

Better Start Bradford Partnership Board Minutes
Thursday 19 May 2022
Via Zoom

Meeting Started: 17:35

Meeting Ended: 18:55

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
Alex Spragg	Programme Director, Better Start Bradford
Jo Howes	Public Health Specialist, CBMDC (items 1 to 7 only)
Gwen Balson	Community Board member (Vice Chair)
Samina Begum	Community Board member (Vice Chair)
Karen Tetley	Community Board member

In Attendance

Gill Hart	Funding Manager, The National Lottery Community Fund
Gill Thornton	Head of Programme, Better Start Bradford
Jill Duffy	Implementation Manager, Better Start Bradford
Shaista Ahmed	Finance Manager, Better Start Bradford
Nicola Hancock	Contract and Implementation Officer, Better Start Bradford
Riffat Nasser	Contract and Implementation Officer, Better Start Bradford
Guy Dove	Senior Programme Administrator, Better Start Bradford

Apologies for Absence:

Salma Nawaz Josie Dickerson Sara Ahern Sarah Hinton

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Vipin welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies.

Introductions were not needed as everyone knew each other.

The meeting was inquorate and it was agreed to discuss and make recommendations which would then be emailed to the whole Partnership Board asking for comments and approval. 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.

Alex noted that we are recruiting Community Board members and hope to appoint some new ones over the coming weeks and months.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 21 April 2022

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters Arising actions table

Alex confirmed that an email was sent to the whole Partnership Board detailing the recommendations from our April meeting asking for ratification within a given time, because the meeting was inquorate. The recommendations were ratified.

Emma sent an invitation to the Partnership Board for the 12 May Community Star Awards celebration event. Vipin said that the awards ceremony was a good night and it was nice to see that some former Partnership Board members were also involved. The 12 May celebration event was held at Pearls Tearoom, attended by all the finalists, Vipin and some Better Start Bradford staff. The organisers of the Community Star Awards are happy for BSB to continue sponsoring it.

4. Declarations of interest

For item 7, Vipin reported that Gwen is a former Chair of Womenzone.

5. ‘Getting to know you’ session

This was not covered this month.

6. Better Start Imagine contract review

Jill delivered a Powerpoint presentation and explained that the Better Start Imagine project is delivered by BHT Early Education and Training and the current contract is due to end on 30 September 2022. The contract value is £176k to administer the Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL) book gifting scheme and deliver ‘wraparound’ activities such as Story and Rhyme Times. The DPIL licence is held by BSB and is separate to the contract with BHT, as is the purchase of the books. Children who are registered in the BSB area receive a book every month until their fifth birthday.

The Commissioning Advisory Group meeting last week considered three potential options for the project. Option A is to cease registering children for the books in September 2022 and stop the book gifting in September 2024. This means that all the children who are registered would receive at least two years’ of books and would maximise the number of books issued. BHT would be asked to produce a sustainability plan and if a voluntary partner is found to continue the administration of the book gifting, then five further years of book gifting (to September 2027) could potentially be funded.

Option B would be to continue registering children up to September 2024 when the book gifting would also stop. This maximises the number of children in the scheme but some would get fewer books and the youngest ones would just receive one book. BHT would also be asked to produce a sustainability plan and if a voluntary partner can be found to continue the

administration of the book gifting, then five more years of book gifting (to September 2029) could potentially be funded.

Option C is to decommission the project. We would be required to give DPIL 180 days' notice and registrations would cease in September with delivery ceasing in December 2022.

Whenever the book gifting ceases, this will impact on Canterbury Imagine, which is a neighbouring book gifting scheme.

The Innovation Hub cannot attend this meeting but Josie had emailed to confirm they would support the continuation of Better Start Imagine as BHT are meeting all their objectives. Scores from satisfaction surveys are high and families value the books. It is a very visible and popular project, BSB are very much associated with the project and it may help with wider awareness of the programme. Josie had confirmed that whatever we decide today, there would be no impact on the evaluation as they already have enough data for a potential impact evaluation.

Key considerations are deciding when registration and book gifting should cease, and if we should favour more children being in the project or more books being issued. The DPIL's theory of change is that the best results are for children to receive the full five years of books, but Jill noted that not much evidence has been found to support this.

The DPIL licence stipulates an ongoing administration function. We should consider the value of the project to the community and that BHT are performing well, delivering the wraparound activities and their recruitment rates are good compared to the birth rate.

The Commissioning Advisory Group had concluded that we should aim to maximise the number of children in the project, not the number of books issued. There is a lack of evidence about the impact of the duration of book gifting and they appreciated the popularity of the scheme. They supported continuing registration of children until September 2024 but we cannot yet commit to five years of delivery after then. We would review this at a later date and there would need to be funding, administration of the scheme in place and permission from the National Lottery Community Fund for us to pre-pay the books which would potentially be delivered long after the end of our programme. BHT will be tasked with producing a suitable sustainability plan within 12 months. They will be looking at different funding models and alternative funding for the project beyond the BSB programme.

The cost of option B is £126k for BHT's contract up to September 2024 plus £210k for the book gifting until then.

Decision: The Partnership Board (subject to the approval of its members not present) agreed to support Option B, recommission until September 2024 and continue registrations until September 2024.

The wraparound engagement activities will continue. The book gifting will cease in September 2024 with all children receiving books that they are eligible for until this date.

BHT to take responsibility for developing a clear plan for future sustainability including funding and how the administration function could be secured for the future to enable

book gifting to continue until children turn 5. If administration is secured, further funding for books may be considered.

BHT with support from Better Start Bradford shall maintain a relationship with Canterbury Imagine and specifically develop a transition plan to be implemented towards the end of the scheme.

BHT will work with the BSB Communications team to develop a sensitive and appropriate communication strategy.

Vipin noted that there was a lot of paperwork and discussion at the Commissioning Advisory Group meeting which went into them recommending Option B.

7. Innovation Fund Projects review: Womenzone and Resilient Dads

Riffat introduced the remaining two Innovation Fund Projects. Riffat said that the aim of the Womenzone project is to provide local families with an opportunity to develop their own learning and understanding around their children's social, physical and emotional development whilst at the same time involving their young children through high quality play opportunities, delivered by experienced and qualified Play Workers.

The project was to start delivery in October 2020 but this was delayed by the Covid pandemic. However the new play gym was installed and the June 2021 Partnership Board agreed to extend the project for a year. The contract value is £153k over two years.

Riffat went through the service description, including that seven sessions would be delivered per week over a period of 39 weeks. Five BSB projects and five external agencies attend a monthly drop in on a rota basis to raise awareness about specific issues and to create better referral pathways to the BSB programme. A family session was to run on Sunday mornings to try and engage more dads.

Riffat said that the project has delivered since September 2021 and 106 people attended the launch event. Performance is rated 'Green' in some areas and Amber in others. Successes include the Big Little Moments campaign and sharing of key messages. There are good relations with the Neighbourhood project and the dads' work is going well. Riffat mentioned work with other BSB projects, sessions such as Art Attack, Dads Zone and Time to Think. Ten referrals were made to Incredible Years and the Womenzone workforce is of good quality.

Potential workstreams in the future include developing more volunteers, peer support, one Parents in the Lead application has been submitted and there may be a second one.

Challenges include the delay to delivery to September 2021 due to the pandemic, anxiety about mixing after lockdown and Womenzone not knowing if to have an open door policy or an advance online booking system. However, good relations have been formed with many BSB families and the dads work is gaining momentum.

A risk is that the Innovation Fund projects were designed to be short-term, and we cannot measure any outcomes due to the nature of the project.

Riffat moved on to Resilient Dads which is a holistic project for dads who experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences delivered by Sharing Voices. Sharing Voices developed a programme with different components such as communication, leadership and parenting skills, mentoring support, sport and leisure and as a fluid and flexible learning medium.

Delivery of the Resilient Dads project was meant to start in April 2020 but due to Covid it was delayed until October 2020, however, there were then recruitment delays and delivery did not start until January 2021 and was online. This caused concerns about the community engagement element of the project because face-to-face delivery could not start until much later.

In June 2021, the Partnership Board agreed to extend the project's contract so a steering group could be set up, an evaluation completed and an additional 40 dads recruited.

The contract value is £153k over two years. There was a large underspend at the end of the first year due to delays in starting the project and the evaluation, nothing was spent from the £12k activities budget until May 2021 due to Covid restrictions.

Riffat proceeded to the project's performance and noted that some areas which were rated 'Amber' were quite close to being Green. However, 35 dads were meant to complete the comprehensive programme but only 7 did so, though there was a delay until delivery started. Satisfaction rates from the service users are good. An external evaluation is underway and should report by July 2022.

Risks include low recruitment and we cannot measure any progress against our outcomes due to the nature of the project. There has been no service design and the course's content has not been put into lesson plans or transcripts.

Successes include identification that there is a need for the project. Two steering group meetings have taken place and have gone well, and links have been formed with the ACEs, Trauma and Resilience team at Bradford Council and other BSB projects. By February 2022 the project had recruited a learning mentor and a project assistant.

Challenges include low completion of the comprehensive programme, staffing issues and there being no evaluation until July. There have also been strategic difficulties at Sharing Voices. The initial 90 minute sessions were found to be too long so were reduced to 45 minutes. Sharing Voices contacted social prescribers but have had no referrals from them. ACEs have been a challenging thing to discuss and 1:1s have worked better than group work.

Gill Thornton gave a Powerpoint presentation and confirmed that the Innovation Fund started in 2018. It aimed to address gaps in the BSB programme and it was agreed to fund projects for one year to test if they had the potential to become full BSB projects that we could service design and evaluate. The projects were agreed in July 2019 but their start was delayed and then the pandemic caused further delay to the start of delivery or the activities were scaled down. All of the Innovation Fund projects funded in this round were extended to mitigate the delays and challenges but are due to complete later in 2022.

The projects had to serve the BSB area and address our outcomes, be evaluated, not duplicate existing provision, be new in content or approach and be manualised or collect data.

Gill Thornton said the new Play Gym at Womenzone is a great asset for the area and specifically their centre and there were other building improvements made e.g. to their kitchen which have increased its suitability. Womenzone staff have developed links, capacity and skills. However, the initial proposals had many wraparounds such as advice sessions about debt, benefits, housing and domestic violence which have not happened. There are some overlaps e.g. Cook and Eat sessions and there is a Neighbourhood worker based there and BSB's dads worker is often present at the Sunday sessions.

Womenzone have skilled staff and strong leadership and Gill Thornton said the current local authority and NHS localisation agenda gives Womenzone an opportunity to develop their service. They do already link families to other services that can help and the satisfaction surveys and case studies are very good.

However, no specified delivery model is written down anywhere and there is an overlap with BSB's Neighbourhood project. The project cannot collect individual data and what data the project does collect cannot be linked to our outcomes so no evaluation can be done.

Gill Thornton moved on to Resilient Dads and said they may have met some of their targets, including via virtual engagement, but they did not record whether the dads live in the BSB area or have children of the target age. The participants have been positive about Resilient Dads and she referred to the case study in the meeting pack. The project co-ordinator is committed and keen and Gill Thornton mentioned the links made with the ACEs, Trauma and Resilience workstream at the local authority. This has helped to highlight specific needs and conversations about areas which are difficult to discuss, and she recalled the talk by an imam at one of the Baby Week events as being a significant step.

There are capacity issues at Sharing Voices which raise queries about their wider commitment to the project. The engagement element of the project has struggled to refer dads on to other parts of Resilient Dads such as learning and support. The project cannot be service designed, with its content dependent on one individual who has not committed to write it down anywhere. The provision of financial information from Sharing Voices is of concern and this has been reported by other partners too.

Gill Thornton moved on to the next steps. Neither Innovation Fund project can be evaluated as BSB would want. We would need clear objectives to achieve service design of the projects which would be necessary to continue their funding. There is also no budget provision for another contract extension. If our funding is stopped, BSB would help both organisations to secure other funding via reporting evidence, impact, helping with new development in the district and linking with Parents in the Lead. Support from our Neighbourhood project would also continue.

There were no questions at first and Ruth observed that this shows that the reports are good. Jo had attended the Commissioning Advisory Group meeting which discussed these projects last week.

Gwen asked if some queries from the prep meeting two days ago had been passed to Alex. Gill Thornton, replying to the queries, explained that funding was already awarded for one additional year to both projects, delaying their contract ends to September 2022. The Innovation Fund was set up to test if projects could be service designed and evaluated, in line with other BSB projects but neither of these projects had developed this potential. There is

currently no rationale for continued BSB funding and there was never any guarantee of continued funding.

There was a query about the impact of discontinuing our funding. Gill Thornton noted that the Play Gym and Café will remain at Womenzone, providing them with an opportunity to generate income and some of their activities receive other funding, though BSB will support them to seek more. Work via the Neighbourhood workers to get referrals to BSB and other agencies will continue.

Gill Thornton observed that Resilient Dads may not continue at all due to the situation at Sharing Voices and she is not sure that the author of the course content would still be involved. Sharing Voices will have a model to talk about to ACEs, Trauma and Resilience and mental health workstreams when discussing other funding and the potential of developing the model into a project.

Both Womenzone and Sharing Voices are strong organisations and have sources of funding other than BSB, and Gill Thornton confirmed that BSB will help them with seeking further funding from elsewhere. We are recruiting a new Parents in the Lead co-ordinator whose role will include supporting the sustainability of existing community organisations, and we will endeavour to align them with the NHS and local authority Localism agendas.

Jo mentioned that ACEs, Trauma and Resilience has a community workstream and there is a small grants programme which Sharing Voices were part of the consultation for, so there is a current funding opportunity there and in the future.

Gwen remarked that there is a need for the Resilient Dads service and asked if the help given to the organisation would be structured. Gill Thornton said there will be a detailed plan taking into account the September end to the funding, but the plan will be agreed by both organisations. BSB will have a Parents in the Lead co-ordinator working with the Neighbourhood project, identifying the needs of groups regarding supporting with funding, networking with key providers and linking them to Here 4 BDCC who can help with matters like funding applications. BSB will have a plan in place for the final project reports, evidence to use, learning and support from Neighbourhood and engagement workers for Womenzone, and links with ACEs, Trauma and Resilience for Sharing Voices if appropriate.

Decision: The Partnership Board, subject to the agreement of its members not present, shall cease to fund the Womenzone and Resilient Dads Innovation Fund projects at the end of their current contracts, 30 September 2022.

Better Start Bradford will work with the projects to develop other sources of funding, collaboration and support.

BSB to support the projects in completing detailed end-of-project reports with strong case studies and qualitative evaluation where possible.

Gwen reiterated that the support should be structured. Riffat recalled that BSB said at the outset of the projects that they would need to think about sustainability. Womenzone, for example, are thinking about applying for Ofsted registration.

Gwen mentioned faith groups and it was noted that Sharing Voices are trying to diversify their service users, but we do not know how this is being done in detail. The evaluation reported that they need a bigger workforce and to get the fidelity right for referrers.

Vipin commented that the reports in the meeting pack are very detailed and this makes the Partnership Board easier to run and makes understanding easier. He thanked the BSB staff team for this.

8. 10 Year Budgets

Shaista went through the written report in the meeting pack. This shows the revenue grant, capital grant and leverage from BSB's partners, and how these have changed through the years.

The report and spreadsheet show how money has been spent from Years 1 to 7 and the plans for Years 8 to 10. The figures from Years 1 to 6 show actuals, but Year 7 is still subject to change as Shaista explained that the Year 7 accounting year has not been closed down yet. Provision has been made for some contract extensions and BSB are still receiving invoices but Shaista feels there will only be minor changes.

The underspend to date is shown and mostly relates to projects. This remains committed to the projects during their contracts, however BSB require them to produce business cases for the use of underspend. Shaista presented the Year 8 budget at the March 2022 Partnership Board and there have been some changes since, such as the inclusion of the Innovation Fund HIDVA (domestic abuse) project.

Shaista explained the basis for the Years 9 and 10 figures. BSB have an expectation that there will be higher costs for Governance, Marketing & Communications and Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning due to the programme focus shifting towards dissemination of the achievements of BSB and the evaluation findings. It is anticipated that we will hold several events and have a large information campaign. The Learning Together budget has also been increased, to facilitate this.

Shaista has also made a provision for closedown costs, which will include practical considerations such as record-keeping for seven years after the end of our programme, removal and clearance costs.

Our projects all have contracts in place and mostly go into Years 9 and 10. There are a number of sustainability projects where investment has been made into district level pieces of work and hopefully these will contribute to our legacy. The Lottery have confirmed that underspend on capital costs can be converted into revenue but this is not anticipated to be significant.

Vipin observed that the Finance & Audit Sub-Committee do go through the budget and accounts carefully in a two-hour meeting before they are shared with the Partnership Board.

Decision: The Partnership Board notes and accepts the revised 10 year budget and the basis on which it has been prepared.

9. Programme Monthly Report

Gill Thornton commented that the Children's Commissioner is quite active and contact was prompted by the ABS annual event and Josie's data sharing presentation looking at a shared child record.

Gill Thornton mentioned BSB's role in influencing the development of new services, namely Start for Life guidance, commissioning of Oral Health services and developing the Food Strategy for the district.

We are interviewing for the Parents in the Lead co-ordinator and a Contract and Implementation Officer next week. The ACEs, Trauma and Resilience training contract lead role is being readvertised by the WAVE Trust.

There is an initial Better Place contract meeting with Bradford Trident next week. Gill Thornton said the recent Parents in the Lead panel session was really good, as a result training for panel members will be provided and there will be recruitment of new members. BSB are reviewing our volunteer strategy.

Gill Thornton went on to the Wider District section of the report and mentioned BSB's role in developing the new Prevention and Early Help strategy and contributing to the consultation on the new age 0-19 contract as demonstration of the influence the programme is having within the district.

The Communication and Marketing part of the report is small this month because the team have been concentrating on developing the new BSB website. Gill Thornton mentioned the various Easter events that took place in parks. Finally, she mentioned that we hosted a cohort of Urban Studies MSc students from Leeds University for the first time for two years, which included talks about Better Place and a visit to some of the Better Place sites.

Vipin remarked that Bradford Doulas regularly appear red or amber, they have ongoing difficulties with recruitment, volunteers and he queried if they should have a base in the BSB area. Riffat confirmed that they are still at the Carlisle Business Centre and have reviewed this and decided to remain there. Vipin noted that it would take two bus journeys from the BSB area and there is no bus stop near the centre, which could put off potential volunteers. It has been a suggestion that they have a base in the BSB area for five or six years now. Riffat said that a detailed Improvement Plan is in place and will be reported on at the July 2022 Partnership Board. There is an issue with the project not recruiting to a Volunteer and Training Officer role, and we are looking at this in detail. Nicola clarified that the project does pay for taxis for their volunteers.

10. Date of next meeting

Vipin said that unfortunately Fareeda was not re-elected at the recent local authority elections, so we will need a new ward councillor on the Partnership Board. He wished to record our thanks to Fareeda for all her hard work, promoting the project in the community and for holding us accountable.

Alex noted that the Parents in the Lead consultation event took place earlier today and a Doodle poll shall be going out to Community Board members to arrange a further meeting.

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.

11. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is on Thursday 16 June 2022, provisionally via Zoom, starting at 9.30 am.

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm.