

Minutes

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

6 December 2022

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Heena Makwana (Chairman), Roy Chamdal (Vice-Chairman), Kishan Bhatt, Rita Judge, Peter Smallwood, Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead)</p> <p>Co-opted Member: Tony Little</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Anisha Teji (Democratic Services Officer) and Antony Madden (The Head of Service for First Response, MASH and out of hours social work - Children & Young People Services)</p>
40.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tony Gill.</p>
41.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
42.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes from the meeting on 3 November 2022 be agreed.</p>
43.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED AS PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items would be heard in Part I.</p>
44.	<p>THE STRONGER FAMILIES HUB: OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS - EXPLORING PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE SERVICE AND SATISFACTION - WITNESS SESSION 1 (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Head of Service for First Response, MASH and out of hours social work - Children & Young People Services introduced the report on The Stronger Families Hub: Our engagement with key stakeholders – exploring participation and feedback to improve service and satisfaction – Witness Session One. A detailed overview of the report was provided and key aspects of the report were highlighted.</p>

The Stronger Families Hub

The Stronger Families Hub was launched in August 2021. The Committee heard that the service provided a single point of contact for children, young people and families in Hillingdon to access a wide range of support services 24/7 and aimed to offer the right help at the right time.

Members were informed that experience gained through the Covid 19 pandemic informed the ways of working and helped shaped a delivery model to meet the demand for out of hours support. 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

It was noted that operating under a clearly defined pathway had helped ensure all advice and support to children and families was targeted, consistent, and the use of pre statutory resources was 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 three localities offering a rich skill set by integrating the workforce. Members were informed that the service had supported and strengthened each locality to encourage lead professionals to confidently manage Stronger Families Plans where appropriate and build community resilience.

A review of the Stronger Families model was undertaken 12 months of operation. The findings of the reviews were outlined to the Committee.

In order to ensure that the service remained dynamic and responsive to children's changing needs, it was reported that a number of initiatives were taking place including a review of the All Age Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, MASH and Stronger Families Hub establishment.

Performance data

The Committee received detailed performance data throughout the report and presentation. Headline performance data highlighted included:

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

Service user feedback

The Committee was presented with feedback from service users. Since the Stronger Families Hub was launched it had been well received and utilised.

Appendices

The Committee had regard to a number of appendices including:

- A blank Early Help Assessment form.
- A completed Early Help Assessment form that had been completed and referred to the Stronger Families Hub.
- An example of a Stronger Families Plan that detailed information such as child contact details, summary of review discussion and plan going forward.
- Terms of Reference for the Stronger Families multi agency review.
- Feedback from parents on the intervention from Stronger Families.
- Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) data report for October 2022 that included in-depth information such as contacts in the last six month, early help placements and demographics of children across all areas of children's social care.

Committee discussion

The Committee noted the information presented and sought additional information on a few points.

Regarding the Stronger Families Champion in schools, it was explained that this initiative was a response to a recommendation from a subgroup and helped support joint working and contributions to Early Help Assessments and Stronger Families Plans. Discussions with colleagues in schools were being planned to promote the initiative further. In terms of working with the third sector and voluntary organisations, the Committee heard that there were already good working relationships in place with organisations such as Brilliant Parents and feedback was often used to consider how services could be improved.

On the matter of out of hours lines and how serious cases were managed, it was noted that the Stronger Families Hub was a single point of access for professionals and families and included 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 three locality based Stronger Families Key Working Teams and; new pathways were implemented to help ensure that preventative intervention was fully utilised and statutory social work was retained for children with complex needs and children at risk. There was regular training available depending on which agencies were involved and all partners attended induction days for additional training. The duty to refer was always emphasised.

The Committee heard that going forward there would no longer be the requirement for the commissioned service Anchor to handle social care calls out of hours thus reducing the need for handovers and streamlining this service further. Cases were coordinated by triage and allocated to teams depending on the nature of the call and specialism. The demands of out of hours social work had changed significantly and detailed analysis had been undertaken of the nature of out of hours work in order to reshape the service. Data collated demonstrated that childrens contact outweighed adults at a ratio of 27% adults to 73% CYPS and although the adults ratio was lower, the nature of work was more complex.

Members welcomed the positive feedback from parents and were informed that when there were any complaints officers worked to resolve the issues quickly. It was also noted that as part of the review's witness programme Members would have an opportunity to meet with parents and young people and would be able to explore any

suggestions for improvements/complaints then.

Officers were thanked for their work in this area which was clear throughout the report and data provided. Given that there had already been reviews undertaken in April and October 2022, it was questioned what was hoped by the Committee's review. It was explained that the Stronger Families Hub had increased in size since its introduction and there had been large investment in this area. Members were requested to provide scrutiny on the area to consider how the service could be improved, strengthened and whether it was delivering value for money. It was also acknowledged that Councillors engaged first hand in the community, and it was hoped that the review would encourage a positive outlook of the Stronger Families Hub and help breakdown any negative stereotypes. There was now a strong focus on Early Help and safeguarding and the review would raise further awareness of the initiative.

During Member questions it was noted that existing data came from a variety of different sources that was cross referenced.

In terms of how the Stronger Families Hub engaged with children where English was not the first language, it was reported that having a diverse work force helped to develop relationships with service users. There was always the opportunity to use interpreters to ensure that comprehensive assessments took place.

The Committee was aware that sometimes there appeared to be a stigma attached to asking for help. It was confirmed that the Stronger Families Hub was promoted through the safeguarding partnership, council website and communications issued from the Corporate Communications team. There was also work being done within religious settings and schools to increase education and consultation including with young people. An example of this was the DfE Build Back Better Fund initiative in regards to safeguarding woman and children from harmful practices including Female Genital Mutilation. The initiative was based in the Stronger Families Hub and included 4 consultation events with residents.

During Member discussions, it was noted that police referrals often related to domestic violence and neglect. It was highlighted that the Stronger Families Hub was a one point contact to encourage and simplify the Early Help route. To avoid discouraging people to complete forms the Committee was informed that the forms were made created in a user-friendly way and avoided any technical jargon. Having the single point of contact made the process more efficient as it avoided going back and forth and enabled accurate assessments to be made.

The Committee thanked officers for their work in this area and the detailed report and presentation.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the and commented on the progress made by the Stronger Families initiative at this time and asked questions as part of its review.

45. **CABINET FORWARD PLAN** (*Agenda Item 6*)

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.

46. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 7*)

	<p>The following updates were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The requested report on how funding had been allocated in schools for Ukrainian children would be presented to the Committee on 2 February 2023• Youth Services, the Budget and Corporate Parenting Panel meeting minutes would be considered at the Committee meeting on 4 January 2023.• The service update on Early Years and Children’s Centres had been marked to ‘to be confirmed’ and would be added to the work programme at the appropriate time. This was due to changes ongoing in the area. <p>The Committee was mindful that the requested information report on an Ofsted inspection of a school in the Borough had been deferred for a second time. Members were keen to receive this report at the January 2023 meeting.</p> <p>It was agreed that Democratic Services would explore whether any additional information could be provided on whether the Council would be undertaking new capacity calculations for each school within Hillingdon in response to Government guidelines.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the updates and work programme be noted.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.17 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Anisha Teji on ateji@hillington.gov.uk or 01895 277655. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.

The public part of this meeting was filmed live on the Council's YouTube Channel to increase transparency in decision-making, however these minutes remain the official and definitive record of proceedings.