

Better Start Bradford Partnership Board Minutes
Thursday 27 April 2023
Via Zoom

Meeting Started: 17:35

Meeting Ended: 19:20

Present:

Vipin Joshi	Community Board member (Chair)
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 6, and 9 only)
Lisa Brett	Head of Service for Early Help and Prevention, Children's Services, CBMDC (items 1 to 7, and 9 only)
Gwen Balson	Community Board member (Vice Chair)
Samina Begum	Community Board member (Vice Chair) (item 6 onwards)
Gazala Taj	Community Board member
Karen Tetley	Community Board member
Ishaq Shafiq	Community Board member (items 1 to 6, and 9 only)
Salma Nawaz	Community Board member

In Attendance

Gill Hart	Funding Manager, The National Lottery Community Fund
Gill Thornton	Head of Programme, Better Start Bradford
Sola Onifade	Contract and Implementation Manager, Better Start Bradford
Guy Dove	Senior Programme Administrator, Better Start Bradford

Apologies for Absence:

Sarah Hinton Carlton Smith Sarah Worstead Marium Haque

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Vipin welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies. He thanked all for attending and said that their time is appreciated.

Everyone introduced themselves to each other.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 23 March 2023

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters Arising actions table

Alex said the only action was for all Partnership Board members to complete and return the questionnaire about the programme monthly report.

Gill Thornton thanked all those who returned the questionnaire and for the comments made at the last meeting. The majority of responses, including those who discussed it at the community prep meeting supported retention of the report in its current format. The 'RAG' rating used in the report was valued. She also noted a comment that she does not need to go through the report in such detail in meetings but is happy to answer any questions after the meeting if they occur.

4. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. 'Getting to know you' session

This was not covered this month.

6. Innovation Hub annual update

Josie gave a presentation with an overview of the Innovation Hub's activities over the last year, and the plans for the coming two years, noting that we are getting to a critical stage of the programme.

Josie shared the Innovation Hub aims and objectives, including to work closely with partners to underpin monitoring and evaluation. They want to get each project to its optimal evaluation level and advise on decommissioning when needed. The Innovation Hub also want to help build capacity in Bradford.

The BiBBS cohort now contains 4,700 pregnancies and Josie said they are on target to reach 5,000 by the end of 2023. It is a very representative cohort in terms of ethnicities, which is a credit to the research team, and over 50 languages are spoken.

Over 2022/23 the aim is to find out more about the Better Start Bradford population, who engages in the programme and who does not, about challenges with language development and inequalities in mental health.

Josie said her team now have access to the 2021 census data for the BSB area. The White British population declined from 25 per cent to 17 per cent over the period. The British Pakistani population rose from 45 to 54 per cent and Other South Asian and White Other populations stayed quite stable. A much lower level of White British pregnancies was noted.

Josie shared that Jenny Lister, a PhD student with the Innovation Hub, has undertaken a 'latent class analysis' and divided the BSB population into four main groups. These are non-migrant / more advantage, migrant / more advantage, non-migrant / less advantage, migrant / less advantage.

Non-migrant / less advantage tends to be White British families with lower education and employment, financial insecurity, and poor health. Non-migrant / most advantage are mostly South Asian people with strong English, good education, financially secure and with good mental health.

Migrant / more advantage are very mixed, though with many people who have English as a second language, one person employed in the household and good health, with migrant / less advantage tending to have poorer employment and health.

Josie reported that 85 per cent of the BiBBS population is engaged with at least one BSB project. There are lower participation rates in projects when 'Active engagement' is needed, such as a 12-week commitment, which is understandable.

Jenny found that patterns in attendance were not influenced by the main four latent class analysis groups. Higher attendance was noted from Pakistani heritage women and socially isolated women, and less from central and eastern Europeans and women with little or no English.

Josie noted that one in four BSB children are late talkers, which she said is critical. This affects mostly boys, families with English as a second language or children with hearing issues. There were fewer issues when the children were in a larger household or were older at assessment date.

Josie turned to maternal mental health; an Act Early comparison study was done with Tower Hamlets which demonstrated that maternal mental health is worse there than in Bradford. Factors include financial insecurity, loneliness, and less social support – it was found that ethnicity makes no difference.

Josie mentioned inequalities and treatment of perinatal mental health and gave some examples of papers that have been published.

For the 'What Next?' part of her presentation, Josie said the team will be very busy. She is excited about the final reports on BSB projects and how far up the 'evidence scale' they will go. Five effectiveness evaluations are underway (for Personalised Midwifery, Baby Steps, Incredible Years, Breastfeeding Support and HENRY). Josie explained that the HENRY evaluation will run until 2028, because the children need to reach school age, when their BMI is measured. She hopes for positive findings from the evaluations which will be presented to the Partnership Board.

Josie proceeded to the plans for 2023/25. There will be a big retrospective recruitment drive for BiBBS. 30 per cent of relevant women were not recruited during pregnancy, partly due to the pandemic.

Josie asked that BiBBS be invited to all events. They will be running campaigns and adverts, including on local radio and videos and she asked the Partnership Board to please support this, as they have done since 2016.

For 2025 and beyond, Josie mentioned the Start for Life projects and the prospect of extended evaluations with the district roll-out. They are seeking to extend the BiBBS cohort and to get grant funding to look at the medium- and long-term impact of BSB. She noted that Sure Start took five years to show impacts such as lower hospital admissions. There are also

opportunities to explore longer-term effects including the impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

The Innovation Hub want projects to maintain their reporting and will be doing workshops for them and one-to-one sessions. Josie mentioned the Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) at the local authority, and she wants to make them more experienced, and work with them and make research part of everyday business. There is some leverage, and several partners are involved.

Vipin commented that it was good to get this update and remind us why the programme has invested in the Innovation Hub, why we are giving time to it and of the end goal that we are aiming for.

Ruth said the presentation was 'mind-blowing' and there is so much information and she needs time to reflect and feed into the new Children, Young People's and Families Board so that it can impact what they do. She noted that Josie needs to update the reference to the CCG in the presentation.

Lisa remarked that the presentation was fascinating, and it was good to remind us of the Innovation Hub's work. The percentage of families engaged is really high and for some council projects it is often really low. Josie said that there are many components to this, and the learning should be captured, such as the involvement of Neighbourhood workers. Some projects with 'passive' engagement are easier to engage families in than others, and the learning needs to be shared.

Gill Thornton noted that BSB has a very dynamic approach to community engagement, including local people at the beginning and involved parents in the development of the service. We have been here for eight years, and our offer has been stable which is a real benefit. We saw that it takes three years to get the brand recognised. A community engagement conference is being planned which will share learning about this critical part of our programme.

Josie agreed to share the presentation slides but will add some further detail.

Sarah asked what might encourage different demographics to engage. Josie replied that she was surprised that there appears to be no difference in ethnicity for engagement – social isolation was identified as more of a factor.

Ishaq said that we need numbers of the families engaged, not just percentages. He also noted no reference to men in the presentation. He suggested that what has gone well and what has not should be made into case studies and inform the local authority offer. Maybe men chose not to engage. Josie replied that these things need to go into lessons learned. There is a flaw in the BiBBS cohort as not many men attend the GTT clinic which lasts all morning, and her team will try to recruit dads into the retrospective study. The project data does include dads.

Ishaq said we also need value for money and cost-benefit analysis looking at longer-term benefits, noting that we invested in projects with very low numbers. Josie confirmed that the effectiveness evaluations will include cost-benefit analysis, as will the national evaluation the National Lottery Community Fund are doing.

Gill Thornton said that the Data, Research and Evidence Community of Practice met last week and there will possibly be a social value evaluation. Lisa observed that Start for Life needs a

cost-benefit analysis. Many families have never been to a Family Hub or engaged with services and she can have a separate conversation with Josie. Vipin commented that it is good to see partners saying that they are going to use parts of the report.

Sola suggested that the evaluation looks at the effect on other members of the household as well as the women and children taking part in the projects.

7. Sustainability and legacy strategy plan update/Project prioritisation process

Alex shared some slides which had also been presented to the Strategic Reference Group last week.

Work on sustainability and legacy has been broken down into four theme areas, scaling up of BSB interventions and programme approaches, systems change, social capital and workforce. Scaling up BSB interventions and approaches involves identifying what works and elements of success, by using implementation evaluations, qualitative feedback and the test and learn approach. Opportunities to build models of delivery incorporating our learning are being developed and examples such as the co-production and Perinatal Project Coordinator elements used in the Start for Life offer development work continue to be sought. The adoption of programme developed products and tools is a further way in which the influence of BSB will last beyond the programme. Start for Life has created a significant opportunity for direct additional investment to some BSB interventions to deliver beyond their BSB contract and across the wider district. BSB projects are also looking more widely for outside investment.

Systems change includes a shift in language, ethos and financial commitments towards prevention and early intervention. We have seen that the word 'babies' is being used much more widely demonstrating how some of the understanding of the focus on the earliest years has developed. Bradford is one of the first 75 districts to be awarded Start for Life funding, and this is a significant opportunity to demonstrate the benefit of increased financial commitment in Bradford to early years.

Alex turned to system leadership in maternal and child health and care across the district. There has been a shift in the way the system has developed, adopting theory of change and logic models. ABS and BSB helped to shape Start for Life national policy and members of the team, board and our projects have been invited to speak at conferences and at meetings with different government departments. In the Start for Life guidance, there are examples from Bradford and other ABS sites.

Gill Thornton added that we are also referred to in the Levelling-Up guidance. Better Place is an example of co-production of good quality urban spaces. At the recent data community of practice, we discussed feeding into policy and learning.

Gill Thornton proceeded to social capital which has been part of our programme from the beginning. We worked with the local community on the implementation of early years. There have been campaigns like Big Little Moments to increase knowledge and understanding of key messages. The Neighbourhood project also helps to build the knowledge and understanding of our programme, to get families involved in services and to understand their needs.

We have developed tools and resources, especially the Happy Early Years fund and it was the Community Board members who had the idea to make parents lead the activities. The HEY Fund groups are now beginning to take responsibility for the future.

Better Place has worked with local parents and communities and has been very successful. The project has been invited to share its learning in many places. The local authority is now looking at how to design urban areas for people who are 95cm tall. This has come about from Better Place and is a strong legacy.

Workforce development is also part of our programme and was built into the bid. We aim to have an engaged, confident, motivated and highly skilled workforce. BSB have worked with other agencies and invited them to Learning Together events. We have developed pathways for local people to be part of the sector, working with schools, higher education institutions and students. Baby Week includes content for the workforce and practitioners to learn, hear from experts and share good practice.

BSB have developed the Adversity, Trauma and Resilience workstream and we part fund its Lead at the local authority. We are partners in the commissioned ATR training which helps people to understand its impact on individuals and to consider how this needs to be recognised when designing services. We have lots to point to and there will be more in the next two years.

Priorities for the final two years include Start for Life transition to the district wide model. Eight interventions are involved, and they are not all 'lift and drop.' Another priority is to manage the closure of contracts with no onward funding. There is also knowledge curation and dissemination, including public information events and briefings about learning and legacy.

We are also planning community celebrations, reflecting how 10 years have changed the community.

There is also the potential set-up of a legacy vehicle. Gill Thornton said we have had initial thoughts about a possible follow-on organisation. It could be a centre of expertise and learning, building an evidence base with some delivery or a centre of excellence in developing evidence-based services. It could also be a strong advocate for early years and prevention, having a skilled workforce and co-production.

At the Strategic Reference Group meeting it was said that if we are not putting our case across, BSB could quickly be forgotten after the end of the programme. We have influenced the Child Friendly District and the Children's Plan, to include very small children.

The Strategic Reference Group asked at their recent meeting that we build on co-production and the community involvement model, for use by our partners. This would help them to build services. They also said we helped to build the 1,001 Days movement which has been a springboard for other Bradford funding. We have helped to develop a strong model for implementation. Our partners will need to decide which projects are business-critical for them, the Children, Young People and Families Board and its four 'Pillars.'

BSB want the BiBBS cohort to continue and will help it to continue working, which could be a role for a legacy body.

Vipin commented that it is good to see the work going on about sustainability. Ruth said it seems like a good approach and we should make sure it is not just rhetoric and there needs

to be a partnership instead of BSB doing this work on its own. We should keep momentum and give messages wherever we go. Alex agreed that it is a partnership-wide piece of work. She observed that there are several 'cliff edges' that coincide with our own.

Gwen observed that Alex and Gill Thornton had given a comprehensive presentation. There is lots going on and it is quite encouraging. She mentioned the cost-of-living, fuel poverty, deprived areas and there seems to be a gap and we should aim to tie the positive things in with these. These are the issues for people and the partnership should be working together, addressing social issues. Gill Thornton said this was a really good point and a legacy body would look at early years but could have a wider remit – BSB have to have a narrow focus. We know families are not attending as other things are taking their focus and we should find some solutions.

Samina said she would like to see how we sustain what has been learned and empower parents to go forward. Families still need services, and we should see how the strategy has developed.

8. Programme Monthly Report

Gill Thornton said that Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust has rebranded 0-19 as the Public Health nursing offer. MECSH is to be embedded within the health visiting model and is being rolled-out district-wide, Edwina is continuing in her champion role within the Trust.

Gill Thornton remarked that the district-wide roll-out of MECSH represents a massive success for BSB. Vipin wished to record our thanks to Edwina for many years of support.

The recent data community of practice discussed working across all five ABS sites to promote the take up of Healthy Start Vouchers, for families on universal credit.

BSB have three vacancies out to advert and Gill Thornton confirmed we do have applications for each role. Shummel has resigned from the Partnership Board as he is to be our new Community Engagement Manager, with a start date of 15 May.

Gill Thornton mentioned the Innovation Fund Resilient Dads project. This has now closed, and we have received their final project completion report and returns. However, we are still awaiting their external evaluation findings and she said there will be learning from it. The dads' work led by Zafar is going really well.

We have vacancies for Community Board members, and all were asked to encourage people to apply, only two applications have been received so far. Guy will send the information to the Partnership Board again, and Gill Thornton confirmed that flyers about the role can be dropped off at community venues.

There will be a Volunteer Fair at the Mayfield Centre in June.

Gill Thornton mentioned the marketing and publicity work which has taken place this month, including producing a Better Place sculpture map.

Finally, Gill Thornton asked all to note the dates of the next Baby Week – 14-20 November 2023.

9. Any other business

Alex presented a paper proposing a recruitment and retention incentive payment policy for BSB staff members. She apologised for tabling the paper due to time constraints but noted that our programme has less than two years left to run. She is bringing our recruitment challenges to the Partnership Board and asking them to agree in principle to ask the Finance & Audit Sub-Committee to study a detailed retention incentives plan.

Alex will share the paper, but noted the complexity of our programme, the evaluations, that there are several commissions and what we are responsible for. We have 30 staff (not all are full time) and over the last 7 months we have had 8 leavers, 50 per cent of those from leadership positions. This has caused a significant strain on the remainder of the staff. Some roles have been recruited to, but significant induction is needed for new staff.

Recruitment has been challenging and some roles have gone out to advert multiple times. We have extended deadlines and tried to be creative about where we advertise. Having less than two years left has put off potential candidates, and this is the same for our projects. We know there is limited capacity for secondment requests to partners. Losing experienced staff has an impact on the value of the programme, legacy, and its successful closure.

Alex outlined the case for retention incentives. Our partners may have better redundancy policies but Bradford Trident, being a small VCS organisation, only has statutory provision. Staff need two years' service to qualify and the only difference to statutory redundancy is that actual weekly pay is used instead of it being capped.

The vast majority of BSB staff would receive less than £5,000 redundancy which is less than 20 per cent of their salary and does not deter people from leaving. Alex explained that if retention payments are brought in, we would still make people redundant when their function is not needed. An alternative is to bring in agency staff to fill vacancies, but this would incur a high cost and these staff still require induction from the diminished capacity.

Alex explained that BSB needed to bring these challenges and requests to the Partnership Board, to authorise a detailed proposal to be brought to the Finance & Audit meeting which is next week. The request will have more detailed costs and explain how they are to be afforded.

Sarah commented that recruitment and retention will be a challenge over the next two years and the suggested policy is a good idea in principle. There will be redundancies before the end of the programme and maybe we could try to upskill staff. Alex said that redeployment is already prioritised, and it will all be short-term in nature. It is difficult to fully project our capacity needs over our final two years. It is likely that peoples' jobs will adapt and retaining knowledge and expertise is critical. Recruiting skilled people will get more difficult as we approach the end of the programme, but the team need to see we are making an effort and this needs to be seen more widely too.

Sarah said that staff need to see that they are valued and given support. Josie shared that lots of staff left the Innovation Hub six months ago and the same will happen in other projects. This is a big risk across them all, a cliff edge, and she wondered what other A Better Start sites are doing.

Lisa agreed with the retention proposal in principle and queried if there will be better redundancy payments or maybe a bit of both. Alex explained that the redundancy policy is

organisational, and the proposal would just affect BSB staff. Staff leaving is a risk which has been flagged and we will look at ways to help other projects.

Alex noted that at other ABS sites, the employing bodies are very different, such as large national organisations with better redundancy packages and redeployment opportunities. BSB is disproportionate in size to Bradford Trident. Alex has discussed this with the other sites' directors, who have also experienced lots of change over the last 12-18 months.

Gwen shared that the staff churn was noted at the community prep meeting earlier this week and it is a challenging issue. She suggested having more options as the retention policy may not work. Ishaq remarked that there are surely more options. As projects end and staff leave there would be more surplus funding. She would not want to return any money to the National Lottery Community Fund at the end of the programme and it should be kept within Bradford.

Gill Thornton explained that there is a contingency fund for project staff redundancy costs and we have worked to retain staff. We have a detailed budgeting process and have asked projects for a detailed costs projection. We are not expecting a large surplus at the end of the programme or any surprise surplus and there is also Start for Life which will bring additional investment. Two years ago, BSB completed a function review to redesign the staff structure to the end of our programme. People have moved roles within the team, but this is getting more difficult.

Lisa noted the challenge for host organisations about redeployment. She wants Bradford people to work in Bradford, while noting HR requirements about preferential treatment etc. and her team has lots of vacancies. Alex said that unfortunately we cannot predict vacancies in two years' time, the numbers, or roles. Most BSB leavers have gone to jobs in partner organisations. There is more job security there which is very attractive.

Alex said that when the situation becomes clearer, we can work collaboratively with partners then. Lisa suggested starting negotiations now to 'plant the seed.' Gazala mentioned Sure Start and asked how they finished. Alex recalled that there was a long, slow end to Sure Start which was a different situation. Some BSB projects are in their final 12 months and there has been some churn, but we can be flexible. Project staff have changed the hours they work, and we have been supportive. However, the BSB staff team has some specialist functions, and the people need knowledge of the programme.

Alex advised that we have also used learning from the National Lottery Community Fund about programmes already closed. Ruth noted that statutory organisations could help with longer-term staffing, but her workplace needs to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in running costs. There could be redundancies and she cannot commit to anything yet, but Ruth would talk about vacancies at the right time. We would, however, need to be wary of HR rules about preferential treatment.

Gwen asked if we are discussing a retention or redundancy payment and Alex confirmed that it is both. Several BSB staff would have less than two years' service and it would only be a retention payment for them. The detail of this is not yet worked up.

Decision: The Partnership Board agreed in principle to the adoption of a recruitment and retention incentive scheme and instructs the Finance and Audit sub-committee to undertake scrutiny of the detailed proposal.

Vipin asked about other options. Alex replied that this is urgent, we are currently trying to recruit, and three more staff are leaving in May. We have been trying to think of other options, such as use of agency staff and we can explore this with the Finance & Audit Sub-Committee. BSB will work through the costings with them then bring it to the Partnership Board. Lisa said that if an extraordinary meeting is needed to put it through, then we should have one.

Vipin wished to thank Helen Hall and Fiona and other leavers. Helen had been with BSB since year 1 and was a great supporter of us and, on behalf of the Partnership Board, he wishes her well in her retirement. Vipin also passed on congratulations to Shummel on securing his new role.

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

10. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is on Thursday 25 May 2023, provisionally via Zoom, starting at 9.30 am.

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm.