

**Better Start Bradford Partnership Board Minutes**  
**Thursday 16 December 2021**  
**Via Zoom**

**Meeting Started:** 09:30

**Meeting Ended:** 11:05

**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 (items 8, 11 & 12 only)
Alex Spragg	Programme Director, Better Start Bradford
Josie Dickerson	Programme Director, Innovation Hub
Jo Howes	Public Health Specialist, CBMDC
Gwen Balson	Community Board member (Vice Chair)

**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
Kerry Bennett	Integration & Change Manager, Better Start Bradford
Shaista Ahmed	Finance Manager, Better Start Bradford
Jenny Jowle	Programme Facilitator, Better Start Bradford
Nicola Hancock	Programme Facilitator, Better Start Bradford
Riffat Nasser	Programme Facilitator, Better Start Bradford
Helen Rush	Early Years Facilitator, Better Start Bradford
Guy Dove	Senior Programme Administrator, Better Start Bradford

**Apologies for Absence:**

Marium Haque	Ishaq Shafiq	Shaheen Khan	Karen Tetley
Salma Nawaz	Satnam Singh	Ludmila Novosjolova	

**1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

Vipin welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies.

The meeting was inquorate and it was noted that only two Community Board Members were present. Vipin proposed discussing and making recommendations for items 6, 7, 8 and 9 which would then be emailed to the whole Partnership Board asking for comments and approval, and this was agreed. Vipin did not want to hold projects up and have too full an

agenda for our January meeting. A deadline for Partnership Board members to respond by will be imposed, with any not responding assumed to agree with the proposed recommendations.

**Action: Alex to send an email to the whole Partnership Board detailing the recommendations from this meeting asking for ratification within a given time.**

**2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 18 November 2021**

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record. Guy confirmed that they include amendments proposed by Josie in relation to the Innovation Hub update.

**3. Matters Arising actions table**

Alex confirmed that as previously explained, the work to relaunch the district reference group will be deferred until the New Year.

**4. Declarations of interest**

No Bradford Trident Board members were present for item 7 (Better Place commissioning).

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

This was not covered this month.

**6. Breastfeeding Support contract review**

Jill shared a Powerpoint presentation and explained that this project is delivered by Health for All (Leeds) and aims to support more women to breastfeed and for breastfeeding to be sustained. The second strand of the project aims to increase community based support to promote a breastfeeding culture. The project contributes to Better Start Bradford's outcomes for diet and nutrition and social and emotional outcomes.

Breastfeeding Support is an opt out project offering support in the home six days a week. The current budget is £547k for three years and six months, having been extended due to Covid.

The Commissioning Advisory Group discussed three options for this project at their meeting earlier this month. Option A is to recommission Breastfeeding Support as it stands for two years (plus a possible extension of up to six months). The families would continue to benefit from the project and the project would seek to launch Phase 2 (the community based support for breastfeeding). However, without adaptations, the project may not reach the women who are most in need.

Option B is also to recommission Breastfeeding Support for two years (plus a possible extension of up to six months), but with changes, so additional outreach in the antenatal period can be done, which should enhance referrals. Option C is to decommission the project. This would free up some budget, but BSB women would lose the access to support in the home, and it would have a negative impact on the wider breastfeeding system.

Jill turned to the Commissioning Advisory Group's conclusions, they had noted the recommendations from the Innovation Hub about the project. They recognised that this is a

high quality project which provides timely and proactive support. 68 per cent of women referred sign up to the project and it provides a valued service. It works well with other breastfeeding support provision in the district and delivers against our strategic objectives.

Jill has discussed the potential of an integrated commissioning approach for breastfeeding support with Public Health, the existing timelines prevent a joint commissioning approach on this occasion but there is a commitment to integrating commissioning going forward and Jill will continue to work closely with Public Health to bring this about.

We have identified a need for this project to reach less confident women during the antenatal period. The Commissioning Advisory Group recommended Option B, to recommission with changes for two years, with a possible six months extension to manage the end of the BSB programme and the evaluation. There would be additional outreach in the antenatal period and the Innovation Hub's recommendations would be addressed. There is an indicative budget for Option B of £340k for two years.

Jo confirmed that Public Health are keen on integrated commissioning with BSB. The learning from this project is informing the future direction of commissioning for Public Health and they are keen to see the difference that the antenatal outreach will make.

Gwen said that at the community prep meeting on Tuesday, the social value and positivity of this project was recognised and they wanted to recommend it. However, the reach and engagement are below target and the economic value was queried with the project being really expensive. This has an impact on its sustainability and Gwen wondered what other organisations would think of its costs.

Jo said this was a fair point but breastfeeding support is a key Public Health deliverable, as is tackling child obesity which it also contributes to, and there are arguments for greater investment. Public Health may not pick up every element of the BSB project, but breastfeeding support will continue in the district beyond Better Start Bradford and the model going forward will be hugely informed by the work we are doing. Public Health have already changed their model due to learning from Better Start Bradford, and it will have some paid breastfeeding support, not just volunteers.

Josie observed that we should not just look at the cost – if an intervention is effective we should look at cost per impact, not cost per person. We could do lots of cheap things which have no impact. The Innovation Hub are doing in-depth qualitative work with the women, and will find out what they value and should have some good insight in a year's time.

Gwen observed that what statutory services commission tend to be political decisions. Gill Thornton said it is good that Jo and Jane Dickens are developing a sustainable offer, to offer value for money and deliver outcomes which will be informed by the BSB learning.

Ruth noted that although the CCG will not exist after 31 March, breastfeeding support is linked to system priorities and to Better Births, and there is a good possibility of system-wide funding. Better Births does not fit well with the maternity agenda, but breastfeeding support does.

Vipin confirmed that engagement was discussed at the community prep meeting and this project needs to focus on that.

**Decision: The Partnership Board (subject to the agreement of its members not present) agreed to support Option B, to recommission Breastfeeding Support with changes for two years (with a possible extension of six months). This will include additional outreach work in the antenatal period and all the comments above should be noted.**

## **7. Better Place commissioning**

Gill Thornton noted that we will have to seek approval from the National Lottery Community Fund after our decision as we are looking to change the way this project is commissioned. She apologised for not clarifying this prior to bringing the paper.

We are approaching the end of the current phase of Better Place, and the Partnership Board have already agreed to extend the current contract so work which has been delayed by the pandemic and other factors can be completed, and to allow time to commission the follow-on Better Place project. The follow-on project has already been agreed by the Partnership Board in principle.

Gill Thornton clarified that we are not asking for Groundwork's appointment to be renewed, because the follow-on project will be a different contract. The first contract was for engagement and community co-production of the capital programme. There will be no further capital works in the second contract, which is a new and different project, though it will pick up some elements of the first. There will be some of the same objectives, such as improving places not funded by BSB.

The new project will continue community engagement work, seek to increase community capacity, supporting communities to take more charge and responsibility of their local area. This will be in the context of natural play and having a culture of using green spaces for activities. There will be artistic and cultural elements in the future, and Gill Thornton mentioned the opportunity for this to be part of the Bradford 2025 City of Culture bid. The second contract will also seek to build on the growing activities at Horton Community Farm. Other priorities will be biodiversity and air quality, developing other green spaces, linking with social prescribing, working with housing providers and linking communities together with such developments.

The evaluation will also be continued, exploring whether the work increases the use of green spaces and wellbeing. The project will also seek to continue to build in additional leverage funding, and to change attitudes to promoting play spaces for very small children, some of which is already happening.

Gill Thornton said BSB have looked at a Partnership Agreement (Option 1) for a new contract, with the delivery being done by one of our existing partners, and there is a different process for agreeing this. The Commissioning Advisory Group asked for a scoping exercise to be done among our partners, and we found that only Bradford Council's Landscapes Division and Bradford Trident were interested. If the Partnership Board agree to have a Partnership Agreement, BSB will ask both organisations for expressions of interest. The contract award would need to be made by an independent decision panel.

Option 2 is to have an open commission for the new Better Place contract. Gill Thornton noted that this may reduce the chance of the project being embedded and the time required for this will lead to a significant gap in delivery. The Commissioning Advisory Group discussed both options and recommended Option 1 as it has more strengths in terms of the future of the

project, sustainability and timeframes. Better Start Bradford have already started working on the specification.

Jenny mentioned that if Option 2 were selected, the consultants that previously helped BSB with open commissioning (Embed) are no longer in existence. Gill Thornton added that we would have to find a new adviser.

Alex confirmed, replying to a query from Jo that we would need to clarify Option 1 with the National Lottery Community Fund. Gill Thornton said that our commissioning framework allows us to commission from partners. Vipin observed that Option 2 would involve a very long process which would slow the project down and would be difficult. Option 1 still involves some competition.

**Decision: The Partnership Board chose Option 1, Partnership Agreement. This is subject to the agreement of the Partnership Board members not present and then ratification by the National Lottery Community Fund.**

Vipin wished to thank the Commissioning Advisory Group for its expertise, checks done and their questions and acknowledged how supportive this is for the board members.

## **8. ESOL for Infants**

Jill shared a Powerpoint presentation and explained that a follow-on course to ESOL for Pregnancy was discussed at the October Commissioning Advisory Group. When ESOL for Pregnancy was recommissioned in 2019, the board asked that Shipley College investigate the options for a follow-on course, looking particularly at ESOL Stepping Stones, a volunteer-run, community-based course that has run in a couple of venues across the district.

The development of ESOL for Infants was further delayed by COVID19, however Shipley College have investigated options, including ESOL Stepping Stones. Following this scoping exercise it has been concluded that a targeted, focussed class with specific aims is more likely to deliver the outcomes envisaged by the original bid and also better suits the delivery model for Shipley College as it is more formal and taught by qualified tutors.

Shipley College have designed a follow-on programme, targeting graduates from ESOL for Pregnancy and other families up to their child being 18 months. Shipley College's proposed course, ESOL for Infants, would consist of 12 courses delivered over 10 months. Each course would be made up of 6 two-hour sessions, delivered in a play-based setting (Womenszone has been identified as a location but further locations are being sought). A scheme of work has been developed that focusses on themes (vocabulary and grammar) offered by an age appropriate book each week. Books will be gifted so that parents can use them throughout the week to share with their children and do additional tasks set by the tutor. The budget would be £35k for the 10 months. Shipley College envisage 72 participants and the new course would have outcomes of better social interaction and parent-child relationships as well as better spoken English.

Jill explained that the proposal now has two strands, ESOL for Infants designed and delivered by Shipley College and delivery of ESOL Stepping Stones in the community supported by BSB.

The Commissioning Advisory Group were concerned at the high management costs quoted by Shipley College, a further breakdown of what these costs include has been provided in the meeting papers.

ESOL Stepping Stones would be delivered in the community by trained volunteers, using a £150 resource pack. We have done a scoping exercise and found a good level of interest from local community organisations. Better Start Bradford would hold an information session for them in January and we believe approximately 20 groups could be supported with a £3,000 budget.

It was clarified that Shipley College's proposed course would improve the mum's English, not the children's. Josie said there must be no mixed messages in the service design. She noted that ESOL Stepping Stones does have a good evidence-base. She suggested it might help Talking Together outcomes and reduce the risk of language delay and Jill agreed with this. Josie suggested they could work with BHT, but there would need to be consistent messages.

Gwen queried how many participants there would be in the proposed 20 ESOL Stepping Stones groups and if they would need to be face-to-face. Nicola said that ESOL Stepping Stones is delivered to an existing group via a trained volunteer, and she has seen classes with 10 people plus children present as well. It is more community-based and the aim is to deliver it face-to-face to encourage interaction.

Vipin advised that the prep meeting and the Commissioning Advisory Group's main concern was the 50 per cent management charge proposed by Shipley College. We have been given a breakdown but he still feels uncomfortable about it and that any VCS organisation proposing 50 per cent would be rejected. Vipin also said he could see the value in ESOL Stepping Stones.

Nicola explained that the term 'Management Cost' was a misnomer as there is no project co-ordinator, and these costs include this function as well as management functions, Shipley College are not top-slicing 50 per cent. Jill confirmed that we have discussed this with Shipley College and reducing their costs would reduce the work that they are able to do. The problem is how their costs were presented to us and some should be identified as co-ordination, and all are functions required to run the project.

Vipin recalled that some Commissioning Advisory Group members were very surprised at the 50 per cent. Gill Thornton said some of it is a delivery fee, with co-ordination including bookings, recruitment and how courses are set-up. Vipin remarked that how costs are presented need to be looked at in-house. BSB need to do some clarification because if the current paper is emailed to the rest of the Partnership Board, it would be rejected.

Jo suggested that the teaching time is actually doubled by preparation, sourcing resources, booking venues and these are normal practices. Better Start Bradford should put management costs under delivery and Jill said the breakdown shall be amended to make it clearer and refer to delivery.

Ruth said that she felt more comfortable about the costs when she had read all the items included in them. 'Management costs' include HR and staff recruitment and the issue is how the costs are presented.

Gwen suggested BSB put a ceiling on management costs and Gill Thornton confirmed this is already in place at 10 per cent and we need a good case to go above it. We have succeeded in reducing NHS management costs from their original 25 per cent for other projects. Ruth said we need clarity about what management costs are and Jill observed that there is usually a 10 per cent top-slice to cover central costs.

Gwen asked if we could see the figures presented differently before voting. Vipin asked if we could consider this again at the January Partnership Board but Jill said this would potentially mean two less courses are delivered. Nicola confirmed she could restructure the budget very soon using information Shipley College have already provided, then this information can be emailed around the Partnership Board.

**Decision: Alex to email the revised Shipley College budget for ESOL for Infants around the Partnership Board, asking them to approve this and the ESOL Stepping Stones proposed project.**

#### **9. April to September 2021 accounts, Forecast to 31 March 2022**

Shaista presented the written report from the meeting pack, and explained that it shows the actual spend against budget for the six months to 30 September. There is an underspend of £505k, the main reason for which is the pandemic. Organisations delivering the services we fund have adapted their delivery to new ways of working. Some Better Start Bradford projects were underspending pre-Covid, due to low take-up and staffing issues.

Our budgets for Conferences and Events and Learning Together have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. Salaries are also underspent and Shaista explained we have had some unexpected leavers and delays to recruitment (not due to Covid). From September 2021, the BSB staff team returned to the office, but not at full capacity, with a maximum of 12 and still with social distancing measures in place. We have bought additional office equipment and air purifiers, to ensure staff can work safely.

Shaista proceeded to Projects and noted an overspend on Better Start Imagine books which could be due to more people than anticipated moving into the area, or higher take-up. ESOL for Pregnancy have exceeded their targets resulting in the delivery of additional courses.

Shaista moved on to the forecast, which is for a reduction of spend of £384k against the budget. She explained this is based on actuals for April to September 2021, and what has gone through up to December compared against the budget to 31 March 2022.

There have been some revisions to the budget as a result of decisions made by the Partnership Board, these include the Innovation Fund projects which have been extended and budget for the BSB contribution to the jointly commissioned Early Years Play and Learn contract which started in August 2021.

Shaista commented that the accounts are always reviewed first by the Finance & Audit Sub-Committee. They do scrutinise them and ask questions and suggest things to expand on. Vipin wished to record his thanks to Robert and Raj and the rest of the Finance & Audit Sub-Committee.

**Action: The Partnership Board notes and accepts (subject to the approval of Partnership Board members not present):**

- **The accounts for the six month period ending 30 September 2021**
- **The forecast for the year ending 31 March 2022**
- **The slight revision to the budget relating to the Innovation Fund and the Early Years Play & Learn Sustainability Project.**

Shaista mentioned the graphs that were sent out with the meeting papers. The Finance & Audit Sub-Committee asked for the projects' spending against budget to go into graph format. There are many graphs on one sheet, the numbers on them are large, and Shaista said in future each project will go on a separate sheet.

The blue line on each graph represents actual spend, and the green line is the budget. We can see the spend from the beginning of the programme, and Shaista said it is going the right way.

Jo asked why the two Neighbourhood projects have such a difference between them. Shaista replied that their budgets are different and Jenny explained that the two projects have different numbers of Neighbourhood workers as one is a consortium of three organisations, the two contracts are not of equal value.

Nicola remarked that the Better Start Imagine graph does not show its underspend, and Shaista shared that this was also noted at the Finance & Audit meeting. In future each graph will be on a separate page, and it will be clearer and more accurate.

## **10. Programme Monthly Report**

Gill Thornton mentioned that Better Start Bradford have undertaken a lot of work on data sharing, which should help to improve referrals. This includes work on the Data1 project with the Innovation Hub. Resolving data sharing hold-ups in our programme will be useful for the wider system.

We have been involved in a number of sessions with other A Better Start sites to share learning and explore influencing future policy. The Community Engagement Community of Practice had parent representation at its most recent meeting and this will be continued going forward.

Most BSB projects in this month's report are RAG-rated Green. Perinatal Peer Support is rated Amber as they have a new manager, but Gill Thornton said she is making progress and linking with other perinatal projects.

Gill Thornton turned to HABIT (oral health project) and noted that there are discussions with the Institute of Health Visiting about developing the project across wider areas, which is good for sustainability. She wished to congratulate Emma and Kerry for the Virtual Live Learning sessions for nursing students and newly qualified nursery nurses which is a good innovation.

The Community Star Awards have been postponed due to rising Covid cases, but we are proud of the volunteers nominated in the category we sponsor and of Ludmila who is a finalist in a further category. Gill Thornton wished to mention the positive influence on dads work and groups that Zafar has achieved since joining the FACE team.

Gill Thornton then mentioned Baby Week and that this year we had support from external consultants which is new for BSB. There was thought provoking discussion and exploration

of a range of issues affecting babies and the workforce as well as family focused activities, many of which had a musical theme. It was good to be mixing with babies again and thanks are due to the BSB Comms team for their promotion and coverage.

Vipin said he liked the new layout of the report and congratulated the Baby Week team. Its social media coverage was excellent and Ruth agreed with this. Although Ruth was off ill that week, Baby Week popped up a lot on social media and she thought this was very positive.

#### **11. Any other business**

Vipin thanked everyone for attending the meeting and wished everyone a Merry Christmas. The BSB staff team have had a hard 2021, and it is nice to deliver the projects and he asked everyone to stay safe.

Finally Vipin asked everyone if they had felt able to participate in this meeting and all agreed that they did.

#### **12. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is on Thursday 20 January 2022, provisionally via Zoom, starting at 5.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 11.05 am.