

**Better Start Bradford Partnership Board Minutes**  
**Thursday 17 July 2025**  
**Via Zoom**

**Meeting Started:** 09:35

**Meeting Ended:** 11:05

**Present:**

Vipin Joshi	Community Board member (Chair)
Sarah Hinton	Board Member, Bradford Trident
Susan Claydon	Assistant Director, Early Help and Transformation, Bradford Children and Families Trust (items 1 to 6 only)
Gill Thornton	Director, Better Start Bradford
Becky McIlvenny	Community Board member (items 1 to 9 only)
Karen Tetley	Community Board member (items 1 to 9 only)
Ludmila Novosjolova	Community Board member (items 1 to 9 only)

**In Attendance**

Carlton Smith	CEO, Bradford Trident (items 1 to 6 only)
Soo Nevison	CEO, Community Action Bradford and District (items 1 to 5 only)
Sara Ahern	Programme Manager, Innovation Hub (in place of Josie Dickerson)
Vikrant Bhatia	Programme Manager, Better Start Bradford
Shaista Ahmed	Finance Manager, Better Start Bradford
Caroline Burton	Senior Finance Officer, Better Start Bradford
Sarah Whiteley	Programme Management and Contract Support, Better Start Bradford (items 1 to 9 only)
Guy Dove	Senior Programme Administrator, Better Start Bradford

**Apologies for Absence:**

Jo Medd	Gwen Balson	Lisa Brett	Matt Sandford
Gill Hart	Richard Crane	Marium Haque	Darren Crawley
Jo Howes	Abbie Wild	Kerry Bennett	Samina Begum
Gazala Taj			

**1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

Vipin welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies.

A round of introductions took place. Sarah Whiteley has just returned to Better Start Bradford from maternity leave and is attending as an observer.

It was agreed that the meeting could be recorded.

## **2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 22 May 2025**

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

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

Gill confirmed that the Innovation Hub's new contract has been signed off. She wished to thank Sara for chasing this up at the Hospital Trust. This action point can be closed. BSB will be having a contract meeting with the Innovation Hub quite soon.

Gill has again contacted all BSB's partners asking them to confirm the Partnership Agreement and to provide updates for this meeting. She has still only had one response, from Children's Services, and Richard Crane, Assistant Director, tried to attend this meeting but reported IT problems. Gill reassured the meeting that BSB do have good relations with our strategic partners in other areas and forums and working together spaces. They are involved in our programme, though it remains a challenge for them to attend these meetings.

Vipin asked that this action point is carried forward to our next meeting and said it is disappointing that Gill has only had one reply from our partners.

## **4. Declarations of interest**

Shaista has returned as BSB's Finance Manager, on secondment from the Children and Families Trust, and she noted that Susan also works at the Trust. Shaista observed that the accounts to be discussed in item 6 were prepared by Justine and Caroline. Shaista was not involved in them and Caroline will present item 6 today.

Gill shall be discussing a potential extension to the Better Place project under item 6 and Carlton confirmed that Bradford Trident are the delivery partner for Better Place.

## **5. Legacy work programme update**

Soo Nevison gave a PowerPoint presentation which is saved here:



Board presentation  
July 25 v0.2.pptx

Soo explained that some of the earlier slides have already been presented to the Partnership Board, but there are some new people and new slides are added to the end of the presentation.

Community Action Bradford and District were given a legacy brief by BSB to explore legacy options with stakeholders, then for the options to go through a decision-making process with the senior leadership team at BSB, followed by an implementation plan and to support that implementation. Soo explained that some legacy work is also going on within the BSB team and CABAD are not doing it all.

CABAD led engagement work from October to December 2024, with 189 interviews at all levels from strategic decision makers to community members and families. Some of those community members and families had never heard of BSB. If there is a programme like BSB for them in the future, CABAD wanted to find out what it needs to look like.

The findings were analysed and CABAD produced seven options for the senior leadership team, which were later reduced to four options.

The positives that came out of the community engagement included the focus on 1,001 Days and the voice of the family and some of the positives were then looked at and described as functions. This included delivery directly to families, providing ongoing advocacy for 1,001 Days and influencing around commissioning, co-ordination of activity around 1,001 Days, a knowledge base, sharing our learning and physical infrastructure like Better Place.

Soo commented that BSB's Comms and campaigns came out very strongly to support community engagement. There is also the research hub and ongoing workforce development. CABAD and their partners are picking up parts of this legacy work, but the research work remains with the Innovation Hub and workforce development, Comms and campaigns are with the BSB staff team. CABAD are looking at advocacy, influence and delivery around some of these functions.

Soo read out the four options, which were an impactful closure, mainstreaming across the system, a consultancy to pick up 1,001 Days work and a renewed partnership.

The four options were taken to an event in January with some stakeholders. Under impactful closure, CABAD noted requests for a handover of information from the event and for a celebration event to be held. CABAD have let BSB know this and are no longer working on an impactful closure but will offer support if they need to. The BSB staff team are producing project impact reports, podcasts and other things.

Soo described 'mainstreaming' as a broad piece of work. The internal legacy work of the BSB team has made good progress on this but CABAD are starting to identify the 'what else.' There is a wish to mainstream the Better Place project and CABAD are providing some bid writing support, identifying a lead partner and speaking to the National Lottery Community Fund about this. CABAD are having other conversations about what other activity may develop into funding bids as we move towards December.

Under the consultancy organisation option, the NLCF will not fund private sector business and so two Social Venture Schools have been delivered so far, a third one is in planning for September and there is follow-up support for some of the attendees, such as helping them to set up charitable organisations.

Soo said the biggest piece of work CABAD are doing is the renewed partnership, which has a working title of 'First 1,001 Days Innovation Partnership.' CABAD found from the January event that people want something to help them to share learning knowledge, generate ideas and problem solve. People miss face-to-face meetings and the opportunities to resolve issues not on the agenda just before or after the meetings. CABAD are trying to bring those people together and embed families with children and communities into that partnership. The learning from BSB around how involving the community gives richer outcomes is being moved forward.

Soo said attendance at the renewed partnership meetings has risen from 5 people to 20. She explained that they have not yet looked at involving the community as they needed to be sure that the renewed partnership 'got off the ground' before doing so, to avoid building up hopes that were not realised. This new partnership is now a possibility and Soo has recently had a positive conversation with Susan about linking this into strategic partnerships.

There are two renewed partnership meetings scheduled for August – one about community involvement and the other about the First 1,001 Days Manifesto. The completion date for the Manifesto is October, so it can be talked about at the conference.

Soo then presented a slide about how the membership is going to work. It will have a focus on the first 1,001 days – so will be the public sector, voluntary sector, parents and community members. She explained that it will not be in the 'school space' as organisations are already in that space and CABAD will work alongside them.

Soo then read out the functions which are generating ideas, reality checking, problem solving, forming projects, sharing learning, challenging, supporting and informing. Some functions are around commissioning; others are about strategic Boards and providing information.

The renewed partnership will not be a delivery entity. It is made up of people who deliver and commission things and if an idea comes out for which there is funding to deliver it, people within the group will form a partnership to do the delivery. It will not compete with existing delivery bodies.

The group will ensure it is listening to other insight; insight mapping is starting and Soo mentioned looking at how they want to engage with several entities such as the Early Years Alliance, Citizen's Voice Forum, parent and carer panels as examples.

Susan commented that Soo had given a very helpful presentation and lots of work has gone on. She mentioned BiBBS and connectivity to the Prevention and Early Help System Board. They are trying to develop the maturity and integrated nature across all agencies who are delivering in the Prevention and Early Help space. She wondered about the connectivity as this group is to drive learning and influence commissioning in the centre and needs to align with the single pathway for early help assessment for example.

Soo replied that the next step is to work out how to resource the renewed partnership with the BSB team. There will be some convening co-ordination function but some people on the group are members of other Boards. The communication between all of those is if something is outside of what they are up to but lines up with the pathways, they would discuss it.

Soo gave an example of only the voluntary sector being able to access certain funding and there may not be the right voluntary sector people on Boards. In this case, if the message goes to the new partnership and it fits with a work plan and is evidence-based, 'we will communicate with you and if we get the funding this is what will happen'. This group will not be an 'island.'

Susan queried how we would safeguard against bids from the VCS sector not underpinned by Prevention and Early Help System Board principles and strategy. In the past, lots of commissioning has been done without the principles. There needs to be shared visibility of support for children without stifling innovation and expertise.

Soo replied that we cannot stop voluntary sector organisations from applying for funding independently but hopefully this new group is where the partnership work takes place. The voluntary sector is part of this and delivers in partnership and would not compete with other things. Susan said that all have a responsibility under Working Together to safeguard children to work in a partnership way. If something sets up to deliver family support the early help assessment needs to be mandatory or there will be issues. We need the core shared responsibility in the early help space to grow the maturity. Working Together names organisations and it could unintentionally weaken what we are trying to mature.

Gill gave reassurance that as BSB's National Lottery Community Fund money would be used, their terms and conditions would have to be met and safeguarding is underpinned as a key principle. It will be informed by all district policy drivers and some national ones including the Prevention and Early Help space. There will also be the Children's Plan and the First 1,001 Days Manifesto but Gill thinks all would be working in the same direction. Gill would welcome the integration and maturity that Susan described.

Gill stated that if the renewed partnership is to be supported by core funding from BSB underspend from our NLCF funding it must meet the objectives of the programme and the NLCF's terms and conditions. She thinks everybody is comfortable with that as they address all those things that we would expect.

Gill said that the renewed partnership will not be a delivery entity but must have some purpose and not just be a 'talking shop' or the NLCF would not agree to the funding, and it would need to be inclusive across all the sectors. We are doing some detailed work in the team to make sure it has a good model and it needs to be working alongside what else is going on in the district.

Susan mentioned the 1,001 Days Manifesto as an example, and the delivery comments Gill made and said it is vital that that group uses the route of the Prevention and Early Help System Board to inform delivery or they would undermine each other. She thinks the NLCF would be happy that delivery happens through the Prevention and Early Help Strategy, which is the single consistent place where we oversee delivery and grow that maturity of the system.

Susan said that the 1,001 Days Manifesto and all its innovation and learning needs to be part of the Prevention and Early Help strategy, otherwise we will have two documents with key priorities in.

Gill noted that safeguarding has always been underpinned but BSB have never had responsibility for children's social care delivery – our support was in the Prevention sphere. Susan said that Working Together is not about social care and early help is not a social care measure – it is to avoid statutory intervention. The Prevention and Early Help strategy needs to cover all ages and have a space in it with a 'spotlight' on 1,001 Days.

Soo suggested Susan sends one of her team to meet the voluntary sector at a Young Lives Network meeting and give a presentation there. There will be a purpose to the new group and CABAD will pin that into the group and the things for the NLCF but it needs community representation first as it must be jointly owned.

Vipin said there needs to be a separate discussion with Soo, Susan and Gill to get a joined-up plan. At the community prep meeting two days ago, it was felt that the community consultation part of the renewed partnership has started later than it should have done, but

Soo has just explained the reasons why. Soo added that there have been three renewed partnership meetings and at the last one, they were to start community work but the person who was to broker that had an emergency hospital appointment, but it will be the focus in August.

## 6. Finance Report

Caroline presented the report about the management accounts for the year to 31 March 2025, which is saved here:



2025 03 31 Finance  
report for F&A Partne

Caroline said there was an underspend for the year to 31 March 2025 of £888.9k, or 12.4 per cent. This was due partly to lower staff redundancy costs than forecast, as the budget was set before decisions were finalised. Other underspent items included Marketing and Communications, Community Engagement and Conference and Events and were mostly due to delayed work than actual underspend, with some items moved into Year 11. Some things had zero expenditure such as Monitoring and Evaluation, Consultancy and Research and Contingency.

For Projects, there was an underspend for the period under review of about 10 per cent. For most projects, their figures are their final numbers as they have ended. Project underspend was mostly due to recruitment difficulties and lower project redundancy liabilities than forecast. For the Happy Early Years fund, some funds were returned from lead parents once the projects ended because the resources cost less than budgeted for.

The Start for Life figures have now been finalised and £212k needs to be returned from BSB to Start for Life. We are discussing with Bradford Council how this is going to be refunded.

Susan commented that this was useful information. On Start for Life, in December 2024 the Children and Families Trust had to make decisions and find £420k and were not aware of this level of underspend. Gill explained that BSB's contract with Little Minds Matter had finished so we were not empowered to give them any more NLCF money. There was nothing within our programme that would have allowed us to continue our contract with them. BSB did not know in December how much the Start for Life underspend would be but we had been 'flagging up' the issue of the end of our funding for a long time and encouraging partners to incorporate BSB services into their plans.

Vipin noted that Susan's point was understandable but BSB are not here to 'fill holes' that the government and other organisations leave - we are a test and learn programme and what was queried would not have been allowed by the NLCF. Susan agreed with that though said there should be thinking about legacy, upscale into mainstream and planning for when funding ends. Gill confirmed this was all part of what BSB had been doing for several years, but people, finances and situations change. She noted that Little Minds Matter had Integrated Care Board funding as well as being funded by Start for Life. We had discussed further funding of Little Minds Matter with the ICB in 2023 but this did not materialise, which is why Start for Life have had to fund all the project.

Vipin referred to the Start for Life refund and Gill said BSB added capacity to the system and funded the Start for Life 'backbone team' for three years, doing all the contract management and all those costs were met by our team as part of our adding capacity to the system. We could not keep the money to use for other purposes as it was given to us for delivery of Start for Life and we there was no rationale to keep it.

Susan felt there were real justifications for BSB to keep the underspend but it was good for Start for Life be able to build on projects that were already well-established.

Carlton asked if the underspend would be going back to the Department for Education or stay in Bradford. Susan replied that it needs to stay for the benefit of Bradford children and families and Gill said that Abbie Wild had confirmed that it will be.

**Decision: The Partnership Board noted and accepted the accounts for the period ending 31 March 2025.**

Carlton left the meeting at this point. Gill presented a paper about potential legacy projects post December 2025. The first potential project is to do with Baby Week and part-funding a role in Public Health to co-ordinate Baby Week across the district up to March 2028. A business case for this has gone to Gill Hart for her response.

The second project is embedding the speech and language pathway and Gill (Thornton) said this is already agreed with the National Lottery Community Fund, for a full-time six-month role at the Care Trust to work across partners to embed the pathway. This will need to start in 2026 due to restructures at the Care Trust.

CABAD is now supporting BSB with funding discussions and bids for projects. The first one is Better Place, to develop a Reaching Communities bid. Carlton had left this meeting but Gill said he is aware that this will need a different delivery partner to Bradford Trident. It would have a different place-based system, based on an estimation of where needs are, potentially Keighley and some of Bradford South. The request to the Partnership Board is to potentially extend Better Place to March 2026 to allow time to get the Reaching Communities bid through. The cost would probably be about £35k and Bradford Trident would be the delivery provider until then via a contract variation before transferring to a new provider if the bid is successful.

The fourth potential project is the transition to the First 1,001 Days Innovation Partnership. This has been outlined with Gill Hart as a potential transition project. This partnership would safeguard the objectives of the A Better Start programme. The NLCF would want to see a broad commitment from partners to making it sustainable and to things like new system change objectives, new initiatives being brought into the district, alignment with national policy and further sharing of information. The budget for this on the paper is £180k but Gill (Thornton) is not sure this would be the figure and we shall look at this in more detail in the autumn. We just need the Partnership Board to agree to this in principle at this point.

The final potential proposal, not on the discussion paper, is to extend the BSB staff team on a smaller basis to secure the things we have just discussed. The decision if to proceed with the renewed partnership is due in October but Gill is concerned that we would not have the capacity to deliver this change in the autumn, due to there being several events and a lot of dissemination to do. There will also be contractual things and financial arrangements to consider. Practical things will need to be done by BSB, not CABAD and a detailed proposal will be taken to the September Partnership Board around this.

Gill said this option has not been discussed with Gill Hart yet and today we only need the Partnership Board to agree to this in principle.

Vipin referred to matters raised at the prep meeting on 15 July, such as Baby Week. Gill confirmed that Baby Week would be going to Public Health and BSB would be paying for them to mainstream it, like we did with the Adversity, Trauma and Resilience Function - we funded a post and they absorbed it into their establishment. Public Health will have to commit to running Baby Week once our funding runs out and the NLCF would not agree to fund it without a commitment from Public Health being part of the business case.

Vipin passed on the concern of the community Board members that only £30k of the underspend would be going to the community via Better Place, which is only a small part of the total underspend amount at a time when the VCS is struggling. The remainder is going to professional organisations rather than local voluntary and community groups.

Gill noted however that Baby Week is for the parents and the community. Also, the First 1,001 Days Innovation Partnership is to mirror the BSB Commissioning Advisory Group with its community voice in the decision-making, planning and influencing what happens in the broader system. BSB would have to support the community to do that or it will not happen, providing engagement and support and doing local work on sustainability. The renewed partnership could include something like Parents in the Lead as a route in as well as things like parent panels. The partnership could have this kind of function as part of its operations and Gill would like to discuss how this might work with the Community Board members.

Vipin noted concerns about the £180k budgeted for the transition to the First 1,001 Days Innovation Partnership when statutory partners are not attending our meetings. It is good that Susan attended this meeting earlier but he noted that Gill had only one reply from our partners to her email about updating the Partnership Agreement and this is concerning. Gill replied that some of the attendees at the renewed partnership meetings so far are our key partners and quite active in their partnership with us. It will need to be able to influence the wider system and Gill said she is confident we have commitment to it from partners, though it will need more work and it will include parents and the community as partners.

Vipin commented that BSB have proved how important community involvement is over ten years. He would support whatever vehicle is set up if it is one that partners will attend and is representative of the community. Gill agreed to keep this in mind and said she can take proposals forward but the Partnership Board must agree to them or they cannot happen.

**Decision: The Partnership Board agreed in principle to the use of underspend proposals for the potential legacy projects, noting all the comments above.**

## **7. BSB programme closedown – Bradford Trident’s responsibilities**

Vikrant outlined the paper from the meeting pack and confirmed that it was discussed at the recent Finance & Audit Sub-Committee meeting.

As we transition into the final phase of the programme BSB delivery is focusing on three key workstreams: programme closure, stakeholder engagement and embedding learning and systems change. The aim is to have an impactful closure and this work includes mapping of key resources, regularly reviewed by the programme management team and the closure legacy group.

BSB think we have strong foundations for a successful closure and that is monitored through our closure risk register. We align the work of the closure legacy group with our learning plan and stakeholder engagement. BSB have now reviewed our governance structure and have a new staffing structure in place which is delivering in the final phase.

BSB are in conversation with Bradford Trident about a well-managed and orderly closure. We have agreed their responsibilities of resources such as telephones, IT, legacy website and equipment. These discussions are ongoing and further meetings are planned.

A Better Start grant holders have legal responsibilities beyond the end of the grant funding period such as data retention and assets (capital and intellectual property). Bradford Trident as lead organisation will need to submit annual accounts within 10 months of the financial year end. Records including management accounts, personnel and payroll, invoices for grant expenditure need to be retained for 7 years, which Vikrant said starts after March 2028 due to the extension of the BiBBS work. This condition also applies to our partners and BSB have written to them about their responsibilities regarding retention of documents.

Carlton as Bradford Trident CEO has agreed to remain as the designated contact for the NLCF to support post-grant monitoring work for BSB. Bradford Trident will be the Data Controller after the programme finishes and we have discussed this with the Information Commissioner's Office, the NLCF and projects.

There will be handover conversations between BSB and Bradford Trident about finance in the autumn. We have also reminded Bradford Trident and other partners about the insurance of items funded by BSB needing to continue after the funding period closes.

We have clarified that contract management responsibilities for BiBBS and data and finance submissions will sit with Bradford Trident's CEO after December 2025.

## **8. October Event**

Gill confirmed that BSB will be holding a two-day conference at the Great Victoria Hotel on 15/16 October. Not all the speakers have been confirmed yet, but the first day is the Key Evidence day and will be primarily led by the Innovation Hub. Sara said this would bring together all the learning we have had through evaluation and BiBBS and thinking about how we can further influence the system both locally and nationally. It is the 'so what' of all the learning through the evaluation and research.

Sara said that it will be more panel based around themes than lots of presentations on Day 1, sharing the local learning and including the community voice, and it will be interactive.

Gill said Day 2 will be workforce / community focused, with learning from the workforce and community in terms of how the programme was delivered, the impact made locally, the learning from that and how it will be used and embedded into the system and the change that has come about. It will include the critical involvement of the workforce and community in making all of that happen.

The community and parent voice will be 'threaded through' the whole event and there will be exhibitions of the work we have done.

There will be an ongoing supply of updates and information about the conference. Invitations to register will be sent out. We would like all the Partnership Board members to attend, Vipin to say a few words of welcome and we will acknowledge how important the Partnership Board was to this programme. All of this is in planning and we will provide updates, with Rach Stanton leading the work and lots of people on the team doing additional things.

Gill said we are also planning a December celebration event to thank all the people for their contributions to the BSB programme. There is also a parents celebration event planned for September and we would like the Partnership Board to be involved in all the events. Vipin asked that all dates, timings and agendas be issued as soon as possible.

## **9. Programme Status Report**

Vikrant said we have been busy since the last meeting. There was an event to unveil the new Family Sculpture in Bowling Park.

Gill presented at the Nature, Towns and Cities conference and Bradford has been successful in a funding bid to them. This is being led by our partners in Landscapes Division but the bid used Better Place learning and work to put the bid forward. This new funding is all about doing the sort of things that Better Place have been doing. Vikrant said it was shared as an example of cross-sector collaboration and place-based leadership to create healthier and cleaner outdoor green spaces.

BSB also attended the Community Star Awards ceremony in June and this is the last year of our sponsorship of the Outstanding Contribution to the Earliest Years of Life award.

Vikrant then referred to SystmOne and our work with the Care Trust on the overhaul of their main SystmOne unit, to develop the data quality and end user experience. There is good feedback from health visitors, who now have more time for appointments with families due to the SystmOne improvements.

Vikrant turned to programme closure and we have created a communications assets inventory and digital assets register for Baby Week, which can be passed to Public Health.

The project impact reports will be finished very soon and a designer has been appointed.

BSB have donated ten laptops we no longer need to Solidaritech, who repurpose them for use by charity groups supporting asylum seekers and refugees.

Our closure plan will develop into a handover plan we can pass to Bradford Trident.

We have now received aggregated data from the Innovation Hub and are discussing how we analyse it.

We have produced resources for colleges such as student workbooks and are reviewing all current material and we will be producing toolkits, such as about working with dads. We shall also be releasing five podcasts in the last six months of our programme.

Kerry was on the panel for the launch of the CBeebies new parenting website event in London. The BSB staff team have attended other conferences and helped at a couple of community events.

Vikrant reported an expansion of perinatal health support at Airedale General Hospital due to increased funding, boosting the perinatal project administrator roles.

Vikrant noted that our Volunteer Co-ordinator and Maternal & Early Years Specialist have left BSB and we thank them for their contribution to the programme and wish them well in the future. We have appointed a Public Health Partnerships and Evidence Lead, who will be supporting our stakeholder and embedding learning legacy work.

Gill shared that we have applied to Bradford Trident to regrade our Senior Finance Officer to be our Assistant Finance Manager in recognition of her changed role and increased responsibilities, and to approve a pay increase. Those Partnership Board members present agreed in principle to this change, but it is up to Bradford Trident as the employer.

We have also advertised for additional freelance consulting support for our Comms function to ensure that we have full capacity within the Comms team.

Vikrant then read out the Commissioning and Contracts section of the report. We await a signed contract back from Leeds University for the HABIT (oral health) no-cost contract extension. A contract variation is being considered for CABAD for Phase 3 of the legacy work.

#### **10. Any other business**

It was agreed not to discuss the review of the 0-19 service as Kerry could not attend and several people had left this meeting. It will be too late to defer it to the next meeting.

**Action: BSB to send out Kerry's slides about the review of the 0-19 service and the link to the survey.**

The survey offers an opportunity to champion the success of Better Start Bradford interventions such as MECOSH. Vipin remarked that this is important as it was the only replacement for Family Nurse Partnership and it was only us and Nottingham who were trialling MECOSH.

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

#### **11. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is on Thursday 18 September 2025, via Zoom, starting at 5.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 11.05 am.