Developing a rich and vibrant JSNA

Capturing community asset growth within the JSNA – key learning from a trial project
Acknowledgements

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Foreword

The emphasis in JSNAs to date has been mainly around producing a statement of need which could drive commissioning across local government, the NHS, and other local partners. Whilst national guidance recommended that JSNAs needed to acknowledge local people as an important source of information, JSNAs have tended to be more quantifiable than qualitative and community engagement in JSNAs has been variable.

‘A Glass Half Full’ outlined the case for balancing the needs/‘deficits’ based approach with an approach based on community assets/strengths, and details some techniques for discovering and mobilising community assets.

This document gives an overview of the work that took place as part of the Asset Based Pilot Process within the Wakefield District. We hope that the process and key learning points can assist those involved in developing rich and vibrant Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) that reflect both community assets/strengths as well as their needs/‘deficits’.

The document is arranged in four parts:

**Section 1** highlights the national and local policy context that supports the work around embedding assets and co-production into the JSNA process.

**Section 2** outlines the outcomes that Wakefield aimed to achieve and the activities took place as part of the Asset Based Pilot process*.

**Section 3** summarises the lessons that were learnt from the pilot in relation to the asset based approach itself, the need for culture change and around the smarter use of existing and new ‘rich picture’ data.

**Section 4** demonstrates the key ways forward from the pilot that are required to sustain and develop the progress made during the pilot, and embed assets and co-production into the JSNA process.

* The document ‘Growing Communities from the inside out. Trialling an asset based approach to JSNAs within the Wakefield District : Methods and Findings’ provides full details of:
  - The two asset based methodologies that were trialled
  - The process involved in analysing and collating the asset information
  - Key findings and links between asset based information/co-production and the needs information
  - Key learning from the process to ensure that asset based methodologies, analysis and information can be balanced with needs information
Asset based approaches and the development of co-production and community commissioning come at a time when a number of national and local policy contexts are putting public sector organisations under heavy pressure to re-examine their traditional approaches.

These include:

- A failure to significantly shift health inequalities nationally, despite heavy investment in both primary and secondary care, and heavily disproportionate investment in the most deprived communities.

- Heavy investment in a traditionally needs/deficit led model, which has contributed to over dependence by many of our poorest communities on a heavy state support structure, and has also impacted on a reduction in empowerment and confidence in those communities.

- The findings of ‘The Marmot Review’, which strongly evidenced the links between poor health and broader social disadvantage and challenged those addressing health inequalities to contribute to sustainable solutions for communities that also addressed work, economic status and educational issues. It also called strongly for individuals and communities to be more actively involved in local decision making as part of a broader empowerment agenda.

- A radical shift in national political ideology since the last election, with a challenge to those involved with communities to help enable ‘The Big Society’, with its emphases on co-production, community commissioning, transfer of power away from statutory providers and into the hands of the voluntary/community sector – with a heavy emphasis on unpaid and voluntary delivery. The new emphasis on the development of ‘Localism’ is also a challenge to disaggregate services and delivery down to neighbourhood level wherever possible.

- A new climate of rapid and aggressive efficiency savings, with the effects of reductions in service about to be felt most keenly by our poorest and most currently dependent communities. In addition to this, there is a real challenge to hold onto the (mostly non-statutory) community development, empowerment, cohesion and equalities work being delivered cross sector, which will be vital in supporting communities and enabling the move towards more co-productive and asset based approaches.

- An increasing emphasis on the need for Primary Care Trusts and Local Authorities to deliver rich and vibrant JSNAs which can be used as the basis for the development of all Health and Wellbeing Strategy work, and which can support the moves towards modernising commissioning processes across the board. JSNAs need to contain both quantitative and qualitative data (‘community voice’), in order to become more usable by commissioners and to offer a strong picture of the needs and strengths of the communities it serves – a journey which the inclusion of asset based approaches can strongly contribute to.
Section 1

National & Local Policy Context

- Radical changes to the way in which health services are commissioned with a shift from commissioning decisions being made by Primary Care Trusts to Clinical Commissioning Groups. Health and Wellbeing Boards will enable consortia, alongside other partners, to contribute to effective joint action to promote the health and wellbeing of local communities. Engaging Health and Wellbeing Boards in the JSNA process will be central to ensuring that Clinical Commissioning Groups and other partners’ commission service delivery based on an assessment of population based needs and assets rather than individual needs.

- A shift towards enabling more older people and people with long-term conditions to live independently in their own homes, ensuring that they get the support that they need to do so. A JSNA that looks at community assets and community capacity to support independent living as well as population needs will enable the development of a commissioning framework that embraces co-production. This will ultimately identify how people can help themselves and each other as well as the professional services that are required.

- More locally, the development by the Council and other partners of an area based working model of community engagement and multi agency service planning offers a real opportunity to provide a structure and processes within which asset/co-production approaches can be further trialled and subsequently embedded. The establishment of Community Networks within some of the most deprived/priority' neighbourhoods in the District offers a real opportunity to engage with communities in a more balanced way which does not focus exclusively on needs.

- There is also extensive existing delivery across partners which can support the delivery of a more asset/co-production approach, which is often of high quality. Excellent community development work being delivered by the Primary Care Trust is already offering the grass roots level capacity building activity within communities which will make asset based approaches a workable reality in the long term. Equally, a wide range of partner organisations are gathering extensive qualitative and quantitative information about communities which is often not shared, focuses primarily on needs/deficits and is not currently joined with the community development function to more effectively target where work needs to take place and what needs to be done. There are already moves to join up data analysis through the development of a multi agency Data Hub.

- The establishment and development of a consortium of voluntary/community sector providers and the Health and Wellbeing Board and also offers real opportunities for the development of more innovative commissioning and service delivery around the wellbeing agenda in its broadest sense. A more vibrant and detailed JSNA will help to contribute to the development of more imaginative responses to the needs identified, and offer a wider range of voluntary and community based assets and potential methods for service delivery.
As part of the Asset Based Pilot process, Wakefield sought to achieve a number of outcomes, which included:

- **Work with key players to gain ‘buy in’** for the radical shift in emphasis required to move to a more asset based approach, through a series of events and workshops with members, commissioners, frontline workers and strategic managers. It was clear that although there was great interest in moving towards a more balanced approach which allows assets to be captured and used more effectively, many key players were strongly entrenched in a needs/deficit based mindset and that the delivery offered by all of the key organisations was predicated on a well established needs based approach.

- **A trial of two of the purely Asset Based methodologies outlined in ‘A Glass Half Full’** in order to attempt to gather richer picture data about specific deprived/‘priority’ neighbourhoods, which could be fed into the forthcoming JSNA Refresh process. It was hoped that if this was successful, it could provide a template and a systematic approach to enable the extension of the process across the district and for consistent use by all partners, and which could help in the development of methodologies which gathered both needs and asset based information and intelligence about our communities to better inform future commissioning.

- There was also a clear need to **better utilise the existing ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ data** being regularly collected by partners. The move towards a more balanced approach towards collecting both asset and needs based information offered an opportunity to re-examine and redefine the ongoing development of the multi agency data hub, in terms of the quality of the data collected, the effective sharing of the data between partners, and the development of inclusive commissioning processes which make best use of what is known about the communities served.

- There was also a clear intention to **trial these ‘pure’ asset based methodologies as positive capacity building processes for communities** in themselves, and to assess their impact as ways of working to promote general mental wellbeing. There was also a need to test out the extent to which purely asset based methodologies were both practicable to implement and acceptable to communities, who were often themselves deeply entrenched in the identification of needs and deficits in terms of their traditional relationships with services. There was also a question about the extent to which purely asset based methodologies would be acceptable to troubled communities which were seen by residents themselves to have few positive attributes.

- **Wakefield was also seeking a secondary but related outcome in terms of the use of the asset based approach to lever in more meaningful participation** and engagement work with communities across the partners, and to strengthen the sometimes patchy relationships and partnership working in existence across the district.
Section 2  Approaches taken by Wakefield & desired outcomes

**Approaches**

In order to achieve these outcomes, the following activities took place during the Pilot period:

- The establishment of a project manager, supported by a multi agency steering group to oversee project delivery. Members of the steering group were chosen for their expertise in either community development or data analysis/JSNA development.

- The identification of mental health as a key issue to target during the Pilot, because of high levels of poor mental health identified across Wakefield’s most deprived/’priority’ neighbourhoods, and the choice of two very different communities for the trial of the chosen methodologies. Although both identified as deprived/’priority’ areas by partners, one of the neighbourhoods was clearly suffering higher levels of deprivation, had traditionally been seen as a community with low levels of capacity, and was an area in which less capacity building work had been done.

- Extensive preliminary community development by members of the PCT Community Development Team and key voluntary sector workers in the two chosen communities, in order to recruit local residents to take part in the asset based pilot work, and to brief and prepare them for the different approaches being taken.

- Careful training of PCT, Council and voluntary sector workers in asset based approaches and co-production/community commissioning to ensure that a consistent message was reaching the community and that facilitation at planned events was based on a good level of understanding of what the chosen activities were attempting to capture.

- Concurrently, a series of briefing sessions were provided for managers & commissioners within the PCT and its partner organisations (including local elected members) to gain buy in for the approach, and to build understanding of how a more vibrant picture of communities could feed into a more effective JSNA and hence increase the responsiveness of the commissioning process.

- Extensive discussions also took place with partners regarding the use of asset based approaches (or more balanced approaches) within the emerging area based working model of community engagement, participation and multi agency service planning. The development of Community Networks of local residents in some of the most deprived/’priority’ neighbourhoods, combined with the creation of a ‘virtual’ worker multi agency team in each neighbourhood provided a timely opportunity for the incorporation of new ways of working.

- Discussions were also held with a multi agency group developing a Data Hub, to ensure that data being collected incorporated asset based approaches more effectively, and that this information was shared across the partners more extensively than currently happens.
Section 2 - Outcomes  Approaches taken by Wakefield & desired outcomes

- A series of events were held within communities to trial two different asset based methodologies within two very different communities. The World Café event in one of the chosen neighbourhoods focused on positive facilitation methods of small focus groups to answer key questions about the community’s strengths, assets and resiliences. In the neighbourhood which was suffering higher levels of deprivation, a series of workshops and photographic workshops were trialled rather than a single event, although similar questions were used. Full details on the methodologies can be found on pages 14-22 in the document ‘Growing Communities from the inside out. Trialling an asset based approach to JSNAs within the Wakefield District : Methods and Findings’.
A number of valuable lessons have been learned from the Pilot and the methodologies trialled during this period. These lessons break down under three main headings:

- **Issues and lessons about the Asset based approach itself**
- **Lessons around the need for culture change and how this might be achieved, including the refocusing of resources**
- **The smarter use of rich picture data, leading to the development of a more usable JSNA**

**The Asset Based approach itself:**

From the start of the process, it became clear that although the asset based approach has a strong conceptual base, there were a number of issues around implementing it in our engagement with and participation of communities. These issues included:

- A real question around whether it was either possible or desirable to work with communities using entirely asset based methodologies in the longer term. Whilst the trialling of pure asset based events (i.e.: ones which did not focus at all on the gathering of deficit or needs based information and intelligence) was positively received by both communities, this was possible only because extensive and recent prior discussions had already previously taken place around issues and needs — and this was made very clear to those taking part. In the longer term, it seems likely that we will need to develop forms of engagement which can gather information about both assets and needs in order to produce balanced and vibrant data for the development of future JSNAs, which can in turn influence appropriate commissioning.

- In addition, it was clear that it was more difficult for some communities themselves to ‘stay positive’ and focus purely on assets. The contrast between the two pilot areas here provided striking evidence of this. In one of the neighbourhoods, (which is only marginally deprived and has relatively high levels of community activity, facilities and capacity) focusing on assets was straightforward because they were clearly in evidence and understood as such by the community itself. In the other neighbourhood (which experiences far higher levels of deprivation, enjoys few facilities, feels neglected by services and has many residents for whom focusing on day to day survival often leaves little room for the development of personal capacity) assets were fewer in number and notably more difficult to capture. For communities like this, it would seem that the development of a more balanced approach is particularly appropriate.

- During the pilot, it also became apparent that the development of a more integrated approach which captured both needs and assets could work very well and indeed, examples of this good practice already existed locally. Local initiatives including a Substance Misuse Steering Group/Project and a Community Housing Project were excellent examples of an asset based approach being taken to solve an issue which had been originally identified through a more traditional needs based engagement process. Both projects had taken a genuine co-production approach which can and should be replicated as part of future commissioning.
Section 3

Lessons learnt from the Pilot

- There were also clear practical lessons to be learnt about the methodologies for gathering asset based information which could be meaningfully used by commissioners as part of a JSNA. For example, although large amounts of information about community assets were gathered in both of the pilot communities, once analysed it became apparent that much of it was not sufficiently specific to be useful for inclusion in the JSNA. It became clear that in addition to asking about ‘what assets?’, facilitators also needed to ‘drill down’ much more precisely to ask questions about ‘why is that an asset?’ ‘how does that help?’ ‘why did that have an impact?’ ‘what was the impact?’ etc. Wherever possible, scribes also needed to record this information word-for-word. Although all facilitators were carefully briefed, it is clear that a solid understanding of both the approach itself and the eventual destination/use of the gathered information were vital. It also became clear that those with a strong background in community development were not the only strong facilitators – one of our key JSNA analysts proved to be an excellent facilitator because of her excellent understanding of the approach and what was required. Full details of the methods used to analyse, collate and link asset based information to the JSNA can be found on pages 23-32 in the document ‘Growing Communities from the inside out. Trialling an asset based approach to JSNAs within the Wakefield District : Methods and Findings’.

- The other striking piece of learning was the degree to which the use of asset based methodologies was clearly empowering to those individuals taking part. Aside from the important data which could be collected, their active participation in a more positive process which emphasised the talents, strengths and resiliences within the community was clearly extremely rewarding. Despite the earlier points made about the need to develop more balanced and integrated approaches, it is vital that whatever is developed does not lose the power and impact this had for those taking part.

The Need for Culture Change:

It was clear from the outset that massive culture change within organisations would be needed to bring about a move towards more asset based ways of working with communities by all the partners. A long term change management approach will be needed to shift partners’ ways of working over a period of years, and to offer support to frontline workers, managers and commissioners to make it easy for them to integrate more asset based methods and data within their work.

In order to gain this ‘buy in’ at all levels within organisations, a number of changes are required, including:
- The recognition that change will be long term and to design development programmes which will support this.
- This will help workers, managers and commissioners to see the use of asset based approaches as part of the day job, rather than as a ‘bolt on’ which sits uncomfortably at the side of existing approaches.
Section 3

Lessons learnt from the Pilot

• The need to develop methods of working which will be easy for partners across organisations to use, and which will help to produce accessible and usable data which can be owned by all partners through a central shared Data Hub.

• The need to recognise that different partner organisations are at different stages of development in terms of their work with communities, and that certain language and cultural differences can make the development of integrated approaches difficult. The failure of the pilot Steering Group to offer meaningful direction to the project highlighted both a poor understanding of the approach and the gulf of understanding between analysts preparing the JSNA and frontline workers operating in the communities being served.

• Substantial and skilled community development staffing is needed to support the development of more asset based approaches. Communities which have experienced higher levels of disempowerment and deprivation are likely to need more support to help develop the assets which do exist, and to support the embryonic development of future assets. This suggests the need to reconsider the commissioning of community development, and for a greater percentage of these staffing resources to be targeted at areas with fewer obvious assets.

Better use of data and future JSNA development:

• The failure of the Steering Group to meaningfully steer the pilot highlighted all too clearly the differing views and skills of the analysts who put together the JSNA and those working in community development. Better mutual understanding of each other’s work is vital if the JSNA is to be based around information and understanding which reflects a strong qualitative as well as quantitative picture of what communities can do/be/provide as their needs.

• If strong qualitative as well as quantitative data is to be gathered, collated and analysed as part of the JSNA process, better coordination will be needed between partner organisations who work in communities, in order to:

  - work more smartly together to identify asset/needs based information which is already known or being collected but not effectively shared – making the development of these kinds of approaches part of everyone’s ‘day job’
  - develop better procedures and protocols for gathering the information in a more coordinated way at source, and for sharing it for the use of all partners (e.g. through an Integrated Data Hub)
  - encourage frontline staff across the full range of partners to routinely gather and feed in information to the JSNA process, which should ultimately produce a JSNA which is usable by and useful for anyone wishing not only to commission services, but also to simply know more about the communities they serve.
There is a clear commitment within the Wakefield District to work towards a more balanced approach which includes assets, with a long term view to the development of more inclusive co-production approaches. This has been seen by partners as an opportunity to be more creative in our approaches to engaging with communities and developing their more active participation in the decisions affecting their lives.

A number of key actions are now required to sustain and develop the progress made during the pilot, which fall into four distinct but interconnecting areas:

- **Culture change and organisational change management**
- **Development of integrated methodologies and tools**
- **Development of the Data Hub and more inclusive JSNA**
- **Work with communities**

**Culture change and change management:**

Whilst recognising that the journey will take place over the medium to long term, a number of immediate actions have been identified to ‘kick start’ this process, including:

- The development of a training programme for non community developments specialists working in frontline communities, including elected members. This will include basic community development approaches, to include the roll out of an integrated toolkit of methodologies to gather both needs and asset based information in a format which is a positive and empowering experience for communities. This programme will also need to cover the benefits to workers and members in moving towards working in this way.

- More intensive work with commissioners to encourage more active and consistent use of the JSNA for commissioning purposes, and to help them to better understand the qualitative as well as more traditionally quantitative type of information on offer.

- The inclusion of a Community Engagement Core competence in the new Change Management Programme currently under development by the HR Director of Wakefield Council, which will include a module on understanding and implementing asset based approaches and co-production.

- Ongoing work with the Council’s Senior Management team to ensure that the work currently under development around the area based working model widens its focus away from the current Safe, Clean & Green agendas to encompass the wider health and wellbeing agenda.
Ways forward from the Pilot

Development of integrated methodologies & tools:

There is a general recognition in Wakefield that there are some excellent methods already collated in ‘A Glass Half Full’ that are effective in gleaning purely asset based information from communities. However, the Asset Based Pilot identified that these methods may require adaptation to take account of both local circumstances and the need to gather more integrated and balanced information which also incorporates needs information in a way which is still positive and empowering to communities. Immediate steps to move this on have already been identified:

- The development of a small working group of workers from across the partners, who have a solid understanding of the approach to drive forward the actions identified in the final section of this report, and specifically, to work on the development of an easy access toolkit of materials for use by frontline workers. It is likely that this group will need to operate as a sub group of the existing partner Community Engagement Group, which is responsible for the delivery of the new Community Engagement Strategy,

- Close working with the newly emerging Priority Neighbourhood teams [virtual multi agency teams formed to tackle issues in the 12 neighbourhoods identified as most deprived across the district] to ensure that asset based approaches are integrated into the team-building and training currently starting, and that new toolkits are systematically trialled and adapted through these key frontline teams.

- Although some asset mapping in communities has already been done as part of a Targeted Support Fund project in 2010/11, much more detailed work is still required. The best way forward for this will be determined by the working group. Initial work is taking place to map existing community groups. A tie-in with the development of the integrated Data Hub will be likely to form a large part of this workstream.

- Work is already underway to build a more balanced approach to assets into existing community engagement mechanisms. For example, the interview questionnaires used by the Smarter Lifestyles project (a partnership action research project to gather local information from Wakefield District Housing tenants about their area and their lives/needs) have now been significantly amended to incorporate a plethora of asset based information. Researchers/frontline staff will also receive extensive training around how to question tenants differently in order to gather asset based information and an easy to use ‘do’s and don’ts’ list to encourage this new way of working. A model around how assets/needs based information have been integrated into the Smarter Lifestyles Project and the JSNA has been developed so that researchers/frontline staff, Priority Neighbourhood teams and strategic partners have a shared understanding of the eventual destination/use of the gathered information [see Appendix A].
Section 4

Ways forward from the Pilot

Development of the Data Hub and more inclusive JSNA:

One of the key learning points highlighted during the pilot process has been the lack of any real integrated working between the community development and analysis/JSNA parts of the Primary Care Trust – a trend which was also reflected amongst other partner organisations, particularly around the shared use of data. Because of this, the following actions will be key to drive this integrated working forward:

- The Community Engagement Group and working group need detailed future discussions around the work already being done by partners in communities and the existing data which this already produces. Whilst the PIIG (Partnership Intelligence and Information Group) has concentrated on the more effective sharing of quantitative data, its remit does not currently cover the more qualitative information often gathered by those working out in communities, particularly in engagement/capacity building roles.

- The PIIG group needs to continue its development of the integrated Data Hub, and tracking system for feeding information more effectively into future JSNAs. The development of an online shared data warehouse/data observatory will be central to this process.

Work with communities:

Clearly, a lot of preparatory work is needed before new approaches can be rolled out to communities within Wakefield. However, two short term pieces of work have been identified, which should start the process of ‘testing out’ new ways of working developed above. These are:

- As previously mentioned, the re-focusing of the community development staffing resource remaining after the recent round of cuts to focus on the areas of the district which are least rich in assets, and where more support is likely to be needed to develop those which currently exist.

- Significant early work with the new Community Networks currently being developed in each of the 12 Priority Neighbourhoods around asset based working, including the trialling of new approaches and methodologies as they are developed.
This model highlights how assets/needs based information flows between the tenant, the researcher, Priority Neighbourhood teams and strategic partners, with the aim of developing a shared understanding of the eventual destination/use of gathered information.