



“BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF THE WHOLE SECTOR”

Good Practice Mentors case study with:

Voluntary Action South Leicestershire - VASL

Community Champions



Voluntary Action South Leicestershire (VASL) is a charity aiming to improve the lives of people in the local community. This includes the **Community Champions** project, which reduces loneliness among the over 60's.

The **Community Champions** Manager worked with The Good Practice Mentors (GPM) through workshops, peer mentoring and bespoke 1:1 support to strengthen their approach, empower older voices and build wider sector capacity.

Credibility grounded in ‘test and learn’

GPM’s credibility and practical experience were key to the Community Champions initial engagement with GPM and their decision to reach out for 1:1 mentoring support. The project manager valued that the support was rooted in real world practice:

“GPM has the credibility from having distilled the learning from the Ageing Better programme.....it’s evidence rooted in practice, by people who really understand, which is so valuable.” – Community Champions Manager, VASL

Using GPM’s test and learn approach, the Community Champions Manager was able to build confidence in testing new approaches.

“The ethos of test and learn is brilliant, I felt that if I tried something new and it didn’t work, I would get learning to improve next time. Sometimes what you learn not to do is just as useful as what you learn to do.”

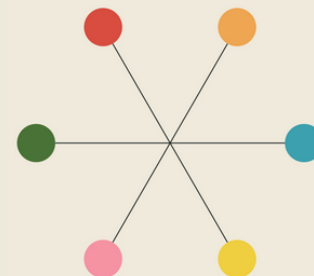
A compass to navigate best practice

The bespoke 1:1 mentoring supported the Community Champions Manager to contextualise and cut through the large amounts of information and focus on what mattered most.

“There is a huge amount of information and having a member of staff who is like a compass helping you navigate that is brilliant.”

- GPM took the time to understand the project’s history, context, resources and aims.
- Support was genuinely customised, not generic.
- Tailored advice saved staff time and accelerated implementation.

“GPM helped me see the wood from the trees and home in on what was most useful for our context.”



Modelling good facilitation

GPM's workshops didn't just talk about good practice, they modelled it by demonstrating what good facilitation looks like in practice and how to use certain tools and techniques effectively.

"As a manager you get the opportunity to see what it feels like when something is well facilitated, it's useful to have things demonstrated that then let you reflect on your own practice."

- Inclusive approach facilitated by very clear communicators
- Ability to adapt quickly when challenges presented themselves
- Responsive to feedback and follow up

"GPM are fantastic about following up with resources, which helps to make my time more effective"



Tangible impacts

The ***"cutting edge"*** support provided by GPM has had direct and visible impacts on the Community Champions Manager, their team and the local communities they work with.

The partnership led to positive real work changes in practice:

- Older voices amplified – Steering groups were redesigned so older people contributed more actively.
- From involvement to leadership, Learning sessions were co-produced with older people, not just designed for them.

"Clients and volunteers are saying much more, it is more balanced."

"GPM made me realise that it shouldn't just be involving them, it should be enabling them to lead."

The Community Champions Manager describes how the learning from GPM ***"has influenced my practice enormously"***.



"The support from GPM is really instrumental in helping a lot of people develop their practice, it's building the capacity of the whole sector"

Proactive dissemination



Community Champions were clear that the GPM model of proactively disseminating learning and best practice is critical, as this model reaches many people – ***“it’s active promotion, not just a report on a website.” It is also of huge benefit that GPM “can offer a wide range of topics for different people and different aspects of your work.”***



Conclusion

GPM’s support has been ***‘extremely significant’*** for the Community Champions project. Through its blend of practical workshops, evidence rooted in real experience, genuinely tailored peer mentoring and 1:1 support, GPM helped the project manager and team build confidence, strengthen practice and empower older people to lead.

The result has been stronger practice, measurable change in local engagement, and a ripple effect of learning that continues to build capacity across the whole sector.



If you would like to discuss how GPM could support you to reach, engage and connect with your community then please drop us an email:

✉ GPM@syha.co.uk

For more information and resources please visit our website:

🌐 [GPM Website](#)

Please see our Eventbrite page for our upcoming workshops

🔗 [GPM Eventbrite](#)