

**Better Start Bradford Partnership Board Minutes**  
**Thursday 18 June 2020**  
**Via Zoom**

**Meeting Started:** 9.35

**Meeting Ended:** 11:50

**Present:**

Vipin Joshi	Community Board member (Chair)
Sarah Hinton	Board Member, Bradford Trident
Tracey Hogan	Voluntary and Community Sector representative
Alex Spragg	Programme Director, Better Start Bradford
Ruth Shaw	Senior Head of Strategy, Change and Delivery, Bradford District and Craven Clinical Commissioning Group
Josie Dickerson	Acting Director, Born in Bradford
Fareeda Mir	Ward Councillor, CBMDC
Gwen Balson	Community Board member
Ishaq Shafiq	Community Board member
Karen Tetley	Community Board member
Ludmila Novosjolova	Community Board member
Olga Dolganiuc	Community Board member
Samina Begum	Community Board member
Shaheen Khan	Community Board member

**In Attendance**

Gill Hart	Funding Manager, The National Lottery Community Fund
Gill Thornton	Head of Programme, Better Start Bradford
Jill Duffy	Implementation Manager, Better Start Bradford
Guy Dove	Programme Administrator, Better Start Bradford

**Apologies for Absence:**

Mark Douglas	Salma Nawaz	Satnam Singh	Adal Qureshi
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**1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

Vipin welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies. Children's Services were unable to supply a deputy for Mark.

Vipin welcomed the new Community Board Members in attendance (Ishaq, Karen and Olga) and everyone introduced themselves.

Vipin said that with the new members starting this was an appropriate time to remind everyone of the Code of Conduct for our meetings. This includes that all should have the opportunity to contribute and the Partnership Board members will hold different points of view which need to be respected.

## **2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 23 April 2020**

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

## **3. Matters Arising actions table**

Alex explained that due to the April Partnership Board being inquorate the decision made about Home-Start was emailed to the wider Partnership Board for comments and queries by 16 June. No comments or queries were received so the decision is ratified.

Gill Thornton apologised for not having sent the Better Start Bradford timeline to the Partnership Board. The work on it is nearly complete.

**Action: The BSB timeline will be sent around to the Partnership Board before the next meeting.**

Alex confirmed that the recruitment of Community Board Members is complete. She also clarified, in response to a query from Ishaq, that all vacancies have been filled.

Community Board Member honorariums is on the agenda (item 8) and so is sustainability (item 9).

The BSB Covid-19 response was emailed to the Partnership Board as requested.

## **4. Declarations of interest**

It was noted that all the Community Board Members are conflicted on item 8 which discusses honorariums.

## **5. 'Getting to know you' session**

There was no session this month. Vipin, however, remarked that with the new community Board members starting there should be plenty of material for future meetings.

## **6. BSB Ante-natal offer**

Gill Thornton said our purpose at the moment is to maximise access to support for BSB parents during the lockdown. There can be very little face-to-face group provision, but we had already planned to review our ante-natal offer prior to the pandemic as there were some issues concerning referrals and risk.

At the bid stage we had identified ante-natal projects that could show effectiveness, that could be evaluated and be delivered locally. We identified low engagement in antenatal support in the bid and showed how it can improve birth outcomes and parent-infant relationships.

Gill Thornton outlined the current ante-natal projects. Welcome to the World was always to be delivered by children's centres, and we just funded the evaluation and did a lot of work to try to increase recruitment, and support training and delivery. HAPPY is a project which tries to reduce childhood obesity, targeting pregnant women with a BMI of over 25.

Baby Steps is a targeted intervention for vulnerable parents which we originally thought the NSPCC would deliver, but they withdrew and the contract was awarded to Action for Children. It is oversubscribed partly because the level of vulnerability in the BSB area is greater than the NSPCC's figures suggested. ESOL for Pregnancy was reviewed by the Partnership Board about a year ago, it aims to empower pregnant women with poor English to make choices about their birth plans, and to meet other women in the same situation. We also fund some other ante-natal projects such as Doulas and the Perinatal Peer Support Service.

Prior to the pandemic, there was a hiatus in Welcome to the World delivery while children's centres transitioned into Family Hubs. BSB staff provided support to the project. HAPPY has had low referral rates and there is a possibility this has been impacted by competition from our other ante-natal projects. In ESOL for Pregnancy we are also trying to increase referrals via the Neighbourhood project.

Baby Steps is oversubscribed with a waiting list. Some families have been referred on to other projects as a result. The higher referrals may be because midwives have a prompt for referrals on their Medway system whereas our other projects do not.

The current position is that all of the ante-natal projects except Welcome to the World have adapted due to Covid, using phone calls or online delivery and mostly having 1:1 sessions instead of groups. We expect that restrictions over face-to-face contact will continue and we are trying to make provision more accessible.

Some potential changes were then outlined by Gill Thornton. We have set up some virtual antenatal education classes, in collaboration with Midwifery and the Care Trust, which have proved very popular and which we now host twice a week. We are also talking to the Family Hubs about extending the classes and involving their staff. We will not be evaluating this fully as there is no tracking of the women and it is district-wide.

HAPPY have identified unused capacity within their team and have suggested adapting their current offer so they would only deliver the antenatal element of their course. This is based on Welcome to the World and would keep the health and nutrition aspects but would reduce the involvement down to six weeks instead of the current year. Jill said the first such course is to start in July and Gill Thornton noted that it will involve 1:1s moving on to groups and will hopefully recruit more people than the old version of HAPPY.

Baby Steps had requested an expansion in their staff team some time ago but the decision was postponed due to the wider ante-natal offer review and then Covid. They propose that four of their staff move to full time which should address the current excess demand and under resourcing. We believe there will still be high demand post lockdown and so the expansion would last until the end of the project's contract.

The proposed changes to the ante-natal offer were considered at the Commissioning Advisory Group on 9 June, they asked for the reasons for low referrals to HAPPY. One factor is the capacity of midwives to identify and refer women, they only raise BMIs of 30 and above as a concern, but the project starts at BMI 25.

The Commissioning Advisory Group had also asked about Baby Steps' situation and we explained that vulnerability was far higher in the BSB area than the NSPCC had originally indicated, so the project has always been under resourced. We believe that most pregnant women in the BSB area would be eligible against the vulnerability criteria. The proposal to conduct a further ante-natal offer review from September was also queried, this has been scheduled because we do not yet know what the post-Covid situation will look like and we want to ensure the ante-natal activity within the programme is fit for purpose in order to ensure the best possible evaluation. At the moment there is scarce evidence of the impact of ante-natal education classes, and if they perform well then scaling them up is a possibility.

Gill Thornton moved on to the recommendations and explained the dates for the wider ante-natal offer review are not specific due to the pandemic, but the final cohort doing the current version of HAPPY are due to finish in May 2021, and it will be necessary to have a review in January 2021 to support decision making regarding the future of the contract.

Ludmila asked how many parents attended the new virtual antenatal sessions and Gill Thornton replied that the first one had 9 people and it rose to more than 20, which has resulted in an increase of sessions. There are four sessions which are repeated and participants can dip in to whichever sessions they wish to.

Josie wished to reiterate the value of virtual delivery with anything being better than nothing. Baby Steps is succeeding where other ante-natal projects have not, by engaging hard-to-reach families and getting referrals from midwives, the project is also performing well in other A Better Start sites (Blackpool and Lambeth). The Baby Steps evaluation could be 'ground-breaking' and Josie felt we should be bold in championing the project.

Ruth remarked that Baby Steps is an opportunity to show the rest of the district something that works well, and could be a legacy of BSB with us piloting work that could be rolled out to the district.

Gwen commented that she appreciates the value of referrals to Baby Steps by health professionals and asked if there is any other learning. Josie said there is lots of learning from Bradford and the other sites, and this is part of their plans. There is also significant qualitative work being undertaken.

Gill Thornton noted midwives are under some pressure so we created the perinatal coordinator role to make referrals, but their contact with the women is by phone at the moment which is less good than face-to-face. The next steps of the ante-natal offer review include improving relations with Midwifery (with the Clover Team being suspended due to the pandemic) and trying to increase referral rates.

Ishaq asked what we had learned so far and who we are engaging with. Josie said part of the Innovation Hub's role is to monitor this and Baby Steps is engaging with what are traditionally recognised as hard-to-reach groups. Gill Thornton said evidence is just anecdotal so far but we need to explore positives like 1:1 contact, midwives and family support workers doing the delivery, and maybe there is a combination of factors.

Sarah said she has worked with parents who have attended Baby Steps and the 1:1 contact before the groups start is very important in establishing a supportive relationship and commitment to the course. She felt that the good performance is particularly interesting considering it is quite a long course and she wants to support the project.

Vipin then asked the Partnership Board if they would vote on the recommendations.

**Decision: To note that the wider review of Better Start Bradford Antenatal provision will continue from September looking specifically at recruitment, reach, referrals and effectiveness evaluation and therefore further proposals may be brought to Partnership Board in late 2020 or early 2021.**

**The changes proposed to the HAPPY project for a period up to May 2021 with a review in January 2021 are agreed.**

**The changes proposed to the Baby Steps project are also agreed.**

## **7. Review of end of contract process**

Jill presented some Powerpoint slides and explained that the current process was agreed in October 2017. Since then there has been some learning and feedback has been received and it is timely to have a review. Some things have not worked well and there is a need to focus on sustainability. The Implementation Team and the Innovation Hub have fed into the process.

Currently there is a three month timeline for recommissioning and decommissioning following the end of contract review. The learning is that this is too short to complete a transition, do re-service design, answer requests for more information and to provide feedback on evaluations. Expectations have not always been met and we have found that data can be interpreted in different ways. Other factors to consider are the communication and protocol of Partnership Board decisions, sustainability, the purpose of and attendance at meetings and continuity.

Jill turned to suggested solutions. There should be focus on the end of contract review much earlier (the end of Year 2), looking at evaluation, data issues and remedial action to be taken about data. It is proposed that an internal scoping meeting after the Year 2 review takes place with BSB and the Innovation Hub, looking at an options appraisal and changes in context would be added with proposals taken to the Commissioning Advisory Group at their meeting the following month.

A revision to timelines is proposed, allowing a wind down period in the event of decommissioning and enough time when recommissioning for service design amendments and a transition period to the new contract of up to three months. Evaluation findings will be available two weeks before the project review meeting. It is also proposed that the BSB programme facilitator attends the Commissioning Advisory Group meeting when the project is reviewed as greater knowledge of the project will support the discussion and allow the majority of queries raised to be resolved. The Commissioning Advisory Group already has the delegated power to extend a contract by up to two months should there be outstanding queries which need to be resolved.

It is proposed to schedule a session for the Commissioning Advisory Group about their expectations for evaluations which the Innovation Hub will lead. There will be a focus on data quality at every quarterly project review. We will develop clear communication lines and protocols and document the process.

At their 9 June meeting the Commissioning Advisory Group had queried why a contract needed extending in the event of decommissioning. Jill explained that we had intended that

some projects run for the entire BSB programme but to respond to changing contexts we have scheduled a project review every three years. If decommissioning is notified too early there will be an impact on delivery numbers, wind down may have started and there would be an impact on the evaluation too.

Jill added that early planning is needed for sustainability and there should be early consideration of evaluation options.

Shaheen asked about timelines and if this would mean amending a project's model. Jill said we would only change models after a Partnership Board discussion. Josie noted that HAPPY's model is only changing due to extreme circumstances. After Year 2 of a project we would only change the model to improve fidelity. Shaheen said quantitative data would be needed as well and Jill confirmed we would capture this and we are looking at definitions such as referrals.

Ishaq said at the recent community prep meeting there were concerns about data quality and information and it was felt there was not enough information about numbers, involvement in the wards and impact and we may need to look at monitoring and evaluation again. There was concern about the frequency of reviews, oversight by the Partnership Board and involvement of parents in service design. It was agreed that a more detailed session on the Innovation Hub's role, data collection and quality control would be developed.

**Action: There will be a session at the next Partnership Board about the Innovation Hub's role.**

Josie noted that some projects are quite new to our data requirements and we are working with them to improve data. There has been work with the National Lottery Community Fund on a data dashboard which has taken longer than anticipated.

Josie said she would be happy to have 'fresh eyes' looking at their work and suggested Ishaq attend the Innovation Hub's programme management group meeting. Ishaq wishes to be able to say in five years' time that there was a true impact. Gill Thornton confirmed that quarterly project reviews are completed and there has been even more contact during the Covid situation, so we can address any issues and these are highlighted in the programme monthly report (item 10). More detailed issues are considered by the Commissioning Advisory Group and the Partnership Board. It is important that the operational and strategic functions of the Programme team and Partnership Board are maintained.

Gill Thornton said community Board members are encouraged to join the Commissioning Advisory Group, the Finance and Audit Sub-Committee, project theme groups and are welcome to meet BSB staff to develop their understanding of the operational functions.

Gwen raised the interpretation of data as an issue. Josie said data had sometimes been incomplete, inconsistent and with different people involved. There are good relations with projects but her team had no data analyst for six months, however there are now two people in post.

Jill reiterated that quarterly project reviews have data as a standing item including interpretation and she would welcome Community Board Members joining the Commissioning Advisory Group.

Shaheen remarked that we also need to look at cost-effectiveness. Gill Thornton confirmed that this is an ongoing piece of work, with Preventonomics and looking at wider value and we have been working with the health economics team at York University (but this work is suspended due to Covid). It is hard to convince statutory partners that prevention works, so we will need to be able to put figures in front of them to justify changes.

**Decision:**

- **The Better Start Bradford core team and Innovation Hub work together to refine, document and embed processes as per the solutions identified in Appendix C in the meeting pack.**
- **Re-commissioning and de-commissioning timelines be amended as per Appendix A.**

**8. Honorariums paid to Community Board Members**

It was agreed that due to conflicts of interest the Community Board Members should be part of the discussion but should not vote on the recommendations.

Alex said these were first discussed at the February 2020 meeting at which the Chair was reappointed for two years. The honorariums were first agreed in 2015 and are a token payment, not a reflection of work done, and BSB has no liability or legal obligation. In 2015 we had used the Volunteering England rate of £11 an hour and the community Board members' obligations to spend two hours per week on BSB to work out the payment. The amounts were increased by 2 per cent in April 2018 and inflation has ranged between 1 and 2 per cent since then and other programme costs have increased.

There is continued commitment to the equity of the community voice in decision making. Alex proposed a 2 per cent increase to the honorariums from April 2020, with a further review in April 2022 as there is currently a two year cycle.

Alex invited questions and Gwen noted the role of the community Board members was not reviewed at the February 2020 meeting. She also pointed out the Chair's honorarium had increased from £3,000 to £5,000 a year and she was not aware there was a 2 per cent increase in 2018. Alex said she did not have the context of the 2018 increase and she was not aware a review of the community Board members' role was wanted but one could be done. The Chair's increase was to reflect the amount of time committed and the Chair and Vice Chair's payments are still based on £11 an hour.

Gwen noted a Vice Chair has never been appointed and more work than two hours a week is being done. Alex suggested a review of the role should be separate and Gwen said she was concerned about the principle and amount of time spent being a community Board member. Tracey added that she agreed that a review of the role should take place.

Fareeda asked who makes the decisions and Alex confirmed that the honorariums were agreed by the Partnership Board at its establishment. She noted that some partnerships make no such payments at all. Alex said she was happy for a review of the role of community Board members to take place. Tracey suggested that HR expertise may be needed for the review and there is a need for fairness and equality. There will be a need to buy this expertise in and Alex said the review should report in time for the September Partnership Board. Gwen and Ishaq agreed to be part of the review.

**Action: Better Start Bradford to organise a review of the role of the community Board members, to report at the September 2020 meeting. Any increase to honorariums as a result of the review to be backdated to April 2020.**

## **9. Sustainability and Legacy Project**

Alex recalled that we had been asked to cover this as a result of the review of the 10 year budget at the April 2020 meeting. It was felt that a broader understanding was needed.

Alex shared Powerpoint slides to provide the context in which sustainability and legacy are being considered across the programme. As background, reference was made to the programme bid which included a section entitled, Lasting Change. The ambitions identified were:

- ensure the focus is on preventative, evidence and science-based approaches in pregnant women and young children;
- ensure all the organisations working with us understand the principles of our approach to ensure the sustainability of the programme beyond the ten-year plan;
- develop and change local policies across Bradford District;
- influence regional and national policy and strategies for maternal and child health;
- embed the learning into the core work of all key organisations working with us;
- strongly influence the maternal and child health approach across the district as a whole and ultimately across the region and country;
- fully engage the hearts and minds of all our key partners and the community – both existing and future – by using effective and evidence-based projects leading to real change in outcomes for pregnant women and children;
- become experts in delivering preventative universal and targeted services for pregnant women and young children in some of the most deprived wards in Bradford District and the whole of England.

Alex proposed 4 categorisations of sustainability and legacy in relation to the programme. These were, Social Capital; that the community has a strong understanding and commitment to the importance of pregnancy and early years in influencing life chance, and that local organisations and individuals are equipped to develop and sustain community-led initiatives and make a contribution through volunteering, co-production and collaboration.

Scaling up and replication of BSB interventions; finding out what works and what are the elements of success, securing external investment and building models of delivery with BSB learning. Alex observed that there are examples of this already happening.

Systems Change; a shift to prevention and earlier intervention, system leadership across maternal and child health, influencing local and national policy development, service design and integration of evaluation adopted into practice beyond BSB, with Reducing Inequalities in the City being a good example of this.

Workforce; that there is an engaged, confident, motivated and highly skilled workforce, that there are effective pathways for local people to develop relevant skills to secure employment in health, care and early years sectors, and that there should be system wide learning and development opportunities which lead to changes in practice.

Finally Alex mentioned internal learning which will contribute to the development of the next steps in relation to this. These include The Story So Far event which has been delayed due to Covid and the independent review of BSB's programme has also been delayed, with the report not ready until perhaps November 2020. The Innovation Hub are also undertaking a systems change review and the programme wide refresh of the theory of change is nearing completion.

Shaheen asked if behavioural change of parents was being captured. Josie said it is hard to define system change but change in the BSB area over time is part of the overall aim.

Gwen raised the impact of Covid on BAME people, the Black Lives Matter campaign and inequalities. She wondered what the BAME representation is at senior leadership levels across the programme, and if BSB have that information and if we need it. Alex replied that we provide workforce returns to the National Lottery Community Fund but it is not broken down by ethnicity. Gwen said it would be interesting to know what the BAME role is.

**Action: BSB to provide a breakdown of the BAME representation in the workforce across the programme.**

Josie commented that the same question was raised at Born in Bradford and at the hospital. There is very limited diversity among those applying for jobs at her workplace. BiB need to commit for a plan to happen and a strategy is being done and she can share this with the Partnership Board. Upskilling is one solution and Gwen said there should be adjustments made as it is not a level playing field. Fareeda wondered why the local community was not applying for the jobs and said there needs to be upskilling.

Ishaq thought there was hesitance to raise inequalities. He said that three recent Bradford Trident job adverts had not been helpful and felt that they should have been publicised via local networks. Sustainability and legacy should include behavioural and cultural changes, looking at how to upskill and the impact of volunteers. The EU/New Arrival groups should be considered.

Tracey said it would be interesting to see if delivery staff are representative of local communities. She mentioned a training package, Parents in the Lead and addressing inequalities via training. 52 per cent of her workforce have lived experience of the service provided.

Gill Thornton said the three BSB wards were chosen due to inequalities and the outcomes framework addresses this and has targets to lessen the difference not just with the whole of Bradford but the rest of the UK. Currently BSB are doing a functional review to see if we have the right skill sets and there will be some vacancies (and therefore opportunities). She agreed with Gwen about the current context and we do not monitor delivery in the same way but it would be useful. BSB have quite a stable team, with many staff having small children and/or living in the BSB area or knowing it very well and currently one staff member is pregnant. About a third of the BSB staff team is from a BAME background.

Shaheen asked how Born in Bradford's impact of Covid survey is progressing. Josie said 2,100 parents received the questionnaire, at least one-third of which are in the BSB area, and her team are just writing the report. She will share the initial findings with the Partnership Board later this week. There is also a Covid impact survey for children aged 9 to 13, and a pregnant women Covid impact survey has gone out.

Gwen asked about domestic violence and Josie said they did ask about relationships, and domestic violence may come out of the qualitative part of it. She confirmed that the survey covered the whole of Bradford.

## **10. Programme Monthly Report**

Gill Thornton noted that all the objectives in the first part of the report were rated 'Green.' A significant success is that Little Minds Matter is expanding into the City CCG area with funding from the Reducing Inequalities in City initiative, which is an example of scaling up BSB interventions which are deemed to be successful. Another highlight is that BSB's response to the Covid pandemic was covered in the National Lottery Community Fund's *Insight* publication.

BSB have been working on a return to the office plan with a risk assessment, and the plan is that limited numbers of staff will be able to return from 6 July. Our data administrator Gaby left just before Christmas and was not replaced, but next week she is returning to work for BSB, remotely from Uganda, for three days a week.

Gill Thornton said the BSB staff team had been amazing through a tough time including bereavements and some people shielding. She confirmed that counselling is being arranged for some colleagues. They need the Partnership Board to support them and they have produced high quality work. Ruth wished to pass on her thanks too, with there being good quality information and work.

During Infant Mental Health Awareness Week there had been a really successful webinar featuring Suzanne Zeedyk with over 200 participants. Feedback was positive and this was an excellent way to showcase our expertise and influence the thinking in this field.

Gill Thornton mentioned that the Comms team have been working on several campaigns such as National Smile Month and Volunteers' Week. The Engagement team have mostly been working from home but have remained in close contact with community partners, they have also led on the development and distribution of the activity packs.

Fareeda asked about case studies and Gill Thornton said these are on BSB's website, with each project producing one per month.

Gwen commented that the Little Minds Matter expansion was amazing and she wished to pass her thanks on to the BSB staff too and Shaheen asked for this to happen as well. Ishaq said he was grateful for BSB's help with the Bradford East Covid response. It was noted the team have created 1,000 child activity packs which have been distributed to BSB families. It was agreed to pass on the Partnership's thanks to the staff team.

Ishaq passed on feedback from Adal Qureshi (another new Community Board Member) that the projects part of the programme monthly report should include recruitment figures and learning. Regular updates would help with understanding the context. Jill explained that this is collated quarterly as said we are reporting on all projects during the pandemic in the report which usually we do only when a project has had a quarterly review. Gill Thornton noted that there would need to be context to the figures due to targets. Jill confirmed that annual reviews are reported to the Commissioning Advisory Group.

**Action: Thanks to the staff team to be relayed from the Partnership Board for their efforts and adaptability during the lockdown period.**

**Guy to send details of the Commissioning Advisory Group to the new Community Board Members, and to progress any requests for them to join the Group.**

**11. Any other business**

Vipin asked if the next meeting could please begin on time.

Finally Vipin asked if everyone had felt they had an opportunity to contribute to this meeting and all agreed that they had.

**12. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is provisionally on Thursday 16 July 2020, starting at 5.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 11.50 am.