

**Better Start Bradford Partnership Board Minutes**  
**Thursday 18 January 2024**  
**Via Zoom**

**Meeting Started:** 17:30

**Meeting Ended:** 19:00

**Present:**

Vipin Joshi	Community Board member (Chair)
Sarah Hinton	Board Member, Bradford Trident (items 1 to 9 only)
Ruth Shaw	Senior Head of Integration and Change (Health and Care) for Women and Children, Bradford District and Craven Health & Care Partnership
Lisa Brett	Head of Service for Early Help and Prevention, Bradford Children's and Families Trust (item 1 to 8 only)
Alex Spragg	Programme Director, Better Start Bradford
Rizwana Jamil	Ward Councillor, Bradford Council
Sarah Exall	Consultant in Public Health, CBMDC (item 7 onwards)
Samina Begum	Community Board member (Vice Chair)
Humera Mahmood	Community Board member (item 6 onwards)
Karen Tetley	Community Board member
Ludmila Novosjolova	Community Board member
Salma Nawaz	Community Board member

**In Attendance**

Gill Hart	Funding Manager, National Lottery Community Fund
Gill Thornton	Head of Programme, Better Start Bradford
Sola Onifade	Contract & Implementation Manager, Better Start Bradford
Michelle Thompson	Communications Manager, Better Start Bradford
Heather Fawcett-Jones	Contract & Implementation Officer, Better Start Bradford
Guy Dove	Senior Programme Administrator, Better Start Bradford

**Apologies for Absence:**

Ashraf Miah	Ishaq Shafiq	Marium Haque	Carlton Smith
Gwen Balson	Sara Ahern	Gazala Taj	Josie Dickerson

**1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

Vipin welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies.

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.**

## **2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 14 December 2023**

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 December meeting asking for ratification within a given time, because the meeting was inquorate. Alex thanked the people who responded and confirmed that the recommendations were ratified.

The Community Board Member who signed up for Incredible Years but had not heard back has now been contacted by the team at Barnardo's.

Alex confirmed that work is ongoing with Forest Schools about sustainability. The project are in discussion with the schools they have worked with and are looking at bidding with Better Place for Heritage Lottery funding. Gill Thornton added that Get Out More who deliver Forest Schools are also exploring Core20Plus5 funding through Community Partnerships.

The action relating to cascading the learning from the Personalised Midwifery project is ongoing, Gill Thornton is working with Better Start Bradford's Contract and Implementation Officer, the project and the Innovation Hub to demonstrate how the project has reduced inequalities.

Alex noted that the National Children's Bureau will shortly be publishing a report following the policy roundtable with the Royal College of Midwives which will include details of the Personalised Midwifery project and summary of the evaluation findings. Ruth suggested talking to Abbie Wild about sharing the learning within the Best 1,001 Days workstream, Gill Thornton said that Kerry Bennett and the Specialist Midwives are cascading this information. A poster about the project was also presented at the Unicef conference, all the learning will be pulled together and we will present a single story. Ruth offered to help with this.

In relation to the BSB programme extension proposal, Alex confirmed BSB are finalising the initial budget to share with the National Lottery Community Fund as part of the proposal, it is hoped there will be a response before the next Partnership Board.

There are still six updated register of interest forms outstanding and Vipin asked for them to be emailed to Guy.

## **4. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

This was not covered this month.

## **6. Cooking for A Better Start end of contract review**

Sola went through the report that had been sent out as part of the meeting papers. The Cooking for A Better Start project (which is delivered by HENRY) is due to end on 31 March 2024. The end of contract meeting was held on 20 December 2023.

The project offers practical cooking sessions for parents of children under 4 years old and aims to increase the knowledge and confidence of parents in cooking healthy meals that are right for the age range of the children. Cook and Eat Facilitators give face-to-face sessions in practical cooking delivered in community locations with cooking and creche facilities. Children can be brought in from the creche for practical parts of the session.

Sola mentioned the impact of Covid, and the project designed an online offer during lockdown, but this proved significantly more challenging for parents, and the online offer was ended after restrictions were lifted in September 2021.

The project was evaluated against three progression criteria, Recruitment (number of parents attending one or more sessions), Implementation (number of programmes delivered) and Reach (a representative sample from three ethnic groups).

Sola shared the project's Key Successes and Learning. Seven community facilitators were trained by HENRY and it is anticipated that they will continue delivering cooking sessions within their organisations after our funding ends. Five of the seven facilitators had the opportunity to shadow the core team to enhance their learning. Cooking for A Better Start will be handing over all tools and resources to enable the facilitators to continue after the project ends in March 2024.

Using the parents' room in collaborating schools to host the cooking sessions after children were dropped off at school in the morning was identified as particularly successful. Providing a mix of parents-only and parent and child programmes gave families choice and enabled them to try new ways of interacting as a family.

A parents' forum was created which enabled the project to check on the progress being made by parents in relation to implementing the cooking of healthy meals at home and enabled the parents to provide feedback to HENRY. Sola noted that most of the feedback provided was positive.

The provision of creche facilities was identified as key to the active participation of many parents, however Sola noted that this would be unsustainable after BSB funding ceases, due to cost implications.

Sola proceeded to Key Challenges. He reiterated the impact of the pandemic and the online offer not being very successful, so it reverted to face-to-face after lockdown as it was the more favoured approach.

The two-facilitator model allows all aspects of the course to be delivered, but reduced capacity caused this to be delayed with recruitment issues and training needs.

The cost-of-living crisis affected participation in the project due to a higher proportion of parents returning to work and also impacted the cost of ingredients for which HENRY had to seek additional funding to cover this. Creche provision, venue hire, and office rent all had rising costs which also caused HENRY to require more funding.

At the start of the second contract (April 2021) there was a change in the Project Coordinator, which impacted the project in achieving its targets for Year 1. Sola mentioned that a cooking session consists of 6 parents and whenever any of the parents dropped out, it affected the target set for the project. Attendance was also impacted by school closures and sickness in families.

In relation to Next Steps and Transition Planning Sola reiterated that HENRY are handing over the project's resources to the seven trained facilitators so that sessions can be sustained in the community.

The Partnership Board is asked to consider approving that the project comes to an end as scheduled on 31 March 2024. The Commissioning Advisory Group recommended this decision to the Partnership Board at their meeting on 10 January 2024.

Gill Thornton referred to the evaluation report as the Innovation Hub were not present. The Key Findings showed that the progression criteria targets were not achieved but Gill Thornton remarked that this is not a failed project. When it was first set up, it was seen as a gateway to other BSB projects, whilst there is limited evidence of this, Cooking for A Better Start has a significant value in its own right regarding engagement. The families fed back that most of them were going on to access other service offers but due to the age of their children when they participated the majority of these were not BSB projects.

The Innovation Hub recommended better targeting of the activity and trying to link it to more developed activities such as HENRY. For the Reach progression criteria, there needs to be more proactive recruitment of White British families and New Communities.

The project aims to develop skills in parents, to cook cheap and nutritious meals for their families. A pre and post questionnaire was issued, but the Innovation Hub found that the parents tended to already have fairly good confidence and skills. They recommend targeting fewer skilled parents and tailoring the project for parents with less access to cook nutritious meals with limited resources.

Gill Thornton explained that the Innovation Hub will produce a final report after the project ends, which should help to inform service development in the future.

Rizwana enquired about the transition plan, the trained community facilitators and asked how they would target parents. Gill Thornton replied that this will be reliant on the organisations they are part of acquiring sufficient funding. There are a number of potential funding sources such as Community Partnerships, Public Health as well as local and national funding pots. It is also something that community organisations may develop themselves, perhaps supported by our Neighbourhood Workers. As well as a useful project report, there is also a course manual. Gill Thornton suggested looking at the project's logic model again when it is finalised.

Rizwana asked if the training of community facilitators included accessing other funding pots. Gill Thornton confirmed that it does, and it also helps them to become HENRY-trained, and potentially other training too.

Vipin recalled that the project was discussed at the Commissioning Advisory Group with our partners. He said it is a great project which hopefully statutory partners will pick up with the voluntary sector. Vipin commented that it is great to get children and their parents involved and the knowledge the project brings can bring a life change to the family.

Sola observed that the lessons learned are also useful for the community facilitators to continue with community-based teaching.

Lisa shared that Ross McAllister (founder of What Works/ the Early Intervention Foundation and who wrote the children's social care review) met with her team earlier today and Born in Bradford. Engagement in Family Hubs was discussed and cook and eat was identified as a good engagement activity, along with baby massage and other things. Alex commented that it does depend on what is meant by 'engagement,' and Cooking for A Better Start did not achieve parental engagement into the rest of the BSB programme. However, two-thirds of the parents did intend to access other services.

**Decision: The Partnership Board (subject to the consent of those members not present) approved that the Cooking for A Better Start project comes to an end as scheduled by 31 March 2024.**

## **7. Communications update**

Michelle introduced herself as BSB's Communications Manager who has a team of two part-time colleagues. She provided the Partnership Board with an overview and general update of BSB's marketing and communications.

Michelle presented a Powerpoint slide showing the many things her team look after, including the BSB website, social media, the monthly newsletter, branded material, advertising, and key messages campaigns.

23 news and impact stories were created and shared during 2023, these included projects meeting milestones, Better Place improvements, and case studies interviewing families and project staff. The team draft stories, publicise them and hope other families read them and that it encourages them to participate. Case studies are a particular favourite as they show the impact the programme is having; a wide range of case studies are available on the BSB website.

BSB have started developing a Resource and Learning Library as we approach the end of the programme, and Michelle shared that there is a substantial amount of content already.

Michelle mentioned the communications team work in partnership with many of our partners. An example of this was the NHS Bin the Bottle campaign which was highlighting the impact on tooth decay in very young children. BSB have supplied illustrated characters for the campaign, helped with messaging and provided feedback. In addition, BSB staff supported roadshows where resources were given out and a free dental check-up was offered.

The Talking Bradford pathway is another example of partnership working in both its development and physical realisation. The communications team supported the development of the messaging, ensuring this was simplified where necessary, and fed back on resources such as videos.

Michelle mentioned the strong relationship with Bradford Families and Young Persons' Information Service (FYI), where appropriate the websites and social media cross-promote each other's activity, share information and support each other with wording of key messages.

Michelle turned to the Insight Publications which are regularly published by NCB on behalf of the Lottery. BSB supply an article monthly which include impact; user voice and evidence and showed some examples of BSB articles, including about MECOSH, dads' work and SystemOne. Articles are provided by all the A Better Start sites, Michelle suggested looking at the other sites' articles as there is some interesting learning.

Some examples of our photographs were then shown, Michelle explained that we use a professional photographer, but the photos are of real Bradford families which she felt is important. The photos are used on our website, for marketing and social media.

In addition, a designer has been commissioned to provide lots of illustrations of families for when no appropriate photos exist. We have shared these with our partners as the images are 'timeless,' whereas children grow up, and Michelle showed a selection of marketing materials where these have been used.

Michelle then shared how the Happy Early Years (HEY! Fund) was rebranded from the Parents in the Lead fund after much research. We sought feedback from families and panel members on the logo, website, a simplified application form. The communications team have also contributed to the training provided to new HEY! Fund groups about how to promote their group and share stories and provide ongoing support with this.

Significant resources have been developed with the Better Place project to support engagement through publications such as the sculpture map. Promotional material was developed for the Better Place Outdoor Project (BPOP) fund, including seed packets.

Baby Week is our biggest event of the year, with 2023 being our sixth. The theme was Bradford Babies, Healthy Babies and the Comms team were on a district-wide Baby Week steering group and developed the main visual identity.

There was a mini launch in July 2023 for the Baby Week Workforce event, which encouraged people to sign up for the Baby Week newsletter too. The free event, hosted by Dr Amir Khan, 'sold out' in a week. BSB produced printed and digital material, promoted Baby Week, liaised with Comms partners in other organisations and supplied information. 15 screens in the city centre (provided for free by Bradford Council) showed Baby Week information and we also used the big screen in City Park.

225 early years settings signed up for the Baby Week resource pack, called the Healthy Habits Bumper Box, in it were Healthy Habits activity cards for settings to do their own Baby Week event, bunting and simple low-cost ideas and the resource packs received great feedback from the settings.

The Baby Week Wiggle was developed as something people would do district wide, it took on a life of its own with many groups posting videos online and sharing via social media, the video of CBeebies presenter George Webster doing the wiggle had 10,000 views.

A Baby Week promotional video was made using locations across the district. BBC Look North filmed at the Baby Week Family Event at Odsal Stadium for two hours, and that evening the back of the BBC studio was covered in Baby Week branding when the filming was broadcast.

Michelle shared the communications team activity planned for 2024/25 and said it does not just involve her team. The plans include work on legacy planning and with other sites using National Lottery Community Fund guidance. There will be a series of learning events which Michelle's team will promote. There will also be more added to the Resource and Learning section on the BSB website.

Vipin thanked Michelle for the presentation. He recalled that there was very little BSB promotion before Michelle started, but now the programme is much better known, thanks also to promotion from our partners and he offered congratulations. Vipin said it was great to get on Look North.

Lisa commented that the presentation was great. The images work, are family-friendly, and it is good to link with the Family Information Service. She suggested we consider wider marketing with Health and the police and Michelle asked for any matters like this to be emailed to her afterwards.

Ludmila fed back that parents say BSB's marketing and promotion are the best in Bradford.

Humera suggested that instead of having to give consent for photos at every event she attends, to keep consent on a database. Michelle said that she was not sure about the GDPR implications of doing this. She has told people filming about consent and people refusing consent are given yellow stickers to wear at events. The stickers are also given to HEY! Fund partners and we have done group consents before. She suggested Humera email her separately.

Vipin noted BSB use of platforms such as YouTube and X (formerly Twitter), there is lots of marketing information and partners are welcome to get in touch with Michelle.

**Action: BSB to share Michelle's presentation – her email address will be on it in case people want to contact her with queries.**

## **8. Programme Monthly Report**

Gill Thornton went through some highlights from the report. She commented that work on Baby Week is year-round and the steering group is really strong. BSB hope that we can pass leadership of Baby Week on after the programme finishes.

We have linked up with other sites delivering Baby Week nationally, of which there were nine in 2023. The sites are to meet up quarterly, are looking at co-ordinating the offer and developing a national Baby Week structure to help with funding. This is in the early stages and our focus is still on the local event. We are hoping Baby Week Bradford in November 2024 will be a 'runway event' for the City of Culture.

Gill Thornton said Baby Week is a central part of the Comms success, getting the message across.

Bradford Council's Landscape, Design and Conservation Team has received two Landscape Institute Awards for its work in the district: the Excellence in Public Health and Wellbeing Award, and President's Award for Best Landscape Team of the Year. Work with our Better Place project has helped to gain these awards.

An overview and learning from the UNICEF Baby Friendly Conference was shared with the BSB staff team. The research poster we submitted at the conference won the prize for best poster.

Gill Thornton went through the Innovation Hub section of the report. The 5,000<sup>th</sup> baby in the BiBBS (Born in Bradford Better Start) cohort was celebrated during Baby Week and they are still recruiting. She asked that the Innovation Hub be contacted if there are any queries.

Sarah Cartin, Workforce and Learning Manager is developing our Virtual Live Learning offer for the district. We are also piloting an early years workforce learning programme and the first training session on Play was delivered to the Media Museum who provided very positive feedback and are keen to collaborate going forward.

Gill Thornton mentioned the Education Alliance for Life Chances funding, BSB are on their Partnership Board and have contributed to the development of a funding bid to the National Lottery UK Fund and participated in a discussion with Purposeful Ventures. This explored investment in the further development of the Act Locally pilot work which builds on BSB learning in relation to community engagement and co-production.

Gill Thornton then mentioned Comms work undertaken such as the 12 Days of Better Start Bradford Christmas and work the Family and Community Engagement team have done with events like Festive Funs at Shine and the Karmand Centre. They have supported events and prioritised volunteering.

Finally, Gill Thornton mentioned the latest Insight article and Michelle noted that BSB is the only A Better Start site that submits an article every month.

## **9. Any other business**

Vipin noted that we will all have seen that unfortunately, Alex will be leaving BSB at the end of next month.

Alex advised that this evening's meeting is her last Partnership Board. There have been internal conversations about the Programme Director role, and she has spoken to Vipin and the NLCF. An interim plan has been developed for Gill Thornton and Kerry Bennett to take on additional responsibilities. There will be a handover to them from Alex.

A Strategic Reference Group meeting has been arranged for next week for them to consider options about the replacement process and how this is managed. Their decisions will be reported on, and support will be needed from the wider partnership to ensure the completion of the BSB programme.

Vipin observed that the programme does not stop and there is a strong staff team. He said it is sad to lose Alex and the last five years have gone very quickly and he thanked Alex for her hard work and effort. He wished Alex well in the future, noted she has family nearby and mentioned that she is welcome to visit BSB at any time.



Gill Thornton confirmed that the BSB team will hold together and see the programme through to the end.

Vipin commented that we give thanks but move on and we have been in this situation before. We have learned a lot and there is lots of experience in the staff team and the programme is in safe hands. It is good, as a Community Board member, that Alex understands what community engagement means.

Alex thanked all who contributed to the programme and noted lots of nice comments in the Chat. She appreciates the support from the Partnership Board and could not have done the role without it, has learned a lot over the last five years and will take it forward.

Alex said she has faith in the team and is proud of everything that has been achieved. The success of the programme relies upon everyone contributing in their own way and influencing in many ways.

Vipin observed it is about all the Partnership Board members working together and he thanked them for attending the meetings and events. He noted Rizwana promoting our programme to Bradford Council. Alex has left the BSB programme in a strong place.

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 22 February 2024, via Zoom, starting at 9.30 am.

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm.