

## **Assets in Scotland: Note of the meeting held on 24 January 2012, Glasgow**

### **Areas of potential interest in assets**

How 3rd sector can play a role

Harnessing community and voluntary capital

What do you with assets once they have been mapped

Value for money for Public Services in an environment of cuts

Assets as an authentic approach to tackling poverty

Links to the Danish approach to youth criminal background

Role of intangible assets

Health improvement perspective in contrast to deficit approach

Health inequalities more generally

### **Background to meeting**

The Christie Commission and its implications suggest that new approaches to public services are needed. Various parts of Scottish Government are interested in assets

### **Definition of an assets based approach**

There were some agreed principles about an assets based approach, which had been drawn in the past from organizations represented:

- Values
  - Relationships
  - Trust
- Doing things with, not too

However there was a recognition that people would informally be using these principles but may be describing them as coproduction approach or may not even be describing their approach at all.

There was further discussion about the different levels of using an assets based approach that may be used across different organizations represented, including working with communities to identify assets that can support their own development, individuals using an assets based approach to support self management of conditions, amongst others.

General acceptance that assets describes both tangible and intangible assets, though with some suggesting that intangible assets are more linked with community development.

### **Concerns about the use of an asset based approach**

An implicit suggestion that inequalities are the responsibility of individuals not utilizing their assets. There are concerns here about the impact of this negative view of assets in the context of such things as gender inequalities and an understanding that assets must empower individuals if it is to have an impact.

Challenge in measuring an assets based approach – both from a funders' perspective in terms of what makes an application good (many assets or not many assets) – and from an delivery

perspective in terms of how do measure the different between now and before if it always based on a positive view of the situation.

### **Assets as one part of a bigger picture**

Risk of assets being perceived as a panacea to the future provision of public services, rather than dealing with structural problems that need to be resolved. These systemic structural problems include management styles, regulation, projects based work, short term funding all stop frontline staff from implementing new approaches, including assets.

Wider work needs to be done to prepare for an assets based approach in public services, such as working with communities to change mindset about thinking about positive aspects of the community. This is not simply about assets but a wider thinking of the systems that exist.

Problems, challenges and needs based service provision are all based on a deficit approach. Operationalising an assets based approach in the context of how provision decisions are made, especially in the current economic climate would take significant consideration.

Changes need to be made in the way people are educated in such professions as doctors, social workers that support an assets based approach and public servant as facilitator.

An assets based approach should perhaps be consider alongside other agendas such as the inequalities.

### **How assets sits with other approaches**

How do other new thinking such as behavioural psychology and change link to this approach to assets. Not a nudging approach in the way that a big society model could be perceived. Defining difference between Scotland and England approach.

Assets is an important part of democratic participation, as integral to the approach is involvement in services, Politics and politics. Assets should be part of the discussion in Scottish Government about democratic participation.

There is a political mandate from Scottish Government for an assets based approach in many policies, but it has usually been interpreted very light touch by organizations that deliver or commission services.

### **Public servants**

One reading of the Christie Commission is the changing practice of being a public sector manager to a facilitator or enabling role. Public servants should be facilitating people to solve their own problems - catalyst for individuals and communities. Need be trained in this.

Example of the Police using community capacity building to reduce what they have to deliver themselves. If police believe that these approaches can work and these are difficult problems that this works.

There is a need for the translation of intellectual debate to a coherent message for frontline staff who can't or will not engage in the debate.

There is little incentive to change within health and social work to change, this needs to be changed

Challenges around the trust in local government and how this needs to be increased if an assets based approach was to be implemented.

### **Assets is an active approach**

Identifying and releasing assets in groups.

Mapping needs to lead to change - so has to go beyond this. Have to enable people to act. This needs to happen as it is not where Things are happening.

### **Measurement and evidencing**

Need consideration about what to look for and the impact of an assets based approach is measured.

Good quality evidence is needed and in the cases of Local Authorities need to dramatically improve how they apply evidence. Lack of demand from organisations about applying good quality evidence.

Suggestions that best quality existing evidence could be used to support an assets based approach through applying an 'assets filter'.

### **Assets in practice**

The National performance framework could be considered assets based.

There was discussion about how you identify and what are competencies for assets:  
Assets based competencies relates to team based competencies

Social Work tends to work with higher end of problems that assets based approach could cover but an assets based approach is more likely to be considered a preventative approach. Concerns about what this would be mean for funding – either of higher end projects or preventative work.

Some of the interpretations of an assets based approach focused on how an individual relates to a community. There are challenges about the level of what an asset based approach can support - What about those people who are too difficult for the community to deal with eg older people with dementia?

Stories were recognized as important part communicating the message of assets and ensuring that communities and individuals want to tell stories as currently don't believe their stories are worth telling, and that the system doesn't want to listen, and understanding how they fit into this high level talk.

### **Barriers and facilitators**

There is a need to identify barriers and enabling factors to people who can make change in communities.

Needs still need to be conceptualized, as there is challenge with an assets based approach that a community would not be considered deprived.

Whose definition of risks counts, as there are often opposing attitude to risk. An assets Based approach can help to conceptualise risk.

Impact of welfare reforms may be even more significant to communities and individuals than the current financial crisis.

Local Authorities are cutting external funding (inc community organisations) rather than cutting their own staff.

Communities can help to provide assets for individuals and families which don't have access to positive assets within their immediate life or network.

It is important in the implementation of an assets based approach to build in what already exists that communities and individuals already care about - rather than the opposite.

### **What is currently happening**

Linking an asset based approaches to community development and considering a competencies frameworks.

How community development relates to public sector service reform.

Action research on assets based approaches - about what works for them.

Resources on community capacity building for public bodies to understanding capacity in local communities.

Case studies of barriers and facilitators for implementing an assets based approach.

### **What next**

#### **1. Risk**

#### **2. Measurement and evaluation**

Evaluation working group

#### **3. Access to key strategic influencers**

#### **4. Chance to link up on commonalities**

#### **5. Training/competencies/public servants and professional formation**

Speaking to SW frontline staff about integration Health and social care, and to find out about how staff think about an sets based approach (ADSW)

#### **6. Making I a thing/brand (visualisation and storytelling)**

Visualise the information about what is happening (Snook)

Make it a thing, to ensure that we don't lose momentum - video, slides (Snook)

**7. Actions (what actions)**

Blog/email about discussion and examples given during the day

Diagram in the glass half full - TO BE DISTRIBUTED

**8. Name situations where nominal**

**9. Language /conceptual (ref think public or YouTube, Fiona set of values, asset. Based worker**

**10. Barriers**

Looking at barriers with orgs to accessing funding – other organisations to get involved

**11. Practice examples of assets proofing docs and policies**

Communities of practice (IRISS)

Visualise information about what is happening