

Croydon Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Pilot Project Report

Summary April 2014



“ABCD is a great project. For someone who hasn’t been in the area for a year yet I have met many people and know much more about what is available and how to access it especially as the mother of young children. On a wider level I feel that the connections I have made offered something much needed to others in the area and was done in a way that is open to them. There are many things to share.”

Thornton Heath Resident

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This booklet is a summary of the ABCD Pilot Project report.

It is designed to give an overview only. You can read the full report on the council's website at: www.croydon.gov.uk. This report is for everyone especially community development workers, Council officers, voluntary organisations, health workers, police and anyone looking to adopt the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach as good practice for community development.

If you find it easier to read large print, use an audio tape, Braille or need to communicate in a language other than English please let us know. Tel: **020 8726 6000**

Foreword



I am very pleased to introduce this report on the Community Connectors Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Pilot Project. I would like to thank our local voluntary sector partners, Croydon Voluntary Action, the Asian Resource Centre Croydon and Gingerbread Corner as well as the many residents

and community groups who gave their time to deliver this project.

We are committed to bringing hope and unlocking the ambitions and aspirations of all who live and work in Croydon and one of the ways we will achieve this is by empowering our residents to improve their local area. The report demonstrates the ABCD approach is an effective tool in making this happen.

The diversity of community activities that have taken place as a result of this pilot is particularly impressive. It is clear that shifting the focus from what's missing in an area to recognising and strengthening what's already there, can successfully address issues of community isolation and fragmentation. This has been recognised by the 2014 Municipal Journal Achievement Awards with a well-deserved commendation for 'Excellence in Community Engagement'. Congratulations to all those involved.

We are proud of our borough and we believe it is time to be ambitious for Croydon. This report shows our vibrant and diverse community shares this view.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Watson".

*Councillor Mark Watson
Cabinet Member for Safety and Justice*

What is the ABCD Approach?

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)

uses the skills, experience, talents and enthusiasm of local individuals and communities to **strengthen communities and families**. It is based on the idea that strong communities are built by recognising, celebrating and harnessing the 'community assets' that are already there.

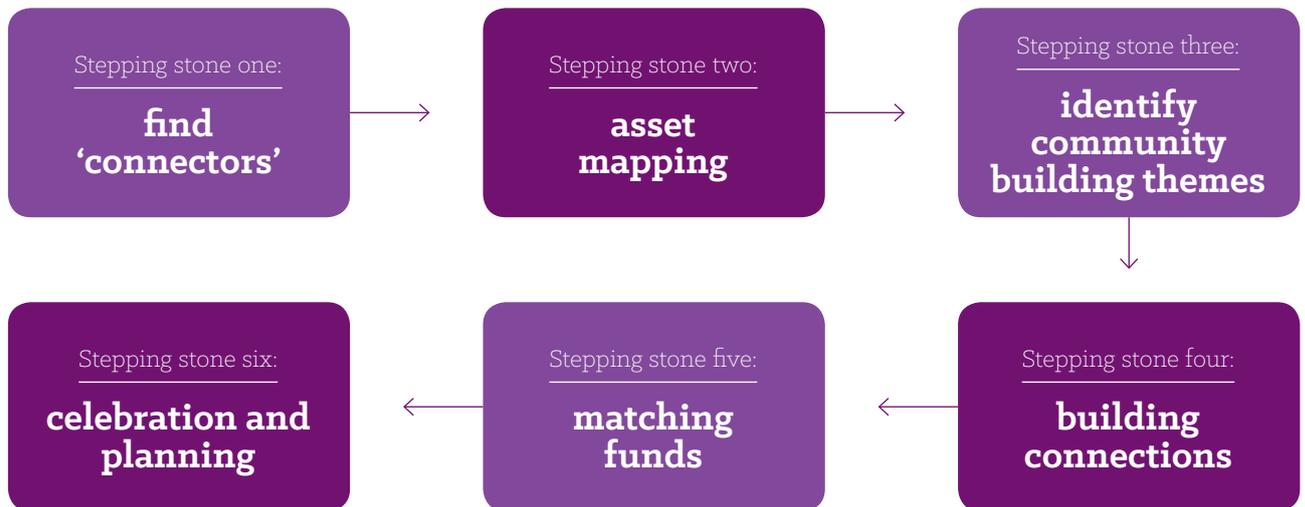
The Community Connectors ABCD Project's aim was to adopt a **community sensitive 'stepping stone' approach** to build up local communities in the wards of Broad Green, Selhurst and Thornton Heath. Why these areas? These wards are some of the most deprived in the borough and significantly affected by the riots of 2011.

The Council commissioned local voluntary sector partners Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA), working with Asian Resource Centre Croydon and Gingerbread Corner to deliver the project, with mentoring, support and guidance from national experts, Nurture Development.



The Project followed the *Six Stepping Stones* ABCD methodology as devised and promoted by Nurture Development

The Six Stepping Stones Model



While the traditional ‘needs’ based approach to community development tends to prescribe ‘solutions’ and create agencies that deliver services to clients, the ABCD approach focuses on facilitating the empowerment of citizens by helping them to identify and share their strengths and co-create their own social innovations.

Deficit Approach:	Strengths Based Approach:
Focus on Deficiencies	Focus on Assets
Problem Response	Opportunity Identification
Charity Orientation	Investment Orientation
Grants to Agencies	Grants, Loans, Investments, Leverage
More services	Fewer Services
High Emphasis on Agencies	Emphasis on Associations
Focus on Individuals	Focus on communities/ neighbourhoods
Maintenance	Development
See People as Clients	See People as Citizens and Co-producers
‘Fix People’	Develop Potential
Programmes are the Answer	People are the Answer

What did the Project Involve?

Workshops

Three 'Introduction to ABCD' one day workshops were presented by Nurture Development in the first few weeks of the project, one in each of the three wards. They were very well received and ignited a passion for ABCD among community development practitioners, health workers, council officers, police officers, a highly diverse range of local people and voluntary associations, large and small.

Ideas Fairs

The Ideas Fairs were particularly memorable events where people came together to share their stories and their ideas for a better future. Many of the project ideas received their first public airings at these events and the new connections made and the generous offers of help received from the diverse range of local people present at the Ideas Fairs all but ensured the success of every one of the projects. The depth of engagement at the Ideas Fairs proved to be a key turning point, allowing local citizens to connect with each other to support and offer gifts to their communities, leading to stronger projects with increased local support.

Community of Practice

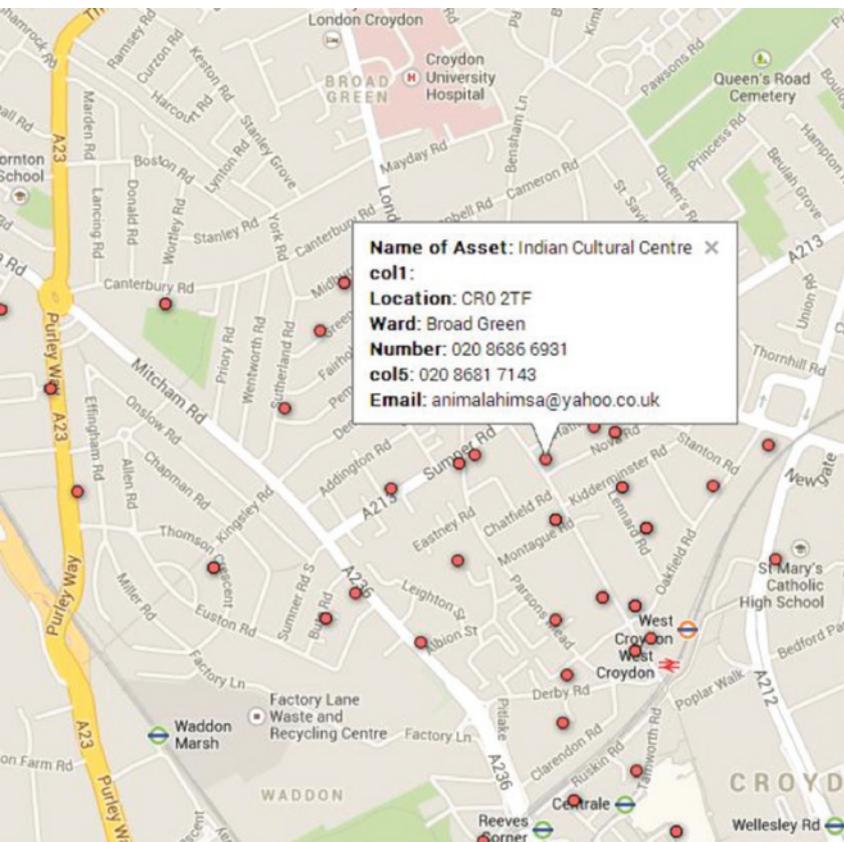
This was convened once a month. It enabled collaboration with council staff, the voluntary and community sectors, local business people and with politicians. It was an opportunity for people to come together to keep up to date with the project, support and challenge each other, deepen practice and share their expertise, information and connections. It was also an opportunity to learn more about how to engage with local communities and how doing so may assist them in their daily work.





Mentoring Sessions

These were organised every fortnight by Nurture Development for Community Builders based on forming 'developmental alliances'. It offered the participants opportunities to become more aware of ABCD, to identify options and to initiate action. Nurture Development led training sessions for 62 of the Community Connectors in the ABCD approach, which included help with going walkabout, asset mapping and learning conversations. The Community Builders also played a crucial motivational role. However, the ideas for making life better for others came directly from the Connectors themselves that were at the heart of the project. These formed genuine, positive and enlightened responses to the hard times that so many of the people coming into contact with the Connectors were experiencing.



Asset map of Broad Green

Asset Maps

CVA created an online neighbourhood (<http://talk2croydon.co.uk/ABCD>) and Google fusion asset maps which became a rich and valuable source of information and vehicle for communication. Asset Maps were published online and blogs and write ups of the events and activities were made available to all, becoming the first point of call for all announcements.

What did the Project Achieve?

Outcomes

This project has shown that community isolation and fragmentation can be successfully challenged by shifting the focus from what's missing to strengthening what's already there in neighbourhoods and communities. The key outcome was a successful engagement of over 300 local people – both in the new start-up activity and in visioning exercises.

There were good levels of participation in the project across different communities in particular those communities that are traditionally under-represented. Amongst the connectors, 21% of these were young people, 31% were from a Black background and 29% from an Asian background.

There was evidence of increased knowledge of local community assets within wards and a clear improvement in how community members taking part in the project felt about their area by the end of the project.

Outputs

- Exceeded a target of 60 new community connectors reaching 77 connectors
- 77 community projects – (See Appendix)
- 60 connectors received match funding; i.e. funding from other sources

The number of groups, clubs and associations volunteering their time to support the project in each area were:

- Broad Green associations engaged with: 81
- Selhurst associations engaged with: 87
- Thornton Heath associations engaged with: 76

Legacy

Croydon now has a national reputation for leading on the application of ABCD and has contributed a great deal to a wider recognition and endorsement of the Six Stepping Stones model.

- CVA ran another ABCD project funded by NHS England from October 2013 to March 2014. The achievements and lessons learned on the first ABCD project informed the planning and implementation of the second project.
- CVA's Volunteer Centre has been relocated to the Centrale shopping centre and is offering a hub space for the Community Connectors.
- CVA is now a member of ABCD Europe Faculty.
- There is also scope for referring ABCD projects to the new Enterprise Hub for further advice and support.
- The Big Local and *Community First* initiatives have also declared an intention to support the ABCD approach.
- Jim Diers, an Associate at Nurture Development, gave a presentation at a seminar in November 2013 in Croydon on the 'Seattle Model'. He is known as the Albert Einstein of local government for creating responsive neighbourhood based teams, mini town halls, and co-produced services for active citizens and responsible communities. The event showcased Croydon's track record in ABCD work.
- The Barnwood House Trust in Gloucestershire has invited a party of Community Builders, Community Connectors and some of the CVA Xpress workers in Croydon to visit the County to share what they have achieved. They will meet with the "You're Welcome" ABCD team and representatives from the eight communities involved.
- CVA has been allocated funds by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) under the 'Our Place' Programme to run 'Our Place Croydon Project'. The new project will benefit from the headstart given by the pilot, with significant community involvement already secured in the target wards of New Addington and Fieldway.
- Croydon Council was commended in the Excellence in Community Engagement category at the 2014 MJ Local Government Achievement Awards 2014 for its work on the Asset Based Community Development project



Jim Diers speaking at the ABCD Community Connectors event in November 2013

Next Steps

The approach has been community owned and led which has also strengthened its sustainability. A range of local skills, talents, local knowledge and resources have been uncovered through this process and a diverse mix of locally led projects emerged. The key lesson has been that the creation of informal associations can often provide an environment for enterprise and innovation to grow.

The priority is to encourage people to get involved in their local neighbourhoods by utilising their skills and knowledge as well as applying for the resources to roll out ABCD further across the borough on the basis that:

- (i) the Community Connectors ABCD model is an effective way to strengthen communities
- (ii) the role of the Community Builder is essential.

Want to find out more?

The people, their aspirations, their offers of help and details of their new connections and their projects have been captured in write ups, blogs and videos which have all been posted at www.talk2croydon/abcd. This serves as a community resource, a record of achievements and social archive.

At www.nurturedevelopment.org people will find a treasure chest of resources, including articles, videos and blogs on all aspects of ABCD.

Glossary

The ABCD Approach

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) builds on the skills, knowledge and potential within the community and its members and asserts that strong communities are built by recognising, celebrating and harnessing the ‘community assets’ that are already there.

Community Connectors

Local people who are known by and who know their neighbours. These people are called ‘Community Connectors’ and their curiosity, energy, loyalty and kindness are the foundations upon which everything else is built.

Community Builders

These are paid staff, appointed to identify the Connectors in a community and provide them with training support.

Stepping Stone Approach

These are the six distinct phases that a Community Builder can identify, connect and mobilise to enable greater levels of citizen led action.

Appendix

Broad Green

The ABCD approach resulted in the initiation of a range of local projects including:

- Community Fun Day
- Food for Thought – Greet & Eat
- Little Miracles Home from Home (2)
- Community Breakfast Club
- Future of Croydon – Fashion
- Kelvi
- New Energy through Breathing & Yoga
- Cake Making & Icing (Decorating)
- CRIS (Croydon Renewable I.T. Skills)
- Fashion, recycled & refreshed
- Website classes
- Tailoring (Dress Making)
- Cricket Club
- Cinematic Dance Club & Singing Club
- Community Cricket
- Asian Dressing
- Creative Spectacular
- Edutainment Radio
- Turkish Youth Community group
- Cricket for Gunster
- Broadgreen Residents Garden

Selhurst

The ABCD approach resulted in the initiation of a range of local projects including:

- Sports in the Community
- Community Gritting
- Family Camping Weekend
- Selhurst Swap Shop
- Achieving Real Talent
- Sewing Open Day
- Raised Voices
- Yearning for Learning
- Project FMP
- House of Jerry
- Life Companions
- Youth in Partnership Project (YiPP)- Music Literacy Holiday Club
- London's Young Chefs Academy
- Personal Development Workshops
- Making Friends in Selhurst
- Music Literacy
- Women in Action
- Coming back to work/CV workshops
- Saving Our Lollypop People Campaign

Thornton Heath

The ABCD approach resulted in the initiation of a range of local projects including:

- The Bespoke Relationship Seminars
- Trip Down Memory Lane Project
- Parade of Nations
- Portuguese Fellowship
- Dance Club
- Music Band
- Chill Time Focus Group
- Holiday Scheme
- GP Partnership Tool
- Kelvi
- Knitting Club (Needlework & Fabrics)
- Table Tennis
- Coffee Morning
- Dress Making
- ICARE Project
- Women Know your Worth
- Strimming the Media
- Community Garden
- Confidence for Thornton Heath
- Blast from the Past
- Vision the Rising Stars
- Singing Youth Club
- Cake Making
- Youth Hub
- Give Imagination
- Vision Early Registration
- Picnic in the Park

Projects that were supported by the ABCD pilot that did not require funding include:

- Intergenerational mentoring and teaching
- Learning Maths through Dominos
- Thornton Heath Nature and History walk DVD
- Youth spaces
- Music and emotional well-being sessions
- Number 50 Bus campaign
- Green Lane Safety campaign
- Athletics training for Year 3 pupils
- Supporting parents of excluded children
- Grandparents support
- Hub for young homeless people
- Community Garden in Thornton Heath Recreation
- Black Churches in Croydon developing funding bids for education and childcare
- Information bulletin to parents via childminder network
- Fashion project with young women
- Intergenerational work- young girls and care home

