



Community Assets

As well as assessing the needs of their community, it is essential for local churches to look at the assets and gifts within their own church community.

“Communities have never been built upon their deficiencies. Building communities has always depended on mobilising the capacity and assets of people and place” Kretzman and McKnight (1993) – Building Communities from the Inside Out.

The Church Urban Fund Together Network have produced an excellent document on An Asset Based Approach to Tackling Poverty. As well as giving a good overview of the differences between a needs-based approach and an asset-based approach, the document also contains some great case studies of churches that have successfully implemented social action projects.

www2.cuf.org.uk/research/tackling-poverty-england-asset-based-approach

This report summarises the difference between the asset-based approach and needs-based approach as follows:

Needs-based approaches	Asset-based community development
Start by looking at a community’s deficiencies and problems.	Starts by identifying the community’s existing assets.
Tend to characterise people in poverty as victims or passive recipients of help.	Believes in local people as active agents for change.
Turn to external agencies – government programmes, researchers or charities – to find solutions and bring about change.	Believes that local people are the greatest resource for building a stronger community.
Are often target-driven and reliant on grant funding given on the basis of certain needs being addressed.	The journey is as important as the destination. On this journey, people discover their strengths and learn how to work together to overcome problems.
Can reduce community ‘togetherness’ as highlighting problems attracts outside resources and ‘professionalised’ solutions.’	Encourages collaboration, using existing capacities to build the resilience and strength of the whole community.

The Local Government Association have produced a document that looks at how an asset approach can improve community health and wellbeing:

www.assetbasedconsulting.net/uploads/publications/A%20glass%20half%20full.pdf

This document contains the 12 principles of an asset based approach:

- 1) Everyone has gifts. There are unrecognised capacities and assets in every community. Find them and provide opportunities for people to offer them.
- 2) Relationships build a community. See them, build them and utilise them. Citizens are at the centre.
- 3) It is essential to engage the wider community as actors not just as recipients of services.
- 4) Leaders involve others as active members of the community.
- 5) People care about something. Find out what motivates individuals.
- 6) Identify what motivates people to act. Every community is filled with invisible 'motivations for action'.
- 7) A listening conversation is the way to discover motivation and invite participation.
- 8) Ask, ask and ask. People must be offered an opportunity to act.
- 9) Asking questions rather than giving answers invites stronger participation. A powerful way to engage people is to invite communities to find their own answers – with agencies following to help.
- 10) A citizen-centred 'inside-out' organisation is the key to community engagement
- 11) Institutions have reached their problem solving limits. They are stretched thin and need more skilful and wider engagement with communities.
- 12) Institutions are servants. Ask people what they need and offer help, step back and create opportunities for people to act together

One approach to finding out about the assets of a community include facilitating a community conversation through a "World Café". A toolkit for hosting a World Café event can be found here:

www.theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Cafe-To-Go-Revised.pdf

Nurture Development produce a great resource called the Good Life Conversation which can be found at the following link:

www.nurturedevelopment.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/GoodLifeConversation.pdf

Both these resources guide you through a series of questions to help you understand the gifts and contributions individuals can bring to the community.

They will help you to do the following:

- discover the things that enrich a person's life;
- explore which passions can be developed to support community wellbeing;
- connect a person's gifts to other assets to create an abundant community.

An individual's gifts can be divided into the following three categories.

Gifts Of The Head

These are the things we like to learn about and that we enjoy talking with others about. They may include topics such as art, astronomy, history or movies.

Gifts Of The Heart

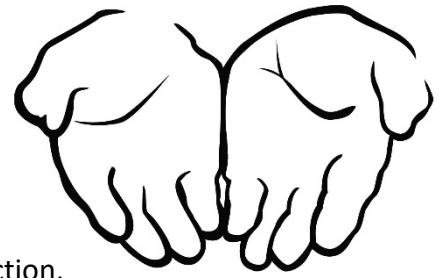
These are the activities we like to be involved with because we care deeply about them. They include causes and projects such as the environment, civic life, children or caregiving.

Gifts Of The Hands

These are skills we know how to do and would like to share with others. They may include crafts, sports or cooking.

On the following pages you can find an example of a community in Smethwick, who looked at these three gifts.

GIFTS OF THE HAND



- **Practical skills** - helping move items, litter picking, gardening, driver (with your own vehicle), warehouse skills, stewarding, SIA security badge, supermarket collections
- **Technical skills** - maintenance/DIY, repairing items, construction, restoring furniture
- **Computer skills**
- **Creative skills** - art and craft, sewing, photography, video making
- **Food skills** - cooking, serving, washing up

Smethwick gifts:

- Employment and apprenticeships
- Furniture upcycling
- Training and teaching people practical things
- Cooking skills
- Council has a lot of professionals in childcare, housing, welfare
- Gardening
- DIY
- Litter picking
- Washing up
- Music production
- Social development to enterprise
- Sewing/crafts
- PC
- Graphic design
- Bike servicing
- Photography
- Video making
- Driver
- Supermarket collections
- Computer skills
- ESOL tutor
- Food
- Street food
- International food market
- Lady in the Friends & Neighbours drop-in has many skills to pass on
- Sewing, computer IT, DIY, just the skill of wisdom

GIFTS OF THE HEART



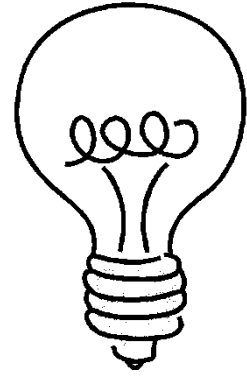
- **Caring skills** - caring for people, listening, counselling skills, people skills, first aid
- **Working with children** - storytelling, organising activities, helping with sports/classes/groups
- **Musical skills** - playing an instrument, creating music, singing, dance
- **Familiarity with a language other than English**
- **Sharing a skill with others**

Smethwick gifts:

- Youth activities
- Homework club
- Reading
- Sport activities
- People skills
- Listening
- Sharing a skill
- Youth work
- Singing and dance
- Health related support services - interpretation services, hospital discharge
- Assisting with events
- Leadership skills
- Caring skills
- Supporting
- Advocacy
- Empowering people - caring, children, elderly
- Caring for people
- Listening
- Passion
- Empowering people
- Working with young people
- Community ESOL
- Community connector
- Children (younger than teenagers)
- Reading/story telling
- Messy play

GIFTS OF THE HEAD

- **Administration skills**
- **Persuasive skills** - fundraising, marketing/public relations, creative writing
- **Leadership skills**
- **Event skills** - organising events, assisting with events



Smethwick gifts:

- Fundraising
- Organising events
- Leadership
- Organisation
- Interpretation and translating
- Leadership skills
- Organising events
- Leadership
- Management
- Admin
- Events
- Access to training through SMBC
- Organising interest groups eg upcycling club
- Understanding constitutions or company documents
- Independent chair of meetings
- Fundraising
- Running fundraising workshops
- Linkages to government and national initiatives
- Coordination - power to convene
- Fundraising and associated business skills
- Access to training

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU FEEL PASSIONATE ABOUT?

Smethwick passions:

- Handyman DIY services
- Connecting community
- Improving housing of people
- Homeless issues
- Local history around immigration
- Promoting health
- Environment
- A strong focus on supporting new communities
- Youth club
- People
- Community
- Single parent issues