



# “*GIVING PEOPLE THE CONFIDENCE TO CHALLENGE & CHANGE*”

## Good Practice Mentors case study with: North Somerset Council

North Somerset Council works closely with Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations to support communities across the region.

As part of this, the Engagement and Partnerships team wanted to strengthen how they work **with** communities, ensuring that resident voices are genuinely heard, valued and responded to.

After attending initial co-production training through Voluntary Action North Somerset (VANS), the team reached out to GPM for further bespoke support.



## From training to wider impact

Initial support focused on delivering co-production workshops for town and parish councillors and clerks, supporting them to think differently about how they involve residents in local decision-making, improve how they listen and respond to communities, and apply co-production principles in practice.

This work was funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, a UK Government programme supporting local investment to strengthen communities and improve life chances.

These sessions encouraged participants to think differently about:

- How they involve residents in decision-making
- How they listen and respond to community voices
- What meaningful co-production really looks like in practice

Following this, GPM delivered a six-month series of online workshops for the North Somerset VCSE network, alongside council staff, expanding the reach of the learning across the wider system.

These sessions covered topics such as:

- Outreach friendly communication
- Creating informal opportunities for involvement
- Building confidence to engage communities in more accessible and responsive ways.

## Practical, relevant and easy to apply

A key strength of the support was its focus on practical tools that could be applied immediately.

As the lead Engagement and Partnership Officer, explains:

***“It gave me tools that I could apply in everyday life, and with the communities I work in. It gave me things to think about away from the training.”***

The sessions created a supportive environment where participants could bring real challenges and work through them together:

***“We were able to give real life problems and get help to work out what to do next or what to do better next time.”***



## Building confidence to do things differently

The training helped build confidence not just in individual practice, but across the organisation.

The lead officer describes how it has enabled staff to start challenging existing approaches:

*“It has given us some ‘power’ to challenge, change things, call out jargon, point out co-production labelled tasks that are not co-production as we now know.”*

This shift has supported a move towards more inclusive, accessible and honest ways of working with communities.

This was particularly important in helping teams move beyond more traditional, formal engagement approaches, giving them the confidence to try more informal and accessible ways of connecting with communities.

## Strengthening collaboration and connection

The sessions also created opportunities for new connections:

*“Working with colleagues who have also attended that I may not have worked with prior... possibly wouldn’t have done so without this training.”*

By bringing together staff and VCSE organisations, the programme helped build a more aligned approach to engagement across North Somerset.

This has helped to create stronger relationships across teams and sectors, supporting a more coordinated and consistent approach to working with communities.

## Impact for communities

The support has led to practical changes in how teams approach their work, particularly in how they engage with residents and design opportunities for involvement.

Councillors, clerks and VCSE organisations are now more confident in involving people in decision-making, improving how they communicate, and creating more accessible and informal ways for people to take part.

This includes:

- Greater confidence in using co-production tools
- More thoughtful and inclusive communication
- A stronger focus on language and accessibility

As the lead Engagement and Partnerships Officer explains:

*“It helps enormously looking at communication, language, [and] my confidence using co-production tools”*

## Conclusion

Through a combination of workshops and ongoing support, GPM helped North Somerset Council to:

- Build confidence in co-production and community engagement
- Develop practical tools for day-to-day work
- Strengthen collaboration across teams and sectors
- Challenge and improve existing ways of working

For the Engagement and Partnerships team, the support has gone beyond training, helping to embed a more reflective, inclusive and community-led approach across their work.

This is helping to ensure that communities are not just consulted, but actively involved in shaping decisions that affect them.

***“It has given us the confidence to challenge and change how we work.”***



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](mailto:GPM@syha.co.uk)

For more information and resources please visit our website:

🌐 [GPM Website](#)

Please see our Eventbrite page for our upcoming workshops:

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