



Community engagement beyond the “quick wins”

A Good Practice Mentors case study with:

Tameside Ageing in Place Pathfinder (Jigsaw Homes)

Running in the Ridge Hill area of Stalybridge, Greater Manchester, the Tameside Ageing in Place Pathfinder (AIPP) programme aims to make sure that older people’s voices are heard and valued in the places they live. It is a three-year community engagement project led by housing support organisation Jigsaw Homes.

The team spent the first 18 months of the AIPP programme meeting people who were already engaged in their communities, but the project’s Community Engagement Worker was conscious that they **“were not reaching the people behind closed doors”**. It was for this reason that they sought the support of the Good Practice Mentors (GPM) programme, and they haven’t looked back since.

Bespoke practical support

The Tameside Pathfinder team explored bespoke support options with GPM to make sure it would be right for them, with the Community Engagement Worker saying

“we saw quite early on that it was a no-brainer to work with GPM, it was a massive benefit and opportunity”.

GPM support for Jigsaw Homes included:

- A practical in-person training session
- Communications support
- A tailored risk assessment
- In-person door-knocking training and support

What is door-knocking?

- A safe, light-touch, non-intrusive conversation
- Builds trust and rapport
- Addresses barriers and provides residents with a ‘nudge’ to attend an informal pop-up event
- Models safe behaviour for both residents and door-knockers
- Developed with input from the police, trading standards, housing providers and older residents



Reaching the people behind closed doors

The team undertook two sessions of door-knocking alongside a pop-up café serving teas and coffees, through this activity they:

- Engaged with 45 residents who had never previously had any contact with Jigsaw and weren't involved in any existing activities

Other residents were also met through this activity and connected to:

- A digital awareness course
- Job seeking support
- Other existing social groups in the area such as ‘Knit and Natter’

The learning and support from GPM meant that the team were undertaking the door-knocking

“in a structured way, almost a more scientific way based on what works, you knew you weren't just going out and winging it!”

The Community Engagement Worker described how the conversations with these residents were different from those the project was previously having.

“This is a different type of communication and there's real skill in how you go about that.”



The longer-term ripple effect

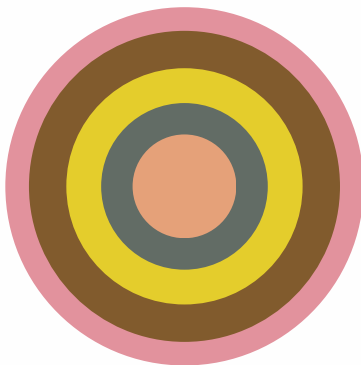
Beyond the door-knocking, the GPM support has impacted how the team approach community engagement, now focusing on building relationships and informal communication.

“[it’s] really enhanced that kind of approach - in what we’re doing now and what we will do going forward in other work.”

The support from GPM has also changed the way the Tameside Pathfinder team communicates their activities. The team recognised barriers to engagement in their previous comms and subsequently made adaptations, changing the language used and including a map of the location to support engagement.

Going forwards, Tameside Pathfinder will continue to apply the learning from GPM to reach even more residents who are not already engaged in existing social activities. The Community Engagement Worker stated that the GPM support

“has given us a pathway to engage with people, and we know it works”.



Tameside Pathfinder’s top tips for community engagement:

- Dual-track approach: Giving residents multiple opportunities to meet and engage (an initial leaflet-drop followed by door-knocking and a pop-up café on a later date) increases the likelihood of positive engagement with new faces.
- Inclusive communications: Don’t make assumptions about people’s local knowledge. Include accessible information on communications, such as a map, image of the location, and contact details (*a phone number for those who don’t use email!*)
- Outside, visible pop-up café: Host the pop-up in a visible communal area that is more likely to attract passers-by, and reduces the barrier of entering spaces that are unfamiliar or perceived to be unwelcoming.
- Not too much information: Avoid overwhelming new people with too much information on their first engagement. This is an opportunity to say hello, not to ‘sell’ your opportunity or support.
- Extra support: When new people join an existing social group, ensure they receive a ‘Warm Welcome’ from the group and feel able to return again next time.





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](#)