Discovery Day

Information pack

Proud to be part of
Your Essex Community
Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector

ATF

The Active Wellbeing Society

Why Host a Discovery Day?

A Discovery Day has the power to transform a community. What begins as a single conversation can spark lasting change, forge meaningful partnerships, and unlock the potential within local people.

The Felmores Story: A Case Study in Community-Led Change
In January 2020, ATF facilitated a Discovery Day in Felmores, Pitsea, Basildon. Local people shared a bold ambition: to "reclaim the park." Northlands Park had developed a negative reputation as an unsafe area where parents wouldn't let their children visit.

ATF and residents began offering free activities 3-4 times a week. Hundreds came. When a tragic murder occurred in the park, participation continued to flourish, a testament to what local people had created together.

"I've never seen the park this busy, since ATF came along" – Claire, Local resident

The Discovery Day unlocked countless 'assets' – people with passion and commitment. New programmes emerged. The community transformed.

"You have put a huge smile on our children's faces, and you made us, for the first time in 17 years, feel like home" – Mira
A Discovery Day isn't just an event, it's the first step toward something special.

Want to see what a Discovery Day report could look like?
Click here

HOSTING A DISCOVERY DAY

What to expect?
A fun, interactive, strength-based discussion session to explore aspirations and opportunities within the local community.

Who should come along?
Anyone who wants to make a positive difference locally, including residents, volunteers, community stakeholders, and active members of the community.

PREPARATION PHASE

Arrange Logistics
A room suitable for the expected number of attendees, hot/cold refreshments throughout, Projector/screen with audio, laptop, Wi-Fi access (if possible), Materials: post-it notes, large paper sheets, pens

Recruit Enthusiastic Local People
Invite residents, volunteers, organisations, schools and charities — anyone who cares about their community. Give a brief explanation of the Discovery Day so people come prepared with ideas to share.

Prep your team
Remember Discovery Days are all about the community coming together to make change. Refresh your knowledge of Asset Based Community Development.

THE SESSION

Welcome & Introductions
Set positive tone, explain the purpose, introduce ABCD approach.
Session should last approx. 2.5 hours.

Help the room reflect on building connections...
Ask questions like "When did you feel strong community spirit/belonging?" "What key ingredients brought people together?"
→ Table discussions, capture on post-its/paper

Present:
Identify Assets. Ask: "What works well?" "What do you value?" "What are you proud of?" "What do people need?"
→ Table discussions, capture strengths & assets
→ Facilitators help guide positive focus

Future:
Exploring Possibilities. Ask: "any barriers?" "What do we want more of?" "What are the possibilities?" "How can you help?"
→ Table discussions, capture ideas & commitments
→ Identify community 'assets'

Gather Feedback
Collect event feedback (digital form works well)
Thank participants, explain next steps

Create the change
Use all the knowledge and community power from this session to spark collective community change

FOLLOW-UP PHASE

Deep dive analysis:
Review all notes, post-its and data collected. Identify themes, assets, opportunities & priorities

Create & share summary:
Share summary slides, including key themes, assets identified and possibilities

Develop community plan for change:
Co-create action plan based on community input. Build on identified assets & willing volunteers

Engage community assets:
Connect with those who offered to help. Options: follow-up meetings, one-to-one conversations, ongoing working groups

Remember: Flexibility is Key!
Adapt this process to your community's needs while keeping Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) principles at the core.

After completing your Discovery Day, we'd love to hear your takeaways, key learnings, or any questions. Feel free to reach out via email at: communityparticipation@theaws.org

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