

Better Start Bradford Partnership Board Minutes
Thursday 18 April 2024
Via Zoom

Meeting Started: 09:35

Meeting Ended: 11:05

Present:

Vipin Joshi	Community Board member (Chair)
Sarah Hinton	Board Member, Bradford Trident (item 6 onwards)
Gill Thornton	Programme Director, Better Start Bradford
Lisa Brett	Head of Service for Early Help and Prevention, Bradford Children's and Families Trust (items 1 to 9 only)
Ashraf Miah	Development Officer, Community Action Bradford and District
Sara Ahern	Programme Manager, Innovation Hub (in place of Josie Dickerson)
Gwen Balson	Community Board member (Vice Chair) (items 1 to 5 & 7 only)
Samina Begum	Community Board member (Vice Chair) (items 1 to 5 & 7 only)
Aroosa Meherban	Community Board member (items 1 to 8 only)
Humera Mahmood	Community Board member

In Attendance

Gill Hart	Funding Manager, National Lottery Community Fund (item 1 to 8 only)
Kerry Bennett	Assistant Programme Director, Better Start Bradford
Sola Onifade	Contract & Implementation Manager, Better Start Bradford
Helen Rush	Early Years Specialist, Better Start Bradford (observer)
Guy Dove	Senior Programme Administrator, Better Start Bradford

Apologies for Absence:

Salma Nawaz	Marium Haque	Karen Tetley	Gazala Taj
Sarah Exall	Josie Dickerson	Richard Padwell	Ishaq Shafiq

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: Better Start Bradford 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 – 21 March 2024

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters Arising actions table

The action about cascading the learning from the Personalised Midwifery project is part of cascading the learning from the whole BSB programme. There needs to be a focus on midwifery and continuity of care from the Innovation Hub so this needs to remain as an action point.

Guy confirmed that there are two outstanding register of interest forms, one of which is from someone who is attending this meeting. Vipin commented that hopefully the person would fill theirs in today.

Gill Thornton confirmed that the process of recruiting to the one vacant Community Board member role has started and a timeline has been established. The Vice Chair roles are on the agenda for this meeting (item 6).

The Innovation Hub's annual update is also on the agenda for this meeting (item 8).

The action point about Bradford Doulas and sustainability can be removed. Gill Thornton confirmed that BSB are supporting all our projects with sustainability work. The Doulas have funding from the Integrated Care Board beyond March 2025 which replaces Reducing Inequalities in Communities funding.

The Programme Manager job description has been emailed out with a timeline and Gill Thornton wished to thank those Partnership Board members who have offered to help with interviews.

4. Declarations of interest

Gwen, Samina and Humera left the meeting for item 6.

5. 'Getting to know you' session – Gill Thornton

Gill remarked that it has taken ten years for her to do this. She mentioned the priorities in her life; work, family and values – she has always been involved in politics. There are also hobbies and Gill said she always has something going on.

Gill is continuing to learn, being healthy and active and doing sporting things.

Her mum and dad were from the Spen Valley, both from big families (her mum was one of eleven children and her dad one of nine). They were from ordinary working-class families and her dad was particularly poor, working from the age of ten. Her mum's father came back from World War Two in a wheelchair.

Both Gill's parents thought they had missed out due to poverty and their social class and they developed political interests and met at the Labour League of Youth. Gill's dad was a local councillor at the age of 21. They moved to Bradford as the political situation there was more exciting.

Gill was the third of seven children and has five sisters and one brother and they are all close. She has five children and two stepchildren and has been married three times. Her first marriage ended when she was in her early twenties. Her second husband was the CEO of the Race Equality Council and Gill has lived in Shipley for forty years.

Gill met her current husband Ralph when both were Bradford councillors and Gill had the unexpected gift of a daughter when she was in her early forties. There was a tragedy nine years ago when her son Nick died from an overdose after suffering with his mental health. Gill said that family, people at BSB and friends got her through it. Gill's parents both died about a year earlier, right at the beginning of the BSB programme. Work helped Gill to get through this too.

Gill had mentioned her values and politics and was always involved with her parents' activities, such as anti-apartheid and the Peace Movement. She is very anti-racist and was arrested at age 18 at an anti-National Front demonstration. Throwing paint at that led to a criminal record which meant Gill needed a special visa to visit the US – when a border guard (a Black woman) heard the story she gave Gill a high-five.

Gill has been a Labour Party member since 1977 and a Bradford councillor on and off since 1986. She hates division and anger across the political divide and the unrest and unhappiness there has been in recent years. Gill thinks most people go into politics for good reasons and things work best when there is collaboration across the political divide.

Gill said in politics she is a bit too honest and sees the role as being a servant of the people, not telling them what to do, which is why she thinks the BSB programme is so good, doing things with people.

As for hobbies, Gill knits, embroiders, makes things out of paper and makes her own health drinks. She is quite faddy about food, partly for medical reasons and she cooks odd things. Gill occasionally does photography.

Gill's parents both had businesses and she has always worked, starting at British Home Stores at age 15 as a Saturday job. She worked at the Bradford Resource Centre for 22 years (which was a workers' collective and social action centre) helping people to change their lives and get better access to resources and decision-making. Gill has also done some freelance work.

Gill then became a policy officer at Rathbone, a national charity, which helped to get disadvantaged young people into education and training. She was then given a Comms role which Gill did not like so she left and became CEO of Wakefield CVS. Shortly afterwards, the coalition government cut most of their funding and Gill had to make difficult decisions about restructuring and redundancies in a tough situation. More funding was secured (though less than was lost), including from the Lottery.

Gill established Nova Wakefield, a combined infrastructure support organisation for the VCS which still exists. She left because her mother was struggling as she got older and did some freelance work while helping her mum to get the support she needed. Then the role at BSB

came up and Gill has always been interested in child development and trying to change things. She is a qualified ante-natal teacher and parenting teacher. The work at BSB fits with Gill's passion of tackling inequality and is the 'best thing.'

Gill does weight training, hopes to go running again after some medical procedures and attend boot camps again. She mentioned food fads and has two vegan days a week and for all of January. Gill gave up smoking over 25 years ago and won't easily give in to the impact of getting older.

Vipin thanked Gill for her talk and observed that he understands Gill's passion and that she and Michaela got the community involved in BSB from day one. He has known Gill since she was a young politician and she has led an interesting life and Vipin said she 'has a long way to go yet.'

Gwen thanked Gill for sharing in the Chat and said we need her back as a Bradford councillor. Lisa also thanked Gill in the Chat and noted that there was lots we did not know.

6. Nominations for both Vice Chair roles

Gill Thornton shared that we have three expressions of interest but there are only two Vice Chair positions. The application form and role description have been circulated to the Partnership Board.

It was noted there was no formal selection process last time as there were only two candidates for the two Vice Chair roles. Gill Thornton said she was not sure we will need to hold interviews, and the process should be as simple and fair as possible. She suggested forming a sub-group to consider the applications, give the applicants seven to ten days to complete the application forms, then the sub-group would meet.

Kerry suggested establishing a third Vice Chair position, for someone to develop themselves and help other people at this stage of the BSB programme. Lisa observed that we should think creatively and the Vice Chairs could take turns. Vipin remarked that it is good that someone has put themselves forward to help BSB and develop themselves.

Gill Thornton said that the new applicant should fill the forms in as the existing two Vice Chairs did so previously. We could change the Partnership Board terms of reference and honorariums to have three Vice Chairs. The third Vice Chair would help deliver the work, such as serve on interview panels and save Vipin lots of time.

Vipin remarked that he would want the Vice Chairs to take turns to chair Partnership Board meetings and he would offer to mentor them.

Decision: The Partnership Board (subject to the consent of those members not present) agreed to trial having three Vice Chairs and to approve the additional honorarium payment. BSB will ask the third candidate to fill in the application form.

Vipin reiterated that it is good that someone else is putting themselves forward and that they want to help the BSB programme.

7. HIDVA project – extension proposal

Gill Thornton apologised for tabling this item, explaining that the business case for the extension was only received from the project this week.

As well as the HIDVA (Health Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) project, the only other remaining Innovation Fund project is HABILIT (oral health). HABILIT are writing their evaluation and there will be a webinar to disseminate their results.

The BSB HIDVA works in the Maternity Unit at BRI with referred pregnant women and their families to give them information about the service, about the impact on their baby of domestic abuse and to support them if they decide to act. She provides broader information too and trains maternity staff in having conversations which facilitate disclosure. The HIDVA also supports staff who are experiencing domestic abuse themselves and Gill Thornton commented that it is surprising how prevalent that is.

The HIDVA is employed by Staying Put and works as part their team of HIDVAs working across NHS services.

The Partnership Board approved an extension to the HIDVA project using underspend and redirecting part of the evaluation budget. This extended the project to July 2024. However, Gill Thornton attended a broader HIDVA meeting and learned that the local authority commissioner that funds some other HIDVAs (Survive and Thrive) has delayed the decision about the next contract. We are assured that HIDVA is in scope for the commissioning, including the Maternity HIDVA which BSB currently fund.

The local authority decision is expected in December 2024 for an April 2025 start. This means that a gap exists from other funders and Staying Put have asked us to fill it. Gill Thornton explained that their business case is quite long and she will be happy to share it after this meeting.

The main argument for the request is to ensure the Maternity HIDVA is included in the HIDVA team when the funding is agreed for the service through the Survive and Thrive commission. Their fear is if the service ends in July 2024 there is a much lower chance of it being reinstated in a reduced funding scenario and of re-employing the experienced and skilled worker who has been delivering it for two years.

Staying Put want to protect the post and in the business case they have rolled together the funding for the extension already agreed and that needed for the further extension to March 2025. The cost requested is £15,000.

Gill Thornton noted that Staying Put are working hard to identify other sources of funding for the service but if successful these would also be unlikely to materialise before the end of July 2024.

Gill Thornton said that we have agreed that we would not be looking to accept any business cases from projects for use of underspend or additional funding, however that applied to use of the funding to enhance or add to effective service delivery. This stage of the programme does not need to use underspends for that purpose any longer as we near the end of contracts.

Where we have agreed use of underspends and additional funds it has been to cover a gap between our funding and other funding which is (in our Hungry risk appetite) a strong

possibility. Talking Together and Little Minds Matter are examples and that has materialised in part for Little Minds Matter.

We were hopeful that our investment in Innovation Fund projects would lead to new services being developed. They have all had some impact but HABIT has definitely secured a future for the work and the learning. The HIDVA project has a really strong chance of continuing and the extra funding would help to secure that.

Gill Thornton confirmed that BSB senior leadership are proactively managing the budget and we are confident that the requested £15,000 will be realisable without affecting any planned spending. She added that when the Partnership Board agreed the Innovation Fund, £100k was agreed for the HIDVA project but they only asked for £80k originally.

Vipin asked if the £15,000 would be enough to see the HIDVA project through to the new contract and Gill Thornton confirmed that it would.

Lisa remarked that we should approve the contract request as the project has momentum and we do not want stop-start and it might take six months to recruit someone new. Domestic abuse is prevalent in Bradford and has a long-life impact, we have the money to fund the extension and hope that the project is mainstreamed going forward. Lisa's colleagues are looking at age 0-5s and Lisa will be speaking to Kerry about the learning from the programme.

Vipin noted that we have supported this project from day one and £15,000 is a relatively small amount of money. If we can save one person from being a domestic abuse victim it would be worth it.

Decision: The Partnership Board (subject to the consent of those members not present) considered the report and agreed to approve the request by Staying Put for £15,000 additional funding to cover the gap between the BSB project end and the start of the new local authority Survive and Thrive contract.

Action: Gill Thornton to circulate the business case from Staying Put for the contract extension. The decision to approve the extension was unanimous (though the meeting is inquorate) and she will mention this when she asks for consent from the other Partnership Board members.

8. Innovation Hub update

Sara presented some Powerpoint slides and apologised for Josie's absence, saying that she submitted a big funding grant application at the start of this week.

Sara outlined the Innovation Hub's aims for Phase 2, including underpinning the monitoring and evaluation of activities, ensuring optimal implementation and evaluation to add to decision-making. There is also building capacity in Bradford regarding evaluation and providing evidence.

Since the last Innovation Hub update 12 months ago, Sara said over 5,000 pregnancies have been recruited into the BiBBS cohort, which stops at the end of July 2025. There is a big focus on 'retro recruitment,' to capture families they missed. This has involved a huge amount of work, including billboard campaigns, outreach, and it was a very successful campaign. Now there is a targeted approach, looking for families who would overlap with other projects.

The Innovation Hub have continued BSB evaluations and since the last update ten end of contract reports have been produced, seven of which were final reports. Sara said there is an opportunity to take stock of the learning. 52 evaluation reports have been done to date.

Sara's team have also published five further papers relating to evaluations, such as the protocol for Continuity of Care in the Personalised Midwifery project and the logic model for community engagement.

Sara proceeded to building evaluation capacity, and nine workshops were delivered to projects last autumn about collecting data, which should help projects to get their own funding. There has also been theory of change and logic model work with wider Bradford partners. The Innovation Hub have also supported Start for Life with their approach to evaluation – it is vital that they collect learning, to help attract future Early Years funding.

There is also work to review and adapt existing toolkits, which have been received really well and 'shaping' is going on.

Sara moved on to enhanced evaluations and showed a slide listing which projects are included (Baby Steps, Incredible Years, Personalised Midwifery, HENRY, Little Minds Matter, Breastfeeding Support and Better Place). She also went through the timeline – for Little Minds Matter, the team have collected data, analysis is completed and they will write it up in autumn 2024. Other projects are due later, though Sara hopes Better Place will also be done in the autumn. The projects are having different kinds of enhanced evaluations, with Baby Steps due in January 2025 and Breastfeeding Support in March 2025. Sara commented how very disparate the Breastfeeding Support data is.

The Personalised Midwifery project evaluation is not due until June 2025 – Sara explained that we must wait for the babies to be born, so the postnatal part of the project can be done. HENRY's evaluation cannot be completed until 2028 because the children in it need to reach school age. For Incredible Years, an interim evaluation is due in April 2025 and the full evaluation in 2028.

Sara said a grant application has been submitted to fund an evaluation of the medium to long term impact of the BSB programme. This would look at the impact of the Covid pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis in the critical first 1,001 days.

Sara went on to the Innovation Hub's priorities for 2024/25. There is the reporting for BSB, updating evaluations as contracts complete and getting data in. There will be publications for Breastfeeding Support (qualitative evaluation), Forest Schools ethnography and the Little Minds Matter system evaluation, which Sara commented has a huge amount of interesting data.

The Innovation Hub intend writing publications for all the evaluations, disseminating the learning in the best way, working with BSB and wider partners. They will also be finalising toolkits and resources. There shall be additional outputs from the BiBBS data, such as to do with risk factors and inequalities, and dissemination work, to hopefully attract future funding.

Action: Sara to send her Powerpoint slides to Guy to issue to the Partnership Board.

Gill Thornton asked if the Little Minds Matter system evaluation would help with the new Healthy Minds contract. Sara replied that the research fellow (Alison) has left and this is a

different evaluation to the others. It concerns how the project fits with the early years system in Bradford – strengthening the argument for a place in the system for Little Minds Matter. They need to think how the project fits with the mental health system for early years and there are alternative services. There needs to be real strategic thinking about how different organisations work together, interaction and what is best for families.

Gill Thornton remarked that we are doing all the above already and we hope the Little Minds Matter evaluation will help the discussion. The project would need to adapt to fit with the wider system.

Kerry observed that the profile of evaluations needs to be raised in strategic meetings and there needs to be more connection about where the learning is going. Sara noted that the recent Reducing Inequalities in Communities event showcased learning and her team are seeing where this was received. Gill Thornton said that BSB need to be part of these conversations and Sara confirmed this work is being mapped out and the Innovation Hub will go to BSB with a suggestion, deciding on who the key people are. Gill Thornton asked that BSB's Comms team be involved.

Kerry mentioned the Start for Life steering group and the need for collaboration about learning and there will be separate conversations about this. Sara agreed and confirmed she linked in with Abbie Wild, the new Start for Life Lead this week. Sara commented that there is misunderstanding from funders about what can be achieved in evaluations with short timescales. BSB learning will be used for Start for Life.

Aroosa suggested having some generic shared information about breastfeeding for midwives – she was given different advice from different people when she gave birth and some of the advice was not good. Gill Thornton said that this was up to practitioners but our project has clear service design about messages to parents and how parents are listened to. Two different midwives on the same hospital ward might well say different things, but we can help to 'plug' messages.

Kerry commented that this is very frustrating but one size does not fit all. Health professionals such as health visitors and midwives will fit with their professional bodies' guidelines and we hope they are kept up to date. It should be made as simple as possible for busy practitioners to use guidelines and trying to influence the wider workforce.

Aroosa suggested using some 'Top ten tips' and Sarah Hinton said messaging is not easy and top ten tips for everybody sounded good. Practitioners are busy and may well not keep up with the latest research. Gill Thornton remarked that practitioners might suggest a quick fix which might not always be best for mum or baby.

Vipin thanked Sara for her presentation.

9. Programme monthly report

Kerry said BSB showcased Baby Week at a national learning event and following this, nine local authority sites have joined the Baby Week movement in 2023. Also, two more local authorities have approached us in 2024. A Baby Week steering group for this year is to meet and Kerry confirmed that this will have a partnership approach.

Kerry and Gill Thornton attended a policy roundtable with the Department of Education and the Department for Health and Social Care to discuss Start for Life. Kerry commented that it was good to make our thoughts heard.

We were contacted by the National Children's Bureau with a request for any A Better Start work related to gender equality, including with the workforce, local communities, engaging with fathers and about work tackling inequalities. This was to help with a briefing they were doing for the Cabinet Office and Kerry said that there was a lot that we contributed.

The Education Alliance for Life Chances are developing plans to build on their Act Locally work, linking it to academies, and we will be supporting their bid to the National Lottery UK Fund, which is through to the next round. We will be identifying where some of our programme legacy work may align, such as parent involvement and co-production.

BSB are represented at the Healthy Children and Families Board which provides an opportunity to influence the district's thinking. They recently held a reset day and BSB was credited for our contribution and the opportunity we specifically offered their Prevention and Early Help work.

Kerry noted that Maternity Circles have been extended to 2025, which is good to hear and with a further pilot in Great Horton.

The Programme Manager role at BSB is out to advert and Kerry thanked those Partnership Board members who offered to help with the interviews. She confirmed that Saira Riaz, a former Neighbourhood worker, has started a freelance role to help with the Happy Early Years Fund.

The expression of interest for the legacy support consultant is still being worked on as the draft version attracted lots of comments. Gill Thornton is aiming to issue it on 23 April.

Kerry proceeded to project monitoring and evaluation. The ESOL projects have struggled with referrals but there is a commitment to them from Shipley College, who are recruiting a new Head of ESOL after the previous lead left.

There has been a success for Baby Steps with a memorandum of understanding signed with Maternity Services to do with accessing maternity data. Kerry said this will help to get more referrals and is a huge milestone for the project.

Kerry said Home-Start is in a positive position and there is an opportunity for some funding from Start for Life.

The Innovation Hub's Rachael Moss will be presenting a poster of findings from the Personalised Midwifery project at the Royal College of Midwives conference in May and Kerry added that Chloe and Rachel (Middleton) from the BSB team will be presenting there too.

Kerry moved on to Workforce Development and Volunteering and noted that we may discuss this further at a future Partnership Board meeting. A new Virtual Live Learning programme starts in May. Great feedback has been received so far about previous sessions and Kerry asked Partnership Board members to please attend.

Our new student and workforce workshop was delivered by BSB's Early Years Facilitator to Childcare and Health and Social Care students at Shipley College. Good feedback was received from the delegates.

Kerry mentioned that three new volunteers supported our Easter event at the Mayfield Centre. A play and learn training session was also delivered there by our Early Years Facilitator for practitioners and their children, focussing on using low-cost play and lots of childminders attended.

Kerry outlined posters designed and promotion for events, our latest News Update, an interview with Haleema from Better Place and the celebration event for the Neighbourhood Workers.

BSB's FACE team have been busy and Kerry mentioned the Happy Women's Day held at Peel Park Centre (60 people attended) and the Happy Women's Day held at the Thornbury Centre (over 150 people attended). We supported 10 families to attend the World Book Day event at City Library. We also had an information stall at the World Social Work Day at Fountains Church where our FACE team spoke about BSB to about 50 existing and newly qualified social workers who are part of the Children and Families Trust.

Finally, Kerry mentioned an NCB article, live on the NLCF website, about how ESOL courses are empowering new and expectant mums in Bradford.

10. Any other business

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

11. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is on Thursday 23 May 2024, via Zoom, starting at 5.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 11.05 am.