

**Better Start Bradford Partnership Board Minutes**  
**Thursday 23 March 2023**  
**Via Zoom**

**Meeting Started:** 09:35

**Meeting Ended:** 11:25

**Present:**

Vipin Joshi	Community Board member (Chair)
Sarah Hinton	Board Member, Bradford Trident (items 1 to 11 only)
Alex Spragg	Programme Director, Better Start Bradford
Josie Dickerson	Programme Director, Innovation Hub
Ruth Shaw	Senior Head of Integration and Change (Health and Care) for Women and Children, Bradford District and Craven Health & Care Partnership
Sarah Exall	Consultant in Public Health, CBMDC (items 1 to 11 only)
Rizwana Jamil	Ward Councillor, Bradford Council (items 1 to 8 only)
Ashraf Miah	Development Worker, Community Action Bradford & District (in place of Peter Horner)
Gwen Balson	Community Board member (Vice Chair)
Karen Tetley	Community Board member
Ludmila Novosjolova	Community Board member
Shummel Uddin	Community Board member

**In Attendance**

Gill Thornton	Head of Programme, Better Start Bradford
Sola Onifade	Contract and Implementation Manager, Better Start Bradford (items 1 to 11 only)
Shaista Ahmed	Finance Manager, Better Start Bradford
Abrar Hussain	Workforce Development Manager, Better Start Bradford
Guy Dove	Senior Programme Administrator, Better Start Bradford

**Apologies for Absence:**

Lisa Brett	Salma Nawaz	Samina Begum	Marium Haque
Carlton Smith	Sarah Muckle	Ishaq Shafiq	Gill Hart
Gulsoom Akhtar			

**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 – 23 February 2023**

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

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

Bradford Doulas update is on the agenda (item 6).

Alex reminded all that we discussed the ending of Vipin's term as Chair. He is willing to stand as Chair again and there are no nominations to stand against him, so Vipin will be re-appointed as Chair until the end of the Better Start Bradford programme.

BSB are recruiting for new Community Board members this spring. Adverts will be going out this week and Alex asked all to circulate. She thanked Gwen and Samina for agreeing to be on the recruitment panel.

A questionnaire about the format of the programme monthly report was sent out with the meeting papers.

**Action: All to please complete and return the questionnaire before the next Partnership Board meeting.**

Gill mentioned another action – she has asked Laura McLarty for a summary of the ethnography presentation she gave us last month.

## **4. Declarations of interest**

Rizwana declared for item 9 that she is Chair of Womenzone, but she left the meeting before their project was discussed.

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

This was not covered this month.

## **6. Bradford Doulas update**

Gill explained the background to this agenda item relates to the Partnership Board's conditions placed on Bradford Doulas to resolve the issues with data submission ahead of the contract extension. She apologised for tabling this item but noted we did give Bradford Doulas up to the end of March to meet the Partnership Board's conditions.

The Partnership Board agreed to recommission Bradford Doulas for one more year, with an end date of 30 April 2024. This is conditional on data quality and submission being improved, targets and dates being put in place, and the next training course to be delivered in the BSB area.

In February 2023 the project requested extra laptops to help them enter their data and support, and BSB provided training on SystmOne to the relevant staff. We have monitored their data inputting which was irregular at first, but then their data submissions improved and they are now up to date. The figures have been matched and whilst there are a few discrepancies, they are close to the reported numbers.

Gill remarked that much support needed to be provided to the project from BSB. There have been some issues with data processing at the Innovation Hub so there is no report from them, but detailed information will be provided later. However, Gill believes that the project has met their data requirements.

Josie confirmed that the data is now recorded, and she is really pleased with this progress. Bradford Doulas are now thinking about entering their Reducing Inequalities in Communities (RIC) data which means the Innovation Hub should be able to compare it with BSB's data. She explained that the reason there is no Innovation Hub report is that they have only just received the data. It takes time to run data quality reports and do data cleaning, checking for example that there is no double counting.

It was noted that for data quality, there are higher 'no consent' figures than we would have wanted, and this will be followed up.

The next Doulas training session will be in the BSB area in September 2023. The new volunteers will not have much opportunity to deliver before the end of our project but will be available to support the wider project.

The project has tried to recruit a recruitment officer but were unsuccessful. The project manager will leave in mid-April to take up a role with the Reducing Inequalities Alliance. Action for Communities CEO has assured BSB that the role will be covered while the project manager is replaced.

Bradford Doulas are two years behind with the RIC data and have asked BSB for support to help them prepare for the RIC evaluation. We will not be providing any more training, or SystemOne laptops.

Gill said that Bradford Doulas have delivered the action we asked them to (with much support) and so are compliant with the commission.

Gill shared that there remain a number of identified risks associated with the project but these will be closely monitored.

Vipin observed that the report on Bradford Doulas was comprehensive and clarifies the issues raised at the community prep meeting.

**Decision: The Partnership Board agreed to recommission Bradford Doulas for one more year, with an end date of 30 April 2024.**

## **7. Volunteering review**

Abrar delivered a presentation summarising the volunteering review which was undertaken to take BSB's strategy to 2025 and beyond. A consultation was conducted with existing volunteers.

As a result of the review, it was agreed to bring the current community champion role to an end. Abrar explained that BSB tried to organise a thank you event, but uptake was low, so they will be emailed, texted and sent a thank you letter. BSB will ensure we keep in touch with the volunteers and let them know of training opportunities and we will have a designated person to be their contact.

Two new volunteering roles have been created. One is a parent voice function which will enable BSB to hear the views of parents across the area, ask for feedback on our programme and respond to calls from wider partners. There will be at least monthly contact with them via WhatsApp, and the panel members will have an information workshop or training at least quarterly. Detailed role descriptions, registration forms and induction packs have been developed. We will recruit them via various methods such as through Neighbourhood workers and a Volunteer Fair has been held.

The other new volunteer role is event volunteers i.e., for summer events, Festive Fun and Baby Week. We will again recruit via various methods and have written role descriptions, induction packs and they will be included in risk assessments. BSB shall provide them with a detailed calendar of events, training or information workshops every three months.

Abrar explained that the terms for the volunteers on the HEY Fund panel have not changed.

A clear procedure shall be written for whenever BSB staff request volunteers for events. We shall keep volunteer training and attendance records.

There will be a formal volunteer launch after Eid (late April).

Ludmila asked if there was a policy for volunteers getting references from BSB and mentioned a previous issue when nobody on the staff team had seen a volunteer's work. Gill responded that this was a useful question, references for volunteers directly participating in BSB activities and training are provided by staff who have worked with them, the situation may be different for volunteers running Happy Early Years (HEY) Fund groups where BSB staff may not know how they are contributing. We hope we would be able to support volunteers to identify suitable referees and we will be offering training which should support volunteers who wish to move into paid roles. Gill remarked that Gulsoom is doing a report on the HEY Fund projects so we will be able to demonstrate what has been achieved. Shummel commented that a parent who commits to run a HEY Fund group needs something in return.

Gwen queried why BSB stopped the community champion roles. Abrar replied that the role had changed over time and the review demonstrated that individuals within the role had different expectations. The number of community champions dwindled due to the pandemic and there were fewer volunteering opportunities. Clearly defining the required roles would help to address the issues identified and enable individuals to take on the aspects of volunteering they felt most comfortable with.

## **8. Accounts to 31 December 2022 and Year 9 budget**

Shaista shared a spreadsheet showing actual expenditure versus budget. There is a £673k underspend for the 9 months period to 31 December 2022.

Shaista noted that all these figures have already been presented to and scrutinised by the Finance & Audit Sub-Committee. There was a £4k underspend on Salaries, due to staff leaving and recruitment taking longer than anticipated.

There was a £1,905 overspend on Learning Together within the period. Shaista explained that this is due to the scheduling of events with more events happening and with bigger turnouts. The heading includes Baby Week, and its speakers, venues, and catering and BSB's sponsorship of the Bradford Literature Festival early years programme.

Shaista said that travel and other expenses (such as parking, hotels, mileage) did not have much spend over the last two years but now people are returning to the office and travelling. It is good that in-person things are happening again, but it has been hard to predict these costs and BSB try to budget as accurately as we can.

There is currently a £9k underspend for Marketing and Communications. The new website is continuing to be developed, and some of the activity of the team such as leaflets and newsletters may be allocated to other budget headings.

Shaista noted a £12.5k overspend for professional, legal and consultancy fees due to the costs for our NHS Leadership Fellow being higher than initially budgeted.

Shaista explained that we budgeted for an Area Wellbeing Survey in this financial year, but it will now take place next year. Gill added that this is tied in with Better Place and is being discussed with the Innovation Hub. Shaista noted that Management Overheads are what Bradford Trident charge us for items such as rent, cleaning, IT support and insurance.

The Projects budgets reflect the service level agreements which are normally for three years. Shaista said that reasons for project underspend with their mitigations are shown on the spreadsheet. The ICAN project ended on 31 December 2022 and the remaining underspend will be reprofiled. In relation to the Sustainability projects, the perinatal support partnership co-ordinator and the breastfeeding support co-ordinator were not recruited by Public Health, so an underspend is shown.

Shaista proceeded to the forecast, explaining that she has used actual spend from April to December 2022 then forecast to 31 March 2023. She is predicting a spend of £7.2 million for the year leading to an underspend of £713k.

Forecasted underspend of £33k is predicted for Salaries, due to unexpected leavers and vacancies not being filled, and £9k for Learning Together as there are not many events scheduled in the final quarter. Variances are explained on the spreadsheet for each heading.

Shaista turned to the Year 9 budget and explained that the £7.6 million predicted spend is split between monies received from the Lottery and partners (such as RIC funding for Little Minds Matter and Personalised Midwifery, West Yorkshire Police, Bradford District Care Trust, Bradford Council and West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (the former CCG)). Balances have been brought forward for projects from Year 8, but there are only a few projects that this applies to.

Shaista explained that inflation of 2 to 3 per cent has been used for Management Revenue and 4 per cent for Salaries. For Projects, service level agreements have been used.

Vipin shared that at the community prep meeting, they agreed how useful Shaista's reports are. He confirmed that the Finance & Audit Sub-Committee also look at them in more detail.

Sarah Exall queried the two Public Health posts not recruited to. Alex explained that the posts were agreed prior to Sarah Exall joining, with BSB contributing to short term investment which was unable to be realised due to timescales, our contribution was therefore not required.

Karen asked if there are any plans for unused underspend as there are only two years of the programme left. Alex confirmed that we reprofile the budget each year and are in conversation

with the Lottery about what we could do with any underspend. They have confirmed that 31 March 2025 is not a 'hard end' to the programme, so there may be a short period beyond this for completion. The budget is complex, and we cannot exactly predict underspend and we will be working with partners on options that might be available to us.

**Decision: The Partnership Board notes and accepts:**

- **The accounts for the nine-month period ending 31 December 2022**
- **The forecast for the year ending 31 March 2023**
- **The year 9 budget for 2023-24**

## **9. Innovation Fund overview**

Gill explained that Gulsoom sent apologies and Gill will be giving a presentation about the Happy Early Years Fund on Gulsoom's behalf.

Gill noted that most Innovation Fund projects have now completed. The Innovation Fund was launched in early 2019 and a consultation was done, and a development session held. There were a number of factors which led to delays in both the process of awarding funding and delivery. Four applications to the Innovation Fund were funded and another jointly with Better Place.

Some of the projects did prep work during 2019, such as the Play Gym being built at Womenzone. Extensions were approved due to the pandemic with additional resource committed for some. There was also a further funding round and the HIDVA (Health Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) project was established.

The Innovation Fund as a whole includes Parents in the Lead which funded 56 projects, distributed £71k of funding resulting in 849 sessions being delivered involving 22,000 participants. Parents in the Lead was rebranded to the HEY Fund and Gulsoom was appointed as the dedicated co-ordinator.

Gill described each Innovation Fund project in turn. Grow to School was delivered by Horton Community Farm and linked to Better Place, encouraging families to spend time together outdoors. The project was originally devised to work with early years settings but was adapted due to Covid restrictions, initially distributing growing packs, leaflets and resources. They later were able to start open air sessions, and activities at the farm were very successful, but they were unable to do anything with nurseries until even later. As the delivery model changed it was not possible to evaluate the project, however parent and child feedback was positive and case studies developed to illustrate impact. They have developed materials for working with age 0-3s and continue to do activities with Better Place projects.

Older Yet Wiser was a programme designed for grandparents to gain a greater understanding of early childhood development and to help build good early language, healthy nutrition and strong relationships. It was designed as a 3 year programme to allow for a more detailed qualitative evaluation which would allow us to assess whether there was ongoing and sustainable change, however it was not possible to deliver until March 2022 and a single course was delivered as the provider's business priorities had changed as a result of the pandemic.

The qualitative evaluation provided some important insights, participants were positive about the course and its content. They felt that it gave them much needed support and affirmation as grandparents and the provision of a creche and interpreters was welcomed. It was felt that the course would have benefited from a more diverse range of participants. The service users also felt that a follow-up course as their grandchildren get older and an offer in their home language would be beneficial. Follow-up interviews were conducted after 6 months with a small number of participants. They were clear that the course had a lasting impact on their relationships with their grandchildren and with the wider family. The learning from the project will be used by ChildsSide, the provider, in further developing the offer and to contribute to a paper designed to influence work with grandparents when planning services for early childhood.

HABIT is an oral health project which is still operating. Gill shared their objectives which formed the elements of a feasibility study which has had to be extended as a result of the impact of the pandemic. The project has achieved or is on track to achieve all targets and has worked with early years settings and Health Visitors and produced a series of resources. As the project has been largely delivered through MECSH there is a reasonable expectation that this will continue with the training being embedded into Health Visiting. They are also involved with the Commissioners in Public Health looking at improving Oral Health, with an objective of HABIT becoming part of the specifications for the 0-19 Health Visiting and School Nursing contract 2024 -2027. The final report and evaluation will be shared once completed later this year.

The Womenzone Play Gym and Healthy Café was funded to provide local families with an opportunity to develop their own learning and understanding around their children's social, physical and emotional development while at the same time involving their young children through high quality play opportunities, delivered by experienced and qualified Play Workers.

Gill observed that the development of the resource had been a significant benefit to Womenzone and the local community. Womenzone effectively refer people on to other services and parents have accessed HEY Fund to set up groups and activities, but the Innovation Fund project was brought to a close as it was not possible to complete an evaluation.

The Resilient Dads project, delivered by Sharing Voices, used a range of components to support fathers to play a more active role in their young children's development. There were a number of factors which led to not all of the components of the project being fully delivered despite an extension.

The project showed promise and demonstrated demand for dads specific social and emotional support but there was insufficient capacity within the organisation to develop this further. There have been delays in receiving financial information from Sharing Voices, but their final claim was submitted on 20 March.

The HIDVA project is a contribution to a 24 month pilot basing Health Independent Domestic Violence Advocates in hospitals and is due to complete in mid-2024. The BSB role has a focus on maternity and is developing relationships, providing training as well as supporting individuals who are referred. The HIDVA works alongside other HIDVAs across the hospital and we hope ours will be a permanent presence with built in sustainability.

Gill summarised that whilst significantly hampered by the pandemic the Innovation Fund projects had met the original objectives and there is considerable learning to be drawn from them. All projects have had some impact and have created change which is sustainable either in terms of change in practice, new learning or development of new resources for our families. They have also allowed BSB to reach new families, new areas and work with new groups and organisations.

Sarah Exall enquired about evaluations and Gill said these were minimal, but we intend to complete a final written report. We will share the final Older Yet Wiser evaluation.

The HEY Fund was launched in September 2022 at an event attended by the Lord Mayor, at which the change from Parents in the Lead was explained. There will be three panel meetings this year to decide on applications, some 'before you start your project' sessions and a celebration event in September 2023. Gill wished to thank the panel members (7 remained from the Parents in the Lead panel and there are 4 new ones).

So far, there have been 23 successful HEY Fund applications. There were 10 in the first round of applications funded to a total of about £20k. 13 out of 14 applications in the second round were accepted (the other was outside of the BSB area) with a similar total amount of funding.

Gill shared that BSB have provided the HEY Fund projects with much support via our Family and Community Engagement team and Neighbourhood projects, but we want them to run by themselves. Examples of groups are Play and Learns, school readiness, pregnancy yoga and mental health in pregnancy. There are also three dads' projects in round 2, including parent and toddler exercise sessions. Gill showed some pictures from the groups and confirmed that a good record of them is kept by BSB.

Gill went through the support provided such as materials, help with promotion (though we want the groups to do this themselves) and the Soldo card (a pre-paid debit card which means the groups no longer need their own bank account). Groups have also been supported by making training available, supplying key message materials and the resources on the BSB website.

Training provided includes Paediatric First Aid, Learning Through Play, Outdoor Play, and Infant Mental Health Awareness Training. Training is also available on how groups can become constituted via CABAD.

Gill said the HEY Fund is going well but the support given by BSB needs to be balanced, as we want parents to develop themselves.

Shummel said recognition should be made of Zafar from BSB who helped with applications and with getting dads involved. Gill agreed and added that the Neighbourhood workers and the Early Years team had contributed in similar ways. She reiterated that there needs to be a balance of the amount of ongoing support provided by BSB as we need the capacity to be built within the community.

Ashraf mentioned that CABAD can help with training, safeguarding, and tools are on their website. He asked when the next panel meeting is, and Gill replied that there has just been one and the next one is in June 2023. Guy will send Gill's presentation about the HEY Fund out.

**Decision: The Partnership Board notes and accepts the Innovation Fund update report.**



## **10. Sustainability and legacy strategy plan update/Project prioritisation process**

It was agreed to move this agenda item to our next meeting due to lack of time.

## **11. Programme Monthly Report**

Under Key Highlights, Gill mentioned Start for Life, eight BSB projects are part of the Start for Life delivery plan. There should be more details about this at our next meeting. Start for Life will also be setting up parent panels and their guidance includes a BSB case study.

There is also the launch of the Better Place Organisation Fund which is on our website.

The A Better Start Annual Event took place last week and was very successful with great feedback received. The video which was shown at the event was a collaboration across the sites and Bradford was well represented.

Alex shared that the ABS Directors took part in discussions with five government departments who work on family policy. They are establishing a cross-government family policy group. Barriers to implementing sometimes competing or conflicting government policies and overcoming them were discussed and items from the discussion will form the agenda of their first meeting in May.

Gill mentioned Baby Week, the multi-agency steering group is well established and questionnaires have been shared with parents and practitioners.

The Community Partnership which covers Bradford Moor has worked closely with BSB to establish a Maternity Circle. These provide support, advice, and social networking to families during the first critical 1,001 days from conception throughout pregnancy and into infancy and are being piloted in a number of community partnerships.

Alex sits on the Bradford District & Craven Health & Care Partnership's Children, Young People & Families Partnership Board and has taken on joint project management responsibility with Lisa Brett for the Prevention and Early Intervention pillar of this board.

Gill confirmed that BSB are trying to recruit staff to fill our current vacancies. A Senior Data Administrator will start in post on 17 April. We will be interviewing on 6 April for a new Community Engagement Manager and Gill wished to thank Gwen and Ludmila for volunteering to be on the recruitment panel. Our Early Years Specialist is retiring next month, and a job description is being reviewed for the role. We did not receive any applications for the Programme Administrator role and its closing date has been extended.

Gill noted that the Personalised Midwifery project has recruited more staff, and the RIC funding has been extended for the final year.

There will be a new section on the report for closed projects such as ICAN.

Abrar shared that he had had positive meetings with Bradford College in relation to our input to their Early Years training offer and that are keen for us to work together. BSB are also now one of their Industry Partners.

We have met with the Family and Young Person's Information Service to agree that some of our information will appear on their website.

Gill showed some posters that BSB's Comms team have produced. We currently have no Community Engagement lead, but work is ongoing, and Gill mentioned some men's events held. We also supported a health event held in BD5.

Gill confirmed that all projects have now submitted sustainability plans.

Vipin remarked that there was phenomenal participation from Bradford at the Annual Event, and this was noted at the recent community prep meeting. Alex thanked Vipin for this feedback and said that staff enjoyed participating and working with other sites and she will pass the feedback on. Vipin added that it was good to see learning from other areas.

## **12. Any other business**

Vipin asked everyone if they had felt able to participate in this meeting and all agreed that they did. He thanked all for attending and said their time and effort is appreciated.

## **13. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is on Thursday 27 April 2023, provisionally via Zoom, starting at 5.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 11.25 am.