



# Baby Week Bradford: a tool for health promotion, system change and celebration amid a challenging landscape

Stevenson C & Bennett K  
Better Start Bradford



## Background

- Better Start Bradford is a 10-year **partnership programme** funded by The National Lottery Community Fund.
- Our mission is to **improve outcomes for children** in three of the most deprived wards of Bradford through a variety of **evidence-based interventions**.
- Better Start Bradford has hosted Baby Week Bradford on behalf of the Bradford district since 2018, **bringing together stakeholders** and strategic leads to **share key health promotion** messages with both **families and the workforce**.
- Baby Week came to the UK in 2016, following the Brazilian model 'Semana do Bebe': a **social mobilisation** strategy to promote the importance of **good early childhood development** (UNICEF 2010).

## Aim

- Baby Week is a **celebration of babies**, putting the first **1001 days**, babies and all those who care for them in the spotlight.
- It is a golden opportunity to engage with local communities, share best practice and promote the current service offer for expectant families and families with young children across the Bradford district.
- By bringing Baby Week to Bradford, and working with partners further afield to nurture an ever-growing national movement, Better Start Bradford hoped to stimulate an awareness of health needs, influence policies affecting health, and facilitate health-enhancing activities (Council for the Education and Training of Health Visitors, 1977).

## Method

- Better Start Bradford chairs a steering group of stakeholders including representatives from both **statutory and voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations**. In preparation for the week, held every November, the steering group decides on a theme to reflect the **current health priority topics for babies, young children and families**. Examples of previous themes include speech, language and communication and good health and nutrition in the early years.
- **Consultation** is undertaken with families and workforce to ascertain focus areas within the chosen theme. The consultation also allows us to ensure that delivery of Baby Week Bradford is **district wide**, meeting the **needs of the local population and reaching lesser heard communities**.
- The steering group works to pull together a **programme of events** for **families and workforce** including fun days, conferences, outdoor activities and webinars. A suite of **resources** is also designed to support maternity and early years settings to deliver their own events during the week and beyond. To ensure Baby Week Bradford is a success it is essential to utilise assets already available within the local maternity and early years system and the enthusiasm of the dedicated Bradford district workforce.

## Outcome

- In 2023, over **1600 people** engaged with Baby Week Bradford at 30 district-wide events. Feedback from families was **overwhelmingly positive**, with evaluation data gathered focusing on one change families would make as a result of attending Baby Week Bradford events. This was mirrored in feedback from practitioners who reflected on the value of **networking** and **shared vision**, as well as changes they intended to make in their practice as a result of attending or contributing to events.
- Baby Week Bradford is a superb example of **overcoming organisational boundaries**, with the VCS, local authority (public health, family hubs, libraries, museums and galleries), midwives and health visitors all working together to improve outcomes for babies, young children and families.

## Expected long-term impact

- This mission feels more important than ever amid a landscape of competing health priorities, which often means prevention and early intervention is overlooked. Baby Week Bradford encourages us to focus the district's attention on the importance of the first 1001 days and showcase the fantastic work that practitioners do to support families during this critical time.
- By working with partners to **share best practice**, Better Start Bradford is working to ensure the **sustainability** of Baby Week nationally, with **12 areas** expected to host events in 2024.
- Locally, work is ongoing to **embed** Baby Week Bradford in the district long term, **fostering ownership** and ensuring that it has an appropriate home beyond the end of the Better Start Bradford programme in 2025.

## References

UNICEF (2010) *Semana do Bebê* [Baby Week]. Translated Google. [https://www-unicef-org.translate.goog/brazil/semana-do-bebe? x\\_tr\\_sl=pt& x\\_tr\\_tl=en& x\\_tr\\_hl=en& x\\_tr\\_pto=sc](https://www-unicef-org.translate.goog/brazil/semana-do-bebe? x_tr_sl=pt& x_tr_tl=en& x_tr_hl=en& x_tr_pto=sc). Accessed 21 March 2024.

Council for the Education and Training of Health Visitors (1977) *An Investigation into the Principles of Health Visiting*. London: CETHV.