

**Better Start Bradford Partnership Board Minutes**  
**Thursday 25 February 2021**  
**Via Zoom**

**Meeting Started:** 17:30

**Meeting Ended:** 19:30

**Present:**

Vipin Joshi	Community Board member (Chair)
Ruth Shaw	Senior Head of Strategy, Change and Delivery, Bradford District and Craven Clinical Commissioning Group
Sarah Hinton	Board Member, Bradford Trident
Alex Spragg	Programme Director, Better Start Bradford
Josie Dickerson	Programme Director, Innovation Hub
Tracey Hogan	Voluntary and Community Sector Representative
Fareeda Mir	Ward Councillor, CBMDC
Richard Padwell	Superintendent, West Yorkshire Police
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
Satnam Singh	Community Board member

**In Attendance**

Phil Hayden	Director of Programmes for Children's Services Innovation and Improvement, CBMDC (in place of Mark Douglas)
Gill Thornton	Head of Programme, Better Start Bradford
Gill Hart	Funding Manager, The National Lottery Community Fund
Jill Duffy	Implementation Manager, Better Start Bradford
Heather Fawcett-Jones	Programme Facilitator, Better Start Bradford
Nicola Hancock	Programme Facilitator, Better Start Bradford
Guy Dove	Programme Administrator, Better Start Bradford

**Apologies for Absence:**

Mark Douglas	Tom McCulloch	Adal Qureshi	Gwen Balson
Shaheen Khan	Salma Nawaz		

### **1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

Vipin welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies.

### **2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 21 January 2021**

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

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

The Innovation Hub presentation has been sent to the Partnership Board.

Alex has met with Sharon Saunders from the local authority who is leading the digital inclusion work. Alex confirmed she shared insights from Better Start Bradford families, the links we have made and Sarah's feedback that a significant proportion of our families have access to a device – the issue is a lack of data and connectivity. All of this is being fed into the district's longer term strategy which is being developed. At the moment their priority is home schooling. Alex will share any update on the strategy when it is available.

We will discuss the independent performance review under item 8.

The outcomes framework has been circulated to the Partnership Board.

### **4. Declarations of interest**

Josie declared that Born in Bradford were involved in the development of HAPPY (item 6).

### **5. 'Getting to know you' session - Ludmila Novosjolova**

Ludmila showed us a family photo and said she has a husband and two daughters, aged 8 and 2. Both daughters are Bradford born and bred and she has been married for 12 years.

Ludmila was born in Latvia when it was still part of the USSR and her first language is Russian. When Latvia joined the European Union half of its economically active people left. Ludmila's parents unfortunately have died but she has an older sister who still lives in Latvia and they speak all the time.

After graduating from a Latvian university in 2005 in biology and qualifying as a biology teacher, Ludmila could not find any work and moved to the UK 15 years ago. She has lived in many parts of the UK then met her husband in Bradford, moved to Bradford and has never regretted it. She described Bradford as a multicultural and welcoming place with lots to offer young families.

In Latvia there are no children's centres and there is very little in terms of children's services. Ludmila was lucky to find Woodroyd Children's Centre close to where she lived and she was a very active mum who attended all the courses. She volunteered there then worked as a family support worker at Woodroyd for five years, and found it very rewarding.

Ludmila said her family is now complete and she is grateful for the opportunity her younger daughter has had via Better Start Bradford. Ludmila was pleased to meet the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge when they visited Bradford in January last year.

Ludmila has been involved in nearly half of BSB's projects, including Personalised Midwifery, Incredible Years, Henry, Imagine, Breastfeeding Support and Better Place. She refers all her friends to our projects. She showed us photos of her children doing some of the projects, has seen some of the new Better Place sculptures and has four shelves of children's books due to the Imagine project.

Vipin thanked Ludmila on behalf of the Partnership Board for her presentation and said it was useful to be reminded of BSB's projects.

Guy noted some Partnership Board members have yet to do the 'getting to know you' session. Phil agreed to participate at a future meeting and Guy will send him some information about what is expected.

## **6. HAPPY – contract review**

Jill gave the background to HAPPY which is a 12 week targeted antenatal project delivered by Barnardo's aiming to reduce childhood obesity via behaviour change. It targets pregnant women with a BMI of over 25 and is a 12 week course and is delivered both antenatally and postnatally. The budget is £170k over three years and it was originally designed to have a TWiCS (Trial Within a Cohort Study) evaluation, but numbers doing the project have been too low for this to be completed.

The 12 week offer ceased in May 2020 and it had many challenges to its delivery. As a response to Covid, a 6 week universal antenatal offer was started in July 2020. Delivery is online, the content is based on the original programme and it still gives key health messages. Take-up has been positive in terms of participants and completers.

HAPPY's contract ends on 31 May 2021 and the Commissioning Advisory Group considered four options at their recent meeting. Option A is to recommission the original 12 week project for three years. The implementation challenges have not been resolved and there is the ongoing review of the antenatal offer. Low recruitment has meant there can be no TWiCS evaluation. The budget would be £275k for three years.

Option B would be to recommission the newer six week universal antenatal offer for three years. The project is successfully recruiting pregnant women and includes some health messages and an implementation evaluation could be done. However this offer has no evidence that it will impact childhood obesity, there has been no service design or initial commission and there is the ongoing review of all antenatal provision. It would potentially compete for referrals with other universal provision such as Welcome to the World and could be seen to be duplicating existing provision. The budget would also be £275k for three years.

Option C is to decommission HAPPY, but extend the six week offer for nine months, until February 2022. This would continue its role as a Covid response, and would allow more time to consider the wider antenatal offer (BSB's and the district's). It would not be targeting childhood obesity so BSB would work with partners to plan an alternative response. The budget for Option C is £58k.

Option D is to decommission HAPPY from 31 May 2021. This would lead to a possible lack of opportunity for pregnant women in the BSB area to access a universal antenatal session, as universal provision remains limited and would increase urgency for the completion of the antenatal offer review.

Jill summarised the Commissioning Advisory Group's conclusions. It was noted that Barnardo's have worked hard to address the referral and retention issues for the 12 week offer with limited success. If it is recommissioned we are unlikely to get much higher participation so there would be no TWiCS evaluation, but having no childhood obesity intervention would lead to a gap in the BSB portfolio. The increase in uptake of the 6 week offer was recognised, but it has no evidence base, no service design and the child obesity outcomes are unknown. It was developed and delivered as a response to Covid and there is possible duplication with other antenatal offers and competition for referrals. We need to complete the ongoing review of antenatal services with our partners and be careful about the wider district plans. BSB would use the extension period to complete the review and consider alternative provision.

Josie noted that Born in Bradford were involved in the development of HAPPY but the project has not worked as anticipated in the BSB area. It is a 12 week course because it needs to be that long to achieve behaviour change (healthy activity and healthy eating).

Childhood obesity is a big concern in the BSB area and Josie said her team would be keen to do an evidence based literature review to see if there is anything else BSB could fund. Gill Thornton agreed that childhood obesity is a significant problem in Bradford and a weaker area of our programme, particularly as we cannot deliver Pre-schoolers in the Playground. If Option C is chosen we would start work on finding alternative provision immediately.

**Decision: The Partnership Board decided to proceed with Option C - to decommission with a caveat to extend the current antenatal provision until February 2022 due to COVID-19, noting all the comments above including finding alternative provision.**

## **7. Talking Together – contract review**

Jill outlined this project which is delivered by BHT Early Education and Training and aims to improve child language and communication skills via positive parent-child interactions. It offers universal screening of two year olds to assess their language and communication and then a six week course delivered in the home for two year olds who need it. There is a further course (Talking Together Plus) where needs are not met within the initial six weeks. The budget is £1.386 million over three years. The current contract ends on 31 May 2021.

The Commissioning Advisory Group considered three options for the project at their 8 February meeting. Option A is to recommission the project as it is for three years. The universal screening of two year olds for language delay would continue and they would be offered the intervention where needed. There is a strong potential to have an effectiveness evaluation. There would be work with BHT to improve data sharing and completeness. The budget for a three year extension would be £1.55 million.

Option B is to recommission the project for three years, and include a new additional element, Fundamental Foundations. This would target language delay in nurseries, finding children who had missed the screening or suffered regression due to the lockdown. Jill explained this would be a new intervention outside the scope of the project which we would need to service design and commission. The demand for Fundamental Foundations is unknown and there is no evidence base and no focus on parent-child relationships. The budget for this option is £1.7 million.

Option C is to decommission the project. This would mean that the universal screening of two year olds is lost and the intervention at this point in a child's life. The opportunity for an

effectiveness evaluation would also be lost. We would need to fund a different intervention but alternative projects seem limited and there would be a delay while we commissioned something.

The Commissioning Advisory Group noted the good recruitment of Talking Together and the value of their support. BHT have worked hard to address the challenges of the pandemic. They have also worked well with the Innovation Hub and there was a feasibility study called oTTER which indicated there is a good prospect of an effectiveness evaluation.

The issue of regression due to Covid was noted and the Commissioning Advisory Group asked that BSB explore this with our partners. They recommended Option A.

Josie remarked that oTTER was a phenomenal success and she has never known a feasibility trial to go so well, there are really positive trends and outcomes. The next steps would involve an effectiveness evaluation. Josie would also like to roll out a national evaluation but this would take a long time and would need funding. However we have the BiBBS cohort and Josie expects a local full effectiveness evaluation within the BSB timescale.

Vipin referred to the community prep meeting where the attendees agreed that Talking Together is a really good project which makes a big difference and nothing else picks up all the two year olds.

**Decision: The Partnership Board chose Option A, to recommission Talking Together as it is for three years.**

At this point Vipin welcomed Richard Padwell to the meeting, who is our new representative from West Yorkshire Police.

## **8. Independent performance review**

Alex noted we have shared the final report from St Edmunds but it is a large document and wouldn't be possible to examine all of it. St Edmunds were commissioned to produce the report in January 2020 following a Partnership Board discussion. They were asked to review BSB's progress at our mid-point, assess our effectiveness and make recommendations.

St Edmunds are Bradford based but are independent of BSB. They completed desktop research of documents relating to the programme such as minutes of meetings, newsletters, website and social media and interviews with BSB staff, Partnership Board members, local parents, project staff etc. The pandemic affected their field work and access to people and St Edmunds were only able to conduct one focus group.

A wide range of views was collected which Alex said was helpful for us all to hear and understand. St Edmunds gave us a verbal summary of the themes they explored and areas identified for improvement at the January Partnership Board and their final report has been circulated.

Alex proposed that as a next step the Partnership Board review the nine recommendations made within the report and determine whether they are appropriate and accepted. This will also be an opportunity to outline any work undertaken or planned which has contributed towards the actions recommended since the commission and the interviews took place. We

should identify what needs to be done and by whom. Some elements may need wider participation than the Partnership Board.

Alex observed that recommendations 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 all relate directly to the Partnership Board. The first two relate to the need to develop guidance that explains the purpose, success, challenges and plans of BSB to share with new and prospective Board members and their induction. There is a current induction pack but it was felt that this should be reviewed and updated and Alex noted it does not currently go to new non-Community Board members.

Vipin recalled that at the community prep meeting it was thought that Partnership Board papers are easy to understand and in plain English. He mentioned the yellow ducks we had at face-to-face meetings which were used when there were too many acronyms etc.

Ruth observed that she has been involved with BSB almost from its beginning and it is easy to lose track of some of the projects and programmes. She suggested that a map is done of all BSB and Parents in the Lead projects so they can be seen visually and she has forgotten about some things. Phil remarked that plain English is not always the answer and pictorial information can be more accessible than words. He said the quality of relationships in the Partnership Board is important and makes it more likely members will ask questions and learning is a social thing. We should use different mediums such as flow diagrams.

Vipin commented that Innovation Hub reports are much easier to understand now. Gill Thornton said BSB's Comms teams use pictures and different methods and we have just bought a system mapping tool. Josie asked that the Innovation Hub be part of this system mapping work.

Ishaq said plain English is important and he mentioned reports with no 'flow' and complex language. He agreed with the use of pictures and asked 'how has that been shown.' He stated that we have come on a long way and there is a balance to find between making things plain and losing the science. Karen observed that learning socially is done in the prep meetings which are beneficial and reports are 'unpicked' at them.

Alex noted that our comments on the first recommendation link in with the fifth recommendation relating to ensuring full and frank discussions are possible and consider a mechanism to support or extend these opportunities. Vipin attends the Commissioning Advisory Group as do some other Community Board members and they then bring a contribution to the community prep meeting.

Sarah remarked that being a Partnership Board member is overwhelming at first. She suggested the induction be done in stages, with the initial one being too much to take in. Once a new member has been to a couple of Partnership Board meetings, then they might have some new questions. Alex said this was a good idea. She noted there is an annual 1:1 for Community Board members with Alex and Vipin which was last done around Christmas.

Vipin said these are some good ideas and Alex noted our discussions also link to recommendations one, two and five. Zebunnisa will lead the system mapping and pictorial work but Alex suggested we need to form a small task and finish group to review the induction system which will include these documents and she will be asking for volunteers.

**Action: Alex to ask the Partnership Board members for volunteers to join the task and finish group.**

Recommendation three is about devising a mentoring and buddy system for new Community Board members. Vipin recalled this was first done by pairing a Community Board member with a partner organisation which was useful for people with special interests. Sarah said we should ask people if they are willing to take part in this as the person she was partnered with did not respond to two emails. Vipin noted that the first buddying scheme was implemented but only a couple of people took up the second one.

Alex said that Ludmila had helped Olga informally and this experience was fed into St Edmunds' review, which was implementing peer support for both of them and we could build on this.

**Action: The task and finish group to explore the development of a mentoring and buddying system for new Community Board members.**

Recommendation six was to review the term of Partnership Board participation, with a need to retain long-term knowledge. Alex noted that whilst individual terms are for a period of two or three years members are able to reapply, as has been the case with four of the existing Community Board members. There has been a mixture of continuation and new people and it has been useful to have the balance of new voices and experience. Vipin said that the current arrangements enable the recommendation to be fulfilled.

Alex proceeded to Recommendation four, which is for BSB to hold workshops to develop leadership skills in the community, particularly among women, including ESOL classes and confidence building. Gill Thornton noted we already fund an ESOL for Pregnancy course but general ESOL is not in our remit, with there being significant ESOL provision and our role is to link families to this if there is this need.

Gill Thornton said this recommendation relates to our work on sustainability, capacity building and legacy over the next four years and whilst we're still early in the process the Partnership Board will be kept informed of progress. She suggested that Parents in the Lead could be an opportunity to achieve some of the outcomes around capacity building. Vipin remarked that the ESOL for Pregnancy project has improved a lot and Gill Thornton added that she has good hopes for its sustainability. It was agreed that progress against this recommendation would be covered within programme reporting.

Recommendation seven is to better engage with schools, temples, mosques and churches etc. to reach families, and ensure engagement strategies are part of the Innovation Hub evaluation. Alex noted that the development of the Neighbourhood project had been in recognition that this was an area that required additional investment and a different approach.

Josie noted that since St Edmunds did their review, Neighbourhood project service design has been completed, as has the logic model and the evaluation plan. There is a new community engagement research fellow (Lizzie) working on the Neighbourhood project. Josie suggested an update on the project be brought to the Partnership Board in a few months once Lizzie has some more ideas about a 'hands-on' evaluation. She may be supporting community organisations to do research themselves which Josie is quite excited about. This is 'citizen science' which it was agreed would be good to do.

BSB's FACE team have built relations with faith leaders to encourage them to share our key messages as they have influential voices within the community, Vipin remembered that he met the FACE Team and shared details of BSB faith leaders. This continues to be part of the

delivery model with Neighbourhood Workers increasing the contact with faith leaders and schools and is a key part of the community engagement strategy. Vipin reminded the Partnership Board that sharing Better Start key messages is a role and function of us all and invited members to share details of key influencers so they can be followed up if there is no existing relationship.

Ruth noted a Comms theme through some of the recommendations. She noted BSB's Comms team have won an award but reflected that there may be a need to go back to basics. We should ask if people in the area know about BSB and maybe we have lost track of that. She wondered how and why a new person moving in would find out about us. Gill Thornton agreed with this and that we have a great Comms team but we have to ensure the routes to accessing our information are clear for all. Gill Thornton also felt it was key for us to get our story out there with the help of the Innovation Hub and shared that in recognition of this more capacity is to be put into the relevant team.

Alex observed that the BSB team have reflected similarly to Ruth and are working to improve access to information and support to navigate the complexity of the programme. This includes current work to develop a referral pathway tool to support individuals to more effectively refer into Better Start projects and the creation of a Better Start Bradford app.

Recommendation eight relates to all projects supporting the evaluation using the Early Intervention Foundation model and learning from each other. Josie confirmed that the Innovation Hub do try to help projects through the evaluation process and do an evaluation plan for every project. A barrier is potentially the communication of evaluation plans to projects, the Partnership Board, the Commissioning Advisory Group and BSB facilitators. Often the project lead may know about the evaluation plan but not the other project staff. The Innovation Hub have now employed an evaluation facilitator in recognition of some of the issues raised and to support projects in their understanding of and confidence in delivering evaluations. Some projects have had strong evaluations (Family Nurse Partnership, Personalised Midwifery, Talking Together) but there is recognition they have not yet provided the level of information people want to know telling them whether the projects have made a difference on the ground. Josie felt that the way recommendation eight was phrased did not reflect what is needed.

Jill confirmed we have been working on the evaluation plan much earlier in the process and it is revisited at annual reviews and we have asked if the research questions 'fit.' We could do better when taking evaluation plans to the Commissioning Advisory Group, who could help to develop them. Satnam expressed that it would be good to have a 'critical friend' looking at the evaluation plans.

Tracey said this was a useful discussion. Very small grassroots organisations in the VCS are going to the wall in these Covid times and regret not putting an evaluation plan in right at the beginning. They need to know how to demonstrate their outcomes and their worth or they will never get further funding. Some have done fabulous work but no story has been set out. Some of the VCS need handholding and support through this process e.g. the Innovation Fund projects. It is not the day job for some VCS staff who may do five different jobs.

Gill Thornton agreed with Tracey though noted all of the BSB projects including the Innovation Fund projects have an evaluation plan. She warned that we need to be realistic about projects' capacity and the Innovation Hub have provided tools and guidance to support organisations with evaluation which are available on their website. Lots of work has been done already with

significant handholding including with the Parents in the Lead projects with support from the BSB team. Josie shared that her team are developing an 'evaluation-lite' model and Tracey suggested CABAD could help the VCS organisations.

The final element of this recommendation is about using all communication tools to share learning etc. as widely as possible. Sarah commented that most VCS organisations have not done research at this level and do not know how long it takes and it is important that they understand this. The community want to see things happen quickly but research takes a lot longer and we need to communicate this more effectively.

Vipin agreed with the comments about being a 'critical friend' to evaluation plans and the value of pictorial communication. He said we should decide what to promote, how and why and we need to continue that. He commented that BSB's Comms are very good including the use of social media. It was agreed that existing work was addressing the areas raised within the report and these would be reported to the Partnership Board through the usual channels.

Phil said he had no problem with the report but felt there is a lost opportunity from its scope. BSB is also about system change and the report identifies that it is filling holes in the system left by services which are no longer there and there is a significant infrastructure gap around system leadership. He had expected to hear about the gap in universal and targeted services that BSB is filling which is detracting away from its 'test and learn' purpose. BSB need to share lessons to get wider change and Phil would have wanted to hear more about that and it leading to sustainability. The recommendations did not include anything about the big infrastructure changes needed and what Bradford is doing with this resource.

Vipin noted BSB are doing test and learn with its money. Phil said statutory services are putting lots of money towards complex needs but there needs to be more for Prevention. Reconfiguring age 0-5 services needs resourcing and the report does not say enough about using BSB better and investment in age 0-5s.

Gill Thornton noted that BSB funding is made up of partner contributions in addition to the National Lottery Community Funding. The partnership is responsible for change and needs information and it is our job to get that right. BSB are carrying out a function review which is setting objectives and the things Phil has mentioned are our key objectives. BSB have a sustainability workstream including informing what happens in the wider system and thinking about legacy.

Phil remarked that the report did not go far enough for him to go Bradford Council to say they should be doing more and that they should not have cut age 0-5 services. Also he would have wanted to be able to say the constraints should be taken off BSB and that the partners need to do better.

Alex noted there is a time lag from when the interviews were done and some things have progressed since then. Phil clarified he wanted to see BSB say 'Here's a finding. What are you going to do?' He asked what constraints are stopping BSB from doing better and reiterated that we are filling a void in services taken away and that infrastructure has disappeared.

**Action: Alex to explore the wider issues raised with strategic partners.**

## 9. Programme monthly report

Gill Thornton advised that the Community Star Awards have been announced and we will feature the story of the winner in our Comms.

BSB's own Comms team recently won a Nursery World award for Online and Social Media.

Little Minds Matter and Kerry did a presentation to the England Committee of the National Lottery Community Fund about infant mental health that was very well received. They noted infant mental health is a matter that has previously been under recognised.

At the inaugural conference of the Yorkshire and Humberside Health Inequalities Academy, The Bradford Reducing Inequalities in the City programme was launched with reference to BSB and that the RIC evaluation is being led by Josie.

The Neighbourhood West Bowling project is rated 'Amber' due to the combined factors of the impact of Covid on delivery and there being a vacancy. There is nothing seriously wrong and work is underway to resolve the identified issues. Targets are being discussed but we can be more flexible than with our other projects, and the service design exercise is near completion.

Community Board member Salma was interviewed on BBC Radio Bradford on 23 February. She spoke about BSB issuing parent wellbeing packs and how she influenced their development. Guy will send around a link to Salma's interview. Alex added that the BBC got in touch due to Salma's blog on the website, the link is shared in the report.

Gill Thornton asked that the Partnership Board approve an increase to the budget for ESOL for Pregnancy. The project is much more successful than previously, and more courses are being offered due to demand. Shipley College have always charged BSB for what they have done and previously consistently underspent against the budget, however current demand has led to an adjustment in the offer which will require an increase to the overall budget by £34k over three years.

**Decision: The Partnership Board approves the increase to the budget for ESOL for Pregnancy.**

## 10. Any other business

Gill Thornton shared that Little Minds Matter are developing a digital campaign about the importance of parent-child interaction. They are looking for parents to make some videos for the campaign and she asked the Partnership Board to tell parents about this opportunity. A gift certificate is available for parents who take part. Gill Thornton explained that parents need to do their own videos due to the lockdown. We will share the briefing document about the filming with everyone.

**Action: Little Minds Matter video briefing to be shared with the Partnership Board who are requested to share with relevant parents.**

Vipin thanked everyone for attending the meeting and noted there are a lot of Zoom sessions. He asked if everyone had felt they had an opportunity to contribute to this meeting and all agreed that they had.

**11. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is provisionally on Thursday 18 March 2021, via Zoom, starting at 9.30 am.

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm.