



# 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:

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Purpose / theme</b>	<b>Witnesses / officers attending</b>
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

