

Better Start Bradford Innovation Hub

End of contract report – Better Start Imagine May 2019

This is a report provided by the Better Start Bradford Innovation Hub (BSBIH) for the Better Start Bradford (BSB) and the Better Start Imagine team.

The document provides an overview of the Better Start Imagine project's performance and findings from the implementation evaluation. The design of this evaluation is described in more detail in the Evaluation Plan Summary, which was approved by key stakeholders from the BSBIH and BSB.

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Better Start Bradford Innovation Hub End of Contract Report for Better Start Imagine – Executive Summary



Project overview

Better Start Imagine (BSI) is a universal project within the 'Loving Language' theme of Better Start Bradford. The project is comprised of two components; a book gifting service that delivers a free book every month to children living in the Better Start Bradford reach area from birth to their 4th birthday, along with wrap around sessions that aim to support and encourage good home literacy practices between parents and children.

This document presents the findings from the BSBIH's implementation evaluation of BSI, based on data provided by the service provider (BHT Early Education and Training) from the beginning of the contract period in October, 2016 to February, 2019. For clarity, this report is separated into a section on the findings for book gifting, followed by a separate section for the findings on the wrap around sessions. BSI was the subject of Better Start Bradford's Improvement Science project, and this contributed to the flexible and changeable nature of service delivery. The flexible delivery also had an impact on the progression criteria, which needed to be adapted in order to capture those elements of the project that remained stable over the contract period.

Project performance summary

The progression criteria selected for this project were reach (book gifting), implementation (wrap around sessions), and recruitment (wrap around sessions).

Book gifting

- Reach - Over the course of the contract, BSI slightly under recruited families from White British backgrounds (83%), and White Other backgrounds (86%), placing them in **AMBER** for these groups. They exceeded recruitment targets for Asian/Asian British: Pakistani mothers (104%), placing them in **GREEN** for this group.

Wrap around sessions

- Implementation - It was anticipated that BSI would run 78 Storytelling sessions annually. In the first year, BSI only ran 35% of their target number of sessions, placing them in **RED** for this criteria. However, in both Years 2 (106%) and Year 3 (103%), BSI reached and exceeded these targets, placing them in **GREEN** for this criteria.
- Recruitment - It was anticipated that BSI would recruit 6 children to each Storytelling session, for a total of 468 children annually. In Year 1, recruitment was only 11%, placing them in **RED** for this criteria. However, this improved in Year 2 (79%), and in Year 3 (97%), placing them in **AMBER** during these phases.

Other key findings

Book gifting

- BSI has sent out over 65,936 books to 2602 children since the beginning of the contract. This represents 67% of the total eligible population.
- Rates of book gifting referrals were similar across different referral models (BiBBS, health visiting), and a relatively large proportion of recruitment was through self-referral.
- In interviews, mothers were overwhelmingly positive about BSI book gifting, and both the recipient child as well as siblings were using the books.

Wrap around sessions

- Implementation and recruitment to the Storytelling sessions improved over the course of the contract period
- A community consultation revealed that less than half (42%) of the children in the sample were read to on a daily basis. Additionally, 63% of parents said they did not have time to attend a wrap around session. 16% said they were not interested in these types of sessions

Recommendations

The following are overarching recommendations for the BSI project (both book gifting and wrap around sessions). Specific recommendations for the individual components of the project can be found on the summary pages that follow.

Recommendation 1 –

Redefine progression criteria for this project. Given the separable nature of the book gifting and wrap around components of the project, it would be meaningful to have separate progression criteria for these two aspects of the project. Similarly, it would be beneficial to use the understanding of the first years of project delivery to set meaningful target figures for all components of the project.

Recommendation 2 –

Continue to improve data quality. The project has worked hard to rectify data issues within their control, but issues within SystmOne (i.e. challenges linking parents and children), challenges due to incomplete data from BDCT, and issues linking and understanding discrepancies across different data systems (DPIL, BDCT) still remain. These should be addressed in future, and ensuring strong data capture procedures should be a priority for any new referral models.

Recommendation 3 –

Prioritise understanding how this project works for the diverse community it serves. This includes understanding how families from different cultural, religious, and language backgrounds feel about the books and the wrap around sessions.

Better Start Imagine – Book Gifting Summary

Project overview

The first component of BSI was a book gifting project, which was sourced from Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (DPIL) project. The aim of this aspect of the project was to provide books to all children in the Better Start Bradford reach area who were born after 1 January, 2016.

In order for recruitment to be as effective as possible, BHT partnered with different organisations to facilitate recruitment. Initially, recruitment was done through BiBBS, and children were recruited to BSI through contact with pregnant women. This was considered an interim solution, because of the time-limited nature of BiBBS, as well as the acknowledgment that BiBBS did not have the capacity to recruit beyond proportion of the eligible population that is engaged in the cohort. Later, recruitment was changed to become part of the health visiting service, as this was considered a more sustainable pathway that would ensure engagement with a larger proportion of the eligible population.

In both cases, recruitment happened through these providers, but BHT were responsible for registered children with the DPIL system and ensuring that their SystmOne profiles were complete and accurate.

Project performance summary

The only progression criteria considered appropriate for the book gifting component of BSI was reach.

The project aimed to engage a representative number of families from three main ethnic groups into the BSI book gifting project. Over the course of the contract, BSI slightly under recruited families from White British backgrounds (83%), and White Other backgrounds (86%), placing them in **AMBER** for these groups. However, they exceeded recruitment targets for Asian/Asian British: Pakistani mothers (104%), placing them in **GREEN** for this group.

Other key findings

BSI has sent out over 65,936 books to 2602 children since the beginning of the contract. This represents 67% of the total eligible population.

Rates of book gifting referrals were similar across different referral models (BiBBS – 65%, health visiting – 69%), and a relatively large proportion of recruitment was through self-referral (25%).

In interviews, mothers were overwhelmingly positive about BSI book gifting, and both the recipient child as well as siblings were using the books.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 –

Continue to develop the primary referral pathway for BSI book gifting. There are ongoing discussions with health visiting about a change to the current model of recruitment, and it is vital that this element of the project is carefully monitored to ensure that the method is successful and all necessary data is collected to allow for monitoring and evaluation.

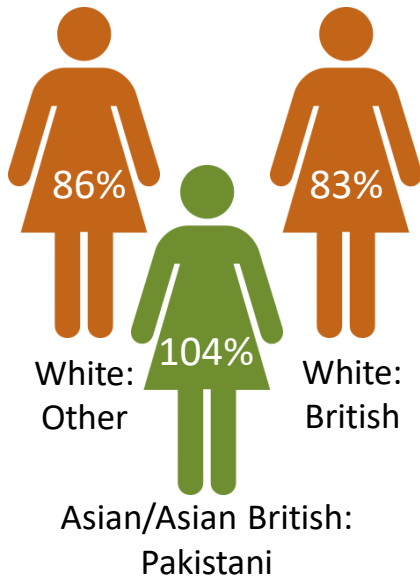
Recommendation 2 –

Continue to work with the DPIL team to try to establish book reading support information and evaluation options that are delivered through the book gifting service itself. This has previously been discussed with DPIL, and would benefit both the implementation and evaluation of the service.

End of contract report – Progression Criteria & Project Performance

Progression Criteria

Reach - How representative were the families recruited to book gifting?



It should be noted that, due to issues with incomplete data, the following ethnicity figures are based on the ethnicity of parents, rather than the ethnicity of the child receiving the BSI book gifting, as originally agreed. There were also issues with the completeness of the ethnicity data that impact on our confidence in these results.

The target was for BSI to engage a representative sample of ethnic groups in the Better Start Bradford community into the BSI book gifting project.

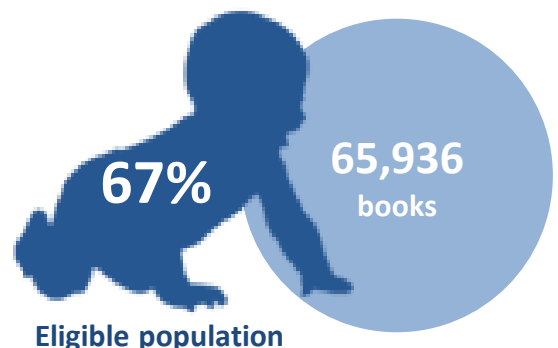
Based on our understanding of the ethnicity of mothers who gave birth between January, 2016 and February, 2019, we would expect 50% to be of Asian/Asian British: Pakistani ethnicity, 13% to be White British, and 10% to be White Other. Over the course of the contract period, mothers from Asian/Asian British: Pakistani backgrounds were proportionately recruited (104% of target), while White British women were slightly under recruited (83% of target), as were mothers from White Other backgrounds (86% of target).

Project Implementation

How many children were signed up to receive book gifting?

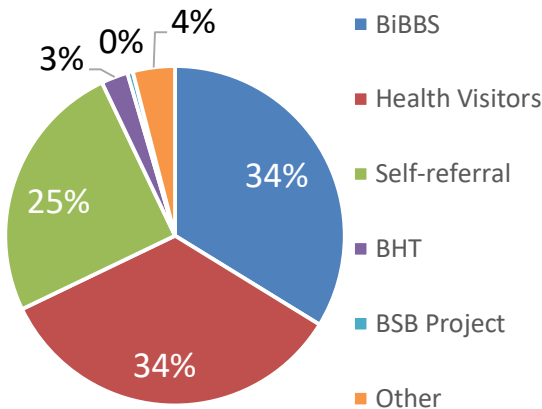
Since the beginning of the contract, 2602 unique children have been registered to receive book gifting from BSI. This number represents 67% of all children eligible to receive the books, given the best available birth rate estimates. Additionally, the recruitment rate during the period in which BSI had established recruitment pathways (January, 2017 – March, 2019) was 65%, and BHT were successful in recruiting many of the eligible children born in 2016. Together, BSI referrals have resulted in 65,936 books being posted to homes across Better Start Bradford.

Although there was not a specific progression criteria associated with recruitment to BSI book gifting, there was an initial anticipated recruitment figure of 70% of the eligible population. This suggests that BSI book gifting was able to recruit close to target.



End of contract report – Project Implementation

Where did book gifting referrals come from?



During the 11 months of recruitment through BiBBS, 65% of eligible children known to BiBBS were recruited to the project.

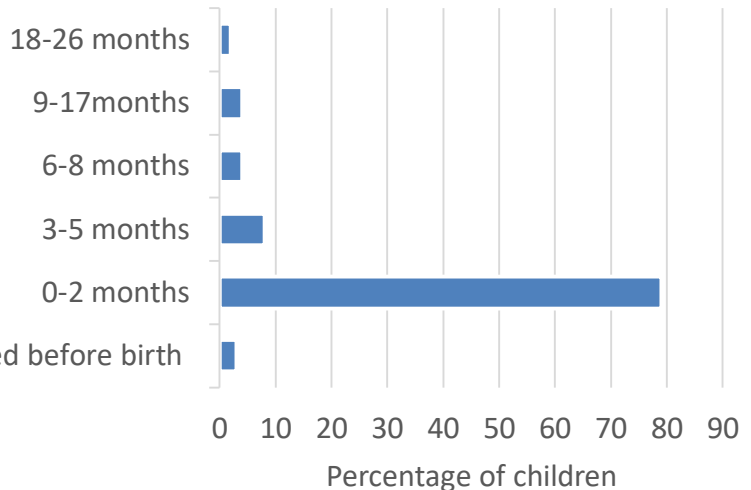
Following on from this, in the 13 months of recruitment through health visiting, 69% of children known to health visiting were recruited. These figures suggest that these two delivery models were similarly successful in their recruitment to the project.

It is important to note that these numbers are best estimates given the need to aggregate data from across different sources.

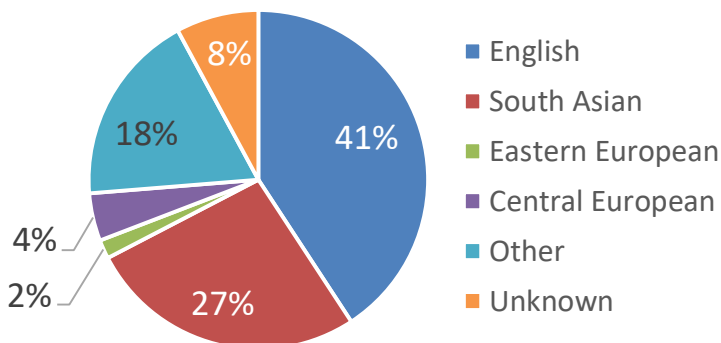
In addition to this, approximately 25% of families self referred into the project, and 7% were referred from other sources.

At what age were children registered to start receiving the book gifting?

BSI book gifting provides children with books up to their 4th birthday, offering a total of up to 48 books. It is important that children be registered as early as possible in their lives, because books are not sent retrospectively after registration. The vast majority (82%) of children were registered between birth and 2 months, as would be expected given the primary referral pathways. The additional 18% of children were older at the time of registration, and some of these children represent children born in 2016 who were eligible for BSI, but who were born before the main recruitment pathways were established.



What languages do parents of children receiving the book gifting speak?



Parents were asked their main language(s), and 41% reported speaking English at home. South Asian languages were spoken by 27% percent of parents, followed by other languages (18%), and Central (4%) and Eastern European (2%) languages. We still do not know how families who do not speak English at home use their English language BSI books.

End of contract report – Additional findings

Interviews with BiBBS mothers

As part of interviews collected for wider evaluation purposes, 22 new BiBBS mums were asked about whether they were receiving the BSI book gifting, and how they felt about the project. Key recurring elements of mothers' responses included the following:

- **Positive impressions** - The majority of mothers reported that they were pleased and appreciative to be receiving the books.
- **Enjoyment of the books** – Children were enjoying the books. Mothers said they captured their child's attention, and they looked at the pictures together.
- **Older siblings used the books** – Older siblings often used the books to read themselves, or were reading the books to their younger siblings
- **Children considered too young for reading** – Some mothers felt that their child was still too young to use or understand the books, and were not reading with them yet. In some instances they mentioned their plans to use the books when children were older.

Wider contextual factors

The BSI contract period has been characterised by large amounts of change. BSI book gifting faces the challenge that it would not be possible for the service provider, BHT, to independently and efficiently identify, contact, and register children. As such, a partner is fundamental to the project, and the most natural home of this partner is within the health service. Given the challenging situation for health visiting in Bradford over the past months and years, there are ongoing discussions about the most effective referral route. BHT have worked hard to ensure the best possible outcomes, but ultimately wider resource limitations within the health system have a large impact on delivery of this project.

Project overview

The second component of BSI was the wrap around services. The aim of this aspect of the project was to provide families with additional information and support on how to best use their BSI books, and how to establish good home literacy practices. This component of the project was considered important because there is limited evidence that book gifting alone is sufficient to improve early home literacy practices. The wrap around sessions comprised one-off sessions, including Storytelling and Rhyme time for babies, as well as courses focused on reading with babies (Owlets), or integrating good early literacy and language practices with baby massage (Sign, rhyme, and bonding time).

This component of the project has changed considerably during the course of the contract. Early monitoring of the project showed that recruitment was a challenge. Better Start Bradford, BHT, and the BSBIH worked collaboratively using a test-and-learn approach to identifying the most acceptable and successful types of services for the community. Better Start Bradford also selected BSI as the example project for their Improvement Science work, which meant that elements of the project were changed incrementally to test different options to improve the project. While this flexible approach to service delivery was appropriate given the challenges to recruitment, it does present a challenge for the evaluation.

Project performance summary

The two progression criteria considered appropriate for BSI wrap around services were implementation and recruitment.

Implementation - It was anticipated that BSI would run 78 Storytelling sessions annually. In the first year, BSI only ran 35% of their target number of sessions, placing them in **RED** for this criteria. However, in both Years 2 (106%) and Year 3 (103%), BSI reached and exceeded these targets, placing them in **GREEN** for this criteria.

Recruitment - It was anticipated that BSI would recruit 6 children to each Storytelling session, for a total of 468 children annually. In Year 1, recruitment was only 11%, placing them in **RED** for this criteria. However, this improved in Year 2 (79%), and in Year 3 (97%), placing them in **AMBER** during these phases.

Other key findings

There were no clear anticipated figures for the wrap around sessions, making it difficult to evaluate whether recruitment figures for the different types of services were on target.

Implementation and recruitment to the Storytelling sessions improved over the course of the contract period

A community consultation revealed that less than half (42%) of the children in the sample were read to on a daily basis. Additionally, 63% of parents said they did not have time to attend a wrap around session. 16% said they were not interested in these types of sessions

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 –

Continue to deliver the wrap around sessions, as they provide families with additional support for how to use their BSI books. The project does not seem to have reached a successful delivery model yet, and so continuing with a test-and-learn approach would be appropriate. However, this should be done in close collaboration with the BSBIH to allow for more robust evaluation to commence as soon as delivery stability is reached.

Recommendation 2 –

Continue to try to understand why families are reluctant to attend the wrap around sessions, and what types of services they may prefer.

End of contract report – Project Performance & Progression Criteria

Progression Criteria

Implementation - How many Storytelling sessions were delivered?

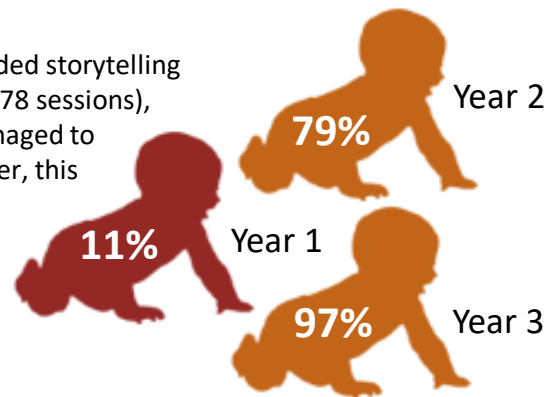


The agreed indicator for Implementation for BSI was the number of Storytelling sessions delivered. It was anticipated that 78 Storytelling sessions would run each year of the contract. During the final year of the contract, Storytelling and Rhyme time for babies were combined, and these new Story and rhyme time sessions were included in these figures.

In the first full year of the contract, BSI delivered 27 sessions, 35% of their target. However, this improved in Year 1 when BSI delivered 83 session (106% of target). Similarly, 34 sessions (103% of target) were delivered in Year 3, when the figures were adjusted to reflect the number of months of delivery prior to the final report.

Recruitment - How many children attended the Storytelling sessions?

Recruitment was assessed by the number of children who attended storytelling sessions. The anticipated figure was 6 children for each session (78 sessions), for an annual total of 468 children. In the first year, BSI only managed to recruit 11% of this target to these sessions (51 children). However, this improved considerably by Year 2, when they reached 79% of the target (372 children). In Year 3, this number was further improved to 97% of their target (195 children, adjusted for the number of months of delivery).



Project Implementation

How many BSI wrap around sessions ran, and how many children attended?

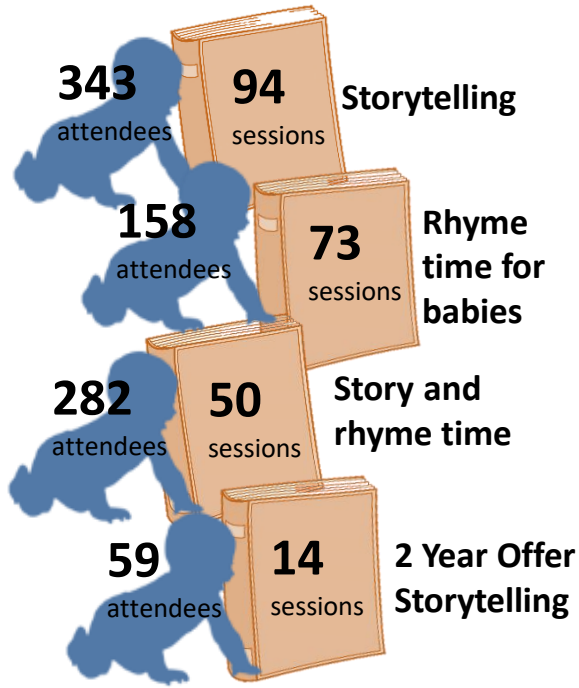


BSI ran two types of 6 week courses, which aimed to encourage sustained engagement with the wrap around sessions. The first version of these courses, the Owlets course, only had 20 attendees across 19 sessions (7 unique children). BSI addressed this by changing the focus of the course, and ran Sign, rhyme and bonding time instead. This course ran 65 sessions with 101 attendees (29 unique children).



End of contract report – Project Implementation

How many BSI wrap around sessions ran, and how many children attended?



During the first part of the contract period, BSI ran 94 Storytelling sessions, which had 343 attendees (41 unique children). During this period, BSI also ran 73 sessions of Rhyme time for babies, which had 158 attendees (62 unique children). Later in the contract period, and following on from poor recruitment figures, Storytelling and Rhyme time for babies sessions were combined to create Story and rhyme time sessions. BSI ran 50 sessions of these, with 282 attendees (70 unique children). BSI also visited early years and nursery settings, and provided 14 sessions of storytelling to 59 attendees (58 unique children.)

Although there were anticipated figures attached to each of these types of sessions, they changed periodically throughout the contract phase. This means there are no consistent figures that can be used to evaluate whether the numbers of sessions reflect the delivery targets.

Additional Findings

Community consultation

A year into the BSI contract, the BSBIH and BHT worked together to produce a questionnaire to explore perceptions of early literacy, use of books and media in the home, and barriers and facilitators of uptake to BSI wrap around sessions. These were completed by 56 parents, 96% of whom were in receipt of BSI book gifting. Key findings included:

