

Asset and strengths-based conversations

Overview

Focusing on a person's strengths and assets is a key requirement of the Care Act 2014 (DH, 2016). The objective being to enable the person to identify and build on what they already have - existing skills, knowledge and networks - to create a proportionate, appropriate and sustainable response to their social care needs. The process of working with the person to recognise and acknowledge what they themselves have to offer should foster a sense of empowerment and independence. The approach is important not only as part of the assessment process but also a part of a preventative agenda too.

The phrase 'asset-based' is often used interchangeably with the term 'strengths-based', so what do we mean by these? SCIE (2015) suggest that these relate to:

- personal assets or strengths – e.g. the abilities, skills, knowledge, potential, resilience of the person and the physical and economic resources they have available to them
- social networks and assets or strengths found within this - e.g. the abilities, skills, knowledge, potential, resilience of the person's family, friends, neighbours and the physical and economic resources they have available to them
- community assets or strengths, also known as 'social capital' and/or 'universal resources' – and the physical and economic resources available within it e.g. buildings, groups, private, public and voluntary organisations, transport, leisure services and so on

When thinking about this approach the importance of both the role of practitioners and of commissioners should not be overlooked. Whilst practitioners can identify the strengths of the person and their social networks, to be fully successful a whole systems approach will be necessary and commissioners must ensure that community assets are well developed and social capital is plentiful. Asset-based community development is a methodology employed by a number of local authorities in terms of commissioning and the 'three conversations' model is being adopted by many as a framework for their assessment conversations (Gollins et al, 2016; Romeo, 2016).

We should be mindful that focusing on assets and strengths is relevant not only in interactions with the people we are supporting but also when communicating with colleagues, with other professionals and particularly in supervision.

Practice development exercises

1. Listen to the audio clips of [Martha and Shirley's](#) conversation in order. After listening to each clip consider the questions below:

- a) What their views are on how strengths-based this conversation is? Why do you think this?
 - b) What strengths assets are being identified? Are these personal, social network or community assets?
 - c) What, if any, risks can they identify? Discuss how they would draw upon Shirley's strengths and assets to enable positive risk-taking
2. Reflect on the last three supervision sessions you were part of where you were the supervisee:
- a) To what extent do you feel the discussion focused on your strengths and assets?
 - b) To what extent do you feel 'coached' by the supervisor and supported to arrive at solutions yourself, as opposed to being given the answers or direction?
 - c) What might have been done differently to work with the supervisor to reflect on your practice and identify solutions, good practice and development?

Relevant research, references and further reading

Daly M and Westwood S (2016) *Asset-based approaches, older people and social care: an analysis and critique*. Ageing and Society. Available on line at <http://eprints.keele.ac.uk/2738/1/Daly%20and%20Westwood%20F.pdf> [Accessed 06/03/2017]

Department of Health (2016) *Care and Support Statutory Guidance (Updated)* [Available on line at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance/person-centred-care-and-support-planning> – accessed 07/06/2016]

Fox A (Ed) (2013) *The new social care: Strength-based approaches*. London: RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) 2020 Public Services Hub.

Gollins, T., Fox, A., Walker, B., Romeo, L., Thomas, J., and Woodham G. (2016) *Developing a Wellbeing and Strengths-based Approach to Social Work Practice: Changing Culture*. [Accessible online at <http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/assets/Resources/TLAP/BCC/TLAPChangingCulture.pdf> - Accessed 06/03/2017]

The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (Iriss) (2012) 'Strengths-based approaches for working with individuals'. *Iriss Insights no 16*. Glasgow: The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services.

NESTA Asset-based approaches in a health and well-being context
Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) *Strength based approach. Care Act 2014*. Video available online: <http://www.scie.org.uk/care-act-2014/assessment-and-eligibility/strengths-based-approach/care-act-video-eligibility-approach.asp>

Romeo L (2016) *Three conversations multiple benefits* Available online at <https://lynromeo.blog.gov.uk/2016/09/26/three-conversations-multiple-benefits/> [Accessed 06/03/2017]

Romeo L (2017) *Give me strength!* Available online at <https://lynromeo.blog.gov.uk/2017/03/02/give-me-strength/> [Accessed 06/03/2017]

Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) (2015) *Key messages on a strengths-based approach for assessment and eligibility under the Care Act 2014*. London: SCIE. Available online: <http://www.scie.org.uk/care-act-2014/assessment-and-eligibility/strengths-based-approach/keymessages.asp>