



Delivered by **Groundwork Yorkshire, Bradford Council and Bradford Trident** from **November 2017 – November 2025**

The Better Place project has transformed parks and green spaces for the benefit of families, with play equipment and facilities specifically designed for 0-3s, right across the Better Start Bradford area. It has created and improved play areas, installed natural play spaces, tracks and trails, planted, created bespoke artwork, and much more, all in collaboration with local families and organisations.

Behind the transformations, the team has encouraged families to access these spaces with confidence, spend more time together outdoors, and build their knowledge and understanding of the array of free play opportunities and adventures available on their doorsteps.

Along with local expert organisations, they've provided a huge variety of outdoor sessions from natural play, tree and seed planting, maternal wellbeing sessions, storytelling, woodworking, toddler cycling and more. Community organisations have also been able to apply for funding to deliver appropriate outdoor play sessions themselves, adding to the offer.



Why this project was developed

The Better Place project proposal was co-produced with local parents/carers who felt the lack of good, safe places to play and a healthy environment to grow up in directly affected their children's early development. An early survey conducted by a Better Start Bradford Innovation Hub researcher identified barriers to families using parks, green spaces and walking routes. The project set out to address these barriers by:

- Creating safe places to play
- Discovering, developing and promoting local green spaces and community gardens aimed at 0-3s and their families
- Greening or planting to screen and absorb pollution wherever possible
- Reducing exposure to emissions for pregnant women and young children
- Developing and publicising good walking routes for families
- Encouraging families with very young children to grow their own plants, fruit and vegetables to improve their immediate environment and their access to healthy food

Impact and findings*

- Better Place has transformed 50 parks, nursery school sites and green spaces in the Better Start Bradford area with toddler-friendly equipment, green pollution screening and tree planting.
- Families have felt empowered to travel and visit a range of parks and green spaces for organised sessions - through building relationships with the Better Place team and their delivery partner organisations - enabling them to benefit from a wider range of projects and services. Families have also begun to use the parks and green spaces independently, joining with other families. Families are venturing outside in the winter months which seems to show a shift in mindset and confidence.
- Ten organisations have received £500 from the Better Place Outdoor Project Fund to deliver outdoor provision suitable for expectant families and families with 0-3s at a Better Place site, with gardening, dance, forest bathing, gymnastics and outdoor craft among the many activities developed, engaging over 150 children.
- A range of steps including daily reminders, flyers, rapport building, cleaner and safer sites, consistent social media presence, a dedicated WhatsApp group, snacks, appropriate outdoor clothing and word of mouth recommendations from families have all helped build and retain family engagement.
- Better Place was part of the steering group to set up Play Streets within the Bradford district, conducting the first pilot to provide insight and feedback to improve the initiative. The team now supports Play Streets within the Better Start Bradford area and sets up toolkits for residents when conducting their own Play Street.
- Parents/carers have discussed how they have begun to change generational cycles and views on outdoor play within their families by being outdoors more and seeing the benefits in themselves and their children.
- Friends-of-groups have become involved with the project and partnered with events and activities within the parks.
- The DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) was in conversation with the Better Place team, and provided Better Place green space examples for a publication showing other local authorities what is possible in terms of bespoke play.
- The Landscape and Design Team at Bradford Council were winners of the 2023 Landscape Institute Awards. Better Place capital projects were an integral part of the submission.
- Natural England has provided funding for a 'Nurture Naturelets' project. They would like to use Better Place as a case study around nature-based interventions for health with 0-3 year olds, looking at the extent of increased nature connection and associated health benefits.

**This section includes information from both the evaluation report/s and project*