

East Hampshire
Asset Based Community Development

Asset mapping guide



Empowering our communities

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EAST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Asset Based Community Development

What is asset mapping?

A key element of ABCD is asset mapping. An asset map represents the process of identifying, connecting, promoting, and mobilising the rich resources and strengths that already exist within the community, whether they are social connections, opportunities, passions, cultural traditions, skills, or financial potential.

Collaborating with the community to create the asset map, fosters a sense of ownership, agency, and resilience within the community.

This empowers and supports individuals to lead and take charge, build foundations, resilience, and capacity that supports sustainable long-term change.

The asset-mapping process and map

1. Define the purpose
2. Agree on community or project boundaries
3. Identify and involve stakeholders
4. Determine methodology and tools
5. Discover and map the assets
6. Connect and apply the knowledge

Note this is fluid and may move back and forth through these step

Define the purpose

Ask yourself, or the group / team, what you hope to achieve by conducting an asset mapping project. These may be related to strategic goals or local aspirations. By outlining a specific goal, you can design better questions. Asking the right questions is key to unlocking potential and making the invisible, visible. If you do not have a specific purpose in mind, the asset mapping process itself can reveal opportunities as residents become motivated when they discover how asset rich their community really is, which can stimulate further activity.

Agree on community or project boundaries

Determine the geographic boundaries that your asset map will include. Are you developing an asset map of a street, suburb, town, parish, or a community of interest? Note, it is often better to start small and go deep, rather than wide and shallow. And you may not want to be too rigid in defining a boundary, especially as you discover more and that assets will often spill across boundaries.

Identify and involve stakeholders

Asset mapping should involve as many community members as possible. Including those whose voices are often less heard. Depending on the purpose, different individuals and groups will have a varying knowledge of a community's assets and will respond to different methods of revealing and recording those assets. Use a wide range of communication methods to find people, newsletters, notice boards, associations, social media etc. This group can change and be expanded upon as you do further asset mapping.

Determine methodology and tools

The idea is to ensure the asset mapping process is fun, visible, and results in building relationships whilst sharing knowledge. The key to asset mapping is to GET CREATIVE. The asset mapping process should be undertaken with a cross section of groups and individuals within the community, and the tools used should be appropriate for each group. Work with the group to agree on the best methodology, noting these may change as you do further asset mapping. See the section below for more detail on methodologies and Appendix 1 for an example of a simple recording template. But you can also use digital tools or build on existing data sets.

Discover the assets

Once you have chosen a method(s), the asset identification process begins. Asset maps are a work in progress and constantly changing and evolving. See the end of this guide for examples of the type of assets you may find.

Displaying the knowledge gathered where it can be easily accessed and modified is useful to maintain engagement from residents. This may be where it can be viewed in a public building, or easily accessible online. This is not just about listing assets. The most important aspect of identifying assets is asking the right questions, to the people creating the map. The aim of asset mapping is to tease out the hidden knowledge.

For example, you can list a neighbourhood centre as an asset, but asking the right questions will give it the context and meaning that is key to unlocking potential.

Questions you might ask in this case could be:

- Who currently uses the neighbourhood centre?
- What activities is it used for?
- What activities could it be used for?
- What physical assets does it have?
- What are its connections to the community?

Connect and apply the knowledge

Asset mapping is about connecting, not counting. Creating an asset map is about building relationships whilst sharing knowledge. The knowledge acquired should be used to further enhance relationships and strengthen community by providing opportunities for residents to get involved and use the talents, skills, and assets they have discovered to achieve tangible outcomes.

Ask yourself:

- How will you apply this knowledge to build and strengthen community?
- How will you create opportunities to mobilise these assets to be powerful and productive together?
- How will you share it across the local neighbourhood?
- How will you apply it to your original purpose?
- How might it be used in future evaluation of the work and ongoing monitoring?



The six types of assets

See the end of this guide for a wider range of examples of what you may find

1. Physical space

Recognising underutilised spaces as potential assets can unlock new opportunities. Identified physical environmental 'anchors' significantly influence connections, access, and equity within a community area. This can be the built and natural environment.

Examples of physical place-based assets:

- Parks and recreational spaces: Places for physical activity, nature, and community events.
- Community centres, faith-based buildings and meeting rooms in pubs and social clubs: Vital resource access points for vulnerable populations.
- Forests/woods/scrub land
- Transit routes and infrastructure: Physical connectors between people and services such as cycle and walking paths or informal local routes or shortcuts.
- Underutilised public spaces: Empty spaces that could become community gardens, vacant buildings with potential for social enterprises.

Mapping these assets helps identify spatial gaps, accessibility issues, and opportunities for place-based interventions and further strategic and business planning.



TOP TOOL TIP!

Make sure to map for Access and Inclusivity

When identifying place-based assets, add simple yet crucial tags like:

'Publicly accessible?' and 'Culturally welcoming?'

You may want to identify who owns the asset and how is it currently utilised?



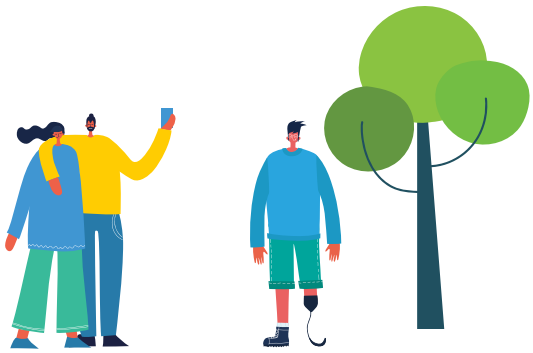
2. Local associations

Associations are the formal and informal groups and networks where community life unfolds, that foster individual assets, building social capital and democracy. This coming together significantly influences access, connection, and equity.

Recognising the associations that are used by people in those areas, as potential assets can unlock new opportunities.

Examples of association assets:

- Faith-based institutions: churches, mosques, temples, often hubs for social support and community events.
- Neighbourhood improvement groups.
- Charitable groups and cultural groups.
- Recreation groups, singing groups, health and fitness groups, mentoring and peer networks.
- Women's, men's, elderly, and youth groups.



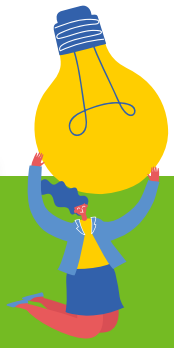
3. Neighbourhood institutions

Institutions often provide stability, infrastructure, and the ability to convene diverse stakeholders. They can be significant providers of services and key partners in large-scale community initiatives. Understanding their roles and potential for collaboration is vital.

Examples of institutional assets:

- Local government agencies
- Hospitals and public health services
- Social care buildings (e.g. care homes and day centres)
- Schools, universities and community colleges
- Third sector anchor institutions
- Fire, Police or other emergency services
- Museums

These entities frequently operate at scale and possess resources that can be leveraged for community-wide impact, making them crucial players in strategic partnerships. You may also want to think about how these resources can be used in additional ways to their core purpose



TOP TOOL TIP!

Go beyond the usual suspects

When mapping institutional assets, go beyond the obvious large institutions.

Consider smaller, specialised agencies or departments within larger entities that might have unique resources or expertise.

4. Local economy

Economic assets are crucial for supporting livelihoods and fostering sustainable development within a community. These encompass institutions and programmes that build local wealth and enhance workforce capacity.

Examples of economic assets:

- Local small businesses: From local shops to worker cooperatives
- Credit unions and community banks: Providing equitable financial services.
- Tourism infrastructure
- Chambers of commerce: Facilitating connections between business and community development
- Workforce development centres: Offering job training, re-skilling, and career pathways.
- Local crafts
- Local funders or grant makers: Fuelling community initiatives and innovation.

Mapping these assets helps communities understand existing economic opportunities and identify areas where targeted investment can stimulate growth and create jobs.



TOP TOOL TIP!



Make sure you mean business!

Tap into Local Business Networks, connect with small business support groups to identify local entrepreneurs, informal economies, and often-overlooked community contributors.

These organisations often have insights into which businesses are community anchors, who is actively hiring locally, or who might offer valuable in-kind support or sponsorship.

5. Individuals – The heartbeat of community capacity



People are the experts of where they live, and the fundamental building blocks of every community. Individuals bring a wealth of lived experience, leadership, unique skills, and vital relationships that form the roots of any successful change effort. Recognising that every resident has value and something to contribute, including often hidden contributions, and potential contributions are the key to unlocking a community's full capacity.

Examples of people assets:

- Gifts, skills, knowledge and capacities of residents living in those areas who want to share and contribute.
- **Community leaders:** Trusted figures in neighbourhoods, coalitions, or grassroots efforts.
- **Residents with lived experience:** People who bring invaluable insight into specific challenges.
- **Youth leaders:** Emerging changemakers who engage peers and influence priorities.
- **Volunteers:** Community members offering their time, energy, and commitment
- **Public-facing workers:** Teachers, support workers, librarians, etc.
- **Everyday citizens with specific skills:** Musicians, gardeners, mechanics, storytellers – talents that can enrich community life.

These individuals are not just resources, they are the connectors within local ecosystems, key influencers, and understand how individual relationships contribute to collective impact. Visualising these connections can reveal hidden strengths and potential collaborators.

TOP TOOL TIP!



Go beyond formal roles

Make a list of 15-20 local individuals with influence, lived experience, or unique skills, even if they are not part of a formal organisation. Think broadly about hobbies, professions, and informal leadership.

Tag them by role (e.g. youth, elders, connectors, artist, builder) and note their current level of engagement. This gives you a relational entry point for deeper mapping and uncovers often-overlooked assets.

6. The soul and story of the community

Stories carry life and meaning. Our memories and stories are among the ways communities stay together, and they are particularly important in building inclusive and equitable communities. Cultural assets connect people to their history, identity, and traditions, enriching community life and fostering a sense of belonging.

Examples of Stories and Cultural Assets could be:

- Stories of background and personal history
- Stories of successful community development
- Stories of community resilience
- Community theatres and festivals
- Heritage or historical societies
- Lived experience knowledge holders.
- Cultural centres for ethnic or migrant groups

These assets often intersect with people and places and can serve as powerful catalysts for civic engagement, social cohesion, and celebrating the unique identity of a community.



TOP TOOL TIP!

Deep-dive into cultural assets

Do not just list cultural organisations. Map the networks between them and how they connect with the broader community.

Identify key cultural brokers, or informal groups that may not have a formal organisational structure.

Discover people who have 'lived experience' and want to share their story.

Explore how cultural assets are used to build social capital, promote civic engagement, and preserve community identity.

Consider mapping the flow of cultural knowledge and practices within the community.

Link with other sources of culture, such as the East Hampshire Cultural Study.



Methods for mapping community assets

Asset mapping is the heart of ABCD. It is not a survey exercise; it is a relationship building process. Key to this is hearing from residents about what matters to them. This can be done outside of traditional consultation exercises and can include:

One to one conversations with residents

Use these to uncover skills, passions, and motivations.

Ask questions like:

"What do you care about enough to act on?"

"What skills or experiences would you enjoy sharing?"

"What would you love to see happen here?"

Community workshops

Interactive sessions that bring people together to map assets collectively.

Activities could include:

- Skills mapping on large sheets
- Community treasure hunt
- Mapping associations and networks
- Visioning exercises

Attend existing groups/ associations meetings

Go to where people are already meeting, ask to have a slot on their agenda, or just hang around before/after, to hear what people have to say.

Asset walks

Alongside identifying local assets, use the walks to further engage with residents, either through involving them in the asset walk, or talking to those you meet along the way.

Light touch surveys

Use only to complement conversations. Keep them simple and accessible.



Methods for connecting assets

As assets are identified connections will be made naturally, but these can also be built on. The Community Builder (see role in toolkit) can do this through:

Match people with shared interests

This may be linking people with a shared interest, but who do not know each other who then may form a small group e.g. nit and natter. Or linking groups e.g. a walking group with a litter picking group.

Link associations and institutions

Some good examples of this would be, a local school offering space to a youth music group, or a care home opening its dining area for community meals.

Use digital tools

WhatsApp groups, community Facebook pages, local forums, whatever people already use.

Host connection events

Coffee mornings, skill swap sessions, neighbourhood meet-ups.

Activate relationships

The key message of ABCD is not about listing assets, it's about activating relationships.

The map is not the territory

Asset maps are not static. They are constantly changing and developing.

That is another reason why the mapping is as important as the map. Asset mapping is an ongoing exercise. Each time new assets will be identified (and some will have changed or even disappeared). But asset mapping, alongside other elements of ABCD will continue to nurture assets.

TOP TOOL TIP!

Map it your own way!



Don't get hung up on the physical nature of the map - use the methods that work best for that neighbourhood.

Asset maps can be digital, take the form of lists in directories, be visual, and be very creative (from quilts to murals, or models).

There is no defined correct way.

Do what works best for you and the neighbourhood.

Six community assets



Physical assets 1

Physical spaces such as:
Gardens
Parks
Playgrounds
Car parks
Bike paths
Walking paths
Forests/forest reserves
Picnic areas
Campsites
Fishing spots

Associations 2

Animal care groups
Heritage groups
Anti Crime Groups
Hobby & Collector Groups
Business Organisations
Men's Groups
Charitable Groups
Mentoring Groups
Civic Events Groups
Mutual Support Groups
Cultural Groups
Neighbourhood Improvement
Education Groups
Groups
Elderly Groups
Political Organisations
Environmental Groups
Recreation Groups
Family Support Groups
Religious Groups
Health Advocacy and
Service Clubs
Fitness Groups
Union Groups
Veteran's Groups
Women's Groups
Youth Groups

Institutions 3

Schools
Universities
Community colleges
Police stations
Hospitals
Libraries
Social service agencies
Non profit organisations
Museums
Fire departments
Foundations

Local economy 4

Local Economy
For-Profit Businesses
Consumer Expenditures
Merchants
Chamber of Commerce
Business Associations
Banks
Credit Unions
Foundations
Institutional-Purchasing
Power & Personnel
Barter and exchange
Corporations and Branches

Individuals 5

Gifts, skills, capacities, knowledge and traits of:
Youth
Older adults
Artists
Welfare recipients
People with disabilities
Students
Parents
Entrepreneurs
Activists
Veterans

Culture & stories 6

Background and personal history
What you like to do and contribute
Existing and ongoing skills and capacities
Successful community development
Economic growth
Adressing racism
Including those who are marginalised
Recognising the value of everyone
A time when you or your group felt appreciated and valued.
A time the community was at it's best

EAST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

ABCD – Asset Mapping Guide

This guide will be developed and updated over time to ensure that is remains fit for purpose.