

# A Feasibility Study to Explore the Potential for Participatory Grantmaking (PGM) in North Yorkshire



## Case Study: PGM Approaches in Scarborough & Ryedale

**Supported by North Yorkshire Council and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

Skyblue Research Ltd

June 2023 to January 2024

### Background

This is one of three case studies based on triangulated interviews conducted by Alan Graver (Skyblue Research Ltd) between June and December 2023.

These 'deep dives' contributed to, and complemented, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund feasibility study which was completed by Skyblue in January 2024. A detailed report, short summaries and 'PGM learning together workshop' slide packs were also produced and are available on request from Marie-Ann Jackson, Head of Localities, North Yorkshire Council.

## Case study 2: PGM approaches in Scarborough and Ryedale

### Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the 17 individuals interviewed for this case study. They shared different perspectives; three from a Regional Funder; another from an issues-based funding organisation; five local authority officers; two PGM facilitators; a place-based Project Manager and community engagement worker; and four residents with lived experience involved in decision making processes including grant panels. Their insights were collected via interviews and 'PGM Learning Together' workshop in 2023 as part of this feasibility study.

**A member of North Yorkshire Council's Stronger Communities Team helped the consultant to peer review insights collected in order to develop this case study which is less about the detailed processes in each activity discovered, rather to bring together some of the reflections having noticed this critical mass of PGM down the north Yorkshire Coast and into Ryedale – which converge thematically around health, mental health and wellbeing, with decision making opportunities being enabled for adults and young people alike. Until this study, the connections were not known or being made.**

### Scarborough and Ryedale PGM Models

The challenges around delivering pure PGM models are always around the time it takes to do it really well, the release of power and control from the funder and the success in getting a truly representational group, including those seldom heard voices to have the confidence to work together for the greater good.

In recent years Scarborough has become an area that has trialled a variety of grant giving and grantmaking that have been modelled on PGM approaches. These attempts have not always been labelled as

PGM, rather have been built around attempts to give some control and decision making back to communities in order to help communities decide what they would like to see and how it is to be delivered. It has been the case that these attempts have often been shaped by the restrictions around the initial funding, but all the groups have made attempts to circumnavigate these in order to let communities decide for themselves.

These are their stories.

"For the Scarborough, the youth panel approach had so many different systems involved, it had great plans but the time pressure to spend the money meant that we were then asked to do a down and dirty quick process. This tight timeline meant that the youth panel didn't have time to shape priorities, do any design process etc which would have been better and could feed learning for the next iteration on the coast."

"It's important to meet people where they are – adapt, change, grow, evolve with participants"

"Described as transformational - Because young people felt first time voice was heard and valued"

"I loved that young people were involved in the panel. It worked hard to not exclude anyone".

"I wonder if in future it could also be an online decision making approach. Were any voices being missed because of the limiting aspect of cost and time for public transport from rural areas to get involved in the face-to-face decision making day?"

## SeeCHANGE – tackling health inequalities in Scarborough

SeeCHANGE is all about reducing inequalities and improving wellbeing in Scarborough. It is a £500,000, 3-year National Lottery funded Project from 2023-2026. It is a holistic approach to Scarborough with all sectors coming together bringing their area of insight for the benefit of the town as a whole. As no one person has the answers it takes collaboration. It has a leadership team comprising North Yorkshire Council, NHS, Scarborough Business ambassadors and VCSE leadership as well as community engagement, small grants to grassroots groups (£30,000 in total for these). Many of those are also residents and bring their own person insight into the mix.

SeeCHANGE's Community Funding is available for small projects seeking to tackle **health inequalities**. The National Lottery have been clear that there must be certain formalities around the funding, and in this way the funding looks no different from other conventional funding arrangements with application forms, panels and a decision making panel made up of professionals. It is, however, the process around nurturing ideas, that makes SeeCHANGE's funding different.



'B' is the Community Engagement Officer for the Project, and she visits communities in Scarborough, sitting and chatting to people in cafes and community centres. She listens and encourages the development of their ideas, building up their confidence. While there is an application process 'B' supports them through that removing any barriers they might have about filling out a form.

Never taking over but rather supporting them to have the confidence to believe that their idea has worth.

At the time of writing (January 2024) there has been one panel where a number of applicants' ideas were considered. With 'B' once again at their side, they could explain in their own words what their idea meant, taking confidence that 'B' believed in them. If there were issues 'B' would feedback and support them to consider what was said and whether they wanted to make any changes. If the applicant was successful, but it was felt that the Team could give some form of added value, 'B' would once again share this with the applicant and also support them with any other areas that might be needed as part of an ongoing relationship.

The successful applicants were invited to meet up over coffee and cake to talk to some of the SeeCHANGE team and discuss their thoughts about the process and also to share what their project was with other applicants. This aspect would build as more applicants were successful and a bit of a 'community' of groups could form to share and support each other. This was the first funding tranche, and it was recognised there would be learning from it. How they felt honestly about the process and what they would like to do differently.

### Experiences

*"We've done our first round of funding and some fantastic projects have been funded. The stand out is a project for non-neuro typical people – when the panel get together it's beautiful, that self-awareness coming from the ground up. It's a good job I'm not on the panel as I'd give them all money!"*

*"The panel was all 'professionals' including representation from the National Lottery who insisted that they were present for all panels. So, no community/residents doing the decision making."*

*“It’s been really great. The question is – how do we get to the next level? We’ve done our first round of funding and have funded fantastic work. It is really good to see how life has changed in a small amount of time for some people.”*

### **Legacy?**

Keep listening, keep learning to improve the grant giving process in order to empower those who feel they don’t have the power to shape their community. Celebrate the great projects and ideas that are emerging from those communities and improve the wellbeing of residents of Scarborough.

### **Eastfield PACT – Cash for Causes**

The Eastfield PACT set up Cash for Causes (C4C) as a Scarborough Borough Council funded small grants scheme to support projects of community benefit in the community of Eastfield.

A total pot of £150,000 has been drawn down over three years from Council monies acquired from the sale of land.

Cash for Causes is one of six work programme areas that are overseen by the Eastfield Pact Regeneration Partnership that is in the process of delivering circa £5million of regeneration investment into the community. The other work programme areas are people, place, jobs / skills, aspiration and community hubs.

Cash for Causes allocates small grants under two strands:

- Micro grants of up to £1,000 with less rigid due diligence criteria; and
- main grants of over £1,000 with no upper limit.

Applications are welcomed from community organisations and private sector organisations if they can demonstrate the project is not for profit. Importantly applicants to C4C must be able to demonstrate a tangible local

connection and projects must contribute to one of the five other work programme areas mentioned above.

Decisions on what gets funded and what does not reside with a panel of 7 people – 5 local residents and 2 stakeholders, drawn from a larger pool of about 25-30 residents and 8-10 stakeholders.

Whilst the resident led panel ultimately decides what projects get funded they reach their decisions using a scoring framework aligned to the fund priorities.

All panel members go through informal training before sitting on their first panel. To date we have allocated just over two thirds of the total available pot and are investigating options for continuation of the scheme.

Some of the grants awarded

- **Off the Hook**
- **Football for Youth**
- **Sight and Hearing Hub**
- **Soup Bap and Banter**
- **Junior Design Factory**
- **Toddler Group and Coffee Morning**
- **Dementia Dance and Movement**
- **Exercise and Pain Management scheme**

C4C is commissioning an external evaluation with results due end of June 2024, to reflect on its successes and learning to inform future decisions about its continuation or otherwise.

### **Big Local Barrowcliff**

There is a partnership with up to 15 residents involved in the decision making about how money on projects is spent. None of the projects are means tested meaning anyone can take part. For instance, the Free School Meal project in lockdown saw every child (not just those eligible for FSM) getting £3 vouchers in the area.

Many residents have lived in Barrowcliff for generations and have family connections throughout the estate. Barrowcliff as a community is faced with a number of challenges especially around income, crime and health but it does have positives too and these are rarely celebrated. There is a sense that as a community it feels let down by authority but The Big Local has done a lot of work to break down the barriers to unite residents and to support the community in getting what it wants and needs.

### **Experiences and reflections**

*"This has felt positive. Better than before. No people coming in with badges on telling people what to do."*

*"Learning from failure is almost as important as succeeding. It took 3 attempts to get the Big Local Barrowcliff partnership right."*

*"We made sure that we didn't wear our lanyards in Barrowcliff, or Council badge when with Big Local."*

*"Gallows Close (a local trusted voluntary community organisation) is giving residents what they need now, not something that a politician says 5 years ago."*

*"We ask what do people want? People are good at telling you what they need. And it's OK to fail."*

### **Legacy?**

*"Big Local is becoming Active Communities Together (ACT). 51 of 150 Big Locals across the country have signed up and 140+ residents have signed up locally. Come to a meeting, see how the legacy is being created."*

*"For the theme of mental health, the approach has to be built around [co-creation](#) within a service. A lot of work has gone in to this in TEWV and the NHS. PGM can be a part of that wider approach."*

### **Scarborough, Whitby and Ryedale Community Mental Health Transformation (CMHT)**

Community Mental Health Transformation in the Scarborough Whitby and Ryedale area will build on the successful participatory decision-making processes that have already designed and invested £190,000 in community mental health projects, to design and invest the next phase of around £245,000 in 2024 before evaluating and informing future CMHT commissioning. The process was successful in giving out 6 large grants and 7 smaller grants all for new projects that adopted different approaches to supporting MH across the wider area.

The grant giving process still has not always been easy and it is recognised that there is still room for improvement.

A stakeholder decision panel member who had had previous experience with PGM across different places, sectors and thematic approaches felt that: *"The CMHT investment panels in Scarborough ended up supporting people with lived experience but the matrix scoring approach to scoring things was laboured. A brief discussion then 15 minutes to score each one 1-5 per application was mechanical. It did enable discussion but could have got done in a third of the time using an alternative PGM approach. I felt that the use of matrix scoring for grants for the CMHT felt quite traditional and prescribed whereas using another approach might have got the decisions made in a third of the time... but power would need to be released."*

Participants with lived experience commented: *"PGM smashed my prejudices wide open. I've been on benefits for 20 years, suffered discrimination, poverty and trauma. People assume I don't know how to function."*

*"Alcoholics and addicts have the answers. Without patronising them, that's the bit PGM does."*

## **Young people's Mental Health PGM in Scarborough**

There has been a Young Persons Panel (involving young people that are already a part of the Youth Council and others that were not part of that Council) to help make decisions about how £25,000 of mental health funding (from Two Ridings Foundation and profiled by the Royals Foundation and visit in 2023).

This experience has been supported by expert facilitation too, and whilst the young people have not had sufficient time to complete a PGM exercise where they actually define the priorities or criteria of the funding – that was pre-determined – they have been able to do some decision making together for small grants given to local VCSEs they felt would help support young people's mental health.

### **Foundation perspectives**

*"I was blown away by the York Deciding Together stuff so when I had the chance in my role at the Foundation I brought together a panel of young people to make decisions on some available funding for projects that supported CYP mental health and wellbeing in Scarborough.*

*They were a phenomenal bunch of young people – their integrity, passion and drive. I came in as the adult very process-focused and thinking 'this is what we need to do.' But on the day of decision making the young people took over, got on their feet, used flipcharts, pens, different colours – they brought questions about the community project applications we had brought to them for a decisions; they asked budget questions and what about value for money.*

### **Reflections**

*"I loved that children / young people were involved in the panel. The timing of meetings, done after school, and open to carers recognising their responsibilities. It worked hard to not exclude anyone. I wonder if in future it could also be an*

*online decision making approach. Were any voices being missed because of the limiting aspect of cost and time for public transport from rural areas to get involved in the face to face decision making day?"*

### **Legacy?**

The Two Ridings Foundation's CYP mental health PGM activity is developing and in a second round of funding for 2024 the young people are shaping the criteria more for that.

### **Scarborough Participatory Budgeting**

Using Scarborough BC grants, a participatory budgeting scheme had been pioneered some years ago with an aim to move decision making power from Councillors to local people.

*"Decision making power moved from Councillors and Committee to the individuals / residents. Organisations would put forward their pitches and individuals / residents made decisions based on these."*

This typically took the form of a 'Dragon's Den' style event with voting and scoring. Often held in a public building such as a library space. Groups would create a stall and deliver their pitch as residents visited each group and asked questions and gave their scores to support the projects they felt best deserved the funding.

### **Experiences and reflections**

*"It had good success across the Borough, hundreds of people got involved."*

### **Legacy?**

*"It [PB] fizzled out because the Area Committees ceased, and the funding wasn't there anymore. There is nevertheless current PGM activity involved in the Eastfield PACT Regeneration Partnership's 'Cash for Causes' work programme area which sees a panel of 7 people (including 5 residents) awards small community grants."*



*“If we can do this kind of thing with grant making why can’t we do it with local authority budgets?” “I think PGM is a precursor to Participatory Budgeting.”*

### **What does this all mean?**

Participatory Grantmaking has been carried out in different ways in different settings across Scarborough and Ryedale for a number of years. Mostly these projects have been working independently of each other and in all but one case without following a formal PGM model. Instead, what has informed these funders’ practices is a belief that ceding power and giving it the communities of either interest or of place is the right thing to do.

Grants have been given to a range of different groups and providers. Some have been given to small groups that only came together when inspired e.g., by the potential SeeCHANGE funding. One example is ‘Ding Dong Bells,’ a group of residents in Seamer. While other grants have been given to established medium sized charities whose work covers the towns of Scarborough, Filey Whitby, Pickering and Malton. All the grants that have been given out are thought to be worthwhile and are helping people to improve their wellbeing, improve their health, encouraging people to try new things and make connections.

What is different is that some of the people involved in receiving the grants would never have anticipated being involved in a community project, they would never have had the confidence to approach a more formal funding offer with their idea. The other difference is the process, the coming together of residents, of individuals with lived experience and of making their voices heard, of giving their opinions and learning how to listen to others, to negotiate and to champion. It is the experience that these communities have had in knowing that they make a difference, that they have been part of something that was for the benefit of

others. While none of these grant structures have been perfect, participants feel that they have been positive.

*“We are also learning that there is a way to improve and build on what is being done currently. To do PGM properly it needs to be properly resourced with ongoing facilitation and development support and that it always looks different even though it follows some key principles because it is built around people and communities.”*

*“If we were doing Devolved Decision Making we would do an open application process, not call it a panel. We would go into shops, salons, cafes and think ‘what are the conditions that might be needed before they could bring their voice in the room’ Start with bringing people together for meals, do some creative workshops. Then talk about values and governance and when the healing has happened, only then, start to make decisions about things such as money for projects. The success of PGM is relationships and journeys not just the money moved. PGM of the future is less about how much money moved in x amount of time – we need a decolonised approach.”*



## What next?

It was not until December 2023 when a workshop was delivered exploring what PGM meant in Scarborough and Ryedale that the connection between these Scarborough and Ryedale based funders and project leaders, each with their different but similar approaches, was made. Each PGM activity had been working in isolation of one another despite the commonalities of place and thematic intention. Perhaps this can lead to some practical joining up of know-how as a consequence of their workshop should the appetite to learn together continue in 2024?

*“To do PGM justice and support our communities to get the best from it we need to be able to share existing and future learning, improve practices and processes with some kind of shared ambition to make a difference to our communities. This must be linked to community and individual empowerment; creating the right environment for nurturing skills and confidence in order to build trusting relationships. So people feel empowered to trust in each another’s ability to make decisions in an agreed way that is elected by the participants themselves.”*