Goodbye and hello

Back in September we said a fond farewell to Phyllis Brackenbury, our Programme Director and welcomed two new faces to the SSBC team…

Phyllis (pictured) had been involved with Small Steps Big Changes since leading on the successful bid back in 2014; having spent a lifetime improving outcomes for babies, young children and families she decided to take well-earned retirement in September but not before ensuring that SSBC was left in the capable hands of a new Programme Manager and Programme Director.
Karla Capstick is now firmly in place at the head of the SSBC Partnership, and is busy meeting all the key partners across the local partnership and the wider A Better Start network.

Before joining the SSBC team, Karla was Head of Service for Early Help at Rotherham Council and had a strategic lead on the prevention agenda and Children’s Centres.

Having joined Rotherham Council in 2015, Karla was part of the senior leadership team that ‘transformed’ children’s services from Inadequate to Good (OFSTED Jan 2018) and was also the Aim 1 ‘Best Start’ lead officer for the Health and Wellbeing Board; the key link to Public Health for children. She also supported the transformation and re contracting of the 0-19 Integrated Public Health Nursing Service.

With a background in teaching and early help, Karla has a genuine passion for improving outcomes for children and families, parent and child voice and co-production.

Alongside Karla, we have a second new face, that of Donna Sherratt, Programme Manager. Donna’s background is in Early Help, most recently as Community Family Support Manager in Nottingham City Council’s Early Help team, where she was responsible for the 0-19’s services covering six wards.

With a focus on Early Intervention, she has made a fundamental contribution to the Sure Start journey in Nottingham, having been part of the programme since 2003.

Her passion for achieving the best outcomes for children, young people and their families spans into her volunteering capacity as Chair of Governors.

Since starting in SSBC, Karla and Donna have been busy finding out about our local communities, how the partnership works together and the importance of local parents to our work. They’ve also been spending time getting to know the core team, and learning about the roles that make up that team, so they can move forward with confidence.

We wish them all the best in their new roles and look forward to working with them on improving outcomes for Nottingham’s children.

“It’s a really exciting time to be joining Small Steps Big Changes and I feel immensely privileged to be part of something which has such potential for driving change and improving outcomes for Nottingham’s children. Within ‘A Better Start’ nationally there’s an understanding that we’re moving into the second phase of the programme.

The first three years has been about getting up and running, putting processes in place and commissioning and implementing new groups, activities and services within our communities.

It’s been a busy time and the team have worked hard to get to where we are now. It’s now time to briefly pause, reflect and celebrate what’s been achieved, before then driving the programme forward into phase 2; accelerating our pace and increasing our reach, evaluating the learning, embedding the programme into the system and sustaining the change.”

Karla Capstick, SSBC Programme Director
A louder voice

Developing the community voice and strengthening community connections has always been at the heart of the Small Steps Big Changes programme. Commissioning a new delivery partner to make this happen is the next step in our ambitious plans...

We’ve always been passionate about making sure that people in our communities have opportunities to get involved in what we do and helping them ‘find their voice’ to bring about lasting change is something we’ve always been keen to achieve. But trying to bring about lasting ‘parent powered’ change is a big ask and our challenge has always been how we can make this happen.

That’s why our new contract with Coram Family and Childcare is an exciting new step on the path to developing our Parent Champion and Ambassador programme. As main vehicles for change, our Parent Champions help lead Community Partnerships, have a place and a substantial vote at Board, assist with recruitment and commissioning and act as positive role models within their communities.

But they’re an ambitious group of individuals, who are keen to improve their communities for future generations, raise outcomes for children across Nottingham and challenge the status quo.

They’re also backed by a group of Parent Ambassadors who help promote SSBC in their communities by engaging with other parents; planning events which will grow our reputation, increase take up of our services and spread the word about our aims and ambitions.

We believe that parents and the local community are the real ‘experts by experience’; they know what their children and communities need to grow and thrive and, now with the right guidance in place from Coram Family and Childcare, plus our continued commitment to co-production at all levels we’re on track with our plans to ‘inject parents into the system’ and bring about real and lasting system change.
Six key learning points in developing our community voice and community connections model:

1. **Genuine involvement/control is key**
   Trusting our Parent Champions to know what they need!

2. **Doing the ground work first!**
   Discussions with the Programme Management Team and Board helped ensure investment in the project.

3. **Getting it right requires investment**
   Working on design of the new service took nine months from initial conversation to going out to procurement.

4. **Offer guidance and support**
   To help the Parent Champions find their own solution.

5. **Find the fun**
   Whilst the process has at times been challenging, it’s also been stimulating and fun.

6. **Getting it right?**
   Well, we think we’re on the right track and we’re keen to start working with Coram Family and Childcare to see what the future holds!

“It’s vital that the voices of children and parents shape local services, and ‘Community Voice, Community Connections’ is making that possible. Over the coming months, I will be working with SSBC Parent Champions and Ambassadors to make sure they are achieving what they want to through the project – whether that’s developing new skills or creating change in their community. Nottingham is home to some exceptional early years initiatives and it’s great that Coram Family and Childcare are now a part of that.”

- **Ellie Grace,**
  Senior Programmes Officer, Coram Family and Childcare

“Coram Family and Childcare has a successful history of achieving positive change for children via parent-led solutions, working directly with families, and by influencing policy and decision makers. We have run the Parent Champions National Network for the last 11 years, joining with fantastic parent volunteers to help more families get the support and services that work for them. This new partnership with SSBC will allow us to build on the great parent-led work already happening in Nottingham and support parents to take it further, creating long-lasting change at both a local and national level. We are excited to be a part of it.”

- **Megan Jarvie,**
  Head of Coram Family and Childcare
‘The Best Start’

In April 2018, Nottingham City Council (NCC) commissioned Nottingham CityCare Children’s Public Health service, in partnership with NCC’s 0-5 Early Help Team to deliver the new ‘Giving Nottingham Children the Best Start in Life’ service. Here we find out more about what that means and the plans so far…

This newly commissioned service is designed to deliver and integrate a range of existing services across the early help and early years’ landscape to shape a service which places the futures of 0-19 year olds in Nottingham firmly at the heart of everything we do.

Forming part of Nottingham City Council’s ambitious Children and Young People’s Plan 2016 -2020 ‘It takes a city to raise a child’. This contract aims to bring together the children and young people’s elements of the Nottingham Plan, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy ‘happier healthier lives’ and the Education Improvement Board 10 year strategic plan ‘A brighter future for Nottingham children’ under one shared framework for Nottingham Children’s Partnership and partner organisations to focus on.

And it’s partnership working that’s essential for this new service’s effectiveness and to ensure that resources are used efficiently; it’s also the key to building a robust governance structure that will keep this innovative service transformation firmly on track!

At the helm of the new governance structure is Nottingham’s Strategic Systems Change Board (SSCB), chaired by Councillor David Mellen, Early Intervention Portfolio Holder at Nottingham City Council, and the Joint Operations Group (JOG), chaired by Children’s Integrated Services Director, Helen Blackman. These are both now in operation, with the JOG meeting monthly and reporting into the SSCB on a bi-monthly basis.
Beneath the SSCB and JOG are four separate workstreams, with the task of delivering priority actions as part of the ‘A Best Start’ Transformation Plan; these cover four areas of work:

**People**
Led by Elaine Mitchell, CIS Workforce Development Manager, NCC

**Performance**
Led by Helene Denness, Children’s Public Health Consultant, NCC

**Places**
Led by Aileen Wilson, Head of Early Help Services, CIS, NCC

**Practice**
Led by Selina Carlin, Assistant Director of Children’s Services, Nottingham CityCare Partnership

These work-streams will meet monthly, identifying their priorities and putting in place plans to improve outcomes for Nottingham’s children; the long term aim to be that, as new pathways develop, families will be able to access the services they need; at the times they need them through a single point of contact.

This new plan isn’t just about the professionals who deliver services though. As part of the process, including parents in its production is something that’s always been an important part of getting it right! We’re proud that two of our Parent Champions sit on the SSCB, helping shape the future of children’s services in Nottingham, and work with existing Children’s Centre Advisory Board members to help develop ‘Best Start’ Advisory Boards, to further strengthen the parent voice is planned.

Once the Transformation and work-stream plans are approved by the SSCB and JOG, these will be shared through partner websites, and newsletters as will future news and Annual Reports on ‘Giving Nottingham Children the Best Start in Life’!

More information will be available through the following:
www.nottinghamchildrenspartnership.co.uk
www.smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk
Early Words Together at Two is a National Literacy Trust initiative which aims to improve the home learning environments of families of two-year-olds. The programme is practitioner-led and is designed for staff from across a range of Early Years and Early Help from Children’s Centres, Private, Voluntary, Independent (PVI) and School Nurseries.

Since September, Early Words Together at Two has been operating in 13 early years settings in Arboretum, Aspley, Bulwell and St Ann’s as part of Read On Nottingham (Nottingham’s own National Literacy Trust Hub).

The programme trains nursery staff to deliver the programme to parents so they can in turn support their child’s language and communication development at home.

And it’s already seen significant progress. The first sessions which give parents top tips to expand their child’s talk, have already begun and the feedback from practitioners has been really positive:

‘It has been easier than we expected to get parents signed up.’

‘I was really nervous to start with but as we got into the session it got easier and I was really pleased with it.’

‘Even though the children were a bit distracted we carried on role modelling the activities with the parents so they can take them and try them at home.’

Read On Nottingham also ran a competition this term to encourage families to read for pleasure. The Dads Reading Selfies competition asked male role models to tweet a photo as they read to their children using #ReadOnNottingham. The winners will be announced shortly, with prizes including bundles of books and a pair of tickets to a Nottingham Forest game.

Winning entries will be published in a gallery on the Read On Nottingham website www.literacytrust.org.uk/communities/nottingham
Imagination Library books have arrived in childcare settings across Small Steps Big Changes communities.

Since the start of the programme, SSBC has already given over 3,000 children the opportunity to receive books through the Imagination Library; the scheme started by Dolly Parton provides a book a month from birth to a child’s fifth birthday. These books are delivered to the children at home so that parents, carers, siblings and children can spend time together reading and sharing the stories.

As part of a new initiative, SSBC offered sets of Imagination Library books, free of charge, to childcare providers, including Primary Schools, Children’s Centres, Nurseries, Family Mentor Teams and also Libraries within the four SSBC wards. 38 settings in total!

As a result practitioners have the opportunity to engage children and families in activities to improve language, communication and literacy using books that the children are already familiar with.

In September 2018, the settings received their first delivery of books; matching the books children have received each month since April 2015. It doesn’t stop there though, because from now on the settings will each receive their own Imagination Library book each month until the end of the programme.

Each setting has also nominated a member of the team to be the named Imagination Library Champion; this person will be the local link supporting the sharing of ideas and resources (session plans and activities) across the partnership. That way, more families will benefit from shared examples of good practice to support their children’s language and communication skills.

‘All I can say is WOW! And a big thank you! We love books and really appreciate this additional resource for the children.’

Fiona Day,
Angels by Day Nursery

‘I received a lovely box of books yesterday. Thanks very much. The children are going to love them.’

Angela Hollick,
Rosslyn Primary School

“We have just received our books… thank you so much they are beautiful!”

Julie Doyle,
Sneinton St Stephen’s C of E Primary School
The theory behind the campaign builds on research developed through the FrameWorks Institute, with the communications ‘Core Story of Early Childhood Development’, which frames important scientific insights around early brain and biological development into themes and metaphors to make the ideas easier to understand. This will be the first time the research has been used in this way in the UK.

The result of this work will be seen next year, when we launch the national Big Little Moments campaign, across all of the A Better Start sites: Blackpool, Bradford, Lambeth, Southend and, of course, Nottingham. The campaign has been developed by 23red, experts in developing behaviour change campaigns, in collaboration with all the sites and FrameWorks Institute. The impact of the campaign will be independently evaluated by Ecorys, an international research consultancy using a multi-method approach.

With the help of a friendly cast of characters, the campaign plans to:

- Build understanding of early social, emotional and language development
- Increase the number and frequency of effective caregiving interactions; using 15 important behaviours that make a huge difference to a child’s social, emotional and language development.

The characters and behaviours will be on our website, in our wards and at venues across Nottingham when the campaign launches on Tuesday 12th February 2019. Look out for them and let us know what you think!

“We are excited to be working with 23red who are the leaders in behavioural change. Every child deserves to have the best possible start in life and together we will be able to implement our new pathways of care to make better use of local resources and improve outcomes for young children.”

Sarah Gibbs, Head of Funding, Big Lottery Fund
In April, the Independent Local Government Boundary Commission for England published its final plans for new electoral arrangements for Nottingham City Council. This followed a public consultation and resulted in changes for all but four of Nottingham’s 20 council wards.

The greatest impact on SSBC will be the expansion of Arboretum ward to the new Hyson Green and Arboretum ward; this will result in an estimated 150 additional births annually. This means that many of the families, who currently live in Hyson Green, will be able to access SSBC Family Mentor programmes, such as Small Steps at Home, Stay and Play activities and Imagination Library books, once these changes come into effect in May 2019.

For the SSBC team and commissioned delivery providers, it means lots of work to make sure that we’re ready to welcome the new families. Our Parent Champions have already highlighted the importance of putting in place a clear communications strategy to make sure that all eligible parents, children and babies are aware of the programme and what it means to them. It also means more staff are required to deliver the programme to these new families.

Our Delivery Provider, Framework, manage the Family Mentor programme across Arboretum and St Ann’s and so they’re currently looking for people with lived experience of parenting to join their team and help local babies get the very best start in life.

“We are very excited with the news of the ward changes; it will give us the opportunity to reach more families with the Family Mentor programme. We’ll be running assessment days on the 10th & 11th of January; the whole process is used to bring out people’s unique qualities and build on their skills in a fun, interactive way”.

Sue Wood, Framework

Whilst we know that in the short term this will mean quite a bit of extra work and planning; we’re also really excited, knowing that we’ll be welcoming lots of new babies and toddlers into the SSBC family from May.

If you’re interested in finding out more about the Family Mentor roles, please contact Sue Wood on 0115 844 1809.
Dad’s the word!

There’s often a lot of focus on what’s important for mum and baby but good father-child relationships are important too and have long-term, positive impacts on a child’s wellbeing. That’s why we’ve been doing lots of work around how to engage and involve dads in what we do.

Including dads is an important part of our goal to improving child development outcomes. That’s why along with our colleagues working in Nottingham’s children’s teams we’ve developed a joint approach to include dads and father figures in our work.

To date:

- We’ve made a commitment to engage fathers in all programmes
- We’ve put together a Dad’s Advisory Group
- We’ve carried out an audit on what we do already to engage dads and identified gaps
- Nottingham CityCare have developed a Dad’s Standard Operating Procedure to promote father inclusive practice in health pathways
- We’ve developed a leaflet for Health Visitors to use as a tool for involving dads

We’ve also commissioned David Bartlett, Gender Equality and Masculinities Consultant to develop our dads’ engagement training. This is being delivered across Nottingham via a ‘train the trainer’ method and since June we’ve trained 14 facilitators to deliver the training, which has been delivered to over 200 staff including Health Visitors, Family Mentors, Community Police Support Officers and nursery teams to name but a few.

As a partnership we all want to have the same baseline - to ensure the involvement of dads / father figures in the services we provide.

Including dads in our services can encourage them to have strong, positive relationships with their children, and helps both dads and mums (whether living together or not) to be consistent and co-operative co-parents.

Our training programme and the things we have already achieved are the first steps to establishing a culture of how we do things when working with families in Nottingham.
This year we’re going one better than we ever have before… By that we mean we’re going one whole day better with an Annual Event that will run for two days.

At this stage we’re still in the first throes of planning, so we don’t have much to share apart from the dates.

Delegates will be able to book on to one or two days with the focus on local delivery and programme updates on day one and, expert speakers on day two.

We’d love to see you there, so please ‘pop’ these dates in your diary and we’ll send out more information as soon as we can.

If you’d like to be kept in the loop and make sure you don’t miss out on information about our event then please drop us an email to ncp.ssbc.admin@nhs.net with ‘annual event’ in the subject line and we’ll make sure we send you more information as it becomes available.
In March 2015, a major review of maternity services as part of the NHS Five Year Forward View was carried out. Led by Baroness Julia Cumberlege, working with a panel of experts and representative bodies, the review aimed to assess maternity care provision and consider how services might meet the changing needs of women and babies. The result published in February 2016 was ‘Better Births; Improving outcomes of maternity services in England; A five year forward view for maternity care’.

In the light of ‘Better Births’ and some of its recommendations, Nottingham University Hospital NHS Trust, supported by SSBC, held a stakeholder event on 17th October 2018 to discuss maternity services; the event aimed to:

- increase the involvement of women and families and improve their maternity experience
- support the implementation of ‘Better Birth’s in particular, continuity of carer pilots
- improve multi-professional working between different staff groups and breakdown traditional hierarchies, helping to build respect and develop relationships between people.

The day was attended by over 75 people from a variety of backgrounds, all with differing views of the maternity experience, this included Obstetricians, Obstetric Anaesthetists, Pharmacists, Midwives, Maternity Support Workers, Receptionists, SSBC Family Mentors, Doulas, Volunteer Breastfeeding Peer Supporters, Parents, Public Health, Commissioners and GPs.
At the event, attendees were initially invited to hear a local service users’ experience of maternity services before being invited to play *Whose Shoes?*®; a board game that offers a new approach to engagement and problem solving.

The game provides practical examples, to help the NHS and others move on from the big picture or ‘vision’ for health and social care transformation, to what it really means for individuals and services, literally allowing you to ‘walk in other people’s shoes’. It’s all about starting to break down the barriers between agencies, services, and mums and dads to achieve the best outcomes for everyone using or involved in maternity services.

Playing the game gave both professionals and parents the rare opportunity to come together to help identify what needs to change, why this is important, how this can be achieved and ultimately how the maternity experience can be improved.

By encouraging the removal of name badges and the wearing of ‘normal’ clothes rather than uniforms, the event brought about the opportunity for attendees to meet as equals, share their experiences and created energy for real action, and that’s never a bad thing!

Some of the quotes generated from the day included...

- “Treat women as individuals - tailor care to individuals, not just the standard offer”
- “I am a doctor, I feel disempowered even though I know the system”
- “Identify useful apps where language is a barrier”
- “Imagine if we all did something, the difference we could make”
What does a typical day look like?
I think many people think that working with children is ‘easy’ or ‘boring.’ Well, that’s definitely not true…So, here’s my ‘typical’ day to prove it...

7:45am: Arrive at work, and grab my morning coffee (an essential start to the day!). I have a quick catch up with the team and then it’s time to start greeting the children. On goes some funky music to get the day started with a bang!

10am: Snack time and I sneak off to the office to do some paperwork. I’ve almost completed a child’s development review, but then the interruptions start.

11.30am: Lunch time! Followed by the arrival of the afternoon children; a new child needs some comfort and reassurance; cue lots of cuddles and I have tears and…stains on my top!

12.50pm: A parent arrives; she’s being evicted tomorrow and has nowhere to go. Time to offer up some reassurance and organise a meeting for her with a family support worker later!

1:30pm: I’ve decided to do some dinosaur feet painting with the children. I squelch my feet into some paint, and give my best stumpy dinosaur impression! The children laugh and laugh, and join in. There’s a lot of mess at the end, but it’s been so much fun!

2pm: Time for raindrop counting, puddle splashing and bike riding in the garden, before heading back inside for some quiet activities, and time to start wrapping things up.

3:15pm: End of the day and I realise I still never got a chance to finish that review!

What do you find most rewarding about your job?
I just love watching children learn and develop. It’s an absolute honour to spend time with them. The things we do can make such a big difference to their lives and really give them a fantastic start to their education.

Many of the families we work with are dealing with a lot of different issues, so it’s important to give support and be able to refer them to the relevant agencies. That’s why I feel strongly about getting parents on board, because by supporting them we can get the best for their children.
In November a group from the Republic of Ireland visited Nottingham to find out more about our early intervention work...

Back in April, Candida Brudenell, Assistant Chief Executive & Corporate Director for Strategy & Resources at Nottingham City Council was invited to Dublin to talk about the work taking place in Nottingham as an Early Intervention City.

Whilst there Candida showcased the innovative work taking place in the City and the impact of this on our children; in response to this over 30 delegates from across Ireland travelled to Nottingham on the 22nd and 23rd November to find out what an Early Intervention City looks like in practice.

The first day of their visit was spent at Nottingham City Council’s Loxley House hearing from leaders in Early Intervention and Prevention, Strategy and Policy, Children’s Services, Early Years, Early Help, and Small Steps Big Changes about the context of early intervention within the overall landscape of the City.

On day two, a short tram ride took the delegates to Bulwell Riverside’s Youth and Play Centre for a ‘market place’ event showcasing partnership working and its importance in building a supportive environment to improve outcomes for children across Nottingham.

A variety of teams attended to showcase specific projects and programmes taking place in Nottingham including Peep, Triple P, Bump, Birth and Baby, Freedom Programme, Breastfeeding Support, Priority Families, Family Nurse Partnership, Read On Nottingham, Dolly Parton Imagination Library, The Front Door and Small Steps Big Changes.

And if that wasn’t enough the delegates also had the opportunity to visit one of Early Help’s regular ‘Stay, Play and Learn’ sessions, learn about Improvement Science, meet some of the families and Parent Champions involved in our work and sit in on a focus group run by SSBC Family Mentors.

Despite this being a very quick visit, it was great to have the opportunity to share the learning with colleagues from the Republic of Ireland and to see their enthusiasm for our work.

‘It was great to showcase all the joined up work across our whole city to make the lives of our young children better.’

Candida Brudenell, Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Director for Strategy and Resources, Nottingham City Council