

Better Start Bradford Partnership Board Minutes
Thursday 20 June 2024
Via Zoom

Meeting Started: 09:30

Meeting Ended: 11:00

Present:

Vipin Joshi	Community Board member (Chair)
Gill Thornton	Director, Better Start Bradford
Josie Dickerson	Programme Director, Born in Bradford Innovation Hub
Lisa Brett	Head of Service for Early Help and Prevention, Bradford Children's and Families Trust
Carlton Smith	CEO, Bradford Trident (in place of Sarah Hinton)
Gwen Balson	Community Board member (Vice Chair)
Samina Begum	Community Board member (Vice Chair)
Aroosa Meherban	Community Board member
Karen Tetley	Community Board member

In Attendance

Gill Hart	Funding Manager, National Lottery Community Fund
Kerry Bennett	Assistant Director, Better Start Bradford
Sola Onifade	Contract & Implementation Manager, Better Start Bradford
Sophie Eveleigh	Contract & Implementation Officer, Better Start Bradford
Guy Dove	Senior Programme Administrator, Better Start Bradford

Apologies for Absence:

Salma Nawaz	Marium Haque	Sarah Hinton	Zakra Yasin
Humera Mahmood	Rizwana Jamil	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.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 23 May 2024

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Vipin wished for thanks to be passed on to Debbie for taking the minutes at short notice.

3. Matters Arising actions table

Gill Thornton confirmed that all the decisions taken by the Inquorate Partnership Board at our last meeting were later ratified, namely:

- Approval that the Better Start Bradford funding for the Home-Start Better Start project ends on 30 June 2024.
- Approval that the Home-Start Bradford District transitions into the implementation of the Start for Life project's male and secondary carers' workstream funded until March 2025.
- Approval that there should be a Strategy Day on 8 July.
- Approval of the appointment of the third Vice Chair. Gill Thornton noted, however, that Humera (who was not present) has not been officially notified of her appointment.

Guy confirmed that there are two outstanding register of interest forms, one of which is from someone who is attending this meeting. That person filled their form in during the meeting.

Gill Thornton confirmed that our amended terms of reference and associated documents were sent out with the meeting papers. She proposed not to go through them in detail at this meeting but would be happy to answer any questions.

4. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. 'Getting to know you' session

This was not covered at this meeting.

6. Baby Steps end of contract review

Sola gave a Powerpoint presentation. Baby Steps is delivered by Action for Children and has been running since 2018 but the present BSB contract was completed on 31 May 2024. The project is continuing as part of the Start for Life offer.

The offer is universal, which came into effect in Year 5 (01/02/2022) of the contract. The target group are expectant mums and dads, in the BSB area who are of any age. Anyone below age 18 is usually referred to the teenage pregnancy midwife.

Prior to Year 5, the offer was a targeted intervention to families living in the BSB area. Families could be referred due to a long list of vulnerability criteria. With the Start for Life programme, Baby Steps is now back to a targeted offer.

Baby Steps is a 'relationships-based' antenatal and postnatal parent education programme, mostly delivered in a group setting. It is particularly suitable for vulnerable and socially excluded parents, identified by Maternity Services, who often face additional challenges and 'overload' in pregnancy and in early parenting. Parents join in mid pregnancy and continue until around two months after their baby is born.

The Baby Steps programme was developed by the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children and has previously been delivered by their local service throughout the Bradford district.

Sola moved on to the project's successes. The retention rate of parents accessing and remaining in the programme is higher than the anticipated targets. There has been successful partnership working with other BSB projects, Family Hub staff and health care professionals which means the project has strengthened their signposting and escalation processes.

The project attends high level local authority meetings for safeguarding, allowing them to identify families who may be an inappropriate referral and can ensure they do not commence work that is too complex for their service. The project has worked hard to find new referral pathways, ensuring a wide range of partners and stakeholders are aware of the project and referral criteria.

Baby Steps always encourage varied staff to attend networking events and have continuous development for all staff, irrespective of position in the organisation.

Families really value the holistic care that the project provides, they can receive essential baby items as well as key information and public health messaging. Sola then read out two good testimonials from parents.

Sola proceeded to challenges. The time lag between when the perinatal project administrators make referrals from the antenatal clinic (8 weeks) and when the Baby Steps team initiate contact (24 weeks) meant that a few of the pregnancies might have suffered adverse outcomes. Almost a third of all referrals received were at higher risk of being a non-viable pregnancy thus putting Baby Steps in an awkward situation.

Receiving referrals from midwives is challenging due to the time constraints of the booking appointments, the time allowed for the midwife to develop a relationship with the family being too short or inadequate and having the ability to assess if the referral is appropriate.

Changes to the system meant that "universal" referrals were *not* universal and should have been flagged as targeted. This meant Baby Steps had additional triage work to assess if referrals were eligible.

Sola went on to a slide called 'What is the way forward.' Action for Children is currently receiving funding from the Start for Life programme as part of the variation of the BSB programme. Baby Steps will continue until at least March 2025 as part of Start for Life. Future funding opportunities will continue to be explored.

The Partnership Board are asked to accept that the funding period for the project has ended.

Josie said that Baby Steps has been a huge success for BSB and the evaluation. Initially there were two antenatal courses (Welcome to the World and HAPPY), both of which failed as they could not reach or engage BSB women. Baby Steps did what internationally has not been achieved with antenatal education programmes, which was reaching and engaging women.

Josie said that 39 per cent of referrals went on to enrol which is 'massive' when considering there will always be dropouts and miscarriages. 86 per cent of enrollees participated in home

visits which were targeted to the more vulnerable, and Josie noted that home visits were critical and so was the PPA role.

Josie described the 69 per cent completion rate as fantastic. The project has been a huge success for antenatal and vulnerable women. There is massive evaluation promise, with women's mental wellbeing improved.

The evaluation so far is not causal, but the Innovation Hub are doing an effectiveness evaluation to demonstrate the causal link. Josie said they also have a qualitative evaluation which gives critical learning about what has worked for Bradford women. Baby Steps has been a phenomenal success across the board and Josie thought we should all be happy about this.

Sophie wrote in the Chat about how Baby Steps refer to other services, including food banks.

Kerry said it would be useful to speak to Lisa about how to share learning and influence. There are the key components about what has worked and Kerry asked how to make the most of it and influence. Lisa confirmed that she is happy to pick it up. There needs to be conversations if Baby Steps is indeed so 'wow' and we need to think about what forum to get the message across. Ideally, we would want Baby Steps to be mainstreamed and Start for Life is not a long-term answer.

Gill Thornton confirmed that she agreed with Lisa and mentioned the Reducing Inequalities Alliance and the Healthy Children and Families board (which BSB are part of) as potential forums. We are the lead on 'Best Start' and need to take Baby Steps to their table as the project hits some of their targets. It supports children at risk of going into care and with SEND.

Carlton remarked that we should talk to commissioners now so the project staff would be kept, and the commissioners should think about the spec and how to commission now as the process takes six months. He said the local authority have no money and the Integrated Care Board have not decided their budget yet.

Action: Kerry said BSB would ensure that they are reminding partners in wider forums about Baby Steps.

There is a high turnover of new people in the system and Kerry made a plea to be kept on the radar when decisions are made.

Decision: The Partnership Board accept that the funding period for the project has ended.

Vipin thanked Josie for a great presentation and mentioned that her enthusiasm could be seen.

7. Neighbourhood Project x2 – contract completion

Sola gave a PowerPoint presentation and mentioned that the Neighbourhood project was delivered by two organisations – the West Bowling Consortium and BD4 Family. It was launched in November 2019 and its aim was to optimise recruitment into BSB projects from under-represented groups, and to ensure that the programme messages reach as many families as possible.

The project established Neighbourhood Workers within community organisations to develop models of engagement that can support families to access key messages, build knowledge of BSB projects and referral processes, engage with communities not currently accessing BSB services and to gather data that can be used to develop a stronger knowledge of community need.

The project closed in March 2024 and Sola showed a slide with the output and performance for West Bowling. 82 per cent of sessions were attended, 65 per cent of visits to partners took place and 203 per cent of the target relating to existing families was achieved. Also achieved was 287 per cent of the target for new families, and referrals into BSB projects was 67 per cent of target. 556 per cent of the target relating to key messages was achieved and 626 per cent of the target for CPD hours.

BD4 Family exceeded almost all their indicators, and the other was 100 per cent for reflective diaries.

Sola turned to lessons learned and best practice. West Bowling said that venues must be very central to where families are. Many were non-English speakers, and there were problems when interpreters were not available. They recruited bilingual workers and hosted ESOL classes.

BD4 Family had a deep understanding of our projects. They would know when families had a practical need. They were supportive of the other site, which previously had no experience of support for families with young children apart from their extensive advice services.

The contract closure actions are all completed for both sites.

Sola went on to a slide titled 'What's Next?' West Bowling are applying for further funding to run a similar project to the Neighbourhoods project. There is still demand for the workers and a need for signposting to appropriate courses/programmes for families.

BD4 Family already existed as an early years' provision in the community and will continue to deliver their programme. They have secured a Core20Plus5 contract with the NHS. The remaining neighbourhood worker will be facilitating the Maternity Circles contract within the Bradford South area in Holme Wood, from the TFD Community building. Through an additional three-year grant with Lewin Trust, they can offer her a full-time contract of employment.

The neighbourhood worker coordinator will continue employment with BD4 Family through a contract with the Start for Life programme as the new Co-production Coordinator.

Sola then displayed a slide with some feedback and photos. He read out two quotes, noting that the project promoted good relations between groups of new parents. Community engagement is at the heart of BSB. Everything we have delivered for our families has been developed with our local community.

The Partnership Board are asked to accept that the funding period for the Neighbourhood project has ended.

Gill Thornton recalled that the idea about the Neighbourhood project came from the Partnership Board, who thought we needed something closer to the communities. The VCS

had elements that our programme did not. The workers were based in venues across the BSB area. It was different as it built relations, empowered people and led to services for children and families. Gill Thornton wished to thank the Partnership Board for making the right decision.

Josie advised that the Neighbourhood project was hard to evaluate – it was flexible, adaptable and works in different ways. We need to share the learning and a theory of change was created about how it does work. The BSB project is ending but we need to share the learning. Gill Thornton said that a Learning Together session about this, including co-production, was planned but the staff leading that project had left – the team will pick it up in the Learning Together Programme in development.

Action: BSB to put on a Learning Together session about the Neighbourhood project, including co-production.

Sophie said we watched West Bowling flourish – they took learning from BD4 Family and BSB but put the community voice at the top. The staff are more confident and the site was previously just an advice centre for adult problems such as debt. It is good that we have been part of this legacy.

Vipin commented that it is good to see the VCS ‘putting it together.’ There were teething problems but there was good working together. It is good that Ludmila was involved.

Decision: The Partnership Board accept that the funding period for the Neighbourhood project has ended.

Vipin noted that it is good that other funding has been found. BSB took the risks and what works is embedded into the system.

8. Annual Review of Partnership and Governance

Gill Thornton said the work done was covered in previous meetings and she has revised the Partnership Agreement. She recognised that the National Lottery Community Fund need to be consulted if substantial changes are made, but she was just changing names. The branding guidelines have been updated.

Gill Thornton will chase up our statutory partners again about Partnership Board representation, and if we have the right people listed. If we do not, we will ask for names and all partners will be reminded about our programme extension and we will ask them to commit to it.

Action: Gill Thornton to chase up our statutory partners about Partnership Board representation.

West Yorkshire Police attended our annual review meeting with the NLCF this week, and we are meeting the police next month to present about what their investment in our programme has achieved. BSB will do the same with our other leverage partners, showing them what their financial contributions have achieved.

Gill Thornton reiterated that she has completed the review of the Partnership Agreement and associated documents and is happy to answer questions.

Vipin remarked that it is good that BSB will be asking for the re-commitment of partners, and we need to get better attendance from them. Gill Thornton said that they are supportive as a team, even if they are not attending our meetings.

Lisa said Marium is the named person from Children's Services, but Lisa has moved to the Children and Families Trust. Gill Thornton suggested speaking to Charlotte Ramsden and Marium at the same time.

Vipin noted the requirement for a private sector representative on the Partnership Agreement, which Gwen had highlighted at the recent community prep meeting. Gill Thornton said the private sector rep was Vipin originally, and when he moved to be a Community Board Member that position was not filled. She has recently updated the Partnership Agreement so we could follow it up if the Partnership Board wanted us to.

Action: Vipin asked all to consider having a private sector representative and if we had any recommendations about who it could be, with an update at our next meeting.

9. Programme monthly report

Kerry said the ABS Annual Event took place on 10 June, with a theme of behavioural and system change. It was an inspiring day, hosted by dads' advocate Elliott Rae, with presentations from all five directors. We had a great case study and Bradford was well represented. A recording of the day was made and a report will be available.

The BSB staff team recently had a team building day at the Nell Bank centre near Ilkley. This provided an opportunity to take time away from the office environment, to focus on building strong working relationships and valuing employee health and wellbeing. Some team members had not met in person and Kerry said it was good to build relations as we head to the final stage of the programme.

Two staff members visited an event at the Lambeth site to celebrate their impact and learn how they were successful. The event was an inspiration, creative, and learning from it has been fed back to our Comms team.

The Healthy Children and Families board has been restructured and BSB are one of 12 members on it. We have met Nagina Javaid, Programme Director for Children, Young People and Families at the Integrated Care Board and had a good meeting about priorities and support.

The Prevention and Early Help Systems board has also been reconvened. The first meeting has taken place and we are a partner. BSB are also on the Start for Life Steering Group, to add our learning.

We have appointed a new Programme Manager, Vikrant Bhatia, who will join us on 4 July (although he has already joined us on some training). Unfortunately, our Workforce and Learning Manager Sarah Cartin is leaving us to take up a role at Bradford Council. Kerry mentioned legacy and some ex-BSB staff championing us and being in key portfolios.

Kerry proceeded to the Project Monitoring and Evaluation part of the report. All projects are rated Green and some great activity is ongoing, all at different stages. Home-Start have been awarded Start for Life funding for a male and secondary carers project.

Kerry said that Better Place are pursuing future funding opportunities and Better Start Imagine are thinking about sustainability routes. Breastfeeding Support are doing some great work, growing and embedding in the district via Start for Life and they will be hosting the perinatal project administrator role.

Little Minds Matter are having discussions about future funding and pathways with commissioning leads.

Kerry then mentioned Rachel Middleton's presentation at the Royal College of Midwives conference, discussing student placements and our influencing of the curriculum. This brought lots of national interest.

BSB's virtual live learning programme has delivered many sessions. We are working with partners to bring the Prevention agenda alive.

Kerry mentioned our work with Bradford College, developing workshops for the future workforce. There was recently an event at the Big Swing in Eccleshill with 35 students, which was a celebration event and allowed us to embed key messages.

BSB delivered a play and learn messy play session for Happy Early Years fund volunteers and their children. There is a national call to use low-cost play resources to enrich the play and learning experiences of children. Feedback from parents referred to the value of the training.

Kerry then referred to the Talking Bradford pathway and BSB are working hard to keep this going in the district and it is key piece of work. There is great feedback and we need to support the system to embed. The pathway was described at a national event as 'gold standard.'

Kerry then mentioned work done by our Comms team on designing posters, branding, marketing key messages and a variety of events. They have also supported recruitment to the Community Board member vacancy, and a HEY! Fund 'call to action' for its final funding round. There has been a great response with 16 funding applications.

BSB's Comms team have also worked on tools and templates, to help use the best way to share learning.

Some staff have done video training, with BSB being responsive to an ask for learning, helping staff to produce timely learning material about the programme and increasing their skill sets.

We have had a 'How do we tell our story?' session which should help to bring about a good end to our programme. It will be part of the Strategy Day on 8 July.

Bradford Literature Festival begins next week and Kerry said they have supported Early Years better – there has been real progress this year and better branding.

Our Family and Community Engagement team have attended many events. Kerry said there was good attendance at an East Family Hub event and great feedback.

The Programme Co-ordinator Riffat presented at a Public Health conference in Leeds about perinatal mental health and Little Minds Matter and there was great feedback.

Kerry then referred to a National Children's Bureau's Insight article, by Shummel, our Community Engagement Manager about our dads' work.

Gill Thornton mentioned the Talking Bradford Pathway and the need for the pathway was mentioned yesterday at the Healthy Children and Families board. There is a need to pick up SEND issues and that board is an opportunity to feed in. Kerry said she will be meeting Jo Medd about this.

Gill Thornton confirmed that we are working hard to keep up with all such discussions in different strategic forums and boards, and it takes lots of time and attention. There are financial issues in the system and we are trying to show we can help.

10. Any other business

Ashraf has left Community Action Bradford and District and we have no VCS representative. Gill Thornton has contacted CABAD's CEO Soo Nevison, who has advised that CABAD cannot help as their funding no longer includes that representation. There is an advocacy function and they are looking at that and will flag the opportunity up with their leadership trainees. Gill Thornton said a representative would need to be accountable to the VCS and bring VCS issues to us.

Vipin asked that our thanks be passed on to Ashraf for his hard work and commitment over the years.

Gill Thornton then summarised the final annual review with the National Lottery Community Fund which was earlier this week. The meeting had a good turnout from our partners and a very good discussion was held, reflecting on the programme. Also discussed were highlights and challenges this year and over the last ten years.

Issues mentioned were staff and broader partnership members leaving, our experiences of working with the NLCF and learning. As preparation for the review, we sent a survey to about 70 people and did an exercise with the staff team.

Challenges over the last ten years included Covid, the cost-of-living crisis and changes in local structures. We had to adapt our structure and it was good that BSB can be flexible and change things.

Successes included involving parents from the community from the start. There has never been a funded programme like ABS, and hugely important were the funding-based relationship with the NLCF, clear compliance, support and freedom.

Gill Thornton said there has been some learning as we go along which is improvement-based. We could not predict what would happen and hindsight is a wonderful thing, but the review meeting included what we would have done differently.

Kerry said the review demonstrated flexibility and how we responded as a programme, which takes effort. It was very useful meeting and Kerry felt inspired, and it will be help with thinking about the rest of the programme.

Gill Hart agreed that the review meeting was very helpful and inspiring for the NLCF, when information is pulled together and we can see what has been achieved under very difficult

circumstances. Local changes were all different between the five sites. She noted that it was good to get feedback about how the NLCF worked, what worked well and what has not, which will be used for planning in the future. The NLCF had not funded a programme of this size and now has much more flexible, relationship-based funding.

Gill Hart said there is an appetite at the NLCF for more focussed, strategic programmes and early years is a part of it. It is too early to be specific about this but it is great to see what BSB achieved.

Carlton suggested that not enough was mentioned in the review meeting about austerity, which had only just started when the programme did. It shrank the statutory sector, and it is lucky that BSB was here and we need to remember the impact of austerity. He said thanks to the NLCF, who were great to work with, and for their support.

Vipin added that the voluntary sector has taken a 'hammering' over the last ten years and not many VCS organisations are viable and continuing to run. He said thank you for the NLCF's support.

Josie mentioned that there will be an end of BiBBS celebration event on 7 August and they are trying to get projects involved. Professor John Wright may dress up as the BiBBS bear.

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

11. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is on Thursday 18 July 2024, via Zoom, starting at 5.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 11 am.