

**Better Start Bradford Partnership Board Minutes**  
**Thursday 21 November 2024**  
**Via Zoom**

**Meeting Started:** 09:35

**Meeting Ended:** 10:35

**Present:**

Vipin Joshi	Community Board member (Chair)
Sarah Hinton	Board Member, Bradford Trident
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
Matt Sandford	Director of Partnerships and Place, Bradford District and Craven Health and Care Partnerships
Gwen Balson	Community Board member (Vice Chair)
Humera Mahmood	Community Board member (Vice Chair)
Samina Begum	Community Board member (Vice Chair)
Karen Tetley	Community Board member

**In Attendance**

Gill Hart	Funding Manager, National Lottery Community Fund
Vikrant Bhatia	Programme Manager, Better Start Bradford
Sola Onifade	Contract & Implementation Manager, Better Start Bradford
Guy Dove	Senior Programme Administrator, Better Start Bradford

**Apologies for Absence:**

Aroosa Meherban	Sara Ahern	Marium Haque	Becky McIlvenny
Kerry Bennett	Rose Dunlop	Salma Nawaz	

**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 – 17 October 2024**

Matt mentioned that near the end of item 6 of the previous minutes (Innovation Hub contract extension proposal), it was Gill Thornton, not him, who said that 'the programme is about finding things that work, not directly improving outcomes.' This was in response to his query

about reallocating funding to continue some of the projects that are working well instead of prioritising investment in research.

Apart from this correction, the minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

### **3. Matters Arising actions table**

There is an action for Better Start Bradford to put on a Learning Together session about the Neighbourhood project, including co-production. Gill Thornton confirmed it is still our intention to have a final big programme event at the end of February or early March. The plan is to have a focus on why co-production has been such a strong feature of the programme, together with findings from the BSB programme and this will include learning from the Neighbourhood project.

Gill Thornton explained that we have not had a stable Learning Together function for some time, with high staff turnover, and our current Workforce and Learning Manager will be leaving BSB in a few weeks. We are about to advertise that job role – some things have been delayed due to Baby Week.

Gill Thornton said that progress is being made on the action to chase up our statutory partners about Partnership Board representation. Lisa and Matt are present and we are expecting to have a Public Health representative. Gill has spoken to the Care Trust about them sending a representative and they are committed to it, it is just finding time.

The action point about Talking Together and St Edmunds should be removed from the action table.

BSB have met with the Innovation Hub about their contract extension and a contract should be signed quite soon. The key areas of the extension are to be further dissemination, further follow-up from the evaluation, an intense look at systems work and work around the further evaluation of the BiBBS cohort.

Josie was delighted to share that Born in Bradford have been awarded the Wellcome Trust Discovery proposal that they put in. This means her team can follow up all the children in the BiBBS cohort in Year 3 of primary school from September 2025. They can assess things like school readiness then take the research on further into middle childhood, look at the longer-term impact of BSB as a whole. They will also look at how things such as Covid and financial insecurity have affected the children in the longer-term, with this further eight years of funding. Josie said this highlights how what her team in Bradford are doing is recognised and the value of the amazing families supporting the research. Gill Thornton stated that this is very good news and a significant part of the legacy of BSB and our partnership with Born in Bradford. Several Partnership Board members congratulated Josie in the Chat.

The decisions made by the inquorate Partnership Board last month were later ratified, such as the contract completions for Bradford Doulas, Personalised Midwifery and Perinatal Peer Support.

Gill Thornton shared that two Partnership Board members said they were interested in joining the new legacy working groups, but most of them responded to the invitation that she sent out by asking to be kept informed about the groups. The first meetings are about to take place.

For the final action point, Gill Thornton said that BSB's Comms Manager has two contacts at the Integrated Care Board, but Michelle will see if there is anyone else there that we should specifically target with our key messages. There is lots of joint working going on with our partners such as Baby Week, who feed through to their Comms leads via that.

**4. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

This was not covered in this meeting.

**6. HENRY end of contract review**

Josie noted that the final Innovation Hub reports for HENRY and Home-Start were not included with the papers for this meeting.

**Action: Sola to arrange for the Innovation Hub reports to be circulated to the Partnership Board.**

Josie said that 74 per cent of the planned uptake participated in HENRY group sessions, of which 73 per cent completed, which is an excellent completion rate. 1:1 HENRY sessions reached 63 per cent of their target, of which 77 per cent completed.

Although the 1:1 sessions recruited a lot less families, these tended to be from under-served populations. Josie noted that a representative sample of the White: Other ethnic group was successfully reached and other projects struggle to engage this demographic. Their completion rate was still low and Josie suggested reflecting on how these projects are designed and delivered to make them more engaging to families from different cultures.

Josie noted the huge variety of languages spoken by the families who took part in the 1:1s, with only 34 per cent having English as their first language. She suggested that 1:1 sessions add to the learning from HENRY, demonstrating that projects need to be flexible to if they want to reach particular populations.

The Innovation Hub are doing an effectiveness evaluation for HENRY which is Lottery funded, so Josie's team can wait until the children reach school age and get their National Child Measurement programme in Reception. There is also a national HENRY evaluation but Bradford brings real diversity and there is a need for the intervention here due to high levels of childhood obesity. Josie hopes her team will be able to demonstrate the impact of HENRY in Bradford in about two years' time.

Bradford has signed up as one of the sites in the national HENRY evaluation, which means that HENRY will continue to be delivered to an extent in the district and the settings that are taking part are all new sites. Gill Thornton confirmed that several early years settings in local schools are taking part and that they must not have delivered HENRY during the last two years. Josie said this is good news and HENRY was delivered at a lower level in the district outside of BSB though it had real promise. It is a project that the Innovation Hub hopes partners will consider how it could be sustained.

Sola then gave a PowerPoint presentation which is saved here:



HENRY End of  
Contract PP slides for

Lisa commented that the people attending 1:1 sessions miss out on group support, which often continues after the service has ended and she asked how we bridge that gap. Sarah said for some local families that she sees, to walk into a group is just too much, due to confidence issues. Doing a few 1:1 sessions first sometimes enables these people to attend a group later and there may be a way to do that combination.

Gill Thornton said that HENRY is our key project addressing childhood obesity, and getting messages across to parents through whatever mechanism is the priority. She agreed that groups help to consolidate the messaging and provide the support. Other elements of HENRY are important such as workshops and the Parent Champions, who were really valuable in the first years of the project. HENRY was also a good 'doorway' into other parts of the BSB programme. Many of our Community Board members from five years ago first became involved in our programme through HENRY, when there was much wider HENRY provision in the district. HENRY was always a district offer until recently, although we added increased capacity locally and the detailed evaluation. What happens next needs to be a shared responsibility.

Josie said Lisa made an important point about groups, with social support or loneliness being major issues for longer-term outcomes. The Innovation Hub will think about that, however, if there were no HENRY 1:1s, some families would receive nothing. Lisa agreed that 1:1s should be offered to families who would not otherwise access the project, but then there would be no peer support.

Vipin said he had always supported HENRY and liked to see the parent-child interaction at the classes. It is good to see that HENRY is continuing beyond the BSB funding.

**Decision: The Partnership Board approves that the Better Start Bradford funding period for HENRY has ended as scheduled on 30 September 2024, and notes that the HENRY project continues delivering Preparing for Parenthood as part of the Start for Life Programme.**

## **7. Home-Start contract completion**

Josie advised that 197 families were supported by Home-Start which is 94 per cent of the target. These families were really in need for a whole variety of different reasons and the number of families using this service is a small but important number.

The number of Home-Start volunteers engaged and supporting these families was over 85 which is great. Josie explained that the longer-term outcomes for volunteers have not been looked at in depth but the value of volunteering should be acknowledged.

For outcomes and improvements for the service users, Josie explained that their needs were too individual to evaluate, but the satisfaction questionnaire scores are very high.

Sola then gave a PowerPoint presentation which is saved here.



Home Start contract  
completion PP Slide f

Gill Thornton remarked that she would have liked to have heard more from the parents and families who benefitted from Home-Start. She noted that Bradford district funding via Public Health for Home-Start ended a few years ago, so it is good to see that the project, with our support, have gained external funding. Most referrals to Home-Start are from Family Hubs and health visitors, and Home-Start is absolutely part of the support system for families. An effectiveness evaluation could not be done as the offer to families is so bespoke, but the project itself and the evaluation, especially the voice of the families, has shown its impact. Ideally Home-Start should be recognised as part of the wider system offer in the future too.

Lisa said she is a great advocate for Home-Start. She suggested the 197 families be tracked during and post-involvement to see what happened and to ask if any of them were ever known to or stepped up to Early Help. If they were not known, this would be a good business case for Home-Start being worth investing in going forward. As there is no robust evaluation, longer-term tracking is needed. She noted how Home-Start benefits its volunteers too.

Josie said this is a good point and has been discussed in other projects. Routinely collected information can be linked to BiBBS, which is looking at the influence the projects have on referrals into already overstretched services. This is difficult to do for some projects and ideally there needs to be a data sharing agreement with Early Help. Lisa commented that the data sharing agreement needs to be wider and include the Children's and Families Trust and there could be a separate meeting to discuss this. Her team would like the evidence about which projects are effective and so should be invested in.

Gill Thornton observed that BiBBS should be able to tell us something about these children. We need a data agreement but there was reluctance from Children's Services early in our programme, due to GDPR issues linking to children's social care data with its safeguarding and confidentiality requirements. However, Home-Start do not use SystemOne, so there would be no access to this data. We know the benefits data sharing has for children and Lisa said there is some progress with it and there is a data sharing agreement for research purposes. Josie wrote in the Chat that BiBBS has explicit consent so data sharing would not be a problem.

Vipin recalled Sarah telling him about Home-Start some years ago and how it helps people who need support but do not qualify for statutory help. The project has made a big difference to peoples' lives which was not always documented and shown. Instead of just the cost of the project, we need to consider the work done on the ground and the difference it did make. It is great to see that Home-Start continuing with other funding and BSB should help with this if we can.

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

Vipin wished to thank the Commissioning Advisory Group for all the work they do in their meetings.

## 8. Programme Monthly Report

Vikrant said we had had a busy October and he mentioned as a key highlight the BSB project celebration event at Bradford Cathedral. This involved showcasing of our programme and 22 projects in an exhibition style which was well received. Over 160 people attended.

Gill Thornton attended a meeting of the Healthier Together Alliance in Birmingham about how to work together to improve child health. There was recognition of Bradford colleagues leading research into practice. There is a call to pledge to support the Alliance's work which is below which would also give an opportunity to further spread our messages. Born in Bradford and Child of the North have signed up and many other partners locally have too.

**Decision: The Partnership Board agreed to support the Healthier Together Alliance in their work to improve child health.**

**Action: Gill Thornton will send out some information and a link to the pledge (for partners to sign up to) with the minutes which is here:**

[Healthier Together Alliance :: Healthier Together](#)

A joint letter was sent from all the A Better Start sites to the Children's Minister about continuing Start for Life. The Minister acknowledged their concerns, emphasised the commitment to support early years and agreed to a meeting to help inform thinking about the first 1,001 days.

BSB sent some representatives to Better Start Southend, where their Community Interest Company and legacy work was discussed. Southend also hosted the Data, Research and Evidence Community of Practice where there was a round-up of sites' information, how they are disseminating learning and a discussion about their evaluations.

There was also a Community Engagement Community of Practice meeting held in Bradford, which included an evening meal for the attendees and some of the Community Board members joined it. The delegates also visited Thornbury Tots and Bradford Moor Park.

Vikrant mentioned for local strategic influence, BSB being part of the Play Network set up by the Child Friendly District. We continue to support work on improved data sharing and support for programmes coming to an end through the Prevention and Early Help System Board. We are contributing towards a detailed perinatal mental health pathway of which Little Minds Matter is a key element.

As mentioned previously, BSB's Workforce and Learning Manager is leaving BSB in a few weeks. We are looking at ways to get the expertise and support from our staff team and from our partnership. Our staff teams are being restructured with limited recruitment taking place to meet the requirements of the proposed new structure and details should be confirmed in a couple of weeks.

Community Action Bradford and District's legacy contract has been mobilised and there have been contract review meetings. A timeline of activity has been agreed and some stakeholders have been interviewed already. CABAD will get a wide range of stakeholders' views and scope and appraise possible options for the future of BSB. They will test for viability and avoid any duplication and develop an implementation plan.

A new programme of Virtual Live Learning sessions started on 10 October for the current and future workforce, covering the first 1,001 Days.

Baby Week Bradford is underway and Vikrant mentioned some of its workforce development content, and the three Innovation Hub webinars that are taking place.

Vikrant mentioned our continuing focus on low-cost play opportunities. We are in the second year of partnership with Bradford College and he referred to the extra knowledge staff and students can access via this.

The membership of the legacy working groups has been decided, they have started meeting and their work will be aligned with the legacy contract.

Vikrant moved on to emerging risks and issues. Start for Life is only funded to March 2025 and the future of the funding is still not confirmed though we are quite hopeful. There have been discussions about this at a strategic level and representations have been made to government. There is thinking about an exit strategy if the funding is not continued.

Matt said we have seen lots of projects being shifted to Start for Life and he asked what the mitigation is if there is no further funding, noting that lots of projects and people are involved. The longer the uncertainty goes on, the less time there is to deal with this situation. Gill Thornton noted that it is the local authority who are doing the commissioning, so the mitigation and risk management sits with the Start for Life Steering Group and BSB will work closely with them. It is planned that there will be discussions about this matter outside of this meeting.

## **9. Any other business**

Vipin asked everyone if they had felt able to participate in this meeting and all agreed that they did. He thanked all for attending the meeting.

## **10. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is on Thursday 12 December 2024, via Zoom, starting at 5.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 10.35 am.