

**Better Start Bradford Partnership Board Minutes  
Thursday 18 November 2021  
Via Zoom**

**Meeting Started:** 17:30

**Meeting Ended:** 18:45

**Present:**

Vipin Joshi	Community Board member (Chair)
Sarah Hinton	Board Member, Bradford Trident
Alex Spragg	Programme Director, Better Start Bradford
Josie Dickerson	Programme Director, Innovation Hub
Jo Howes	Public Health Specialist, CBMDC
Samina Begum	Community Board member (Vice Chair)
Karen Tetley	Community Board member
Ludmila Novosjolova	Community Board member
Salma Nawaz	Community Board member

**In Attendance**

Gill Hart	Funding Manager, The National Lottery Community Fund
Gill Thornton	Head of Programme, Better Start Bradford
Ian Thorpe	Programme Facilitator, Better Start Bradford
Guy Dove	Senior Programme Administrator, Better Start Bradford

**Apologies for Absence:**

Jill Duffy	Ruth Shaw	Shaheen Khan	Gwen Balson
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**1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

Vipin welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies.

Everyone introduced themselves to each other.

**2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 14 October 2021**

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

**3. Matters Arising actions table**

Alex confirmed up that the write up of our discussions at the theory of change workshop held in July has been circulated by email.

The work to relaunch the district reference group will be deferred until the New Year. Alex explained that there is currently significant flux in Children's Services, Mark Douglas and Irfan Alam, Deputy Director of Children's Services have left in addition to Phil Hayden. Marium Haque has been appointed Interim Strategic Director of Children's Services.

Alex confirmed that the slides from the sustainability and function review presentation at last month's Partnership Board have been circulated via email.

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

Karen declared for item 6 that she knows Incredible Years and the team delivering it well, and she has worked with Barnardo's.

Ludmila said she knows personally two members of the Incredible Years staff team and has previously worked with them at a children's centre.

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

This was not covered this month.

#### **6. Incredible Years contract review**

Gill Thornton advised that Incredible Years was developed with Children's Services as a high-quality parenting project was wanted in our programme. We still believe Incredible Years can give us significant learning and impact.

The project was initially developed in the USA and is delivered worldwide. It has a very strong evidence base and is well regarded. It is strictly licensed and must be delivered as it is designed, which helps with the evaluation.

We commission the Incredible Years: Toddler Basic programme, whose aim is to strengthen parent-child relationships, and is aimed at children aged between 12 and 36 months. It is a 13 week course taught for 2 hours each week, with families required to complete homework between session. The course length increases its quality and strength, as there is evidence that longer engagement is needed to create lasting impact.

Incredible Years practitioner training and study is quite intense. Ian confirmed that one of the team at Barnardo's has achieved accreditation, and others are on the way, but Covid has delayed accreditation as video evidence of delivery is needed. It would be great for the district and potential sustainability if more people were accredited.

Gill Thornton shared more of the aims of the project, such as better eating habits and for the children to play well. Incredible Years has had a very positive response from the parents who have participated, and evidence shows that its effects have been sustained, and it contributes to Better Start Bradford's programme outcomes.

We have explored alternative parenting interventions. Incredible Years was meant to be delivered with Family Links Nurturing, but this did not happen due to changes in Children's Services. We have found that no parenting courses are offered that are specifically for our age group in Bradford district.

Josie said the data quality of this project has been excellent. The recruitment target was 467 parents, but the actual figure was 228 parents so this is RAG-rated as 'Red.' The number of referrals is lower than was hoped, and referrals will need to be boosted in a new contract, and Josie asked that BSB's partners help with this. Low recruitment will affect the numbers for other things like completion. However out of the appropriate referrals, there is a high conversion rate of 80 per cent to enrolment.

The completion rate (defined as at least 8 out of 13 sessions attended) is currently 50 per cent, though Josie pointed out that some parents are still going through the programme. It is hard to retain some parents on what is a very long course.

Josie turned to satisfaction questionnaires which are very positive. As Incredible Years has a strong evidence base, it will improve outcomes. Incredible Years Toddler Basic is new so it is too early to say for definite, but Josie said the indications are very positive so far in areas such as parents' mental health. Should the project be recommissioned Josie believes there is the prospect of being able to provide conclusive evidence.

Gill Thornton remarked that we had to have a parenting project in our programme, and if Incredible Years is decommissioned we would have to find an alternative. The timescale required for commissioning an alternative and service design is challenging at this stage of the programme.

Gill Thornton presented the three options available. Option A is to recommission Incredible Years for two years, and possibly an additional six months if required by the evaluation. Option B is to recommission with changes, which would be to share learning and practice more widely across the system. Qualified practitioners would be advising other people but there is an intellectual property issue and Incredible Years must be delivered under licence. Option C is to decommission.

The Commissioning Advisory Group held a detailed discussion two weeks ago and looked at the Innovation Hub's recommendations for the project. These were to boost recruitment and enrolment, continue engaging with supervision and accreditation, and to increase completion of outcome data by parents pre and post the course. The project has already started some of this work. Continuing with the supervision and accreditation would be good for the district, and the provider is committed to do this.

The Commissioning Advisory Group thought that there is a significant opportunity for evidence of effectiveness of a high-quality parenting programme for this age group. During the pandemic, the provider worked hard to address the challenges. The Commissioning Advisory Group were concerned about the delivery targets, but it was noted that the original recruitment targets were ambitious and conversion rates are quite strong. Performance is in line with what was expected, and referrals are always a challenge for other Incredible Years projects. There has also been the impact of Covid. We now have Born in Bradford staff in the Maternity Unit at the BRI, which makes a huge difference, and we are confident we can improve referrals and recruitment.

Gill Thornton noted that Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) are doing Incredible Years for older age groups, to try to divert them from referral to CAMHS, and we understand that they could look at doing Incredible Years for under fours over the next three years. The Commissioning Advisory Group recommended Option A, incorporating the Innovation Hub's recommendations about recruitment, referrals and improving data.

Jo apologised for missing the Commissioning Advisory Group and raised the cost of the project and asked how many children would be reached if Incredible Years was recommissioned and on target. There are meant to be 16 groups a year of 10 children each, so this would be 320 children over two years. Josie said we should consider the impact of the project against its cost.

Jo said if we choose Option A, the Incredible Years project lead should speak to Public Health as she felt their team are not visible and gave an example of another BSB project which are very visible and in contact. It was agreed to share this with the project.

Vipin noted that Gwen had asked who is doing the engagement and if they are reaching the right people, though BSB cannot say who the Incredible Years staff are due to confidentiality. Vipin commented that Incredible Years is very expensive but a very good project and it is needed and it is demonstrating that it does work. They need to get the engagement right so they are not contacting the wrong people or those who do not require the project. Vipin noted the timescale that would be needed to bring in alternative provision and observed that Incredible Years is a successful project which is working.

Ludmila remarked that the recruitment targets were very high at the start as at the time it was thought the project would be working in children's centres. These (then) had lots of groups and recruitment was much easier, but since then children's centres have lost nearly everything. Ludmila shared that she had done Incredible Years and said it really helped her during lockdown, even though she is an early years professional, and there was still something for her to learn. She noted a language barrier in BD5, and that some mums are not ready to understand what are difficult terms, but Ludmila felt this would be picked up as there are many groups in BD5. An Incredible Years engagement pack is being developed, which will lead to more discussion with parents.

Josie picked up Gwen's comments and observed that reach is fairly representative in terms of ethnicity, and the project is demonstrating that they are reaching the right people as they have high need scores.

Salma advised that she has also done Incredible Years herself with her fourth child and described it as very good and an eye opener. There was lots to take in, and she learned a lot even though she already had three older children. A creche was available which helped, and Incredible Years is to run in schools. She also mentioned that they have delivered courses in Urdu.

Karen observed that Incredible Years is a very good programme, which she remembers from children's centres. She agreed that their team need to go to more venues and talk to staff. Once referrals go in, there is high take-up and there will also be some drop-offs. Karen felt that a completion rate of 50 to 60 per cent is still relatively low and she wondered why and said the project should try to retain more families.

Ian informed that he had looked at alternative parenting programmes, such as Triple P (which is age 0 to 19) and Family Links (which is online, age 0 to 12) and they are not specific to our age group. There is also Mellow Parenting, but this is a targeted programme for higher need families and there would not be the accreditation there is with Incredible Years. There is a Family Links course for parents of age 0 to 5s, but this just consists of four workshops so would not result in the same level of behaviour change.

Ian also mentioned the Parent and Puzzle workshop and the Solihull Approach, but neither would include accreditation or the targeting of our age group. One of these projects required parents to have been on a basic course first.

Vipin noted that Incredible Years is universal. Gwen had fed back that BSB had mentioned that it is also delivered in the Blackpool and Lambeth A Better Start sites, but she noted that these areas have different cultures, languages and religions and it is not a very good comparison, but she is supportive of the project.

**Decision: The Partnership Board chose Option A, to recommission Incredible Years as it is for a minimum period of 2 years, with a possible extension of up to 6 months dependent on evaluation requirements and programme closure timelines. The recommendations of the Innovation Hub should also be noted.**

#### **7. Better Place – short extension of current contract**

Vipin noted that no papers were submitted for this agenda item in the meeting pack. Gill Thornton explained that we have discussed this matter at a previous meeting and the Partnership Board then agreed a one month extension to Groundwork's contract.

The Commissioning Advisory Group want to commission Better Place with a partner, we are in discussions with two (Bradford Trident and the local authority) and we need more time to get their commitment and to agree what we want. We will then request expressions of interest to go to the Commissioning Advisory Group and then the Partnership Board. This should be a relatively speedy process but we want to extend the current contract a little further, to 30 April 2022, which would allow some additional evaluation to be done. There have been staff absences and changes on the project team and the cost of the extension would all be met from underspend.

**Decision: The Partnership Board agreed to extend the current Better Place contract to 30 April 2022.**

#### **8. Innovation Hub annual update**

Josie presented some slides about Innovation Hub Phase 2 (2020-25), which she first talked about to us two years ago. The Innovation Hub has had a restructure as a part of Phase 2, and there are now four key workstreams, with some overlap between them. Monitoring and Evaluation is one workstream, and this covers data quality, monitoring and reporting, the BiBBS cohort, and in-depth evaluations.

The Community Engagement workstream covers project engagement and 'Citizen Science.' There is a System Change workstream which includes enhancing routine data and organisational change. Finally, there is a Knowledge Translation and Dissemination workstream, which covers dissemination and implementation of learning, and support Bradford to become a 'Research Ready City.'

Josie moved on to a slide entitled 'Our Journey' and explained that at 5-6 years the Innovation Hub are at an exciting point. The aims and objectives of Phase 2 include to underpin monitoring and evaluation, share learning, and make Bradford a springboard for investment from other funders.

There is still the Community Research Advisory Group (CRAG), which has had six meetings since May 2020, and a big qualitative exercise was undertaken with projects during Covid. This included the pandemic's impact (including online delivery) on referrals, enrolment and participation and who did and who did not engage more. BiBBS data and project data has been linked, and a PhD student is researching inequalities in the access of early years services. Josie's team have worked with the community engagement team on service design, and on the evaluation of the Neighbourhood project.

There is an ambition to get the community more involved in research, and Josie said for Better Place the community are doing data collection and there is a plan to train peer researchers. She proceeded to system change and data and observed that the team continue to work with organisations to enhance routine data collection. There is currently no validated measure for mother-and-baby attachment, and a new one is being developed and piloted. Josie's team are planning to work with nurseries in 2022 to get them to share their data, and are looking at analysing the free text fields that midwives have on their data system.

The Innovation Hub are also looking at organisation change, including the impact of Better Start Bradford at system level. The theory of change includes measuring how things were and are. The Little Minds Matter evaluation may have an impact on the wider system.

Josie's team are also working on wider engagement and scalability. This includes informing RIC's (Reducing Inequalities in Communities) understanding of health inequalities, using BSB learning. A needs assessment has been developed for Prevention and Early Help at Bradford Council. This is about trying to keep momentum going with change.

BiBBS is a founding member of the International Interventional Cohort Research Group. Work is being done for Perinatal Mental Health across West Yorkshire. Josie's team also reported on the impact of Covid on vulnerable families and ethnic minorities.

Josie moved on to evaluations and said that the BiBBS cohort is going well, with recruitment continuing through the pandemic and Born in Bradford staff running the Glucose Tolerance Testing clinics for pregnant women at the BRI. 3,669 women have been recruited to the cohort and there is an exercise to try to catch up with women missed during Covid.

Josie presented a list of BSB projects' evaluations and explained there are 10 'steps' to evaluations according to the Early Intervention Foundation. Most of them were low on the scale in 2015, but by 2021 most had increased and by 2025 she hopes to show evidence of impact for some BSB projects. This would involve families saying they benefit and getting an indication of effectiveness for several projects. Her team are planning conclusive effectiveness evaluations for five projects and scoping a further three. A few projects shall hopefully show scalability or sustained influence on the wider system.

Only three projects have been shown to be 'not acceptable' (Family Nurse Partnership, Pre-schoolers in the Playground and HAPPY). Josie noted that some BSB projects started later than others. Josie highlighted some key risks that might stop the Innovation Hub from being able to complete their effectiveness evaluations (Talking Together, Baby Steps and Personalised Midwifery). The risk is that there might not be enough participants to do an evaluation, caused by the limits to projects during Covid and BSB having to run down projects from 2024 in advance of the closure of the programme. The Personalised Midwifery project is affected by a shortage of midwives. Talking Together reaches too small a

population to be able to do anything new with it and Josie remarked that an extension to the programme and a wider roll-out would be the only way to add new level of evidence. Baby Steps is to become a universal project so its evaluation will need to start again, although this will mean larger number of families taking part which will help the research.

Finally, Josie mentioned leverage and funding has been gained from various sources, such as the Nuffield Foundation and Bradford and District CCG. There are 10 PhD students working on BSB-related studies.

Josie will send her slides to the Partnership Board. Vipin, on behalf of the Partnership Board, thanked Josie for her presentation.

## **9. Programme monthly report**

Gill Thornton said that the Better Place work has really taken flight, and most of the improvement works have now been completed. We have had some very positive feedback.

Gill Thornton also mentioned the Data1 project, additional funding has been secured from the DfE for digital innovation in Bradford and Leeds. We will contribute our experience relating to the development of shared child records and data sharing to improve the child offer, Bradford Partners are concentrating on children's autism. Our aim is to have 'One Child Record.'

BSB will be contributing towards Bradford's 2025 City of Culture bid, providing illustrative examples of age 0-5s involvement in art and culture using Better Place to illustrate one way of bringing children and outdoor art together.

Vipin noted that this is Baby Week and suggested Partnership Board members attend the event at Kala Sangam tomorrow. There is also a separate online event. Vipin thanked the team working on Baby Week and noted its social media promotion.

## **10. Any other business**

Ian shall be retiring from Better Start Bradford next month, and Vipin wished, on behalf of the Partnership Board, to thank Ian and show our appreciation of his work for BSB over many years.

Vipin also wished to thank Mark Douglas and noted that we have lost a great supporter, though Marium Haque, the interim replacement, is also supportive of us.

Finally, Vipin thanked everyone for attending this meeting and he said really appreciates the work we do.

## **11. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is on Thursday 16 December 2021, provisionally via Zoom, starting at 9.30 am.

The meeting closed at 6.45 pm.