



## Working with Bath and North East Somerset Council

### The situation

Throughout 2014 we have been lucky enough to have been working with Bath and North East Somerset Council – BANES.

They have been working on a major project which has really embraced the principles of flexible working. The council were spread across a number of different sites and the decision was made to build a major central office site, with the added advantage of significantly reducing the council's carbon footprint.

It was crucial to BANES to win the hearts and minds of their employees and to find ways to help them to really benefit from a more flexible working model. The site move meant that employees would be encouraged to use public transport, to work from other sites near to meetings, and from home, aiming to reduce travel time and costs. Flexible working also meant that employees could have more flexibility with their working hours, but as with any significant change, there could be resistance and BANES wanted to minimise this. Their approach included all levels of staff and some of their activities included:

- Helping senior level staff to understand the benefits and principles of flexible working, equipping them to lead by example
- Educating all employees on the features and benefits of the new site and the environmental impact, trying to paint a picture of their new ways of working
- Training up a population of volunteers to champion the change – employees from all levels who would work with teams and individuals to drive the change with positivity
- Keeping employees informed about progress and plans and really creating a sense of excitement about the changes
- Offering training and development to all people managers on how to manage teams who work flexibly or remotely, helping them to understand how to support people with different needs and how to get the best out of their teams

### What we did

This is where we came in. We have worked with BANES to develop and deliver a programme to people managers that helped them understand what was needed when managing flexible workers. We also give attendees some practical tools that they can take back to the workplace and use with their teams to ensure performance and engagement levels remain high. The course covers communication, building team spirit when people aren't necessarily sat in the same office location and helping to understand how different personalities can impact how people feel about working flexibly.

### The results

The process of engaging people with the flexible working model continues, alongside ways of helping employees and the local community to use and enjoy the benefits of their new building. It's great to speak to the employees and hear their excitement and enthusiasm for the building, the council and their flexible working principles. Feedback also shows that managers feel more confident and capable in managing flexible workers – a great result.

*"Gail and Clare at Peopletopia have proved to be great partners in our project to deliver flexible working in the Council. They have provided sound advice taken from their varied experience and backgrounds, creative ideas that we were able to turn into engaging solutions for getting our staff on board with the biggest change the Council has faced since it was created in 1996. They have themselves delivered extremely well received workshops for our Managers around managing differently in a flexible working environment and are always willing to be available to offer practical support and encouragement in the background when times are tough. They are also very nice, fun people to have around! I cannot recommend them highly enough".*

Chantal Young. Senior HR Consultant - Strategy (E&OD)