

Better Start Bradford Partnership Board Minutes
Thursday 20 January 2022
Via Zoom

Meeting Started: 17:30

Meeting Ended: 18:25

Present:

Vipin Joshi	Community Board member (Chair)
Ruth Shaw	Senior Head of Integration and Change (Health and Care) for Women and Children, Bradford District and Craven CCG
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
Peter Horner	Voluntary and Community Sector Representative (in place of Tracey Hogan)
Gwen Balson	Community Board member (Vice Chair)
Karen Tetley	Community Board member
Ludmila Novosjolova	Community Board member
Olga Dolganiuc	Community Board member
Salma Nawaz	Community Board member
Satnam Singh	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
Sarah Worstead	Senior Manager of Integration and Change (Health and Care) for Women and Children, Bradford District and Craven CCG
Fiona Saville	Community Engagement Manager, Better Start Bradford
Guy Dove	Senior Programme Administrator, Better Start Bradford

Apologies for Absence:

Tracey Hogan Michelle Holgate Jill Duffy Samina Begum

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Vipin welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies.

Ruth explained that Sarah Worstead will be her deputy if Ruth is unable to attend our meetings.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 16 December 2021

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters Arising actions table

Alex confirmed that as our previous meeting was inquorate the whole Partnership Board were emailed asking them to ratify the recommendations. There were six responses with three people agreeing to all recommendations, one abstaining on item 7, one abstaining on item 8, and one disagreeing with the recommendation for item 8. Alex's email stated that a nil response would be assumed to mean that the December meeting's recommendations were agreed with. As a result all of the recommendations were ratified.

The re-establishment of the District Reference Group was due to be brought to this meeting, with Alex and Gill Thornton intending to meet Better Start Bradford's partners beforehand. This has been delayed due to pressures at our partners, with some of them not allowed to attend non-clinical meetings, and structural issues at Children's Services still exist.

The National Lottery Community Fund needed to ratify the change of commissioning process we proposed for the Better Place contract, this has now been completed.

4. Declarations of interest

Ludmila will leave the meeting while we vote on item 6.

5. 'Getting to know you' session

This was not covered this month.

6. Neighbourhood Project options paper

Fiona gave a Powerpoint presentation and explained we will be considering two options at this meeting. The Neighbourhood project was commissioned for three years to increase engagement across the BSB area and take-up of BSB projects, with one Neighbourhood worker based at BD4 Family and three with the West Bowling Consortium (which covers BD3 and BD5). It has a hub and spoke model of delivery with BSB being the hub and the VCS organisations the spokes. The project was co-designed with 15 VCS partners and aims to increase the reach of the BSB programme, including among lesser known communities.

Fiona described the impact of the project from its first two years. It made 1,882 contacts, 837 referrals and delivered 2,636 key Prevention and Early Help messages. 947 Play and Learn sessions were attended or facilitated. She clarified that 18 months of this was during a pandemic when contacts were limited. The project has also supported Parents in the Lead applications, leading to new Play and Learn sessions being developed. The Neighbourhood workers conducted doorstep visits to engage people and developed trusting relationships, helping with emerging needs such as welfare and debt advice, holiday hunger, immigration and employability support.

Fiona outlined how the Neighbourhood workers' role differs from that of BSB's Family and Community Engagement team. The FACE team have a more strategic role, and lead forums such as the BSB Project Engagement Forum, Community Engagement Network and the Bradford Dads Matters Steering Group. They also help to recruit Community Board members and community champions, co-ordinate Parents in the Lead, and lead campaigns.

The Neighbourhood project delivery partners have requested an extension (to 31 March 2024) and expansion of the Neighbourhood project. This would help them to develop a sustainable partnership between themselves, and increase capacity to allow additional focus on the Canterbury estate capitalising on the opportunity to work with The Arc and Horton Community Farm and New Communities, the Killinghall/Tyersal area and other identified pockets of low uptake and engagement.

Fiona explained that we are bringing this decision forward (nine months before the end of the current contract) as the delivery partners want to mitigate the risk of losing experienced staff members and have the security of a longer-term contract. She noted they are small VCS organisations. They also hope to improve their data collection via use of the Upshot system, develop their partnership and demonstrate their model of place-based support, which Public Health are interested in.

Fiona said the delivery partners complement each other and they have links into many organisations in the district, such as Prevention and Early Help Hubs, Community Partnerships, the Living Well service and Primary Care Networks. The delivery partners are well-established community anchors. They have been horizon-scanning and looking at alternative funding and sustainability for beyond the BSB funding. BD4 Family employ someone who looks for funding opportunities and works on bids. The West Bowling Consortium sit on the Stronger Communities board and have shared learning about project development/management which is now part of Stronger Communities way of working.

Fiona presented two case studies and said there have been many more collated. If the project is extended there will be further evaluation and qualitative work, looking at the Neighbourhood workers' reflective diaries. The case studies, one relating to a Hungarian family and another with triplets, showed how they were supported to access BSB projects and other local provision. Developing trusting relationships does not happen overnight, and Fiona shared that Neighbourhood project staff worked with some families for months. Some families now want to develop their own play groups. Fiona reiterated that working with the families was not easy during the pandemic.

Option A to be considered at this meeting requests the funding of three extra full time equivalent staff to 31 March 2024. This involves a total increase in investment of £419k to help engage unreached communities and develop a sustainable partnership. The delivery partners would implement Upshot, so would have a consistent monitoring system.

Option B would involve no expansion in staffing, just the contract extension to 31 March 2024, costing an additional £192k. There would still be the new proposed partnership and use of the Upshot system. Risks associated with this are less evaluation and the gaps in delivery remaining.

This matter was considered by the Commissioning Advisory Group last week. They recognised how this project is in a unique place to help families. Often vulnerable families have other issues to resolve before they can access BSB projects, which the Neighbourhood

workers help with. They supported the move to a single data reporting system (Upshot) and recognised that alternative funding sources are being explored. Public Health are keen to learn from the project's model.

Fiona concluded by saying that the Commissioning Advisory Group recommended Option A. Vipin thanked Fiona for the presentation, he commented that it would have been helpful for some of the detail to be shared in the meeting papers.

Sarah Hinton said she supported the project and can tell that it has made a significant impact and noted how it works with the grassroots. She asked where the requested additional funding would come from and Gill Thornton replied that the project did not initially use the full allocated resource so some additional funding is available. There have also been consistent underspends in some areas of the BSB programme so there is confidence that there is sufficient resource available to fund Option A.

Gwen recalled the community prep meeting earlier this week. A concern raised was the challenge of community languages and she asked if there is any scope for recruiting volunteers with language skills. She said that she does support this project and it is a great project. Fiona replied that this issue is recognised but it is not expected that every language spoken in the area can be covered. There is work already being undertaken with volunteers, Bradford College and other settings, to encourage completion of a community interpreting course, and there are various approaches.

Ruth commented that Fiona had given a powerful presentation and Ruth recognised the focus on the grassroots, with many of our other discussions being high-level. She also noted the work being done to engage with other services. Ruth mentioned barriers to participating in BSB projects and drop-offs and asked if enthusiasm is sustainable. Fiona replied that there are challenges along the way, and both delivery partners are keen to work together. All the organisations involved are well-established but have different approaches to work. What works well in one part of the BSB area does not necessarily work in another. BD4 Family have specific early years expertise whereas West Bowling Consortium have strengths in more strategic work. The proposed partnership would bring them together, and this could be a legacy of BSB, and the delivery partners are doing horizon-scanning. Ruth remarked that it appears that this project could keep running without BSB, if other partners commit.

Gill Thornton said Fiona deserves much credit for working on the relationships within the project. There is a high level of skill in the partners who are now looking at the direction of travel, and opportunities to align this work with wider strategic priorities. It is a health-outcomes focused programme and matches what partners are doing in their work, which is a unique position. Gill Thornton recalled that the Partnership Board designed the project and the team made it work, and partners trust us to deliver.

Shaheen observed how the case studies highlight vulnerabilities and asked if there are any new issues after the pandemic. Fiona replied that no new issues have been identified but the volume and complexity has increased for many, the Neighbourhood workers have adapted their approach as a result of the restrictions we've been under and anxieties of families, outdoor groups have been formed to address wellbeing and the Winter Wellbeing packs for families were distributed. Vulnerabilities have been compounded by Covid and many existing inequalities have widened.

Alex said the project's relevance to people has been demonstrated. There are different methods of engagement and a diverse range of needs. The two case studies demonstrate the relevance of the BSB projects, and other community organisations to meeting local need. Supporting staff on the ground to increase their knowledge and awareness of what is available is key, and these workers are able to share the needs in the communities. Sarah Hinton remarked that it shows the need for holistic work with families, who do not need just one project. Some Neighbourhood workers are from the same communities as the families, and they know where to go for help. Our families are complex, and they need holistic support.

Vipin agreed with Sarah Hinton and commented that this is a fantastic project. The first conversations with families are important so they do not miss services. Vipin noted that two Community Board members thought it was good that there will be work on the languages issue.

Ludmila left the meeting while Vipin asked the Partnership Board to vote.

Decision: The Partnership Board chose Option A, to extend and expand the Neighbourhood Project contract to March 2024 with an additional three whole time equivalent staff.

Vipin said that as someone who grew up on the outskirts of Canterbury, it is good to see it involved. There is a need for the project there and it should have been covered from its beginning. Ludmila flagged the importance of considering emotional and mental wellbeing in engagement, and Josie suggested that community readiness on Canterbury should be addressed.

7. Programme monthly report

Gill Thornton explained that our Christmas messaging has been highlighted as we received lots of positive feedback. It was good to reflect on what had taken place during the year.

There are two A Better Start national events coming up, and Gill Thornton said she hoped some Partnership Board members would attend. BSB will be presenting at the events, this has created some pressure within the team due to the number of vacancies. We do have some good stories to tell, examples and thinking. Gill Hart asked that we let her or National Children's Bureau know if there is a capacity issue, and she noted there is a time limit.

Sally Teasdale is leaving BSB this month, though Gill Thornton noted that the expansion of Neighbourhood project will fill some potential gaps. We will have a new Leadership Fellow starting in August, who has a Public Health background. A further five jobs in the BSB team have been advertised, interviews have been scheduled for four of these. There is lots of pressure on recruitment across all sectors, and Gill Thornton thanked those Partnership Board members who are helping with the interviews. There are some good candidates, which is good news as we are competing with the NHS and some government programmes which are better paid and able to offer greater security.

Gill Thornton moved on to the project monitoring section of the report. The Doulas are rated Amber due to the fact they have been struggling to recruit a training officer, though they have been able to cover the role and recruit and oversee some new volunteers.

BSB are working with the Care Trust and health visiting on MECSH, which is an improving story, with the review of the tiered structure in health visiting meaning it should move towards a model which is better able to support MECSH. Health visitor recruitment remains a local and national challenge.

Gill Thornton said there will be a report about the Innovation Fund at our next meeting, including about Resilient Dads which is having some staffing issues.

Gill Thornton noted that take up of early education places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds has increased with a larger increase in the BSB area than elsewhere. The events last summer funded and supported by BSB are likely to have had a significant impact on this and we are keen to ensure as many eligible children benefit from this provision as children of this age missed a lot during Covid.

During Baby Week, we showed the film In Utero, which illustrates how trauma and toxic stress affects unborn babies. BSB were careful to present the issues raised in a way that didn't blame parents, and instead the focus was on how pregnant women can be supported to avoid the risks highlighted. The film can be viewed online for free until 31 January. Kerry has been invited to be on a follow-up live panel on 2 February. BSB will share the details and Gill Thornton said it will be worth watching.

Shaheen asked about the Unicef Child-Friendly City application. Gill Thornton said she and Peter have just been in a Child Rights Coalition meeting. Bradford Council's CEO has signed an agreement to go ahead with the application, and it will start with a foundation year for Bradford's accreditation.

Peter added that the foundation year will be used to establish what we do, launch an assessment of children's rights, and there will be engagement events in the summer. There will be lots of opportunities, and this is the start of the journey towards accreditation which will take three to five years to achieve. BSB have had a significant presence in getting to this point, the Unicef accreditation bid has taken quite a long time to get started.

Alex agreed that it is a three to five year process, and it can be one of the ways we can sustain a focus on children within the District and the visibility of the youngest children. It has the potential to be a significant legacy of BSB.

8. Any other business

Vipin wished on behalf of the Partnership Board, to express our gratitude towards Sally for her hard work. She was a public face of BSB right from the start and was always there whenever he attended any events. We are sorry to see Sally leave but wish her well in the future. Vipin asked for these good wishes to be passed on to Sally.

Finally, Vipin asked everyone if they had felt able to participate in this meeting and all agreed that they did. He thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

9. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is on Thursday 17 February 2022, provisionally via Zoom, starting at 9.30 am.

The meeting closed at 6.25 pm.