



HILLINGDON
LONDON

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Children, Families and Education Select Committee

Date: TUESDAY 6 DECEMBER
2022

Time: 7.00 PM

Venue: COMMITTEE ROOM 6 -
CIVIC CENTRE, HIGH
STREET, UXBRIDGE UB8
1UW

**Meeting
Details:** Members of the Public and
Press are welcome to attend
this meeting

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information.**

Councillors on the Committee

Councillor Heena Makwana (Chairman)
Councillor Roy Chamdal (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Kishan Bhatt
Councillor Tony Gill
Councillor Rita Judge
Councillor Peter Smallwood
Councillor Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead)

Co-Opted Member

Tony Little, Roman Catholic Diocesan
Representative

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Terms of Reference

Children, Families, & Education Select Committee

To undertake the overview and scrutiny role in relation to the following Cabinet Member portfolio(s) and service areas:

Cabinet Member Portfolios	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education
Relevant service areas	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Children's Services (including corporate parenting)2. Children's Safeguarding3. Youth Justice4. Youth Services5. SEND6. Education7. Children and Families Development8. Skills & lifelong learning

This Select Committee will establish a Panel to support strong oversight of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities. The Committee may appoint 3 Members to this Panel based on political balance. Membership may include non-Cabinet Members not on the Committee. The Committee may also appoint relevant Council officers and other external stakeholders to the Panel and agree its chairmanship and operation. In agreeing its operation, the Committee will provide for the Panel not to be able to establish any other sub-group or body to carry out its responsibilities.

Agenda

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Agenda Item 5

The Stronger Families Hub: Our engagement with key stakeholders - exploring participation and feedback to improve service and satisfaction - Witness Session One

Committee name	Children, Families and Education Select Committee
Officer reporting	Antony Madden, Children's Services
Papers with report	Scoping report Appendices 1-6 (circulated separately from main agenda)
Ward	All

HEADLINES

Background

At its meeting on 20 July 2022, it was proposed that the first review of the Children, Families and Education Select Committee focus on the topic of The Stronger Families Hub. The Committee approved the scoping report on 3 November 2022 and the first witness session will take place at this meeting. The scoping report for the review is attached so Members are reminded of the Terms of Reference of the review.

Antony Madden and other relevant officers will attend to introduce the report and answer questions from Members.

Summary

The Stronger Families Hub was launched in August 2021. It provides a single point of contact for children, young people and families in Hillingdon to access a wide range of support services 24/7 and aims to offer the right help at the right time. The Stronger Families Hub is a single point of access for professionals and families and includes a 24/7 Triage Service that replaced the previous out of hours model (known as the Emergency Duty Team); to support Early Help Key Working services were realigned to create 3 locality based Stronger Families Key Working Teams and; new pathways were implemented to help ensure that preventative intervention is fully utilised and statutory social work is retained for children with complex needs and children at risk.

The vision of the Stronger Families Hub is to transform the local families support system, providing timely help at the point of need whilst reducing demand for acute statutory services. This model combines a social work led service, adult mental health service and the Hillingdon Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Teams have adopted a multi-agency, locality approach to support children at the earliest possible stage by working closely with partners across Hillingdon in services for young people to enable timely information sharing and facilitate a more co-ordinated multiagency and faster response to the needs of children and families in Hillingdon. Within the Stronger Families Hub sits Hillingdon MASH, which ensures professionals share information

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timely where there are concerns about a child's safety or welfare.

The Stronger Families Hub enables schools, post 16 and early years providers via the referral template to request support for children with Special Education Needs or Disabilities (SEND). In addition, the Stronger Families Hub early help model enables health professionals to conform with the statutory requirements of completing a SEND Early Health Notification, once they have identified a child who may have long term SEND.

Following the launch of Stronger Families in August 2021, a review of the service has taken place highlighting strengths, areas to be developed and opportunities for the partnership as we move into the second year of delivery.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee note and comment on the progress made by the Stronger Families initiative at this time and invite questions as part of its review.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Recovery Planning

In July 2020 Children and Young Peoples Services (CYPS) submitted a business case seeking approval to implement a revised operating model for all first points of contact throughout Children and Young People's Services, to create a coherent single point of access and a robust Early Help offer. The proposed approach changed the ways of working for the Triage Team, Emergency Duty Team, Adult Mental Health Practitioner Team, the Outreach Service, Key Working Service, Participation Services and the Adolescent Development Service.

Experience gained through managing the initial response phase to COVID 19 informed the proposal, specifically the changes outlined for the Emergency Duty service, a delivery model that has become outdated as a result of the change in demand for out of hours support. In addition, the development of a robust early help offer was required to support effective management of increasing demand. The new model aimed to:

- Focus on 'prevention' from the very first point of contact.
- Transition from 'Emergency Duty' to 24/7 Support
- Deliver a robust Early Help Offer
- Reduce the demand on statutory services

The new operating model aligned services, strengthen pathways and integrated the Early Help offer to provide an effective alternative to the statutory services. The new single point of contact was the Stronger Families Hub and sits at the front of the change programme in order to improve the coordination of service delivery and promote the Early Help structure to help create a

community focused and joint-working service. One of the most significant aspects of the Stronger Families Hub model is the simplified coordination of response. Creating a fluid and flexible service from the point of contact through to the delivery of targeted interventions which reach across CYPS and out to the community in order to help mitigate rising demand into statutory services.

Operating under a clearly defined pathway has helped ensure all advice and support to children and families is targeted, consistent, and the use of pre statutory resources is maximised. The Stronger Families Hub changed the ‘front door’ approach, as well as the capacity and capability to deliver strong preventative services via an Early Help Assessment and Team around the family approach. Redirected resources embedded the Key Working Service across 3 localities offering a rich skill set by integrating the workforce. The service has, supported and strengthened each locality to encourage lead professionals to confidently manage Stronger Families Plans where appropriate and build community resilience.

Progress made

The Stronger Families Hub has made it as easy as possible for residents and professionals to gain access to support including safeguarding services for children and young people. For the past fourteen months, this has been the single point of contact for requests for services for vulnerable children and young people in Hillingdon. The approach saves triage time, as all the required information is provided at the start, rather than going back and forth to enable an accurate assessment to be made. Importantly, this supports gaining consent of the family and once the Early Help Assessment referral form is completed the Stronger Families Hub is better placed to decide what form or support or intervention is most appropriate.

The 24/7 Support Service supports a robust, scalable and consistent out of hours approach with one single point of contact. In the forthcoming weeks, it will be no longer the requirement for Anchor commissioned service to handle social care calls out of hours, reducing the handoffs and streamlining this service further. The requirements for out of hour’s work that exceeds advice and support is well coordinated by triage and handed to the right on call specialism.

Since being launched the Stronger Families Hub has been very well received and utilised. Since the launch over 27,000 requests for assistance were considered with over 12,000 of these made via the parent friendly Early Help Assessment which can be accessed and completed anywhere and at any time by professionals. We appreciate how busy our partners are so the new process enables our partners to save and add pertinent information before submitting the Early Help Assessment consequently promoting timely decision making for children and young people. The Stronger Families Hub has supported over 1800 families to access support from the Stronger Families Key Working Locality Teams.

Since the start of the pandemic the service has received an increasing number of contacts each month. The average number of monthly contacts in the last year (1st October 2021 – 30th September 2022) was 1976. When compared to the average number of contacts in the previous year (1st October 2020 – 30th September 2021) 1526, this is an increase of **29%**. Testing identified that there has been an increase of contacts each month (April’ 22 – 1466, to Sept’22 - 1860) averaging 1816, with contacts peaking in May and June 2022 at 2125 and 2106.

Review, adapt and improve

To support evaluation and development of the Stronger Families model following 12 months of operation we have completed a review focusing on three areas:

- multi-agency MASH review - to include consideration of learning from Solihull JTAI
- a multi-agency Stronger Families Review – to consider effectiveness of multi-agency support being delivered
- Internal Audit review – to consider quality of information received, recording and decision making.

This will enable findings from the multiagency audits and internal reviews to triangulate areas of good practice and areas of further development.

Alongside partners from education, adult social care, CNWL, CCG, Hillingdon Hospital, Children's Centres, Portage, SEND and the SEND advisory service, the Stronger Families review detailed a number of key findings. For example, partners in SEND found that the SF Hub: "worked more collaboratively; partners in children's centres noted the hub "shared knowledge...less likely to be duplication"; colleagues in Portage highlighted the "detailed notes"; health professionals commented that the Early Help Assessment "questions easy to follow". Of assurance, several of the recommendations were workstreams in progress. For example, the need for SF Hub staff to have a wide knowledge of relevant support services, the availability of EHA data for partners, attendance by Primary Care at the monthly Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings to further the collaborative approach taking place and Stronger Families Champions in schools helping support joint working and contributions to Early Help Assessments and Stronger Families Plans.

As part of the review of statutory support in the Stronger Families Hub, the SF Subgroup completed an audit of cases in the Hillingdon MASH using the Solihull JTAI recommendations as a framework. The audit considered Q1 of 2022-23 and concluded that: "...the consensus of the review group was that the MASH is operating effectively to safeguard children. Partner agencies are working together effectively, and information sharing promotes positive outcomes for children." Moreover, the MASH enquiries evidence good practice in analysis including areas such as family history, discussions with parents/carers/professionals, strengths as well as risks, provides feedback and ensures that information is analysed with a clear rationale of the decision-making process detailed on the child's case file records. Importantly that the practise taking place in the MASH helps determine the next steps for the child, and 'makes meaning' of the information provided by the various contributing agencies" Whilst the recommendations were centred on individual and isolated examples these were not seemingly fully representative of the practice taking place; nonetheless all pertinent and useful points being addressed at this time with learning disseminated with the practitioners. An example of this was ensuring parents are fully aware of the range of agencies that may be contacted, and the types of information shared when consent is provided to further promote transparency and partnership working.

To further ensure the service remains robust and responsive to the changing nature of children's needs, an internal audit was commissioned by the Executive Director of Children and Young Peoples Services (DCS) The audit considered a range of areas including the decision-making process within the SFH, information sent by professionals when requesting support for children and their families, contribution to Stronger Families plan and the response of partners

to the Stronger Families initiative. Moreover the report highlighted the increased demand and need to continue to build the capacity of the Stronger Families Hub to ensure the hub is sufficiently staffed in order for children to access support from the right person at the right time.

Moving forward

The Stronger Families Early Help model is expected over time to reduce demand into statutory services. The model will provide the right level of support to professionals to help them manage need as a lead professional and avoid unnecessary repeat referrals. The introduction of an integrated Early Help model will lessen the overreliance on statutory support services as well as preventing entry to care. Families' experience will continue to improve as the locality model increases reach into the community, strengthens locality partnerships and build community resilience.

In order to ensure the service remains dynamic and responds to children's changing needs, a number of initiatives are taking place at this time. These include the following:

- A review to consider the merits of an All Age Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub across Children and Adult Social Care. This is to further a family safeguarding model.
- A review of MASH and SFH establishment to ensure adequate resourcing to meet increase in demand and potential future demand.
- Furthering the automation agenda with a wider use of robots enabling staff to remain focused on providing information, advice and support rather than administrative tasks.

PERFORMANCE DATA

Effective, timely and relevant management information is in place to sufficiently monitor contacts, referrals, assessments and case throughput to support decision making and escalation, to identify demand and emerging risks. Data is sourced from Protocol to provide required performance reports. These reports utilise a range of organisational and child-level data and benchmarking statistics. This enables the leadership team to forecast areas of focus, emerging trends and providing real-time comparisons with other local authorities.

Headline performance

• Contacts in the last 6 months	11,541
• Early Help Assessments completed	816
• Referrals in the last 6 months	2,074
• Statutory assessments completed in the last 6 months	2083

These are set out in more detail on the next few pages.

Contacts (request for assistance)

Contact Outcome(s)

Information and Advice Only

Internal Redirection for open case (EHM)

Link to Existing Early Help Episode

Progress to OLA EHCP Transfer

Progress to SEND

Refer to Stronger Families

Send to Children's Centre Teams

Send to MASH

Send to Statutory Social Care

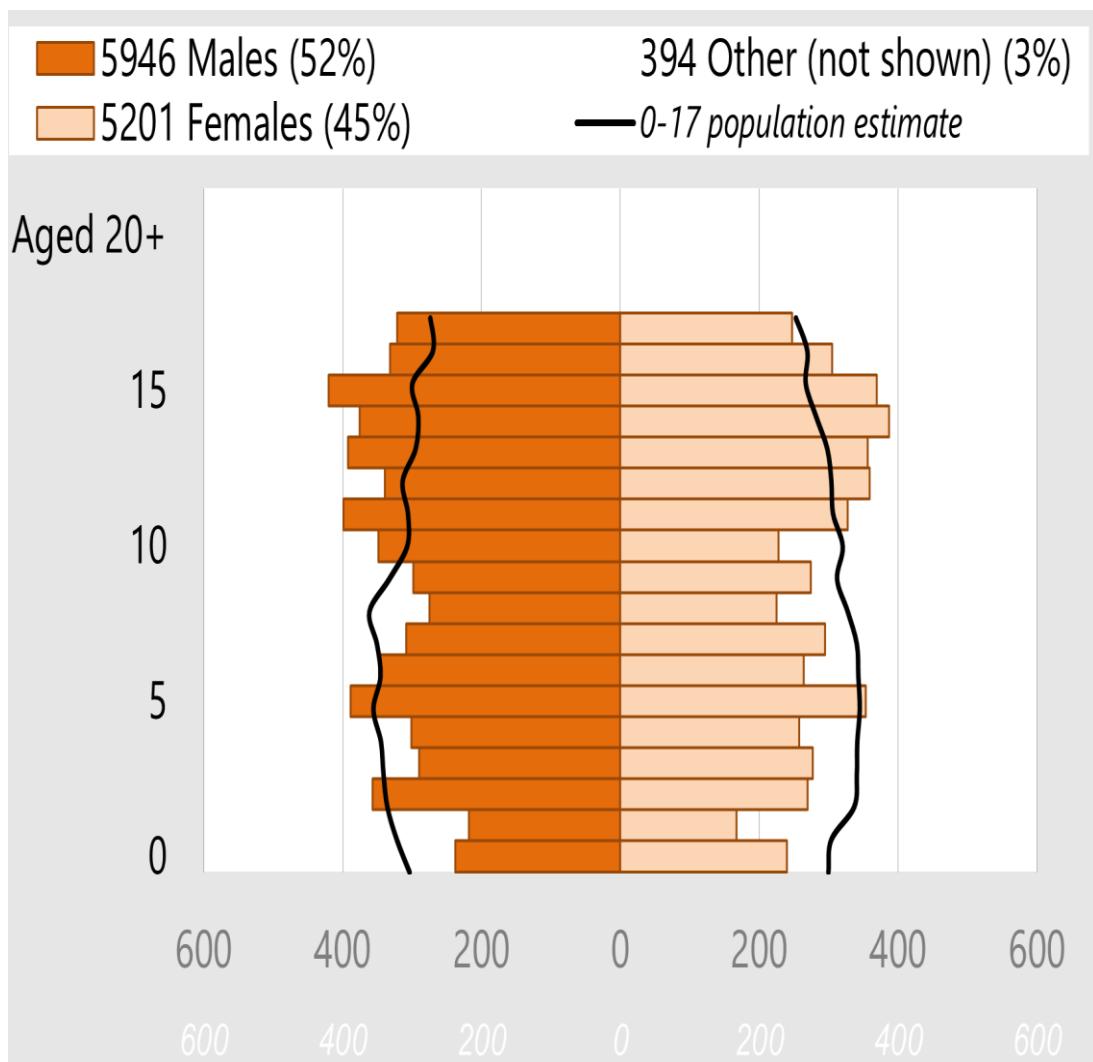
Signpost to Other Agency

Targeted Support Programmes

The Stronger Families Hub has an objective to bring together key people in the workforce, including AXIS network crime practitioners, database, Triage Officers and MASH Senior Practitioners as well as co located partners who have access to health, education and police data bases. All contacts and referrals enter directly to the Stronger Families Hub where they are triaged by a team of trained Triage Officers, Social Worker, Senior Practitioners and Advanced Practitioner with oversight and support from two team managers. Requests are then signposted to the appropriate service in CSC, SF Key working as well as SEND, SAS, Portage, Participation and Childrens Centres. The AXIS team use the AXIS Database to identify new Early Help cases and enhance the information sharing of all referrals into the Hub.

A aim of this service is to identify and signpost children, young people via early help pathways where possible. The improved sharing of information at the earliest possible opportunity has supported early identification of need and better defined how contacts are progressed, including whether they should be converted into a formal referral, as well as offering advice, guidance and signposting. The categories above show the range of outcomes selected for contacts received by the Stronger Families Hub.

Age and Gender of children requiring assistance



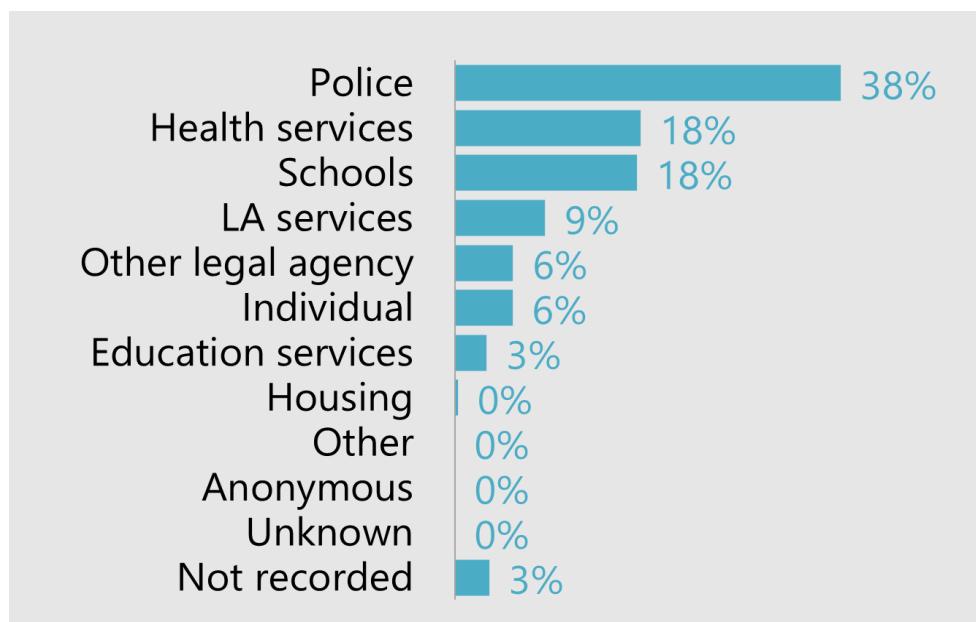
The Stronger Families Hub aims to provide support from pre birth to age 18 in order to intervene early before difficulties become entrenched with children and their families. Support in the formative years is of particular importance to help lessen the likelihood children will require statutory support in later stages of their childhood as illustrated in the chart above showing young people, often male, requiring the highest level of support at this time. Adolescent Development Services including AXIS is now accessed via the Stronger Families Hub. Young people can also access targeted support services themselves directly by self-referring.

Ethnic backgrounds of children for whom a contact has been received

White	30%
Mixed	5%
Asian or Asian British	16%
Black or black British	10%
Other ethnic group	9%
Not stated	30%
Not recorded	Nil

The diverse community's resident in borough is reflected in the ethnicity of children and their families as well as the CSC workforce, 30 of whom are based in the Stronger Families Hub and MASH.

Source of contacts (non-statutory support)



Police Merlin reports are the main source of contacts and can account for almost half of all contacts and referrals received by the Stronger Families Hub. MASH Police are co-located on site with the Stronger Families Hub staff. The area is base for up to 13 members of the Met Police including a Police Sargent and Detective Sargent to promote collaboration and the rapid exchange of information.

Category of contacts used to illustrate the primary need of the child/ren

Absent parent / carer - UASC
Absent parent / carer-unattended child
Abuse by Professional
Access to records
Adoption
Age Assessment
Checks - CAFCASS
Checks - EWO
Checks - Health
Checks - Housing
Checks- MP
Checks - Other LA
Checks - Police
Checks - Probation
Checks -SEN
Checks - UK Border
Child Mental Health
Child Missing from Education
Child Sexual Exploitation
Child Substance Misuse
Contact Issues
Court Order
Dependent of an Asylum Claim
Domestic Incident
Domestic Incident Notification
Domestic Violence
Early Health Notification
Education Health and Care Needs Assessment Request
Emotional Abuse
FGM
Harmful Sexual Behaviour
Housing / homelessness issues
Injury Reported
Missing Child
Neglect
OLA CLA Notification - for Info only
OLA CP Notification - for Info only
OLA Referral
OT -Assessment /Adaptation/ Equipment
Other Agency Prospective Foster Carer
Parental Mental Health
Parent / carer illness or disability
Parent Substance Misuse
Physical Abuse

Classification: Public

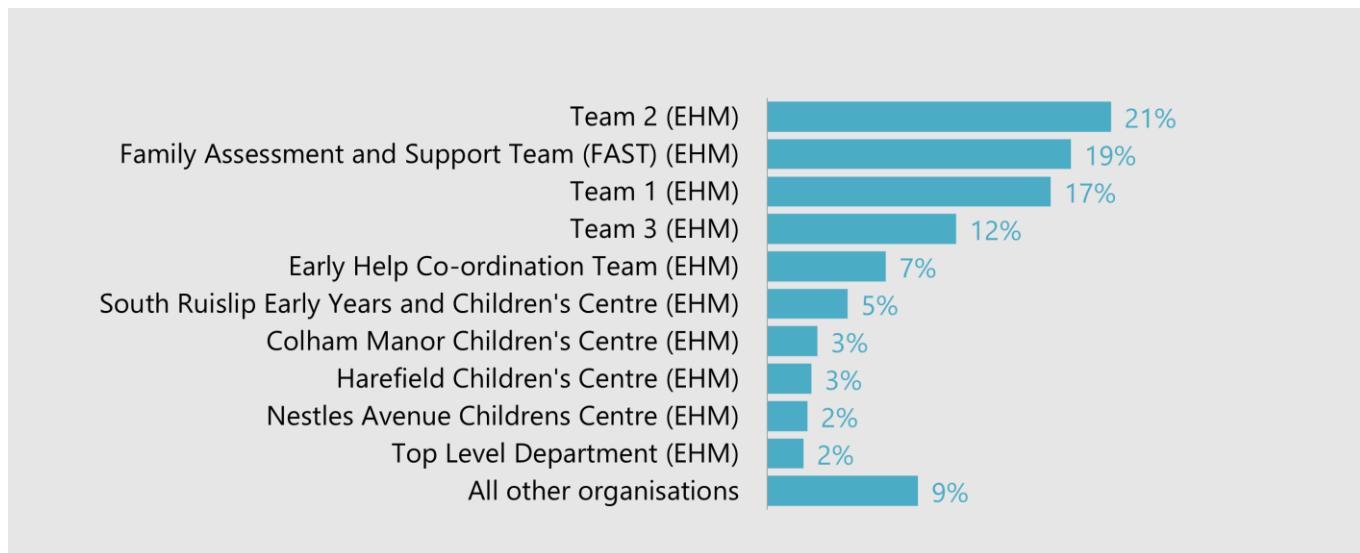
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Poor School Attendance
Post 18- Ensuring Safety
Potential Victim of Trafficking
Poverty / low income
Private Fostering Notification
Radicalisation
Remand in LA Care
Request for secure bed made by police under PACE
Requesting Counselling
Requires registration of disability
Requires respite / short breaks
Section 37 Report Direction
Section 7 Report Direction
SEND Advisory Service Request
Serious Youth Violence and Vulnerability
Sexual Abuse
Socially unacceptable behaviour
Step -Parent Adoption
Substance misuse
Transfer In Request
Vulnerability
Young Carer

The demands of out of hours social work have changed significantly and detailed analysis has been undertaken of the nature of out of hours work in order to reshape the service. The former Emergency Duty Team was a generic team supporting both children and adults out of office hours and was replaced with the Stronger Families Hub which operates as a 24-hour support service. Children's contacts in volume far outweigh adults at a ratio of 27% adults to 73% CYPS. However, an analysis of the complexity shows that although the volume is far lower in ASC the complexity and demand of work is greater.

ASC required a far higher number of visits 27.8% in comparison to children's 2%. In summary 90% of practitioners' time is being spent in addressing adult mental health concerns. The volume of children's contacts indicated a higher requirement of time at the triage stage to ensure advice and information is provided and that case management systems are kept up to date, particularly for the volume of Looked After Child and Domestic Abuse notifications received. As a response to demand analysis of both data processing and direct intervention and support, the Stronger Families Hub has a clear focus on the triage of contacts and referrals. The above details the contact categories used by staff in order to determine the primary need. More than one service and team can be accessed via the Stronger Families Hub.

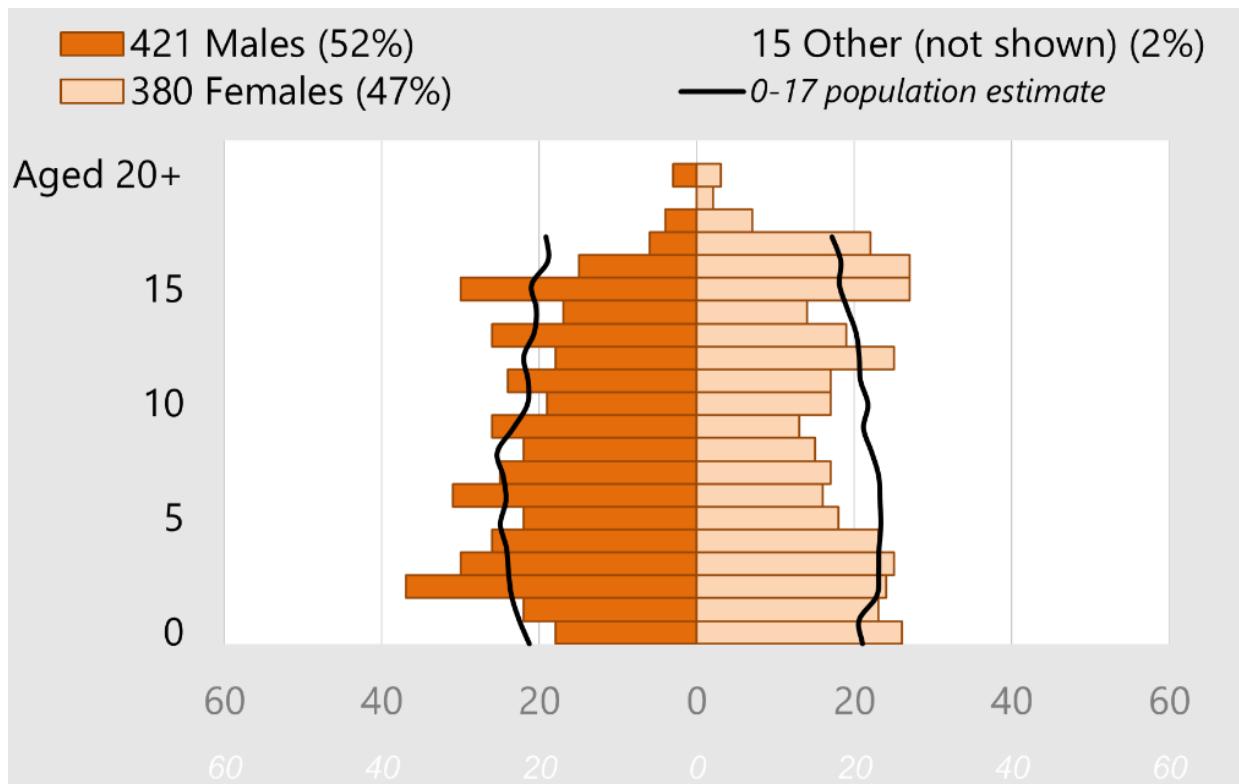
Source of completed Early Help Assessments



The Stronger Families Locality Key Worker Teams have a clear intervention and form of support made available. This has created an enhanced skill set in the service. The SF Key Working Service is delivered through three locality teams using the same approach, tools and systems and therefore providing consistency across the borough regardless of families area of residence. The three teams operate on a locality basis that was identified through data mapping. The capacity within the teams reflects the demand in each locality, although the overall service requires to be flexible to assist with changes in future demand across the borough.

For example, circa 1,700 (based on 2019 activity data) referrals were managed by the Participation service covering children missing from education and attendance issues however children in situations such as this are now referred directly into the Stronger Families Hub to access the Participation Service and locality teams. A whole-family support offer is made available using a Stronger Families Plan which is co-produced with parents, carers and young people- if age appropriate to do so.

Age and Gender of children subject to an Early Help Assessment



Ethnic backgrounds of children subject to an Early Help Assessment

White	30%
Mixed	4%
Asian or Asian British	15%
Black or black British	11%
Other ethnic group	10%
Not stated	30%
Not recorded	0%

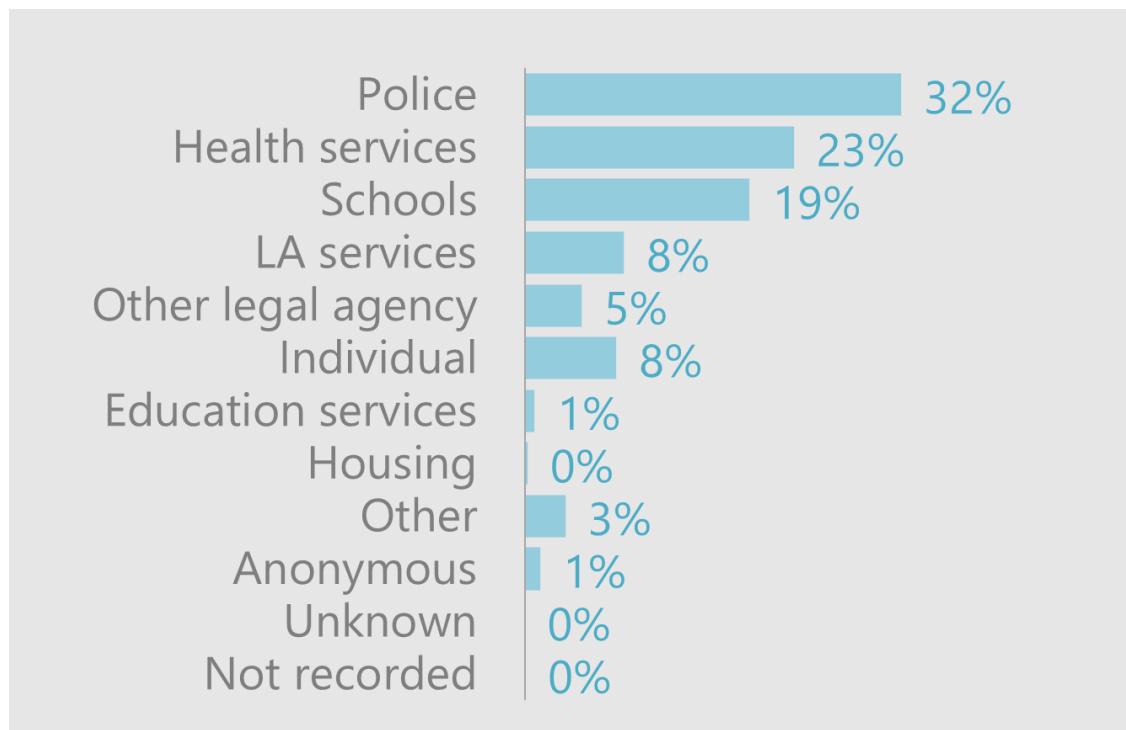
Early Help Assessments are the primary method of assessment and mechanism to access targeted support services. The main roles and responsibilities of the Stronger Families locality teams is to offer:

- Key worker intervention for children with additional needs requiring targeted support either as a lead professional with a view to handover or alongside the lead professional for a time limited period.

- Support advice and guidance to strengthen the role of partner agencies. Being a key point of contact and support within the locality will prevent step up to statutory services when not required.
- Support and facilitate early and sustainable step down of cases by earlier co-working in cases such a Child in Need Plans, reunification, resettlement planning or special guardianship support plans.
- Focus on the early identification and planning for children with special education needs and disabilities.
- Focus on the early identification and prevention for children at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation as identified through the AXIS database.
- Using the team around the family approach for children missing for education and attendance issues.
- Work seamlessly with the Adolescent Development Service, Childrens Centre, Youth Service, 0-19 Health Service.

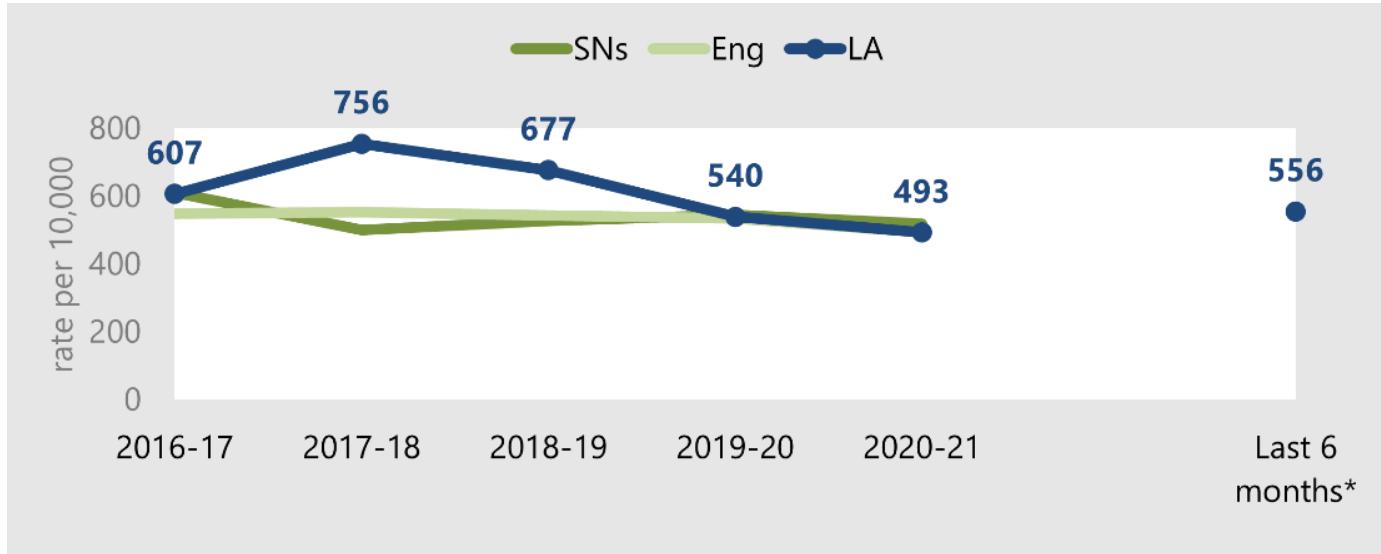
The Key Working service is led by the Head of Early Help Prevention and Permanence.

Source of referrals (statutory support)



Police Merlin reports remain the main source of statutory referrals and can account for almost half of all contacts and referrals received by the Stronger Families Hub.

Rate of referrals per 10,000 children aged 0-17



The chart above illustrates a yearly reduction, since 2017-18, in the number of contacts that are progressed to a statutory referral. The local authority is now below the national average and statistical neighbours as a result of the level of non-statutory support provided to children and their families.

Portal Usage

All contacts in the period October 2021 to November 2022

Email	12,591
Fax	13
Internal System notification	8
Portal	11,887
Post	2
Telephone	2168
Walk In	7
Total	26,676

Contacts were previously received via various pathways, emails, and calls, referral forms, into social care direct, triage or directly to MASH. Triage was occurring more than once and was demanding on the services and resources at that time. A revised Early Help Assessment was designed and has become the primary referral route for partner agencies excluding the Police who utilise a dedicated secure email address to share information and merlin reports. The Early Help Assessment is accessed via an online portal (accessible on the local authority website) and is interfaced with the CYPS and Early Help case file management system.

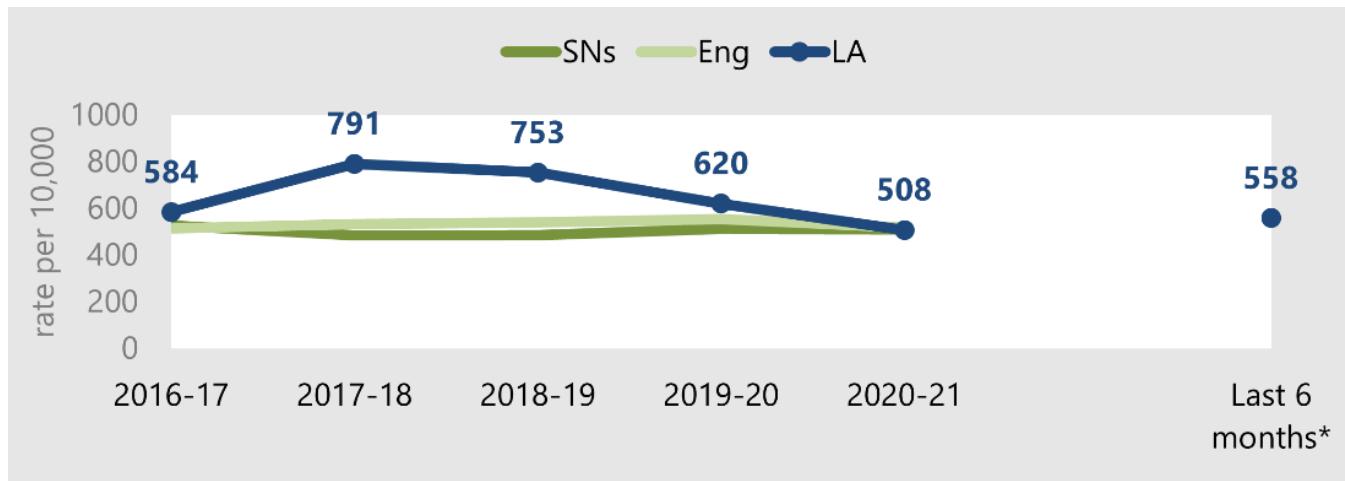
The table above shows the increased use of the early help assessment portal and reflects a decrease in other forms of contacts being received. Child protection concerns continues to require to be referred via telephone. A written referral is submitted through the portal the same

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day to ensure a written record is provided, information cross referenced. This avoids any delay in the child receiving support and protection services.

Rate of completed statutory assessments per 10,000 children aged 0-17



The operating system prevents delay in children and families being offered help. As noted earlier, since the launch of the Stronger Families Hub, over 1800 families have been referred to the Stronger Families locality teams for support. The impact on children and their families of the recent health pandemic and more recently the cost-of-living crisis has resulted in more families being in distress and consequently requiring support services.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

The Stronger Families service delivery model seeks to build upon existing family and community strengths with the provision of advice and guidance where required. The locality approach enables the development of strong links with families, their community, and local universal, and third sector organisations.

Stronger Families ensures that children, young people and their families receive tailored support at the earliest point, from the most appropriate service(s), to enable children and young people to achieve their full potential. The Stronger Families Key Working service works together with families to prevent difficulties from escalating and becoming more complex. It is consent based, and time limited. Families have the option to self-refer and access the service without any restrictions.

There are three Stronger Families teams who each serve a locality of the London Borough of Hillingdon. The three areas as defined as North (Ruislip and Northwood), Southeast (Hayes) and Southwest (West Drayton). The service is designed to support families in their area of residence, therefore within local distance and easy access. Families are supported with complex and multiple difficulties which are preventing parents from adequately caring for their children e.g. lack of knowledge of positive behaviour management, routines and boundaries, mental health,

substance misuse, disengagement with education and risk of homelessness.

The service works with families:

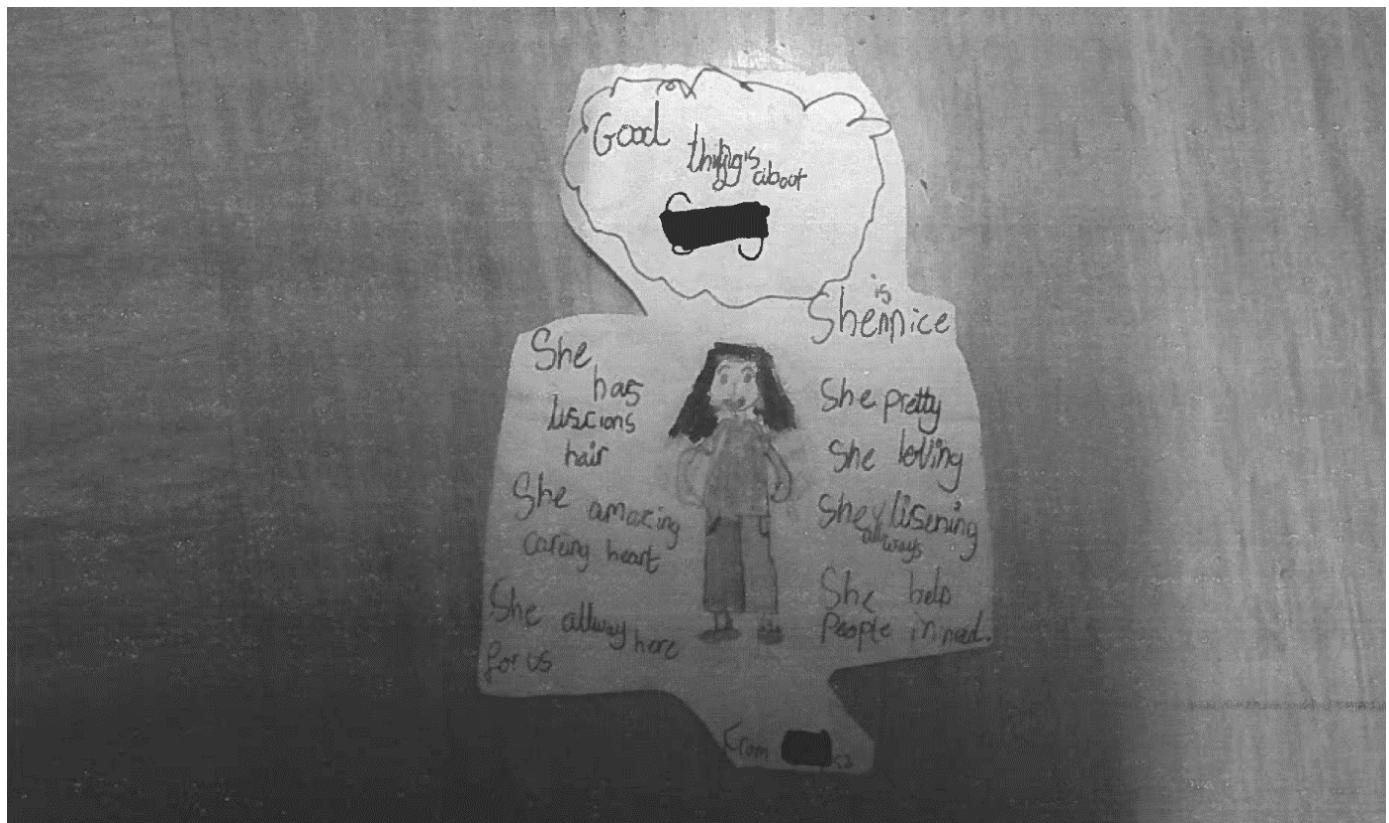
- Where there are early indicators of abuse and neglect of children and young people
- Where a family is struggling with complex issues related to ill health and or financial disadvantage/ unemployment to the extent that their parenting capacity is compromised.
- Where a vulnerable expectant mother requires support to prevent an escalation of concerns requiring statutory intervention.
- Where there is parental or family conflict which is escalating.
- Families affected by domestic abuse
- Have a child or children with emerging special educational needs or a disability or has additional needs related to health or behaviour.
- On whole family issues where a child or young person is frequently missing from home or school.
- On whole family issues where there are school attendance and participation issues.
- Where there is early identification of criminal exploitation.
- Where parents and / or children and young people are involved in criminality
- Where there is a plan to reunify a child with their family following a period of being looked after.
- Where a family needs support following a young person, who is returning from custody to prevent family breakdown.
- Where a child or young person is involved in risk taking behaviours
- *This is not an exhaustive list as the service is designed to be responsive to changing local need.*

Families benefit with interventions undertaken that address the concerns as identified by/with the family and helps develop their capacity, strengths and problem-solving abilities of the family. The keyworker and other professionals involved deliver interventions directly to the whole family or individual members, sometimes it is necessary to broker and coordinate services, as part of the plan, from partner agencies, voluntary or community groups. The keyworker uses persistent and non-stigmatising engagement techniques and works in a way that suits the family in terms of time, location and individual learning styles. Creativity, use of self and positivity as part of a strengths-based approach, using interpersonal tools to engage families and facilitate their 'buy in' to the service. All help offered is sustainable in that families are offered tools and skills to develop their strengths.

- Delivering a tailored approach, individual to each family's needs to address areas of concern whilst promoting problem solving skills/strategies within the family.
- Using assertive and practical engagement strategies/tools such as 'activity sheet', 'box of worries' and/or consequential thinking skills for families or individuals who may be resistant to support.
- Supporting families intensively in their own homes and community settings through modelling and coaching techniques, promoting practical skills such as budgeting and domestic management, and social skills such as listening and negotiating.
- Providing positive parenting techniques at different stages of child development and supporting families in managing difficult and challenging behaviour.

- Advocating for parents so that they are resilient and build confidence in accessing universal and targeted services if required.

Feedback from Young People



"I have been really honest with my feedback. I have done the best I can do. I feel listened to."

"I felt like I could say anything. I felt quite comfortable. She gave us ideas on how to bring ourselves closer in the family. I have started having a closer relationship with my Mum and I am attempting to build one with my dad. My Key Worker was very understanding, and we connected fast".

"... is proud that his attendance has improved and is enjoying the support of Targeted Programmes."

"I just feel that you've helped me since you've been here – I feel like I can manage my bills and my relationship with the school more confidently. My mum has noticed that I'm calmer with the whole situation. In the first few weeks being able to call you, it was a relief to be able to speak to someone about it. I feel like we've come miles from there – we're not even near there anymore."

Feedback from parents

"I self-referred to social services when my son disappeared from home at night and was struggling with low mood and suicidal ideations. Once the social worker referred us to M things started

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moving quite quickly. M was the most courteous, human, kind and professional key worker we could have asked for. She was committed to our well-being and devoted to her role in supporting us often going above and beyond checking on us out of hours. She got my son onto the adolescent targeted programme which was a blessing during the summer holidays when we were homeless. This contributed for his mood improvement and over-all well-being. She struck such a lovely positive relationship with him and he appreciated her input and loving kindness as much as I did. I have never seen such devotion in council services. She would chase up housing for us and was always on the things.

She made us feel very comfortable, was non-judgemental and accepting of us and understanding/sensitive to our circumstances. Never once intrusive! So very respectful! She just knew how to strike the perfect balance. I could go on and on singing her praises. The service has now come an end and we will miss her dearly. We would like to let you know she had such a significant and positive impact on our lives and helping us get back to normality after so much adversity. This will never be forgotten."

"My total appreciation and gratitude for the services and support provided."

"I really benefited from going on the Domestic Abuse and Parenting programmes and feel more empowered and confident in parenting, which has also reduced stress."

"I had a look at that bag and the clothes and loved everything. There all so amazing so thank you so much. I'm very grateful for all of it and your help."

"I just wanted to thank you for working with me and all your help. I am ever so grateful. Thank you again".

At point of closure a parent feedback that she '*initially, had felt very down, stuck and exhausted [and] the changes in her son would not have happened without Key Worker's involvement.'*

"The Key Worker was very supportive and always listened to me, non-judgemental, unlike other professionals I had in the past."

"I think it's helped that you don't pretend to be perfect, it makes you human and it's made it easier to talk to you. It's a work in progress and I feel like we're going in the right direction. I thank you for all your help and if I need it again then I would refer myself back to the Stronger Families Hub because I've found it really helpful."

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Adherence to the local authority's statutory duties ensures that the Stronger Families Hub supports the Council in delivering against its financial objectives set out in the Medium-Term Financial Forecast.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The key pieces of legislation are as follows:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- Working Together 2018

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

APPENDICES

(to be circulated separately from main agenda)

- 1 Early Help Assessment
- 2 Stronger Families referral (good example)
- 3 Stronger Families Plan
- 4 Terms of Reference for the Stronger Families multi agency review
- 5 Feedback from parents document
- 6 ChAT data report for October 2022

- 1 [Early Help Assessment v1.0 May 2021.docx](#)
- 2 [Stronger Families referral good example.docx](#)
- 3 [STRONGER FAMILIES PLAN.Template.docx](#)
- 4 [TOR SF Review.docx](#)
- 5 [Feedback from Parents on the intervention from Stronger Families.docx](#)
- 6 ChAT data October 2022

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Children, Families and Education Select Committee

Review Scoping Report - 2022/23

Draft title: The Stronger Families Hub: Our engagement with key stakeholders – exploring participation and feedback to improve service and satisfaction

1. OBJECTIVES

Aim of review

At its meeting on 20 July 2022, the Select Committee agreed as its major review to investigate how the Stronger Families Hub was functioning in practice since its creation over a year ago. This document serves as an introduction to the topic of the Stronger Families Hub and sets out in general terms the context to the Stronger Families Hub within local government, the objectives, the challenges and offers a framework for any subsequent review.

For the purposes of the review, it is significant to distinguish between the Stronger Families initiative and Stronger Families Hub. Both these areas are distinct in their roles although when developed and rolled out the Stronger Family Hubs will strengthen the early and targeted intervention available for families in the Borough. This review will specifically focus on the service in place for children and young people.

It is intended that the review will support the work of Children's Services in helping to shape its ways of working, identifying areas of weakness and how overall engagement with key stakeholders can be improved.

Terms of Reference

The following Terms of Reference are suggested for the review, subject to any changes agreed by the Committee:

1. to understand the Council's current work with the Stronger Families Hub and what it entails.
2. scrutinise a service that was launched a year ago and review its effectiveness.
3. review the Stronger Families Hub's digital process (one number, one address) and how this works in practice.
4. to understand and explore the nature of partnership working.
5. to consider the allocation of information to children and families and access to community support functions.
6. review the support in place for parents and children that were born during lockdown and the impacts of covid.
7. to acknowledge that all families come in all shapes, sizes and circumstances and how better support can be provided to parents.
8. to explore the measures in place for child protection and safeguarding.
9. subject to the committee's findings, to make any conclusions, propose actions, service and policy recommendations to the decision-making Cabinet.

2. BACKGROUND

Stronger Families Hub Team

The Team was initially set up with two team managers, an advanced practitioner, 11 fulltime and one part time social worker (typically senior social workers) as well as 10 triage officers. In light of the increased demand since the launch, interim arrangements have been made for additional staffing subject to the findings of the project review.

Context and key information

"Our vision is to empower families to be and feel strong, safe and healthy through the provision of early and targeted support to reach their full potential.

To achieve our vision, we need to respond to need when it arises and work together to ensure we have the right person for the child and family leading the right intervention."

The Stronger Families Hub programme is a 24/7 service available to residents providing a wide range of support services. It can be described as a locality based Early Help and Prevention Service supporting children at the earliest stage by working closely with partners across Hillingdon.

The Stronger Families Hub programme went live on 3 August 2021 and provides a single point of contact for all safeguarding referrals and an online route to refer a child to social care. The areas of support include:

- Children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)
- Adolescent Development Services
- Portage
- Stronger Families (Locality Key working teams)
- Social Care
- Attendance issues
- Children Missing from Education

The Council's website includes further information regarding the service model which combines a social work led service, adult mental health service and the Hillingdon MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub). It enables schools, post-16 and early years providers to request support in an educational establishment for children SEND. It enables health professionals to conform with the statutory requirement of completing a SEND Early Health Notification, once they have identified a child who may have long-term SEND. The Stronger Families Hub allows better information sharing between professionals, which ensures a more co-ordinated and faster response to the needs of children and families in Hillingdon.

Relevant Legislation

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017

External issues and risks to Stronger Families Hub

Stronger Families Hub within local government is faced with a number of challenges, including:

- Increasing demand for services combined with decreasing funding/resources
- Continued effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing recovery; and
- Recent Implications from BREXIT, including scarcity of materials, manpower and expertise;

Current data, best practice and research

Further data and research will be identified as the review progresses.

Connected work

The Stronger Families Hub in Hillingdon has the potential to impact all children and social care services within the Council. Implications to this impact will be identified as the review progresses.

Executive Responsibilities

The Cabinet Member responsible is Councillor Susan O'Brien, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education.

3. EVIDENCE & ENQUIRY

Lines of Enquiry

Lines of enquiry can be expanded as the review progresses or included in relevant witness session reports. However, lines of enquiry may include:

- establishing the historical background of the stronger families hub to compare how well the service is being delivered now.
- real focus on the end user and how they have found the service in practice.
- exploring what support functions are in place and whether these can be improved.
- the nature of partnership working and how it is combined in practice.

Potential witnesses

Witnesses will be identified by the Committee in consultation with relevant officers.

Surveys, site-visits or other fact-finding events

Such opportunities will be identified as the review progresses. A possible survey of suppliers will be considered to provide useful feedback and evidence for the Committee.

Future information that may be required

Further information may be identified as the review progresses.

4. REVIEW PLANNING & TIMETABLE

Proposed timeframe & milestones for the review:

Meeting Date	Action	Purpose / theme	Witnesses / officers attending
3 November 2022	Agree Scoping Report	Information and analysis	Democratic Services/Committee
6 December 2022	Witness Session 1	Setting the scene	Officers

4 January 2022	Witness Session 2	The voice of providers	Social workers
Outside the committee - Survey / Networking session / consultation / informal meeting with users etc...			
2 February 2022	Witness Session 3	Partnership working	MASH, social work and key partners
TBC	Out of Committee session	Stronger Families Hub	Site visit to the Hub
TBC	Out of Committee session	Informal chat with Service Users including parents	Service Users
14 March 2022	De-brief and emerging findings	To discuss key findings and identify potential recommendations	
18 April 2022	Approval of draft final report	Proposals – agree recommendations and final draft report to Cabinet	

Resource requirements

None

Equalities impact

None.

Background Papers / further reading

[Stronger Families - Hillingdon Council](#)

[MASH - Hillingdon Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements \(Hillingdon LSCB\) \(hillingdonsafeguardingpartnership.org.uk\)](#)

[Early Help: Stronger Families - Hillingdon Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements \(Hillingdon LSCB\) \(hillingdonsafeguardingpartnership.org.uk\)](#)

Appendices

App A - Stronger-Families-Flyer

App B - Stronger-Families-Webinar-Slides