced by VAL in partnership with LCC.

Characteristic	What does this look like in a thriving community	Examples within the ABCD programme
<i>Social connections:</i>	There is recognition that social connections are as important as work, socio-economic status, or health factors. People are socially connected to community, to family, to friends. The quality of close relationships matters and topping them up when things change is important. Relationships are strong enough to identify when people need more support and when emotional, mental or physical wellbeing is noticeably changing.	Community Connectors have brought both parents and wider communities together, including at an inter-generational level, to provide a range of support and activities for children including play equipment being installed in one area. The success led to the development of a play box for local families. The play equipment has created a place for families to meet and support each other.
<i>Self-resilience:</i>	The characteristics of personal resilience are taught in schools and supported in other shared environments (e.g. care environments and workplaces) including understanding boundaries, self-awareness, self-care, managing disappointment/stress, taking the lead, team working and mindfulness.	One Community Builder is supporting a local resident who lives in a building with 25 flats of single people over 50. He felt socially isolated and wanted to meet new people. He had an idea to cook for his neighbours. The Community Builder supported him with creation of leaflet and involved the housing association. He is now holding a monthly dinner/social evening where people are coming together, making friends and eating good food.
<i>Shared purpose:</i>	Members of the community have shared purpose (e.g. through a family, friends, workplace, community groups, shared identity, faith), the confidence to act when things need changed or improved and they support the purposes of other communities; but with enough room to pursue individual aspirations.	In New Wortley the Community Builder has attended existing mental health groups and spoken with the participants: this has resulted in several people identifying their talents and interests. As a result one person is running a coffee morning while another took over the community Facebook page, another started volunteering on reception, another is leading on the Urban Task Force, another is now doing outdoor maintenance, another is in charge of booking days out for the group and another will be starting a Book Club next month.
<i>Accessible work opportunities:</i>	Work opportunities and pathways to a useful occupation are accessible to all including paid employment, volunteering and cultural or artistic activity. Noting that it's not any job that delivers good outcomes and people who work too much are at risk of serious health consequences. Work aims to be a place that helps create social connection, and sustain wellbeing and resilience.	A number of Community Connectors have used their engagement in a local activity as a springboard into employment. One resident was disengaged from services and had been suffering from anxiety and social isolation and was not been leaving the house. By building up good relationships with the Community Builder and attending the coffee morning her confidence and self-esteem increased and she has re-engaged with services and applied for a job recently.

Characteristic	What does this look like in a thriving community	Examples within the ABCD programme
<i>Inclusive support:</i>	No-one is set aside from the community and their ongoing contribution is recognised, welcomed and supported (e.g. older people, people with learning disabilities).	A Community Builder is supporting a young man with learning and physical disabilities to become a community connector and set up a games group at the local café. A self-reliant multiple sclerosis meet up group worked with the Opal Community Builder and The British Trust for Conservation volunteers in the area which culminated in significant improvements to the gardens including constructing compost bins for garden waste and two raised planters that are designed for use by people with physical disabilities and mobility challenges.
<i>An enterprising and sustainable economy:</i>	There is an enterprising and sustainable economy which includes locally run businesses and social enterprises with a culture of healthy competition.	Better Action for Families support people in the community to run a local market stall on a monthly basis at the Bridge Café in Cross Flats Park (a local social enterprise that is run by people with Learning Disabilities). The Community Builder at LS14 Trust worked with East Street Arts wellbeing programme that has springboard a group of women in the area to set up a new micro enterprise.
<i>Urban planning and facilities:</i>	Community led urban planning is in place and facilitates easy movement between work, home and community facilities such as support providers, heritage/cultural venues, transport & broadband infrastructure.	Communities have shown interest and enthusiasm for engaging with urban planning but have not yet been able to contribute.
<i>Community-led social infrastructure:</i>	There is community supported/led, accessible social infrastructure that facilitates human connection and exchange (e.g. libraries, parks and places to learn such as schools, universities and vocational Institutions, places of worship.) including local institutions which act as communications hubs/spaces where all members of the community can mix & mingle (e.g. community anchors and community centres).	A Community Builder has supported some members of the community to run a bingo group on Fridays, originally to reduce social isolation for single parents during school hours. They then decided to run coffee mornings as a self-help group for single parents to help with stress and anxiety.
<i>Decision making, shared knowledge and skills:</i>	Members of the community are involved in key decisions which affect their communities and take the lead when necessary. They are able to contribute to wider economic, political and social decisions where different communities need to cooperate with each other and there is a culture of sharing knowledge and skills. There is space to raise and deal with difficult issues in a safe environment.	Examples of sharing knowledge and skills include: classes in art therapy in Seacroft, English as a foreign language and Arabic, teaching Makaton to other parents in New Wortley to aid communication with people with learning difficulties. A Pathfinder site in Harehills with a focus on creating a culture of reading and learning has been developed.

Characteristic	What does this look like in a thriving community	Examples within the ABCD programme
<i>Respect and pride in surroundings:</i>	The community respects and takes pride in their surroundings; it is resilient and able to mobilise to provide support in times of crisis.	Whilst tackling the climate emergency, can seem overwhelming to individuals, action taken at a local level can feel more achievable. Community connectors for example in New Wortley, have established walking and litter picking groups. The community in Seacroft has come together to rejuvenate their local park. Residents in Tinshill have been working with the Community Builder from Opal and have created a Sunshine gardening club who have created pop up gardens and work with Tinshill in Bloom who help maintain public spaces in the area.
<i>Community support and communication:</i>	Contact in and between communities is supported by press, media and local events – helping to maintain information, knowledge and understanding between community members and their traditions.	Many of the Pathfinder sites have been utilising social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, particularly since lockdown, to enable social connection through digital platforms. Pathfinder sites to continue to share good news stories on social media platforms through #TogetherLeeds.
<i>A feeling of safety:</i>	Members of the community feel safe both at home and when moving through the community (and beyond) at any time of the day.	The Syrian community supporting older and disabled people in Cross Green and other parts of East Leeds through providing simple repairs in return for conversational English has helped develop relationships across communities leading to an increase in the feeling of safety in the community.
<i>Welcoming of others:</i>	The community welcomes newcomers and treats each other with respect regardless of differences; recognising that, whilst people have differences, there is much more they have in common.	A range of food based activities have been developed to bring people together including the Syrian Kitchen and Roma Kitchen (Migrant Access Project), shared pub lunches in Gipton, and LS14's 'EAT' project which used ABCD to simply bring the community together to eat together and eat well.
<i>Cooperative and collaborative:</i>	There is a high degree of cooperation and collaboration amongst organisations and institutions that deliver support services to the community; with all services co-produced with the community.	Cycling activities held over the school holidays in the Clifton and Nowells community in East Leeds proved to be very popular with the residents. Two people stood out with their potential leadership skills and were supported by the Community Builder to make links with British Cycling. These two people, one 15 and one early 20s, stated that they would be happy to work to improve cycling facilities in the local area. They are helping to fundraise and campaign as well as training to become cycle leaders/ coaches.