

Map assets in your community

01. Background

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This factsheet has been written for you if you want to find out more about how to map assets in your community.
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Community asset mapping is a process where participants make a map or inventory of the resources, skills and talents of individuals, associations and organisations.

A map or inventory of the resources, skills and talents of individuals, associations and organisations is made where you will discover and assemble the links between the different parts of the community, associations and agencies. The knowledge is used to revitalise relationships and mutual support, rebuild communities and neighbourhoods, and rediscover collective power.

Every community has a tremendous supply of assets and resources that can be used to build the community and solve problems, and the asset mapping helps to identify them.

02. Suggested Activities

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Ideally, asset mapping starts with volunteers mapping assets of individuals and of the community. Through this process you will discover the resources, activities and interests you already have.
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You will learn more about what other members of your community (of place, interest or topic) want to do and change. You will find out how to form new and expanding connections to enable you to bring about that change in more inclusive and democratic ways.

Creating a map or an inventory is more than just gathering data and information. It is a development and empowerment tool. The process of discovering the hidden and potential assets in a community creates new relationships and new possibilities.

Asset mapping is most effective when done by a group with an agreed aim. For example if you want to connect more young girls with non-competitive sport, leisure and fun activities, then associations and other asset-holders can respond clearly. In this way your community can strengthen and multiply existing resources and promote better involvement.

The process can be undertaken independently or supported by a skilled community organiser/worker. Here are five steps to conducting a community-led asset mapping exercise:

Step 1. Meet those people who become the core group that will take the lead.

Step 2. Contact the individuals or groups who are active in your community – both formal and informal networks. This will identify the individuals who can do the mapping.

Step 3. Through face-to-face conversations, door knocking and other approaches such as storytelling, these individuals collate the assets and talents of individuals in the community. The residents who get involved recruit more people to help who, in turn, carry on mapping more individuals.

Step 4. Identify the resources and assets of local associations, clubs and volunteers.

Step 5. Map the assets of the agencies including the services they offer, the physical spaces and funding they could provide, and the staff and networks they have. Depending on the local vision, the maps can be extended to include physical, economic and cultural assets. (The next section provides further information on assets.)

Those who are doing the asset mapping ask the individuals and the organisations what they do or have now, but also what they would like to do or be prepared to offer with additional support. In many areas, services have started by mapping associations and agencies because it seems easier and quicker. But if so, then it is absolutely essential not to miss out on the face-to-face work of connecting to individuals and communities.

Without this knowledge, the asset working will risk being limited to sorting out the issues and opportunities that the services or associations have already thought of. If the mapping of associations is being carried out to see what they could offer individuals in their community – for example, social prescribing – those individuals must also be included in the mapping to discover what they can offer to others. ('Social prescribing' is the name given to any social activity on prescription offered by GPs, such as arts on prescription, books on prescription and so on.)

Whole systems

Mapping is being used for 'whole system change' in which individuals, organisations, agencies and communities all map their respective resources and links. The asset approach means that the community is an equal partner in this 'whole system' and that their resources are given equal value. This information is used to reshape the interactions and interventions, invest in community potential and bring about community and organisational change.

03. Additional Information

This diagram shows the different assets in your community

When would you use it?

There are many local circumstances where an asset mapping exercise can help stimulate and motivate change. These include when:

- **there are people who are not engaged with their local community and are isolated and cut off from relationships with their neighbours**
- **a community is fractured, has no sense of its own abilities and no belief that it can change**
- **there are no community associations or where those that do exist are exhausted, have a low membership and are dominated by public agency agendas**
- **agencies only see the community as a source of problems and needs and cannot see where solutions can come from**
- **there is a group of people who organisations see as dependent – for example, people with learning disabilities – so they can challenge these attitudes and empower themselves**
- **communities and staff both want to change things and need to see the world differently in order to discover how they could change. By making visible the things that are undiscovered or unused, the ways people perceive each other can change.**

Assets categories

Asset mapping categorises assets – actual and potential – in six ‘levels’:

1. The assets of individuals: these are their skills, knowledge, networks, time, interests and passions. They can be described as skills of the heart, head and hand. Residents are asked what is good about where they live and what they could bring to make life better for their community.
2. The assets of associations: this is not just the formal community organisations or voluntary groups. It includes all the informal networks and ways that people come together: football teams, allotment associations, workplaces and so on. For example, a pub quiz team has members of interest but it could also offer fundraising, networks and people power.
3. The assets of organisations: this is not just the services that organisations deliver locally, but also the other assets they control, for example, parks, community centres and faith buildings. In fact, it covers anything that could be put to the use of a community to improve its wellbeing. It includes staff and their influence and expertise, which they can use to support new ideas.
4. The physical assets of an area: what green space, unused land, buildings, streets, markets, transport are in the area? Mapping these assets helps people to appreciate their value and to realise the potential productive uses they could be put to.
5. The economic assets of an area: economic activity is at the heart of rebuilding a community. What skills and talents are not being used in the local economy? How do local associations contribute to the local economy by attracting investment and generating jobs and income? Could public spending in the area be used to employ local people instead of outside professionals? How could the residents spend more of their money in local shops and businesses and increase local economic activity?
6. The cultural assets of an area: everyday life is full of creativity and culture. This involves mapping the talents for music, drama, art and the opportunities for everyone to express themselves in ways that reflect their values and identities, improves understanding and tackles their lack of a ‘voice’.

04. Funding Opportunities

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Funding should not be required to undertake the community-asset mapping exercise.
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However you may want to bring in specialist advice and support or additional capacity to help you complete the exercise in which case funding may be sought. The mapping exercise can provide useful evidence, in terms of identifying gaps and demonstrating collaborative working, when applying for funding.

For advice and help, you should seek guidance from your local funding adviser through your local development agency. Full contact details of all local development agencies can be found in the Directory.

05. Useful Contacts

Should you need specialised knowledge to help you undertake your community asset mapping exercise contact ABCD network. They may also be able to advise of any specialised support available in your local area.

The Engaging Together website has a number of useful resources on asset based approaches to working in your community. Visit <http://engagingtogether.org.uk/resources/asset-based-approaches/>.

Your local authority community development team and your local development agency may also be able to help. Other public agencies worth contacting include those in public health who may also be able to help. Full contact details for your local authority and local development agency can be found in the Directory.

06. About the Contributor

The information in this factsheet has been provided by the Healthy Communities Team at the Local Government Group.