

Better Start Bradford Partnership Board Minutes
Thursday 16 January 2025
Via Zoom

Meeting Started: 09:30

Meeting Ended: 11:00

Present:

Vipin Joshi	Community Board member (Chair)
Sarah Hinton	Board Member, Bradford Trident
Gill Thornton	Director, Better Start Bradford
Becky McIlvenny	Community Board member (items 1 to 9 only)
Karen Tetley	Community Board member
Ludmila Novosjolova	Community Board member (item 7 onwards)

In Attendance

Gill Hart	Funding Manager, National Lottery Community Fund
Kerry Bennett	Assistant Director, Better Start Bradford
Sara Ahern	Programme Manager, Innovation Hub (in place of Josie Dickerson)
Vikrant Bhatia	Programme Manager, Better Start Bradford
Michelle Thompson	Communications Manager, Better Start Bradford (items 1 to 5 only)
Guy Dove	Senior Programme Administrator, Better Start Bradford

Apologies for Absence:

Ishaq Shafiq	Samina Begum	Gwen Balson	Richard Padwell
Marium Haque	Lisa Brett	Matt Sandford	Salma Nawaz

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Vipin welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies. He explained that Gwen was to chair this meeting but had sent apologies - she will chair another Partnership Board meeting soon.

Introductions were not needed as everyone knew each other.

The meeting was inquorate, but it was noted that we are not making any decisions today.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 12 December 2024

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 that our final programme event will include learning from the Neighbourhood project.

Gill Thornton said there has been constant contact with statutory partners about Partnership Board representation. Attendance from them has been very good at our last two Commissioning Advisory Group meetings and it is a bit disappointing that they are not here today. January is a busy month for many and we know there is lots going on and attendance is a continuing conversation.

The Innovation Hub's contract extension is being drafted and should be ready for signing next week.

Sara confirmed that the HENRY Innovation Hub report should be issued this month.

The decisions made at last month's inquorate Partnership Board were ratified later. These were noting and accepting the accounts to 30 September 2024 and noting that the funding period for the ESOL for Pregnancy / Infants project has ended.

4. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Communications update

Michelle gave a Powerpoint presentation which is saved below and included a video about Baby Week and a Better Place video.



Board comms
presentation Jan 2025

Michelle mentioned that we will be looking at setting up a legacy website and we have been working with the National Lottery Community Fund who are setting up a repository section on their website, to host key learning, documents and resources. Our legacy website has not been set up yet but BSB will keep everybody informed.

Michelle also referred to the work we do with colleges and our student placements, trying to encourage more people to work in early years.

There is an Insight article about our work with Bradford museums and galleries and Michelle said Bradford Museums have changed their early years offer due to this work. The work has also opened up new venues for families to go to, that they have not tried before.

Michelle mentioned a speech by Vicki Smith of the NLCF at our celebration event in October 2024. This helped our projects to realise that they were part of a much bigger picture, with the five A Better Start sites. Vicki also mentioned how some of BSB's work has been used more widely, with the NLCF using it in some of their campaigning, as have the National Children's Bureau.

Michelle outlined our planned social media work for 2025 and mentioned that we decided to come off Twitter (now X), after talking to external partners, other ABS sites and in line with some other charities. She asked all present to please follow BSB on LinkedIn.

Our work for 2025 includes working closely with the Innovation Hub, discussing their plans, aligning them with ours and getting learning and evidence out there.

Michelle mentioned the HEY! Fund celebration event on Wednesday 5 February 2025 and confirmed that its date has been changed from 29 January. We have helped over 60 HEY! Fund groups.

Vipin said the Better Place video was amazing and mentioned the 'feel-good factor' for the children who were there. Michelle recalled that you could see the joy on their faces when they were outside and Vipin observed that the Better Place project was a good example of what we have done over the last ten years and you could see the passion in the people visiting the sites and delivering the project. There were some excellent comments in the Chat and Vipin thought it makes us feel proud.

Michelle said she felt quite emotional editing the video, when considering what Better Place have achieved, their statistics and the numbers of parks and green spaces developed that were not there before or improved, and all the little statues built.

Michelle mentioned the very short, but very creative videos developed by the Comms team to promote Baby Week events and said they were also worth looking at on YouTube. Anyone with questions after this meeting can email Michelle.

Vipin remarked that although the Better Place project cost a large amount of money (£2.5 million), it is only a fraction of large councils and large organisation's budgets, when considering the enjoyment it has brought in for the people using it and visual effects brought to the communities. He will mention to the councillors he meets that it is not about spending tens of millions, it is about spending it wisely and seeing what we can deliver. BSB has done that and shown that and Vipin would like the Better Place video to be pushed out nationally and it could be an example of what Bradford is about to show to the City of Culture.

Gill Thornton noted that images from Better Place were used in the City of Culture bid and the latest Insight report is about place-based working and Better Place is the key case study, to show how involving people working in a locality builds much stronger outcomes.

Michelle commented that we cannot measure the wellbeing that Better Place has brought, getting children out into green spaces, with fresh air and exercise. In our year of learning, we could do something specific for Better Place, give a tour of the sites and she mentioned the creativity of the statues and wooden sculptures.

Sarah observed that she has been around since the beginning of BSB and the idea about having Better Place came from the community at the very beginning, and community partners pushed to have it as part of the bid. Now we are rejoicing in the project and it shows the strength of the community knowing what they need. Sarah wants us to remember that was in the initial conversations about the bid.

Gill Thornton agreed with what Sarah just said and noted this was mentioned in the Insight article. At the bid stage, we did not know that we were allowed to put something like Better

Place in, but after the pressure from the community we asked the NLCF if it was okay and we got the Better Place bid ready in six weeks.

Sarah said that Better Place shows the importance of the environment for people and the sites are litter free. It is good to have a clean environment to go to when you live in a very built-up area. She commented that all BSB's Comms are fabulous and have been an important part of BSB.

Vipin remarked that Better Place shows the importance of community involvement and we can show what that involvement means, to bring a project to life.

Vipin agreed with Sarah about the Comms and how it has improved year-on-year and how it has made BSB more well-known. Michelle said the team want to do something different and better each year and Vipin thanked her for her presentation and it shows what we do is so important and worthwhile.

Action: Gill Thornton said that we would share Michelle's presentation as a pdf.

6. 'Getting to know you' session

This was not covered in this meeting.

7. Start for Life update

Vikrant said that the Start for Life programme in the Bradford district announced just before Christmas that their funding, which had been due to end on 31 March 2025, has been extended to 31 March 2026. However, the current BSB arrangements through Bradford Trident with Start for Life will end on 31 March 2025 and the projects will have new contracts directly with Start for Life.

The Start for Life projects that are continuing beyond 31 March 2025 are Action for Children Baby Steps, Health for All Breastfeeding Support and Health for All Breastfeeding Perinatal Project Administrators, Family Action Perinatal Peer Support, Home-Start Male and Secondary Carers, Incredible Years Parenting Programme and Little Minds Matter. Those not receiving further funding are HENRY and Little Minds Matter Baby Massage. All the projects were informed by BSB just before Christmas about the outcome of the decisions.

Vikrant clarified that discussions about the value of the contracts and KPIs from 1 April 2025 are direct conversations between Start for Life and the projects individually. BSB will be coming out of the contractual arrangements with the local authority and individual projects as well.

Kerry remarked that it is a positive end that the projects are being maintained within the district. The transition from BSB is important now and this is good sustainability for what we have been testing and learning in Bradford.

Vikrant confirmed, in reply to a question from Vipin, that the projects have been told the amount of their new funding, and there have been direct conversations between Start for Life and the projects about the value of contracts and KPIs. All projects have been asked for a proposal about what they can deliver and about changed KPIs considering their new funding amounts.

Gill Thornton added that for all of these Start for Life projects, there is a significant reduction in funding once our involvement ends. BSB have supported the delivery of Start for Life for nearly three years. The reduction has been a bit of a shock for some projects and BSB shall try to make the transition as effective as possible and help with redundancies.

Vipin commented that it is good to see the projects are being picked up by Start for Life. BSB started off as a test and learn programme, the tests have been done and the learning has gone on to someone else and he thanked the NLCF for the funding. Hopefully the projects will expand in the future with a better financial situation and we have proved there is a demand for them and that they work and make a difference.

8. Changes to Commissioning Advisory Group

Gill Thornton said this is a work in progress report and there is still some lack of clarity. The work is to transform the Commissioning Advisory Group into something that is helping to inform commissioning across the system for early years. Strategic partners in the NHS, Children's Services and Public Health are moving towards doing joint commissioning. BSB are involved in some structures, such as the Healthy Children and Families Partnership Board, and the Prevention and Early Help System Board. BSB are bringing in more Commissioning Advisory Group members and it is positioned as a place where detailed conversations that will inform the commissioning decisions in the district could happen. This has been sought by some of the strategic bodies, who have indicated that they need a place to discuss this in detail or bring partners together to look at how we are commissioning.

New terms of reference that we will draft shall fulfil that purpose but BSB do not know if the group will transform into something new or if it will be the body that is set up that will cover that work. The joint commissioning is looking at Children's and Early Years services and it may be that some of the Start for Life projects we mentioned earlier shall be picked up in that process and more capacity delivered in some of those areas. Gill Thornton noted this links to discussions they are having about a parenting pathway and how parenting is supported and shared that an early language offer is needed but is missing from the portfolio.

BSB will seek to continue the strategic relations with those partners that help us bring the knowledge from the BSB programme and as there are some former BSB projects within the service going forward, this should help us to direct future commissioning. Also, Sara and Josie are on the Commissioning Advisory Group, bringing the learning from the Innovation Hub and Born in Bradford. This is a strategic influencing / strategic commissioning piece of work.

Gill Thornton explained that she has been off work, so she has not drafted the new terms of reference, taking in the comments from Commissioning Advisory Group members. Vikrant said that he and Kerry have looked at the minutes of the last Commissioning Advisory Group meeting at which this was discussed, and Kerry is looking at the initial draft terms of reference and these will be collaborated on.

Sara said this exercise has been useful and there has been positive challenge and pushback and it has been a productive conversation. Maybe something else will be set up but part of the legacy from BSB is that we should have some integration of the commissioning approach within BSB, and it is invaluable to have community Board members on there who have challenged and pushed for transparency from all of us. We want to see that continue, with a strong community voice in commissioning in Bradford and decisions must be transparent and understandable by the community. Vipin agreed that this is important and was discussed at

the prep meeting and whatever is set up needs community representatives on the top table, not in the sub-group, so there is feedback straight in.

Kerry confirmed that the first draft of the terms of reference includes an opening statement about working as equal partners. The learning and transfer of our governance structures has worked well and Community Board members knowing what they want and what is acceptable for influencing and shaping commissioning decisions is important and will be on the terms of reference.

Vipin noted that this is work in progress and asked that the Partnership Board be kept updated. He remarked that it is good to see so many organisations wanting to be part of this conversation, as we have seen silo working in the past. It is good to see people working together, particularly for the communities' benefit and a benefit of the BSB programme has been getting commissioners to work together.

9. Legacy Contract update and 30 January stakeholder event

Kerry confirmed that BSB have met Community Action Bradford and District about the initial findings from the interviews they have done with key stakeholders, including Partnership Board members, to see how that will shape the workshop on 30 January. Our discussions with CABAD are still in progress and they are open to our feedback. We have been clear about the contract and the 'ask' and what we want from this piece of work around recommendations about the legacy.

CABAD are leading the event on 30 January and we want to have clear recommendations about the legacy so we know what we are working on for the extension period.

Vikrant said that CABAD have done a good job in interviewing different stakeholders across the system and this has brought out many views about what BSB's legacy should be going forward. However, we need clear recommendations from CABAD before the event on 30 January and it will help what will be a very diverse audience at the event. We need clear recommendations to allow us to make decisions, with the Partnership Board, about what the legacy should be going forward.

CABAD will be producing a draft report soon and presenting a summary of it at the event on 30 January. Vikrant said this has been a useful exercise and CABAD have been aligning with the work of the new legacy groups we have set up and attending their meetings, to ensure the thoughts of the legacy groups are included in the findings which will be coming out.

10. Programme monthly report

Vikrant said much of the content had already been covered earlier in the meeting. The highlights include the outcome of the Start for Life funding decisions. There is also the legacy consultants' work, who have completed their initial interviews with all stakeholders.

Vikrant mentioned the A Better Start repository work and we have successfully collated evidence and learning for the ABS repository in conjunction with the Innovation Hub and we have uploaded all the relevant toolkits, evaluations and campaign materials on to the repository website.

Embedding learning from BSB with the wider system is continuing at strategic level and we have already mentioned conversations about the BSB Commissioning Advisory Group evolving into a wider district wide partnership focussing on future commissioning.

BSB have recruited a new Workforce and Learning Manager who is due to start in post in early February. We have done some restructuring to meet the requirements of the final phase of the programme and some line management arrangements have changed.

BSB are working on the final impact reports for all the projects in time for the final Celebration and Dissemination event that we are planning and discussing.

The contracts have been managed successfully for Start for Life projects and he reiterated that it is a success that several BSB projects have now embedded within the council. Vikrant went through the Start for Life projects and they are performing well in most areas. He then mentioned the HABIT (oral health) webinar Michelle covered earlier which 149 people attended.

BSB shared insights with the future early years' workforce at Bradford College into why speech, language and communication are important. We continue to work in partnership with the 50 Things steering group.

Our Workforce and Learning Manager attended a Placement Fair for third year occupational therapy students at Bradford University. We also attended the national Baby Week steering group meeting to celebrate the collective success of Baby Week 2024, which Michelle also highlighted in her presentation.

The latest round of Virtual Live Learning sessions concluded in December. Topics included adversity, trauma and resilience, engaging dads and male carers, and SEND in Bradford and Airedale.

A new Better Place legacy video has been created which Michelle shared earlier. We sent out Christmas cards to all colleagues across the system.

Vikrant reiterated that the HEY! Fund celebration event will now be on Wednesday 5 February, not 29 January as it says in the report.

He moved on to the work of our Family and Community Engagement team. They helped with the International Men's Day celebration event at Laisterdyke, which was well attended. He mentioned the Winter Wonderland event at Mayfield which over 150 families attended and other Christmas events the FACE team supported, such as at Thornbury Tots.

Vikrant reiterated for Sustainability and Legacy that most of our Start for Life projects have been embedded into the council's programme in 2025/26, though with a reduction in overall resource.

He also mentioned the article we sent the NCB, which is now live on the NLCF website, about our work with Bradford museums and galleries.

11. 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.

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is on Thursday 27 February 2025, via Zoom, starting at 5.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 11 am.