



(From the ABCD Institute -online link underlined- based at the Irwin W. Steans Center for Community-Based Service Learning & Community Service Studies, DePaul University, USA. The staff members include the founders, John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann).

'Everyone Has Gifts with rare exception; people can contribute and want to contribute. Gifts must be discovered.

Institutions Have Reached Their Limits in Problem-Solving: All institutions such as government, non-profits, and businesses are stretched thin in their ability to solve community problems. They cannot be successful without engaging the rest of the community in solutions'.

For example, in Tanhouse, Skelmersdale (see image above), a 12-month project mapped local *gifts, skills* and *connections* to support the community in finding what existed and to build on its strengths, rather than asking about needs and problems (contact West Lancs CVS for more information).

In the case of health, an asset-based approach is about changing perception and the conversation, seeing individuals as active patients who may have hidden gifts that can be mobilised, rather than as passive service users.

Services tend to ask: what do you need? What is wrong? Which for immediate clinical concerns is important. BUT it is a danger for people who may seem – on the surface - to have few personal resources. Listen for gifts. Some may have unexpected personal resources and unexpected ways of contributing to their recovery or wellbeing.

How to achieve this? In ABCD communities, people learn by sharing stories of experience. Here is a story about a changed approach to health:

“Legless Les” Courier business

Peter Kenyon, “Rural Development around the World, through the lens of ABCD’ (*third story on video*)

Watch the video and reflect on the following:

Les had a long-term health condition, a history of addiction and was socially isolated. However, he was still capable of running a business. It took a hospital assistant to see what he could **contribute**, rather than what he needed, and the impact was immediate. It got Les out of a hospital bed and back into work. He was able to reconnect a community and improve his social health. It transformed the length and quality of his life.

2. **What to do next** after reading this

a. Find out more about ABCD; try the following links:

- **ABCD in Action** <http://abcdinaction.org/>



- **Nurture Development** supports communities to 'reduce institutionalisation and increase interdependency in community life' <http://www.nurturedevelopment.org>. Cormac Russell is the Managing Director.
- West Lancs CVS website for ABCD resources <http://www.wlcvs.org/asset-based-community-development/>

b. Look out for training opportunities around ABCD. It can be a good way of sharing ideas. An example is the West Lancs CVS '*Building on the Strengths in Your Community*' workshop.

c. Think about your role in your local community: how much do you, or are you able to get involved, however small that involvement may be? Think about *your* personal gifts and skills *beyond* your professional identity: how can your personal gifts and skills help to grow *your* participation in community life and strengthen the resources around you?

d. Look out for a new Skills for Care ABCD online learning resource.