



Community, asset and strengths-based approaches: a guide to terminology

This short guide explains what we mean by some of the most commonly used terms for community working. We sometimes talk about how we work, in different ways – often these terms can mean similar things, overlap with each other and can be connected.

Here is a brief explanation of some of the terms that you might hear to describe working in a community, asset and strengths-based way:

- asset-based approaches
- community capacity building
- person-centred care
- skills mapping and development
- strengths-based approaches.

Community capacity building

Community capacity building is about supporting and strengthening the skills and abilities of people and groups to develop their communities. The aim of community capacity building is participation and empowerment. A community does not have to be geographical – it can be a community ‘by interest’.

There is a twofold benefit to this approach – it enriches the community *and* supports people to develop their skills and confidence and be an active participant in their community, rather than just a recipient.

Person-centred care (see [NHS.uk](#)),

Working in a strength-based way is not just about working with people who need care and support – you can use this approach to support staff learning and development, in supervisions and when working with community groups. You can adapt it as a management style, to explore the strengths in your workforce and enhance them for the benefit of the people that you support and the workplace.

When working with individuals, one strength that is regularly discussed in social care environments is resilience.

Research has shown that resilience is made up of different elements in each individual person, but one constant contributing factor is the support that people have or do not have around them. This is particularly relevant if you are building community capacity, as a person's network of support can include community members and groups, or if you are using it for workforce planning and are thinking about the support your staff may need to maintain their resilience.

Skills mapping

Skills mapping is a way of working with someone to explore, identify and understand the skills, experiences and strengths that they already have.

This is achieved by talking to the person about what they can do, rather than just focussing on their needs. Sometimes people don't recognise what they can do as being a skill or a strength, or haven't used particular skills for some time, so it's helpful to take some time to get to know the person and explore this in more detail.

It can also be useful to take the mapping a stage further; if one of a person's strengths is the ability to learn new skills at their own pace, you can also focus on what the person wishes to do and to achieve in the future. This approach can lead to an increase in a person's