

**Draft Community Connectors  
Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)  
Pilot Project Report**

October 2013

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## **Executive Summary**

### **1: Project Remit**

This is a community development project that focused on three wards in North Croydon. By identifying the interests, assets and priorities of the target groups in three wards, the project was intended to inform the Council and statutory partners in their reprioritisation and realignment of services and to review and further develop community networks. It was delivered as part of a Social Recovery project that also featured an independent audit of statutory services.

### **2: The ABCD Approach**

The unique approach taken to community development on this project uses methodologies that have been pioneered in the UK by Nurture Development – key partners on this project. The six stepping stones integral to the approach are (i) finding ‘Connectors’; (ii) mapping assets; (iii) identifying community building themes; (iv) building connections; (v) identifying match funds; and (vi) celebration and planning.

### **3: Delivering the Project**

Part-time Community Builders were appointed to follow the ABCD stepping stones in each ward. The report details the work involved and lists the results – in terms of the local community activities that this project gave rise to; followed by summaries of the local priorities identified through consultations using the ABCD approach.

### **4: The Outcomes**

The project met its outputs in relation to the numbers of people and community organisations engaged. The key outcome was a successful engagement of over 300 local people – both in the new start-up activity and in visioning exercises.

### **5: Legacy**

Croydon is now promoted by Nurture Development as the leading exponent, nationally, of the ABCD approach.

### **6: Next Steps**

The priority is to apply successfully for the resources to roll out ABCD further across the borough on the basis that: (i) the role of Community Builder is essential and (ii) the geographical focus cannot realistically extend beyond three wards.

## 1. Introduction

The *Community Connectors ABCD Pilot Project* has delivered an asset based approach to community development in three north Croydon wards. It was commissioned by Croydon Council on behalf of the Croydon Strategic Partnership as part of the *West Croydon Investment Programme* funded from the Mayor of London's post 2011 riots investment in Croydon. An independent audit of statutory social and economic programme delivery has run alongside this pilot as the other half of a social recovery project intended to *make a positive impact on key outcomes for people in the north of the borough, through the provision of effective support for sustainable community empowerment and reshaping of delivery programmes that are aligned with local community priorities.*

## 2. The ABCD Approach

The Nurture Development ABCD approach assumes that given the existence of stronger communities it will be possible for many of the social challenges facing people to be met with resources from within the community. Further, the case for effective and efficient co-production will be advanced and resource holders will want to shift from a more strengths based approach to commissioning. ABCD asserts that strong communities are built by recognising, celebrating and harnessing the 'community assets' that are already there. These 'community assets' include:

- the skills, knowledge and connections of local residents
- the collective power of local informal associations and clubs
- the resources of public, private and non-profit institutions
- the physical and economic resources of local places
- the shared stories, culture and heritage of communities

The overall purpose of Nurture Development's approach is to bring local people together to make their communities more interesting, healthy, safe and welcoming places to live. This is achieved by encouraging new and deeper relationships and by inviting people to utilise their power as connected and caring citizens to work together for the greater common good. The process begins with listening to the community and with finding 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 (paid staff, appointed to identify the Connectors in a community and provide them with training support) are needed to help the Connectors weave the fabric of the neighbourhood together through hundreds of 'conversations' with individuals, groups, informal clubs and other social networks. These conversations focus on exchanges of 'positivity' and on uncovering people's strengths, stories, ideas, hopes, skills, passions and resources. This new found source of wealth enables the Connectors to begin to

understand exactly what it is that local people care enough about to work together to change. People form themselves into action groups, making sure that between them they have the commitment and all the skills they need to succeed. The Community Builder shows them how best to exercise their collective power and the Connectors cultivate these small action groups to bring about the changes that people want to see. Slowly, broader community building themes emerge that form both a vision and a plan of action for the future. Gradually, levels of competence, mutual trust and self confidence improve. This, in turn, leads to more optimism, higher expectations and a shared sense of 'can do'. At this stage, closer connections are cemented with the wider community - council departments, schools, other public sector bodies, faith groups, businesses, informal clubs, self help, community and voluntary groups.

## **2.1 Local Partners**

Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA), Gingerbread Corner and the Asian Resource Centre Croydon have worked in collaboration with Nurture Development, the leading UK trainers in ABCD, who have pioneered ABCD work in various neighbourhoods across Croydon since 2010. As the delivery partners, each agency has accepted that any organisation wishing to engage with communities must first learn how to step back so that the people themselves can decide what they care enough about to act on. They can then step up and encourage them to connect with and strengthen their existing community assets. This two step approach will lead to the emergence of more resilient social networks that are better equipped to work in partnership. The three partners each have a successful track record in the target areas and had gained the trust of local people and a diverse range of community groups. Each organisation has a well developed infrastructure in place, with communication systems available to support and promote ABCD. The Croydon Xpress Children and Young Peoples Participation Project at CVA provided a useful, reliable and productive team of enthusiastic and talented young people to help organise, promote and run all the ABCD events. They carried out some of the evaluation exercises and digitally recorded the relationship building as it happened, posting regularly on the website.

## **2.2 A shift in emphasis**

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. In this respect, commissioners, project managers and practitioners are requested to avoid the inadvertent decommissioning of personal, family and community skills, connections, local knowledge and passions by presupposing that individuals and families only require services delivered by competent professionals. The ABCD approach asserts that it is the duty of the public sector to facilitate

the conditions within which people, families and communities can more easily become the primary investors in their own and each others future while at the same time remaining confident that services will be there as back-up if needed.

<b>Deficit Approach:</b>	<b>Strengths Based Approach:</b>
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

### 3. The Project Remit

The project brief was to support an ABCD pilot project in the three north Croydon wards of Broad Green, Selhurst and Thornton Heath. The pilot is part of a social recovery project that also includes an independent audit of statutory services, and the key objectives as set by the Croydon Strategic Partnership were:

- To adopt a community sensitive approach in targeted wards in the north of the borough through the delivery of two distinct but interrelated projects
- To deliver an asset based community development approach as well as make recommendations that allow the council and statutory partners to support sustainable community empowerment
- To deliver recommendations that allow the council and statutory partners to prioritise and re-align programmes and activities with the interests, desired outcomes and activity of individuals and the wider community

#### 3.1 Project time scales

The key milestones were:

- Inception and scoping meeting – Oct 12
- Recruit Connectors – November 12 / Feb 13
- Outreach /street walks – December 12
- Ideas Fairs and Visioning events - Jan 13 / May 13

- Appreciative Enquiry – Jan / May 13
- Develop online neighbourhood through Talk2 Croydon – Nov 12 / April 13
- Training Workshops – Dec 12 / Mar 13
- Asset Mapping – Jan – June 13
- Connectors active – December 13
- Children and Young People's Participation – Feb / May 13
- Citizen led projects active – May / July 13
- Community of Practice meetings – Jan / July 13
- Progress report – April 13
- Report Final – July 13

#### **4. Delivering the Project**

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. The workshops were fully booked, well attended and provided the project with the ideal start. All the feedback was really positive and each of the events set in motion hundreds of new connections and conversations that brought the project to life in the streets of north Croydon. Those attending included people new to ABCD from faith groups, community development projects, councillors, representatives from community forums and residents associations, community centre managers, youth workers, small local businesses, NHS workers, children centre staff, safer neighbourhood team officers, neighbourhood watch co-ordinators, local residents and many more.

The three part-time Community Builders adopted the *Six Stepping Stones* ABCD methodology as devised and promoted by Nurture Development who also mentored the Community Builders and led the workshops, training sessions and 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.

In order to collaborate with council staff, the voluntary and community sectors, local business people and with politicians a *Community of Practice* was convened once a month throughout the life of the project. This 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. Above all it was an opportunity to learn more about how to engage with local communities and how doing so may assist them in their daily work.

Each fortnight the Community Builders met Nurture Development for a mentoring session. The sessions were based on forming 'developmental alliances' and offered the participants opportunities to become more aware of ABCD, to identify options and to initiate action. There was no line management involved, with the participants encouraged to make their own choices and decisions. Most of the planning of the project took place very successfully at these sessions. 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 are experiencing.

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. The portable 'asset maps' were a source of inspiration and vividly depicted, for participants and the general public, all the new connections and hitherto unused and unappreciated assets now potentially available for the community to utilise to grow even stronger. The responsiveness of Council Officers when called upon for help by Connectors was another critical factor. A good example was at the final *Community of Practice* when a Council officer informed Connectors about the Community Asset Transfer Scheme. The group fed back to him the barriers they would face accessing such a scheme and now the Council is reviewing the level of support it offers to small groups in accessing the scheme and making applications.

The first connectors training event brought together a group of "futurepreneurs" - men and women in their twenties and thirties who had succeeded in business, the arts, the caring professions and in other ways and were ready to give back. They were determined to make Croydon a better place to live and to do what they could to prevent the younger generations from drifting into anti-social and self-destructive behaviour. Members of the group were asked to identify three things that needed attending to in Croydon. They answered with a free ranging debate about the need for free legal advice, the shared responsibility of citizens to raise children, barefoot medical services in local neighbourhoods, pampering older people, story telling between older residents and children, artists working outdoors, open spaces being cultivated as gardens and for food



growing - and a complete ban on drug dealers, betting shops, amusement arcades and loan sharks.

By the end of the project at the final celebration event opened by Cllr Vidhi Mohan, the people present represented a wider cross section of the community. Attendees were asked to imagine life in their street in ten years time if ABCD had been continued and there was a Community Builder in every neighbourhood. Their response was to describe a transformed community where people assumed that those in power were supporting them, where everyone reached out and connected with their neighbours, where society rewarded those with the courage to take risks and try out new ways to make life better, where everyone took some responsibility for their own health and the wellbeing of others and contributed what they could to community life, where there were street rotas for shared child care, where children could get away camping at weekends, where cars were banned on certain days for children to play outdoors and for residents to have street parties, where Sundays had become once again days for family and community, where fly-tipping had changed to recycling, where everyone was safe and felt more relaxed, where gardening and food growing was done co-operatively, where young people had jobs or practical skills that meant they could support themselves and where everyone looked out for each other's mental health and emotions and no-one was isolated or lonely.

Full descriptions of how the project was delivered in the target areas are provided in the appendix. Summaries are given below.

**4.1 Broad Green** - The ABCD approach resulted in the initiation of a range of local projects including:

- **Community Fun Day:** This community event was an opportunity for the local community to come together and participate in fun games, arts and crafts, sing-along, creative dance and many more interactive activities
- **Food for Thought – Greet & Eat:** This community event was an opportunity for the local community to come together to socialise and share a meal
- **Little Miracles Home from Home:** A facility to support those who have been affected by the current homeless crisis in Croydon
- **Community Breakfast Club:** Ensure that many more vulnerable people in Croydon benefit from donated food
- **Future of Croydon – Fashion:** Reviewing local upcoming fashion designers and also interviewing local fashion shops and stylists. Carrying out a photo shoot to create a look-book for a fashion designer
- **Kelvi:** A board game based on education and culture. The game is based on answering questions within the time given
- **New Energy through Breathing & Yoga:** Effective breathing exercises that reduce stress, increases energy and relax the mind, as well as physical light yoga exercises

- **Cake Making & Icing (Decorating):** Cake making, icing and decorating for unemployed people who are isolated
- **CRIS (Croydon Renewable I.T. Skills):** The project aims to provide IT training courses for under privileged and disadvantaged young people in Croydon
- **Fashion, recycled & refreshed:** The young people will work with a local designer to look at ideas of creating 'new outfits' from their existing wardrobe and outfits sourced from charity shops
- **Website classes:** The project is about creating a website class to teach participants how to structure and design their own website
- **Tailoring (Dress Making):** Helping Asian women by teaching them how to make and cut Asian Sari blouses
- **Cricket Club:** Cricket coaching for boys aged 15-18. The coaching will take place at Trinity School
- **Cinematic Dance Club & Singing Club:** A group of young people that try to improve dance & singing in a cinematic way
- **Community Cricket:** Cricket in the community
- **Asian Dressing:** A project for Asian women who want to know how to do make up
- **Creative Spectacular:** A project that aims to bring youths between the ages of 13-19 together in creating something spectacular. The focus will be fashion design on all levels
- **Edutainment Radio:** Edutainment radio will provide training for young people in the community to develop radio shows, as well as running a business

Broad Green residents identified a range of priorities that would lead to improved quality of life and well-being in the area:

- More green spaces
- More activities for young people, especially but not exclusively those at risk of falling into crime or of joining gangs
- More creative and skills-enhancing activities especially but not exclusively for those who have difficulty finding employment or taking a positive direction in their lives
- A greater variety of shops along London Road, including cafes, book shops, banks and a Post Office
- After school and holiday/half-term activities for young people, including arts and media, football and other sports, IT skills
- Providing a safe after school environment and mentoring for young people at risk of being recruited into gangs
- Exercise, tai chi, healthy living clubs and meetings, including for older women
- English language and computer literacy classes for groups such as women with dependents and care responsibilities
- Job skills training, mentoring and work experience opportunities, including in media and design
- Safety awareness-raising sessions in local schools
- Environmental and clean-up activities in parks and public spaces
- Support and accessible services for elderly people, such as a mobile Hairdressing service, transport to social events and DIY support
- Support, personal development training and mentoring for parents

- Online, media and social networking projects which aim to encourage pride in the area e.g. through an online newspaper, as well as provide opportunities for skills development and networking

**4.2 Selhurst** – The ABCD approach resulted in the initiation of a range of local projects including:

- **Future of Croydon** – This magazine will feature what young people are doing in Croydon, showcasing the positive and diverse things young people are doing it is accessible online, community spaces, cafes and libraries
- **Community breakfast club** - Offers breakfast to vulnerable and sometimes isolated members of the community. It will be held in a community setting rather than a school
- **The Young Chef's Academy** - Providing young people with the basic skills on how to cook. The target audience is young people who live away from home and are recently out of care
- **Edutainment** – A project for young people by young people running all aspects of a radio show
- **Saving our Lollypop People** – A press campaign and petition specifically at Northcote and Sydenham Roads. There is the possibility of running the same campaign model in Thornton Heath for Whitehorse Manor School, who are facing the same difficulties
- **Unraised Voices** – A group for lone parents based at Selhurst Children's Centre
- **Making Friends in Selhurst** – A group for parents who feel isolated or would just like to make new friends based at Gingerbread Corner. It is intended to hold two sessions on two Saturdays a month
- **Young Mums group** - For young mums at the Gingerbread Centre to get advice, support and guidance on similar problems they face
- **Beauty project** - Aims to build the gap between the elderly and the youth where the youth will 'glam up' the elderly
- **Employment initiative** - Workshops on CV writing for young men, improving their chances of employability and guidance
- **Dance school** - Teaching young people how to dance and choreograph, performing at various events and birthday parties
- **Personal Development Workshops** – Delivering three Personal Development workshops for parents. Children will stay in a crèche whilst parents learn
- **Women in Action** - Support people between the age of 18-59 who have been unemployed for many years and confronted with domestic violence and health problems
- **Sport in the Community** – Producing a set of video reports/journalism on 2 or 3 sporting groups in Croydon, showing how they interact with the community and raise awareness about those in need
- **Community Gritting** - Provision of a gritting box on St James Road that can be used by a whole community including local business when needed
- **Family Camping Weekend** - 15 families involved in a camping weekend in Croydon to promote an eco-friendly spirit within the local community, to discover resources

of nature, to encourage families to spend more quality time with their children and to promote sport activities

- **Selhurst Swap Shop** - Sharing and swapping clothing in networks and communities as a way to access a fresh and ethical source of 'new to you' clothing cheaply and without long term commitment"
- **Achieving Real Talent** - Use handicraft sessions to create a sense of unity, it is a pilot project aimed at building peoples confidence in an informal way to enable them to take part in more formal 'meetings'
- **Sewing Open Day** - The project will teach the community new skills and encourage independence. The work shop will be held in Selhurst and runs for at least 4-6 weeks
- **Raised Voices** - The project will focus on how families in and around Selhurst can come together
- **Yearning for Learning** - To offer activities during the summer holidays and prepare children for school
- **Project FMP** – Poetry, combining music & poetry together by using instruments. We also include fashion in our final performance
- **House of Jerry** - Project FMP, teaching young fashion crazy youths about fashion and all its aspects
- **Life Companions** - Life companions will allow isolated or elderly people to engage with others in their community and feel empowered to participate within the community
- **Overcoming isolation in the Asian community** - Highlighted isolation within Asian communities, particularly regarding elders and parents; will work towards organising a regular group

Selhurst residents identified a range of priorities that would lead to improved quality of life and well-being in the area:

- Improving physical health and emotional health
- Creating activities for young people, including assisting with job readiness and building self-esteem/confidence
- Improving play in green spaces
- Improving street safety
- Projects to improve emotional health, especially for isolated parents and those in the Asian community who might be isolated due to language barriers
- Improvements to the green space at Heavers Farm Meadow
- More effective policing to reduce drug-related crime in St James' Road
- Projects for young people, including assisting with job-readiness and building self-esteem/confidence

**4.3 Thornton Heath** - The ABCD approach resulted in the initiation of a range of local projects including:

- **The Bespoke Relationship Seminars:** The seminars will empower families and individuals in the area of relationships with the aim of strengthening families

- **Trip Down Memory Lane Project:** A project that brings young people and older people with dementia together. It gives young people the opportunity to teach and work with older people within the community to use Facebook
- **Parade of Nations:** This event will bring everyone within Croydon together, especially those living and working within the north of the Borough
- **Portuguese Fellowship:** An evening of exchange of cultures with the communities in Thornton Heath, working with young people to help them to get a better understanding of their cultural background
- **Dance Club:** A group teaching kids to dance
- **Music Band:** A music band where people bring instruments and play music together
- **Chill Time Focus Group:** A focus group for parents and carers of teenagers who need support
- **Holiday Scheme:** Indoor and outdoor activities during August for children aged 7-13
- **GP Partnership Tool:** Support to members of the Roma community to test a tool that helps GPs communicate more effectively with their clients
- **Kelvi:** A board game based on education and culture. The main game play is based on answering questions within the time given
- **Knitting Club (Needlework & Fabrics):** This project is aimed at young mums and housewives who want to learn to knit
- **Table Tennis:** Table Tennis for underprivileged children at Holy Saviour's Church Hall
- **Coffee Morning:** A monthly gathering of elderly people and unemployed people for a 'sit and chat' programme at Holy Saviour's Church Hall
- **Dress Making:** A monthly dress making session for non-working mothers who stay at home. The session will take place at Holy Saviour's Church Hall
- **ICARE Project:** The purpose will be to equip participants with skills to compete for jobs on the open market by training them to complete forms
- **Women Know your Worth:** Arrange for a personal accountant to come and talk about basic budgeting for the household, benefit cuts and applying for help
- **Strimming the Media:** Making a newsletter/online webpage and social media feed to track progress made on cleaning, tidying and gardening in spaces in Thornton Heath that need care
- **Community Garden:** Renovate a community garden set within Grange Park to create a welcoming, beautiful, safe and family-friendly garden in the heart of the park
- **Confidence for Thornton Heath:** The aim of the project is to bring young people together in Croydon to talk about what they care enough about in the area to act on and how they would like to see it develop
- **Blast from the Past:** The Older Peoples Network will meet with a group of girls aged 12-16 from Winterbourne Youth Centre and do a cooking session with them. OPeN will also hold a session to discuss with the girls their history and experiences
- **Vision the Rising Stars:** Provide services such as sporting activities for groups for young people between the ages of 8 to 19 years old
- **Singing Youth Club:** Children aged between 5-12yrs will be given the chance to learn contemporary Tamil songs
- **Cake Making:** This activity is for non working mothers who come every Saturday from 10am–12 noon

\* 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
- Youth Club and support for the homeless
- Online forum for young parents to give advice on baby products and groups

A future priority is to make the comparisons between funded and non-funded projects in terms of success and sustainability, with a view to determining how essential a part of the process match funding is.

Thornton Heath residents identified a range of priorities that would lead to improved quality of life and well-being in the area:

- Improving physical health
- Providing more accessible services for psychological health
- More activities for young people of all ages - utilising the space at Parchmore Community and Youth Centre
- Improving play areas and green spaces
- Improving street safety and tackling fly tipping
- Regenerating the High Street
- Intergenerational activity
- Support for those seeking asylum in the area
- Social spaces to prevent isolation for all ages
- Creating activities for young people, including assisting with job readiness and building self-esteem/confidence
- Improving play in green spaces
- Improving street safety

## 5. The Outcomes

ABCD offers a radical, creative and effective approach to community engagement. This project has shown that 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.

### 5.1 The Outputs

The project exceeded its target of 60 community connectors, reaching a total of 77 connectors who were responsible for initiating 77 community projects, 60 of which received match funding and 17 of which relied solely on community assets. Invaluable connections have been made with over 240 neighbourhood based clubs and associations in three areas in the north of the Borough that suffer from an evidently unfounded reputation for non co-operation. 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

More than 300 members of the community were actively engaged with this project.

### 5.2 - Learning outcomes

Nurture Development concluded that:

1. We should not attempt to define what a community needs until the people living there first establish and appreciate better for themselves what 'community assets' they already have at their disposal. As they begin to understand the richness and extent of their existing 'community assets' then social action follows on almost automatically.
2. Every neighbourhood had more skills, talents, local knowledge and resources than anyone or any agency previously knew. The social impact of these personal and community attributes multiplied when they were connected, one with another, but this does not happen without the assistance of a skilled, local Community Builder.
3. Asset mapping is more about citizens making some unlikely and often intuitive connections between possible 'community assets' than about collecting data on local resources. When doing the asset mapping people often defined their neighbourhood as a street or a block of flats, which means any real community building has to take place as close to people's front doors as is possible.

### 5.3 The 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 has Big Lottery support for the Social Recovery project up to 2015 and has secured funding from Department of Health to grow ABCD in New Addington from August 2013. A Community Builder, using the Six Stepping Stones model, will begin working in New Addington in September and the achievements and lessons learned on this project will inform the planning and implementation of this new ABCD project. CVA's Volunteer Centre has been relocated to the Centrale shopping centre and is offering a hub space for the Community Connectors. 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, will be giving a presentation at a seminar in November 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 will be used to showcase 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.

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](http://www.talk2croydon/ABCD). This serves as a community resource, a record of achievements and social archive. At [www.nurturedevelopment.org](http://www.nurturedevelopment.org) people will find a treasure chest of resources, including articles, videos and blogs on all aspects of ABCD.



#### **5.4 What difference has the project made?**

The project was commissioned with the intention of finding new ways to build trust and confidence in local agencies, promote resilient and integrated communities and harness community and voluntary sector enterprise, creativity and innovation in the target wards. In response to this, the Community Connectors Asset Based Community Development project has offered a radical, creative and effective approach.

This project has consolidated Croydon's experience of using the ABCD methodologies to support the self-managing activities of local people. It has confirmed what has been demonstrated by previous ABCD projects: that by deploying a development worker in the *community builder* role it becomes easier to engage the most enterprising local people – as *community connectors* – in starting up social support activities and networks. This project has confirmed that even the most deprived communities are ripe for an approach that focuses on utilising the wide range of assets available to local people.

##### **Stepping stone approach**

Evidence gathered during the project has indicated that the stepping stone approach used was an effective tool for community involvement. This helped to build personal, economic and community resilience.

##### **Inclusive engagement**

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

##### **Strengths based approach**

This project has shown that isolation and fragmentation can be successfully challenged by shifting the focus from what is missing to strengthening what is already there in neighbourhoods and communities. 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 learning has been that the creation of informal associations can often provide an environment for enterprise and innovation to grow. As a result of this process, a total of 77 new local connectors have been identified; 77 community projects have been initiated and there was successful engagement with over 300 local people.

## Improved awareness of community assets

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.

There were some indications that the methodology might work better on a smaller neighbourhood scale, focusing on areas that residents naturally associate with, rather than ward boundaries.

The approach may therefore lend itself better to a smaller neighbourhood focus. Similarly some of the challenges of the project, for example local partner buy in at the Community of Practice meetings, could be addressed through a themed approach and more targeted involvement. This methodology has been applied to the New Addington project, which aims to develop and extend the ABCD approach to health and wellbeing and is already seeing some success.

This approach has helped agencies to capture a clear set of resident priorities and recommendations for each area. These will help to guide the local partner agencies to prioritise and re-align programmes and activities with the interests, desired outcomes and activity of individuals and the wider community over the short, medium and long term.

On that basis this pilot has indicated what can be achieved by deploying a similar resource in other parts of the borough. There can be confidence in similar investments yielding significant social returns that can be measured against indicators such as – getting to know more people; feeling safer; and making healthier, greener lifestyle choices. In output terms, the return on the investment is a well-trained and connected band of local volunteers who are motivated by their peers and supported to find local, customised solutions to their needs. For every one of the seventy-seven *community connectors* trained up on this project, there is a fledgling community project that is harnessing local assets for social support services.

On that basis alone the ABCD business case is a compelling one. It strengthens volunteering, it encourages individuals to be more community-minded and it gives rise to social support activities that in a proven number of cases become sustainable, community-led enterprises. An ABCD strategy for Croydon that goes no further than acknowledging that by making an initial investment there can be a significant return in added value, is well supported by the evidence from this project.

The bigger question is whether or not the modest investments in ABCD work can have a multiplier effect and, in so doing, become the cornerstone of a sustainable community empowerment strategy. The view taken by Nurture Development is that by retaining its infrastructure – i.e. the *community builder* role – an ABCD project will continue to expand,

with each *community connector* identifying the next generation of local entrepreneurs who, in turn, are supported within the methodological framework that ABCD provides. As projects expand and conversations spread, the culture and ethos of citizen-led community action becomes stronger and this manifests itself in tangibles like a greater number of people volunteering and more self-help groups; as well as intangibles like feeling safer and a stronger sense of civic pride.

Beyond this, the question of sustainability relates to how well developed the self-help activities become and whether or not these feed into the local commissioning process. Much of the ABCD inspired activity will continue without any need for public funding. Equally, the trajectory that more structured community action follows, from the grassroots level of ABCD-type projects to the more organised level at which staff teams are employed and more funding is invested, could present commissioners with new and innovative models of provision that tick the key box – prevention.

Working on its main premise - that locally designed, citizen-led innovations are the key that unlocks the entry into the deep-rooted reasons explaining why people offend, or feel like failures as parents, or live in isolation and with great stress - the full value of adopting a borough-wide ABCD approach becomes clear. Not only is prevention the more sustainable option than cure, its business case is a financial one. The support services delivered in a social context head off the more expensive clinical interventions that are needed when client needs become more complex. Constructing an evidence base that in proving this captures the full, long-term value of citizen-led activity, is a key requirement of the new strategic approach that Croydon is now taking.

## **5.5 – Considerations and Recommendations**

Community engagement and involvement has gained increasing importance as a way of shaping public sector thinking and contributing to service design and improvement.

Partners should work together to carefully consider what action needs to be taken so that its policies and activities build personal, economic and community resilience to improve not only outcomes but also encourage a shift in emphasis away from what the public sector provides to one that supports the community to develop local solutions.

Partners should consider collaborative models such as Asset Based Community Development which recognize community assets and builds on them as a way of encouraging the co-production of local services from involvement at inception, through to service design and ultimately delivery.

Community engagement requires a high level of involvement by council and other partner agency staff and the project's achievements flag up the need for a change in culture – a shift from needs based one-way services to strength based opportunities for better and

sustainable engagement with the community. This could be achieved through a change of emphasis towards a strengths based approach. Changes should be considered that allow space for community action and solutions to grow, in a way that serves to strengthen communities with a focus on prevention and collaboration.

As with all grass roots work, word of mouth is the best way to spread new learning. Continuous information sharing about new initiatives, tips and challenges will be needed if the current momentum is to be maintained and for the ABCD approach to take hold across Croydon and reach an even wider audience. Community Builders are therefore vital if the positive relationships that have started within this ground breaking project in Croydon are to continue. Community builders act as the glue that helps to turn local ideas into action.

Ultimately, as with any change or transformation, and critically, for public sector agencies investment will need to be found to support new local interventions that plant the seeds that help to drive a shift in relationship between the public sector and the community.

Partnerships are asked to consider

- Endorsing the ABCD six stepping stones approach as the preferred community engagement and involvement model for the borough; and,
- How partnership and other resources can be used to extend this methodology in particular how it can be used to influence delivery of better outcomes.

The model potentially has many applications for consideration:

- As tool to influence local service design as well as commissioning of services; and,
- As an approach to aid community cohesion, integration and resilience.

Support applications for funding that work towards the aim of employing a full-time ABCD Community Builder in every ward in the borough. However, consideration should be taken to which key neighbourhoods to target first.

Consider what partnership resources can be used to sustain the connections, activities and projects that have emerged as part of the ABCD pilots in the three wards especially as these are seeds of potential future savings and a change in emphasis from what public sector do to the community, to what they can do with a little help or can do for themselves.

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## Appendix 1: Project Delivery

### 1: The Project Areas

#### 1.1 ABCD in Broad Green

##### 1.1.1 The context of Broad Green

The earlier section outlined broadly why the Broad Green ward was chosen as an ABCD site. More specifically it was at the epicentre of the civil disturbances in 2010 when homes, businesses and community organisations were devastated. The community response to these events showed the depth of resilience, skills and desire for the community to take control of the areas future. From the West Croydon Community Forum to more localised initiatives the community of Broad Green looked to its assets to affect change supported by official intervention.

##### 1.1.2 What does ABCD look like in Broad Green?

**Resources and assets offered by residents toward responding to these initiatives included:**  
200 people have offered their support for Community projects as volunteers

Access to studios/volunteer time Art club/music club/drama club Artist (music) Community champion (Spirit of London '12), offering to support young men/young fathers, teaching them about investment banking, and presentation. Community knowledge, Listening skills & sympathy, Planning and organisation, Safeguarding Community volunteer, assisting elderly Counsellors/youth leaders Dance clubs/sports clubs Drop-ins (more available in the morning) with understanding parent Event organisation /planning skills Experience in design/commercial/retailing Family support worker	Outreach work among elderly people Parent/attend positive parenting course Parent/OCN/EPEC Parents groups/ballet for kids/dress making People skills Planting food Play areas/dance clubs/music classes Project administration/admin support Project management Providing learning courses Restoring community centres Sales skills SEN Parent group (coffee morning) Social media promotion Social skills Speech therapy Tattoo artist Voluntary contribution Volunteering skills and discussion
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Football coaching Football coaching/language knowledge (Spanish) Furniture assembly Help cleaning up and decorating Kitchen assistant Knowledge about car seats Leading a workshop in a school Leaflet distribution Life skills (mentoring)/knowledge of being broke Listening skills Literacy mentoring Marketing support / design skills/ publicity skills Mediation skills Mentoring of young people Mentoring/support/SEN(Special Educational Needs) Mother who can offer young people advice Motivational/inspirational/educational Neighbourhood watch	techniques Volunteering time Volunteering time (1 hour) Widespread knowledge of Alzheimer awareness Yoga, meditation and qigong Yoga, meditation and relaxation techniques Youth activities/youth extra curricular activities General interest/work with youth (weekends) Youth business start up, idea creation + planning, motivation Youth work Youth: getting involved in doing something active
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The following resources and assets items were also offered for use either free or discounted:

- Meeting hall / and rooms offered free or at a reduced rent
- Sports equipment donated or offered the use of
- Free use of kitchen facilities and equipment
- Donated food for community events
- Work experience placements in local businesses
- Local business sponsorship of youth activities

### 1.1.3 What has gone well?

We have exceeded our target of 20 Connectors identifying 38 Connectors for Broad Green. The ABCD workshop, Connector's training, Ideas fair and Celebration event were well attended and comments from participants indicate that they were 'inspiring' and useful. New connections and valuable links were made at each event and assets were transferred between people, hence the number of emerging projects – many of which had been incubating before the Ideas Fair itself. Many attendees have requested more of the same

events to be carried out after being pleased with the community spirit and togetherness that was felt at each event.

The Broad Green ABCD Workshop took place on Tuesday 27th November 2012 at Praise House. 17 people attended the event, all either working, living in or just generally showing concern for the Broad Green area. The event was led by Cormac Russell, Director of Nurture Development. Cormac outlined through stories the history and theory behind ABCD. 'The Parable of the Blobs and Squares' (<http://www.nomorethrowawaypeople.com>) film demonstrated the concept of people-led development. The attendees reflected on what they aimed to achieve on completion of the workshop. Some of those attending planned to take action after the workshop as follows:

**I will...**

- Talk to my son about our future
- Let others know of this session
- Tell others who I network with and know
- Regain gainful employment; begin adoption of my wife's son to see our family under one roof
- Make available financial management for community groups
- Truly re-acquaint with my community
- Keep in touch, tell others and talk about it
- Keep in touch with Jennine (Community Builder)
- Encourage people to see their positives and work to their strengths
- Remind everyone I meet of their strengths
- Feedback to staff and CEO, involve parents and community concerning play in parks

The session started the analysis of assets asking what people have to offer. Then we looked at next steps and involvement opportunities where by 12 Community Connectors were identified.

The ABCD Connectors training day ran from 10:30am – 3:30pm on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2013 at the CVA Resource Centre. 26 community connectors attended the training, each of them eager to share their project ideas. After the ice-breakers and introductions the group talked about asset mapping. The connectors then completed a Walk and Talk exercise in pairs to find hidden treasures. They were asked to discover three things that could be used to make the community stronger and a better place to live in. The discussion then became centralised around the question 'What things really matter to you?' and then progressed to 'Who is going to talk to whom?' The group were then informed of what was expected from a Connector. They were each encouraged to have 10 conversations with local people. Themes and links began to emerge among the Connectors as they spoke to each other about their project ideas and how they could help each other.



The emerging Broad Green Asset Map began to build from this point onwards.



An Appreciative Inquiry event was held in Broad Green on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2013 and although numbers were less than expected due to a snow storm that morning, the day was productive. 28 people attended and 14 projects were presented, discussed and plans made to take each forward. Visual techniques and online tools were used to ask open questions such as:

- What makes this a good place to live? What does the community do to improve things around here?
- What do community members do for each other? What helps us feel independent and in control?
- What helps us feel connected and socially useful?

In collecting this information we then utilised the ABCD Institute Asset Mapping Resources: <http://www.abcdinstitute.org/resources/> and our local online portal [www.talk2croydon.co.uk](http://www.talk2croydon.co.uk) to create a sustainable and community owned online neighbourhood. The practice of ABCD is an iterative process requiring an open, informal and non prescriptive approach which we adopted on the day and for the duration of the project.

During the event other organisations were encouraged to adopt ABCD practices. We supported 14 projects to apply for the match funding Grant through supporting citizen led projects to match their local assets and resources with up to £250 of matched finance.

Connectors were helped to conduct appreciative inquiries in each neighbourhood to identify what people care passionately about changing in their community by encouraging them to record the information as local narratives capturing each area's aspirations.

All 3 asset maps were displayed around the room and all were invited on arrival to add to these.

Further discussions then took place around the following subjects:

- Appreciating what is already happening;
- Look at how we can help each other;
- Call to action: - Will you get others involved in next few weeks?

The Broad Green Celebration Event took place on Wednesday the 29<sup>th</sup> May where members of the community of all ages came together at the CVA Resource Centre in Broad Green to celebrate the great work with a particular focus and young people's contributions as this had emerged as the main theme that local people cared enough about to do

something. This link records the event:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUpkAK4MU70&feature=youtu.be>

The event showcased projects kick-started by the ABCD Project. 130 people attended what was a vibrant day, being treated to three talent competitions in music, poetry and fashion, great food, face painting and lots of opportunities to connect with one another's ideas.

Several associations from the 3 wards came to support community projects by displaying what they have to offer. These included Crystal Palace Football Foundation, JAGS Foundation, All Inclusive Training, Limelight and Jude Joseph Ltd.

The competitions were won by Alena, a supremely talented young vocalist from the BRIT School, Nicketta, with provocative poetry that touched everyone and Jade, who's fashion designs exuded buckets of originality. As a result the 3 winners will be starting a project to bring together young people from a mix of faiths and cultural backgrounds to put on their own entertainment shows. The DJ on the day Everol Sampson, the man behind the community project Edutainment Radio, offered all the winners the opportunity to hit the airwaves with their talents, as well as offering all the runners up the chance to get involved in the steering group for the radio project itself. Not only was this event celebrating projects in the youth community, it was creating opportunities and more connections.

Asset maps for all 3 wards (Broad Green, Selhurst and Thornton Heath) were displayed, giving attendees the opportunity to access resources for their projects, to add to what they care about enough to want to help change (their vision) and what they would give to their community. The key issues around young people (14-25yrs) that have emerged from the ABCD project's conversations are low levels of youth activities that are widely promoted, intergenerational interaction, safe and stimulating social spaces and mentoring into education and career planning. All were then encouraged to work on their vision for their community in the future and directed to the resources (such as [www.talk2croydon.co.uk/abcd](http://www.talk2croydon.co.uk/abcd)) to help them to achieve the changes they want to see.

The Community Builder with the support of connectors also arranged informal meetings for the Broad Green Connectors. This included a meeting on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March at CVA Resource Centre to give Connectors a social space to discuss project ideas, supporting the development of projects, make connections and discuss resources needed. They did this by sharing gifts they could offer to each other and explaining what the projects needed to start. (The notes can be found at <http://www.talk2croydon.co.uk/node/5627>).

Over 200 connections have been made in Broad Green via Connectors conversations, events, meetings and Talk2croydon. One example is where a volunteer with web-based skills offered to help Ashley with his Future of Croydon project by going over the designs for

the projects Facebook page, the information to upload onto it and the best ways to promote the page.

#### **1.1.4 Stories to share from Broad Green**

Below is feedback from the connector conversations carried out by the Xpress Youth Participation team with some young people in Wandle Park. They spoke with one boy and two girls after the area was identified as a bumping space from the Connectors Training session. Courtney and Connor both aged 15yrs and Cody aged 16yrs:

Courtney – *'I would like to see a rock club or a hangout place for people my age but not in a youth club, because I just wouldn't go'.*

Cody – *'I'd go if it was somewhere better and I'd like to listen to music and be out of the cold'.*

Courtney – *'Yeah I just come here because it's somewhere to hangout, but when the weather is bad it does suck'.*

Cody – *'And the gangs that hang out here are not nice people. They're like adults in their 20s and they go round robbing kids'.*

Courtney – *'Yeah I had my phone stolen by one of them! It's quite scary'.*

Connor – *'They're not the sort of people you want to mess with though'.*

Two Connectors explain their motivations:

Fatima Koroma:

*'We have found ways of sourcing food for the most vulnerable in Croydon. Many of our clients have families, and so many have benefitted from the food bank. We wish to ensure that some of the most vulnerable children in Croydon are catered for by starting a Breakfast Club. Breakfast Clubs are popular in many schools but only a few have one. We wish to have a club that is accessible to all, including those that have been excluded or even home schooled'*

*'I know what it feels like not to have any food to feed your family. I actually went to the council to apply for benefits when I first came to Croydon and the officer laughed in my face, forcing me to breakdown in tears. Now I want to give back to the community and others who do not have any food'*

Allen Strong

*'I grew up in an orphanage in Lebanon. I learnt a lot about life: its principles and lessons. When I got the opportunity, I moved to the UK, and after doing so, realised that it was a place where someone could make their dreams come true. I now run a group in my own home, where I help and mentor young people to monopolise and develop their business ideas'*

Two Connectors explain their projects:

Sarah Akinwunmi - 21

*'We are a new group wanting to empower the next generation of female stars. We are looking for sparkling young ladies aged 14-18 to take part in an interactive focus group, designed to draw the best young minds together to help build our project so it is perfect for them. All we require are ambitious young women with open minds who want access to a new network that will enhance their future success!'*

Ria Amoure

*'Writing rap lyrics is something young people can learn and a subject many youths are interested in as it enables them to have a voice and speak on subjects from their point of view. The younger that the creative art of rhyming is practiced the better. All you need to do is learn the basic lyric writing techniques, rhyming techniques and how to create structure on a song or backing track.'*

#### **1.1.5 Areas of concern for Broad Green**

- Local initiatives and national initiatives operating in Broad Green caused some confusion. Many were focused on money. ABCD is firstly about people and their strengths so an emphasis on money is not helpful.
- Community First monies and matching funding through ABCD caused confusion and led to different motivations. Our recommendation is to in future disentangle these so that the ABCD approach could focus on ideas and collaborative working rather than funding.
- Greater clarity on the context through the GLA was key to engaging West Croydon Community Forum. This forum was largely made up of people directly affected by the riots and so they needed to be much better informed about the project and its desired impact.
- The size of area covered meant that it was important to focus in on local areas and very local community networks. ABCD is neighbourhood based and Broad Green is a large ward.

#### **1.1.6 Future Look Broad Green**

The Broad Green community are connecting with each other more. At each meeting or event there has been a real sense of working together and inspiration. It has encouraged people to get involved who wouldn't usually have the confidence and support to give back to their community and deliver community projects. See below list of projects:

- **Community Fun Day:** This community event will be an opportunity for the local community to come together and participate in fun games, arts and crafts, sing-along, creative dance and many more interactive activities.
- **Food for Thought – Greet & Eat:** This community event will be an opportunity for the local community to come together to socialise and share a meal.
- **Little Miracles Home from Home:** A facility to support those who have been affected by the current homeless crisis in the borough of Croydon
- **Community Breakfast Club:** Ensure that many more vulnerable people in Croydon benefit from donated food.
- **Future of Croydon – Fashion:** Reviewing local upcoming fashion designers and also interviewing local fashion shops and stylists. Carrying out a photo shoot to create a look-book for a fashion designer.
- **Kelvi:** A board game based on education and culture. The game is based on answering questions within the time given.
- **New Energy through Breathing & Yoga:** Effective breathing exercises that reduce stress, increases energy and relax the mind, as well as physical light yoga exercises.
- **Cake Making & Icing (Decorating):** Cake making, icing and decorating for unemployed people who are isolated.
- **CRIS (Croydon Renewable I.T. Skills):** The project aims to provide IT training courses for under privileged and disadvantaged young people in Croydon.
- **Fashion, recycled & refreshed:** The young people will work with a local designer to look at ideas of creating 'new outfits' from their existing wardrobe and outfits sourced from charity shops
- **Website classes:** The project is about creating a website class to teach participants how to structure and design their own website.
- **Tailoring (Dress Making):** Helping Asian women by teaching them how to make and cut Asian Sari blouses.
- **Cricket Club:** Cricket coaching for boys aged 15-18. The coaching will take place at Trinity School.
- **Cinematic Dance Club & Singing Club:** A group of young people that try to improve dance & singing in a cinematic way.
- **Community Cricket:** Cricket in the community.

- **Asian Dressing:** A project for Asian women who want to know how to do make up.
- **Creative Spectacular:** A project that aims to bring youths between the ages of 13-19 together in creating something spectacular. The focus will be fashion design on all levels.
- **Edutainment Radio:** Edutainment radio will provide training for young people in the community to develop radio shows, as well as running a business.

### 1.1.7 Recommendations for Broad Green

The community gathered a broader vision of the next 10 years and beyond through conversations and feedback at events, this included:

- Safety;
- Economic growth and development;
- Children's wellbeing;
- Neighbourhood partnership;
- Cleanliness
- People;
- Unemployment/underemployment;
- Social enterprise
- Elderly people;
- Women's safety;
- Children's behaviour;
- Cleaning the streets;
- Green space

They will tackle these issues together using:

- Assets from inside their own community;
- Assets from outside - copying good practice projects that have been effective outside the wards and then mimicking this delivery in their area.
- A match of internal and external assets

Residents identified a range of initiatives that would lead to improved quality of life and well-being in the area:

- More green spaces
- More activities for young people, especially but not exclusively those at risk of falling into crime or of joining gangs
- More creative and skills-enhancing activities especially but not exclusively for those who have difficulty finding employment or taking a positive direction in their lives
- A greater variety of shops along London Road, including cafes, book shops, banks and a Post Office

- After school and holiday/half-term activities for young people, including arts and media, football and other sports, IT skills
- Providing a safe after school environment and mentoring for young people at risk of being recruited into gangs
- Exercise, tai chi, healthy living clubs and meetings, including for older women
- English language and computer literacy classes for groups such as women with dependents and care responsibilities
- Job skills training, mentoring and work experience opportunities, including in media and design
- Safety awareness-raising sessions in local schools
- Environmental and clean-up activities in parks and public spaces
- Support and accessible services for elderly people, such as a mobile Hairdressing service, transport to social events and DIY support
- Support, personal development training and mentoring for parents
- Online, media and social networking projects which aim to encourage pride in the area e.g. through an online newspaper, as well as provide opportunities for skills development and networking

## 1.2 ABCD in Selhurst

### 1.2.1 The context of Selhurst

The Selhurst ward was chosen as an ABCD site as it fell within the area designated by London Borough of Croydon for social recovery following the civil disturbances in 2010 and through previous work the area had displayed a healthy energy for localised initiatives and actions.

### 1.2.2 What does ABCD look like in Selhurst?

Through such work a large range of skills and gifts were identified including:

Assisting with checking the area	Befriending
Back-to-Work tutorials	Time
Community Involvement Worker, Crystal Palace Football Foundation	Transportation
Family support worker	Career coaching
Fitness	Self-esteem workshops
Football coaching	Project management and coordination
Knowledge about car seats	Peer mentoring
Parent	Administrative support
Parenting qualification (OCN/EPEC)	Speech therapy
Positive parenting course experience	Universal co-ordinator for Selhurst
Spanish language	Volunteer time



As Gingerbread Corner was a delivery partner and based in Selhurst, many Community Connectors originated from the contacts made by the Community Builder there. Others were identified through walkabouts and conversations at 'bumping spaces' E.g. in parks and schools and through associations such as places of



worship and children's centres. This has meant a welcome focus of discussion relating to family, child care issues, supporting parents and intergenerational activities, amongst others.

### **1.2.3 What has gone well?**

22 practitioners and community members attended the Selhurst Workshop which took place in Selhurst Park Stadium (CFC) on Friday 30th November 2012. At the Selhurst workshop a different style of presentation was given, this was more discussion based and included fewer presentations due to the feedback given from the previous workshop. It consisted of an activity involving cards that were labelled with different skills. Attendees were asked to discuss whether any of them had this skill and if not whether they knew someone that did. The outcome demonstrated that everyone had or knew someone who had important skills and the end result concluded that together there was nothing the community were unable to do. The group had been arranged into a closed circle rather than a semi-circle and the projector was not used during the workshop, which allowed everyone to interact and communicate more effectively.

20 Connectors have been recruited in the Selhurst area with 17 Connectors attending the Community Connectors training day on the March 16<sup>th</sup> 2013 at Gingerbread Corner. There were two major events held in the area to promote ABCD and celebrate assets and initiatives. 45 people attended the Selhurst Ideas fair on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 2013 at the ASKI centre. At the Own Selhurst Celebration event on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2013 at Selhurst Park stadium, 26 people joined in celebrating how community projects were shaping their vision for the future of Selhurst. The numbers at the final event were lower than the interest expressed due to the enforced late change in the date of the event. At the final meeting attendees were encouraged to:

#### **ACT Now:**

Hear about the projects already started through the ABCD Project. Also learn about resources for their own project ideas and get information on opportunities and activities available.

#### **BUILD Together:**

Meet and connect with others contributing for the good of the community. Nominate practitioners (workers in the statutory or voluntary sector) who they feel are passionate about the community to continue ABCD via a steering group.

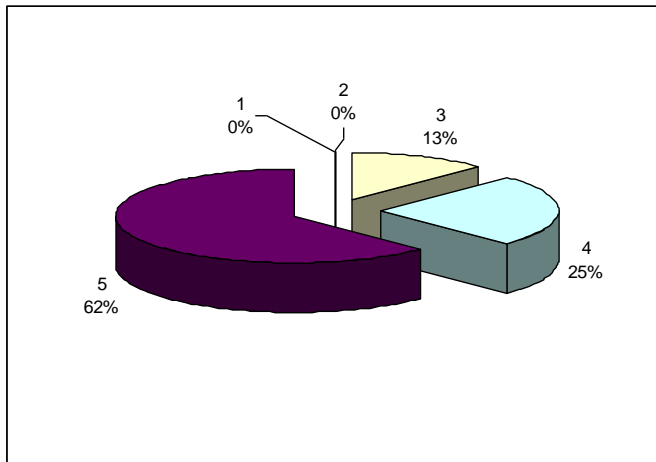
#### **CREATE Tomorrow:**

By sharing their vision for the future of Selhurst over the next 10 years.

## DREAM Big:

By continuing to connect and support each other after the pilot project ends.

The chart below shows how the community rated the information about assets and community projects presented at the 'Own Selhurst Celebration Event' with being 1= Poor and 5 = Excellent.



Attendees named the following positive aspects of the event:

- Networking – sharing ideas – activities/events
- Opportunity to discuss way of improving ideas
- The presentations, the follow-ups/feedback
- People coming together and given a voice
- 'It never fails to amaze me that people have lots of similar ideas with the same passion'
- 'It was all very good, interactive, productive, instructive, constructive and excellent'
- 'Showcasing my project, finding out about other projects, nice food, good facilities, info and signposting'
- 'Presentation was excellent, meeting different speakers was excellent'
- 'Great job today, it was great to meet you and to attend your meeting and meet up with all those lovely people. Your meeting was well run, very interactive and very enjoyable' - Anne Milstead, Patient Participation Group- Parchmore Medical Centre

Suggestions for future events:

- More advertising in the community
- Accredited training for Community Connectors
- Overview of information event would be better to come prepared
- More people to give time for free, science and technology are a major component and it should have been included in the content of event
- Specialize – to perhaps set specialist on areas - in youth and community parents etc.
- Needs assessment, Capacity building business enterprise
- Venue excellent, easily accessible, food was good

- Reach out to organizations for input e.g. housing association who have an interest in knowing their tenants are happy in their communities
- Local newsletter
- Only to get more people somehow
- More involvement, more tolerance, more respect
- Invite some key community/council workers who have some decision making power
- Talk about patient participation groups
- Add to the agenda – what are people willing to give and to share and develop local time bank

#### 1.2.4 Areas of Concern Selhurst

The Community First Panel operated effectively in this area with Gingerbread Corner in the Chair whilst also playing the role of the local ABCD Community Builder. Some confusion arose from the connection between the two distinct projects leading to assumptions that Community First was part of the funding pot for ABCD. Going forward the focus for ABCD needs to be defined more as the collaboration of strengths and ideas rather than as a route to funding.

Important to focus in on very localized neighborhoods as identified in ABCD practice. Selhurst is a less identified area so neighbourhoods cross wards.

Time frame between events and pressure on the lead Community Builders to plan, advertise and deliver on all events in each ward meant that limited time was available for promotion which would have allowed even more engagement and cross-referencing with local partners. Possible solution for this would be to request that local Community Builder partners fully lead on events in their ward including event planning and promotion.

#### 1.2.5 Future Look for Selhurst

From conversations the following projects led by Community Connectors in Selhurst were discussed and connected with assets;

- **Future of Croydon** – This magazine will feature what young people are doing in Croydon, showcasing the positive and diverse things young people are doing it is accessible online, community spaces, cafes and libraries.
- **Community breakfast club** - Offers breakfast to vulnerable and sometimes isolated members of the community. It will be held in a community setting rather than a school.

- **The Young Chef's Academy** - Providing young people with the basic skills on how to cook. The target audience is young people who live away from home and are recently out of care.
- **Edutainment** – A project for young people by young people running all aspects of a radio show.
- **Saving our Lollypop People** – A press campaign and petition specifically at Northcote and Sydenham Roads. There is the possibility of running the same campaign model in the Thornton Heath for Whitehorse Manor School, who are facing the same difficulties.
- **Unraised Voices** – A group for lone parents based at Selhurst Children's Centre.
- **Making Friends in Selhurst** – A group for parents who feel isolated or would just like to make new friends based at Gingerbread Corner. It is intended to hold two sessions on two Saturdays a month.
- **Young Mums group** - For young mums at the Gingerbread Centre to get advice, support and guidance on similar problems they face.
- **Beauty project** - Aims to build the gap between the elderly and the youth where the youth will 'glam up' the elderly.
- **Employment initiative** - Workshops on CV writing for young men, improving their chances of employability and guidance.
- **Dance school** - Teaching young people how to dance and choreograph, performing at various events and birthday parties
- **Personal Development Workshops** – Delivering three Personal Development workshops for parents. Children will stay in a crèche whilst parents learn.
- **Little Jewels Baby & Toddler Group**
- **Women in Action** - Support people between the age of 18-59 who have been unemployed for many years and confronted with domestic violence and health problems.
- **Sport in the Community** – Producing a set of video reports/journalism on 2 or 3 sporting groups in Croydon, showing how they interact with the community and raise awareness about those in need.
- **Community Gritting** - Provision of a gritting box on St James Road that can be used by a whole community including local business when needed.

- **Family Camping Weekend** - 15 families involved in a camping weekend in Croydon to promote an eco-friendly spirit within the local community, to discover resources of nature, to encourage families to spend more quality time with their children and to promote sport activities.
- **Selhurst Swap Shop** - Sharing and swapping clothing in networks and communities is fast becoming way to access a fresh and ethical source of 'new to you' clothing cheaply and without long term commitment."
- **Achieving Real Talent** - Use handicraft sessions to create a sense of unity, it is a pilot project aimed at building peoples confidence in an informal way to enable them to take part in more formal 'meetings'."
- **Sewing Open Day** - The project will teach the community new skills and encourage independence. The work shop will be held in Selhurst and runs for at least 4-6weeks.
- **Raised Voices** - The project will focus on how families in and around Selhurst can come together.
- **Yearning for Learning** - To offer activities during the summer holidays and prepare children for school.
- **Project FMP – Poetry** - Combine music & poetry together by using instruments. We also include fashion in our final performance.
- **House of Jerry** - Project FMP - Teaching young fashion crazy youths about fashion and all its aspects.
- **Life Companions** - Life companions will allow isolated or elderly people to engage with others in their community and feel empowered to participate within the community.
- **Overcoming isolation in the Asian community** - Highlighted isolation within Asian communities, particularly regarding elders and parents will work towards organising a regular group.

#### 1.2.6 The way forward for Selhurst

Community identity and spirit has grown in Selhurst through emerging connections leading to positive change. It is important to build on this and look to sustain the initiatives being developed. Selhurst community's 10 year vision includes:

- Creating meeting and play spaces.
- Not-for-profit childminders

- Rats eradicated, cleaner streets
- Communities coming together to clean streets
- Name and shame fly tippers
- Healthy living community games stadiums in each area get the all whole community
- Dispersion of violence
- Confidence building and CV support groups
- R.E.S.P.E.C.T individual differences
- Youth enterprise Schemes
- Educational groups for parents whose children are transitioning from Primary school to Secondary school
- Park clubs run by young volunteers in the summer holidays
- Open space by clock tower which can be rented for a day
- Schools having more vocational options for children who are less academic

### **1.2.7 Recommendations for Selhurst**

Throughout the project local residents and associations identified a range of initiatives linked to skills that could tackle challenges and create greater well being and robust communities that can also be built into this vision.

- Improving physical health and emotional health;
- Creating activities for young people, including assisting with job readiness and building self-esteem/confidence
- Improving play in green spaces
- Improving street safety
- Projects to improve emotional health, especially for isolated parents and those in the Asian community who might be isolated due to language barriers
- Improvements to the green space at Heavers Farm Meadow
- More effective policing to reduce drug-related crime in St James' Road
- Projects for young people, including assisting with job-readiness and building self-esteem/confidence

### 1.3 ABCD in Thornton Heath

#### 1.3.1 The context of Thornton Heath

Further to the rationale given in the earlier section Thornton Heath was chosen as it was the site of an ABCD pilot in 2010. It was felt that the work undertaken then had begun to develop a group of Connectors and an organisational awareness of ABCD in the area that could be nurtured and developed through further work.

The initial pilot had shown Thornton Heath to be a vibrant area, with a large number of residents and associations prepared to share their skills, talents, time and gifts for the betterment of the wider community. Faced with challenges including high unemployment, growing crime rates, homelessness and a negative image the growing positivity toward the area and desire to support others meant that building future ABCD led initiatives had a strong basis.

#### 1.3.2 What does ABCD look like in Thornton Heath?

Thornton Heath has a well established network of Community Connectors who meet regularly with Community Builders and are developing sustainable initiatives within the area. Through such work a vast range of skills and gifts had been identified including:

Back-to-Work Tutorials	Going into care homes: making food, talking, performing, reading stories, outings, supporting needs, teaching them IT & games, listening, speed dating, cake competition
Carpentry	Teaching assistant; experience of looking after elderly parents
Counsellors/youth leaders	Experience parenting disabled child
Fashion, customer service	Music teacher
General interest/work with youth (weekends)	Cooking Asian cuisine/icing cakes
Access to studios/volunteer time	Thinking skills/communication skills
Help cleaning up and decorating	Sports teacher
Youth work, manager, managing youth centres, supporting NEETs with education, foster care,	Language teacher (10 years)

teaching, employment training	
Life coach qualifications in May-June 2013 - personal development AQA	Cake maker/icing cakes
Music-making software	Carer/dress maker
Arranging meetings, communication skills	Piano tutor
Volunteering, making posters, public speaking (talking to schools), creating videos	Experience in growing own food
Volunteer time	Counselling
Party organiser	Expertise working with the elderly/children

### 1.3.3 What has gone well?

We again exceeded our target of 20 connectors in Thornton Heath. 32 people attended the Thornton Heath ABCD workshop on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2012. The content of the workshop was similar to Selhurst with the Nurture Development card game, *Yes We Can*, used it identify strengths. After presentations and stories from Nurture development attendees were asked to share their passions and gifts.

The Thornton Heath Connectors training session was the last in 3 sessions and most of the Thornton Heath connectors had already been trained due to their eagerness to get started.

43 people attended the Thornton Heath Ideas Fair on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2013 at Haslemere Hall. Exercises to identify the skills, knowledge and potential within the community and its members revealed connections leading to further development of community projects. 20 community members showcased their project ideas to connect with people sharing the same interest, access support and resources to support their passions and apply for match funding opportunities.

Visual techniques and online tools were used to ask open questions such as:

What makes this a good place to live?

What does the community do to improve things around here?

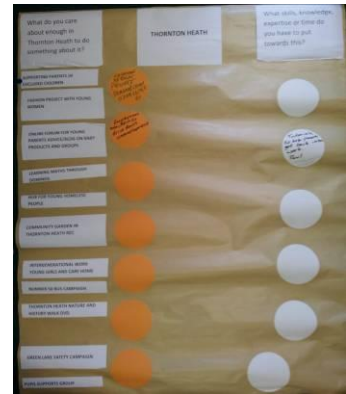
What do community members do for each other? What helps us feel independent and in control?

What helps us feel connected and socially useful?



In collecting this information the ABCD Institute Asset Mapping Resources (<http://www.abcdinstitute.org/resources/>), were used as was the local online portal ([www.talk2croydon.co.uk](http://www.talk2croydon.co.uk)) to create a sustainable and community owned online neighbourhood.

During the event other organisations were also encouraged to adopt ABCD practices.



The final ABCD celebration event – Own Our Future – took place on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> July at the Age UK building in Thornton Heath. The event was opened by Councillor Vidhi Mohan and was attended by 35 local residents. The event saw the showcasing of initiatives and projects and further networking between connectors and those new to ABCD including two local ward councillors who looked at how the council could support initiatives. Participants also engaged in discussion as to how to become involved in local health care and focused on recommending practitioners they had engaged with who they would recommend attending future Community of Practice events. The event was concluded by Sara Milocco of Croydon Voluntary Action who outlined the support the organisation will give to Connectors and initiatives in the future.

### 1.3.4 Stories from Thornton Heath

*'We are a French speaking African community and use our resources to support those who are isolated in our community through language barriers or not understanding the way of life in the UK. Through ABCD we have come to understand that our internal skills can help ourselves to an extent but can also assist the wider community which in turn will help develop our skills and overcome isolation. An example of this is that we are all speakers of French and many are teachers. Why as a group of local people do we not offer this to local children who are learning French at school and can perhaps not able to afford tutor fees? We had never seen ourselves in this way.'*

*'My friend has recently come out of hospital as she has been very ill. She didn't have anyone to look after her and she still has a tube running from her stomach into a bag. I asked the people in my church if whether we could take it in turns to go over and see her and care for her. They have been a great help and have helped me to care for her for the past week now.'*

*'There's this quiet, shy, elderly lady that lives nearby and she had this dog who would constantly bark for no reason, quite a nuisance really. But one day we noticed that the dog had stopped barking and discovered that her dog had died. We didn't see the lady very often as she stopped coming out as much so as a neighbourhood we put money together in order to buy her a new dog. We then showed up on her doorstep with a new dog and she was*

*overjoyed. She now says good morning to us all the time and is a lot more outgoing and friendly towards us.'*

*'I used to live in West Virginia, which is a predominantly white state. Being a young black boy I never thought that the community would care about me. But when I was made homeless I was offered a lot of help and got given a place to stay in a homeless shelter. I couldn't thank them enough.'*

### **1.3.5 Areas of Concern Thornton Heath**

For Connectors to be identified and for attendees to feel welcomed into the project it is important that the role of a Connector is explained with precision. Some people who attended initial workshops felt that they did not have enough time to be a Connector when they were already connecting with others in their everyday lives. This was discussed and every effort has been made by the Community Builder to support Connectors and help identify the nuances of the ABCD approach.

It was identified by a number of Connectors that the matching grant could be a hindrance to the conversation process as some people were attracted to the funding, not the way of working. The Community Builder has played a pivotal role in ensuring that this is clarified at all times.

Blockages have been experienced from some 'community leaders' or groups who distrust the Councils objectives but so far this has been talked through and dealt with at the ABCD workshops. This may be hard to manage outside of the workshops and connector conversations.

### **1.3.6 Future Look for Thornton Heath**

There has been a high turn out at meetings and events and there has been a real sense of working together and gaining inspiration. We have seen a really diverse participation in this area which has encouraged people to get involved who wouldn't usually have the confidence and support to give back to their community and deliver community projects.

See below a list of projects supported and funded by ABCD project:

**The Bespoke Relationship Seminars:** The seminars will empower families and individuals in the area of relationships with the aim of strengthening families.

**Trip Down Memory Lane Project:** A project that brings young people and older people with dementia together. It gives young people the opportunity to teach and work with older people within the community to use Facebook.

**Parade of Nations** : This event will bring everyone within Croydon together on, especially those living and working within the north of the Borough.

**Portuguese Fellowship:** An evening of exchange of cultures with the communities in Thornton Heath, working with young people to help them to get a better understanding of their cultural background.

**Dance Club:** A group teaching kids to dance.

**Music Band:** A music band where people bring instruments and play music together.

**Chill Time Focus Group:** A focus group for parents and carers of teenagers who need support.

**Holiday Scheme:** Indoor and outdoor activities during August for children aged 7-13.

**GP Partnership Tool:** Support to members of the Roma community to test a tool that helps GPs communicate more effectively with their clients.

**Kelvi:** A board game based on education and culture. The main game play is based on answering questions within the time given.

**Knitting Club (Needlework & Fabrics):** This project is aimed at young mums and housewives who want to learn to knit.

**Table Tennis:** Table Tennis for underprivileged children at Holy Saviour's Church Hall.

**Coffee Morning:** A monthly gathering of elderly people and unemployed people for a 'sit and chat' programme at Holy Saviour's Church Hall.

**Dress Making:** A monthly dress making session for non-working mothers who stay at home. The session will take place at Holy Saviour's Church Hall.

**ICARE Project:** The purpose will be to equip participants with skills to compete for jobs on the open market by training them to complete forms.

**Women Know your Worth:** Arrange for a personal accountant to come and talk about basic budgeting for the household, benefit cuts and applying for help.

**Strimming the Media:** Making a newsletter/online webpage and social media feed to track progress made on cleaning, tidying and gardening in spaces in Thornton Heath that need care.

**Community Garden:** Renovate a community garden set within Grange wood Park to create a welcoming, beautiful, safe and family-friendly garden in the heart of the park.

**Confidence for Thornton Heath:** The aim of the project is to bring young people together in Croydon to talk about what they care enough about in the area to act on and how they would like to see it develop.

**Blast from the Past:** Older Peoples Network will meet with a group of girls aged 12-16 from Winterbourne Youth Centre and do a cooking session with them. OPeN would also hold a session to discuss with the girls their history and experiences.

**Vision the Rising Stars:** Provide services such as sporting activities for groups for young people between the ages of 8 to 19 years old.

**Singing Youth Club:** Children aged between 5-12yrs will be given the chance to learn contemporary Tamil songs.

**Cake Making:** This activity is for non working mothers who come every Saturday from 10am – 12 noon.

Below is a list of projects that were supported by the ABCD project and did not require funding:

- 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.
- Youth Club and support for the homeless
- Online forum for young parents to give advice on baby products and groups.

### **1.3.7 Recommendations for Thornton Heath**

Thornton Heath residents vision includes the following:

- Improving physical health
- Providing more accessible services for psychological health

- More activities for young people of all ages- utilising the space at Parchmore Community and Youth Centre
- Improving play areas and green spaces
- Improving street safety and tackling fly tipping
- Regenerating the High Street
- Intergenerational activity
- Support for those seeking asylum in the area
- Social spaces to prevent isolation for all ages
- Creating activities for young people, including assisting with job readiness and building self-esteem/confidence
- Improving play in green spaces
- Improving street safety

The visioning exercise led by Nurture Development as part of the celebration event on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2013 highlighted that in the next ten years residents wanted to see:

- A virtual community connected through the social media to complement physical connections;
- A safer and more relaxed community;
- Collective care for older and younger people

## 2: The Community of Practice

The Social Recovery Project aims to find hidden treasure - the people, places and connections - that can be brought together to make life better for people living in Thornton Heath, Selhurst and Broad Green.

The Community Builders naturally want to collaborate with professionals from the council, the voluntary and community sectors, local business people and with politicians.

The Nurture Development approach to ABCD therefore includes a “Community of Practice” which has met once a month throughout the life of the project. These are not meant to be formal meetings but places where professionals, business people, community leaders and politicians can come together to:

- keep up to date with the project,
- support and challenge each other,
- deepen practice,
- share expertise, information and connections

Above all it is an opportunity to learn more about how to engage with local communities and more about how doing so may assist them in their work.

*We want to offer a safe space to have some deep conversations, find common ground and improve ABCD practice.*

It was agreed that at each session there would be an update on the overall project from a Community Builder, a short learning module on ABCD skills and a presentation by one of the new Connectors. Other than these three constants, the focus would be on conversations, making connections, mutual support and relationship building.

The voluntary sector, community leaders and businesses have been well represented throughout the CoP sessions. An officer from Croydon Council has attended each meeting and provided us with an effective link, as required, with all the relevant departments.

The sessions themselves have been fascinating, really inspiring and extremely valuable. The highlights have been the presentations by the Community Connectors and emergence of solutions generated from the positive and compassionate responses from individuals at the sessions from across the various sectors.

Two examples of what can be achieved by collective problem solving at CoP sessions with a strengths based perspective are as follows:-

At one session Pauline told us of the difficulty she had experienced moving forward with her plans to grow vegetables with and for her neighbours, all of whom lived in an extremely materially impoverished area. She had been offered a piece of land by the council and had worked hard and mobilised the local residents. Unfortunately, a local voluntary organisation based in the building adjacent to the land and had objected to the plot being used as an allotment. Pauline is a working mum with two young children and did her best but eventually she had to give up on her plans. She had not been able to establish the terms under which the land had been offered to the community. However, several months later, when she heard about the ABCD project, her energy and resolve were revitalised and she treated us to an animated and passionate presentation on her hopes for the land and a request for the community to help her. The session was particularly well attended and the discussion uncovered a wealth of connections and offers of assistance. Our council contact undertook to establish the ownership and details of the “gift” of the land. Someone present, who was actually on the management board of the voluntary organisation concerned, agreed to intervene directly on Pauline’s behalf. Someone else running an intergenerational project offered a free training programme for the residents on growing vegetables. An ABCD youth project teaching young people to cook healthy meals offered to buy any excess produce. Pauline was also invited to apply for matching funding to supply the residents group with the tools and implements they needed.

At another session Carol, the mother of a young man who had been to prison, gave us a very moving presentation on the emotional impact of “doing the time with your child”. She spoke of the isolation, the shame and the stigmatisation. She would go months without any contact with her son and the systems and procedures at the various prisons were a mystery to her, and she didn’t know where to go for sympathetic support or guidance. She was thus determined to set up an ABCD project to bring together mothers and teenagers who were experiencing similar difficulties. She recognised that people like her were actually experts and by working together they could contribute to the wellbeing of many others like them.. She had lots of precious newly learned skills and information to share to help people to cope better with the imprisonment of a loved one and also how to respond to the anti social behaviour of their teenage children. She wanted help setting up a focus group for mothers facing the sort of problems she had experienced and assistance in running a one day a week free community drop in advice and mentoring service. She described her aim as “getting back to the basics, local people connecting and communicating”. At the session we discussed the importance of adults in the community intervening on behalf of children and the need to train parents to see the warning signs of troubles ahead. There were plenty of offers of help and new connections were made and the session ended with an introduction to the techniques of non-violent communication and a real and shared appreciation of the power of collective problem solving.

**2.1 – What has gone well?** Each of the sessions so far has been attended by a range of different members of the community, local voluntary organizations, businesses and community groups. The discussions have been deep and rewarding for those who have attended and new connections and hidden treasures have been revealed at every session. The Parable of the Blobs and Squares was well received and has provided a useful and stimulating reference point for discussions – See video - [www.nomorethrowawaypeople.org](http://www.nomorethrowawaypeople.org)

At the last CoP session Connectors were keen to understand why there were so many apparently unused premises and pieces of land that were owned by the Council. From the citizen's perspective the complexity and formal and legal requirements of Asset Transfer schemes and the like excluded local people. A key part of ABCD practice is unearthing hidden treasures that can be used by participants to make life better for all. However, when it came to land and premises people had found it impossible to find out who owned it or any information regarding its availability.

The power of the CoP sessions lies in the connections and local knowledge of the participants and Echez from the council was invited to attend the meeting. He explained the various schemes for community use of land and buildings but it was clear that the current systems were not geared up yet to respond to requests for short term "pop up" venues at peppercorn rents where the current connectors could base their projects. We were informed that the regeneration team were looking into short term use of empty property but nothing would be decided upon during the life of the community connectors project.

Many of those present shared suggestions about potential intermediaries and useful contacts, (eg "Freespace" and the "Ethical Property Foundation"), and new potentially helpful initiatives such as the "Enterprise Hub" at CVA. However, given the short duration of the project it was unlikely that many of the ABCD projects underway or starting up would be able to find short term venues. The ensuing discussions then revealed there was a new Team Croydon, (Volunteer Bureau), shop opening in the main shopping precinct. The manager was in the building and happy to show us around. Seizing the moment, we walked down to the premises and the connectors introduced themselves and their projects, which matched the aspirations of Team Croydon perfectly. This personal contact and mutual respect paid dividends. We followed up this visit with more formal negotiations and it has been agreed that the connectors can have a 'shop window' in the new premises and use of the meeting room in the basement.

**2.2. - Areas of concern** The promotion of the Community of Practice has not resulted in the desired numbers of council staff and politicians attending the sessions.

The project delivery partners have met with council staff and with politicians and the objects of ABCD and the methodology of the Community Connector's Project have always



been extremely well received and welcomed. However, it may well be that the publicity for the Community of Practice that was addressed to council employees could of been better. Themed sessions that were announced well in advance may well have attracted more people. The messages that were distributed about the purpose of the Community of Practice were evidently not clear and from the questions raised by some of the project deliver partners, who reported that they felt pressured to attend the sessions, the assumption must be that people were unsure as to the intention behind the Community of Practice.

**2.3 - Recommendations for the Community of Practice** The Community of Practice has helped generate enthusiasm for the ABCD approach among a range of stakeholders.

Localism requires that service providers and communities come together at some point in a safe and neutral environment, such as a Community of Practice, to openly share their ideas, their hopes, their frustrations and their concerns. However, it may be that the Community of Practice has to be convened by council officers and elected members and not by the voluntary sector delivery partners. Further, discrete permission by the senior management of the council for their staff to participate as individuals would seem to be an essential prerequisite if there is to be an honest exchange of views.

A community of practice is more than just another meeting, it is a place where people from a variety of agencies, sectors and disciplines can voluntarily come together to support and challenge each other, to develop themselves and to deepen their work practices – all at the same time.

### **3: Some Key Lessons**

One full-time Community Builder, rather than three part time ones spread across three Wards, might be more effective. A full time Community Builder in each Ward is preferable but, given long enough to get established and with a committed infrastructure organisation like CVA as back up, we could envisage one full time trained community builder holding together ABCD initiatives in up to three Wards. Administration, monitoring, writing reports and event management should not be part of any community builder's role. Their time needs to be focused on relationship building. On finding, motivating and supporting community connectors, liberating community assets and encouraging the small projects to come together under broader community building themes to promote a unified vision for a stronger and more inclusive community.

Mentoring for community builders is vital to help them stay self aware, make choices and initiate actions. ABCD is a new way of thinking and doing and everyone involved benefits from regular reminders to avoid slipping back into doing things for people that they can do for themselves and inadvertently thinking about people and communities in terms of their needs, deficiencies and problems.

The number of specific meeting-based targets in the contract reflected possible misunderstandings about having to maintain the emphasis on relationship building. Attending all the meetings limited the opportunities to go deeper into neighbourhoods.

It was evident that in future there needs to be a longer gap between the Ideas Fairs and the Celebration events. Assessing the applications for matching funding dominated the time available between these two sets of events and many of the projects were just starting up as the celebration events were scheduled to take place.

The Ideas Fairs would be even better if the venues were freely accessible by the general public. Marquees at community events, in shopping centres and other public spaces would optimise participation in 'world café' style presentations of the small projects and the broader community building themes.

Other pressures on Council staff has meant that during this period they have not been able to participate as fully as many of them would of liked, although the relevant officers all made themselves fully available whenever they were contacted by the Community Builders.

Early feedback from the community revealed some suspicions that the ABCD approach was really a ploy to get residents volunteering their time to replace local services that had been the subject of cuts.

The “Six Stepping Stones” is a practical and effective model for community empowerment and should be adopted as the cornerstone of any ABCD work.

The nine months allocated to this project was adequate time for a pilot project but would not be long enough to embed a self sustaining ABCD initiative.

A range of attractive, colourful and jargon free promotional materials, (leaflets, postcards, booklets and posters – like the two excellent postcards produced by CVA), explaining the “Stepping Stones” and the key elements of the ABCD process in simple English, (with translations), would be helpful for the community connectors to use.

The target areas can be viewed as learning sites or classrooms and staff from the sponsoring agencies, in this case the Council and the GLA, should take advantage of any opportunities to spend time in the areas and join in with the activities and events. This first hand experience of the community empowerment process will be invaluable to them when deciding how to become a more community facing organisation.

Careful thought needs to be given to the scheduling of the milestone events – Introductory Workshops, Connectors Training, Ideas Fairs and Celebrations and Future Planning Events – all need to occur in a logical sequence but will also have to be repeated as new people are continually entering the process.

The formal procedures that will necessarily be required for allocating matching funding need to be agreed well in advance and kept to a minimum in order to make sure that people’s ideas can be turned swiftly into actions.

A system for rewarding people’s participation and encouraging reciprocity such as timebanking (See [www.timebanking.org](http://www.timebanking.org)) should be considered.

Existing ABCD practitioners and community builders from around the country would benefit from meeting up from time to time to exchange experiences and expertise. It is a relatively new and an extremely dynamic approach and so by capturing and sharing stories, insights and successful tactics we will all be made stronger.

Face-to-face encounters must remain at the heart of ABCD but there is potential for more effective use of social media and CVA are already exploring the potential for building a dedicated App to support these face-to-face connections.

The initial focus of any ABCD project needs to be on the sharing of ‘assets’ and the contribution of ‘gifts’. Community Builders can offer funding to support the development of

the emerging projects, but, only at a later stage to oil the wheels of activities that have been driven by the passions, connections and talents of local people.

Avenues are needed to keep a debate on the asset based approach to theory and practice alive among the key strategic partners and do not assume that a declaration of support for sustainable community empowerment will be enough to change the culture of any organisation that has been primarily occupied in delivering one way services.

Ask local people and the Community Connectors to recommend to you any professionals or salaried practitioners they know of who are passionate about localisation and community development. Such connections may become the back bone of a thriving Community of Practice.

Nurture Development has produced two board games, one is called “We Can” and the other “Hand Made”. These have been played at several of the events and training sessions and people have discovered that most of the skills needed for community building can be found locally, indeed they are in abundant supply in almost every street. (Why this is always so surprising to people reveals the high level of dependency we have now on money led solutions to social problems). The games also help identify those tasks which people feel they need some help from outside the community with and those that they thought could only can be done by specialists and professionals. Nearly every time the games were played local people felt capable and willing to take on the majority of the community building tasks themselves. (Please see the “Twelve Domains” at [www.nurturedevelopment.org](http://www.nurturedevelopment.org) for details of the depth and breadth of the areas of competence that are repeatedly and confidently owned by residents).

The main recommendation therefore to managers and workers in the council and other agencies directly from the residents of Thornton Heath, Selhurst and Broad Green is best articulated as follows:-

*When you review your progress on those outcomes you would like to see happen as a result of all your hard work, but that you know in your heart of hearts will not actually be possible to achieve, then please consider how much more you might be able to achieve by working together with a strong community to back you up. Then ask of yourself and your colleagues - what do we need to stop doing and what do we need to start doing in order to bring this about?*