

A close-up photograph of a woman with a warm smile, wearing a black headband and a black top, holding a young child. The child is wearing a red top and a green and white striped scarf. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a bookshelf.

**The London
Borough Of
Hillingdon**

**Hillingdon Stronger
Families Strategy
2021 - 2025**

Hillingdon.gov.uk

Drivers

Monitoring and Review
Voice of the Child
Analysis of Need
National Policy

Aligned local strategies,
E.g. Council Plan, SEND,
Health & Wellbeing Strategy,
JSNA, Hillingdon's Children,
Young People & Families Plan,
Hillingdon's Life (Permanence
Strategy) for C/YP and
Families

“Families are empowered to be and feel strong, safe and healthy through the provision of early and targeted support to reach their full potential”.

Principles and values



Children & Young People

Are physically and emotionally healthy.
Are not traumatised or retraumatised by services or unsafe contexts.
Are supported by their families and communities and, when necessary by professionals to be happy and to thrive and to experience education.
Are active participants in the design and review of services offered to them as individuals or groups.
Live and engage in contexts that are as safe as we can make them.



Parents and Families

Are not traumatised or retraumatised by services.
Know where to get help if they need it.
Have trusted relationships with practitioners, neighbours and other parents.
Are empowered via supportive relationships and where appropriate provision of services to tap into their strengths.
Are active participants in the design and review of services offered to them as individuals or groups.
Live and engage in contexts that are as safe as we can make them.



Communities

Are collectively responsible to support parents, children and young people.
Provide sustainable support through individuals, community groups, business and voluntary organisations.
Are understood and valued by practitioners as being partners in offering solutions and best outcomes.



Practitioners

Are the people that families want to work with.
Focus first on families and their strengths
Identifying where families may have been experienced trauma
Work in partnership with families to understand what they need, and build trusting relationships to build on strengths
Co-produce a shared vision and understanding of outcomes and success with the children and families they work with
Are skilled, knowledgeable in in co-production and co-delivering approaches that work

Our principles in Stronger Families

- Empower and enable families to be stronger
- Focus on preventing problems getting worse
- Work in different ways that are tried and tested and suit the family
- Be clear and consistent
- Think Family flows through all our work with families

- Identify the right person at the right time to lead the right intervention
- Work with kindness and compassion– relationship based
- Be Trauma Informed- ensuring any services offered don't retraumatise
- Professional curiosity

Framework



Stronger Families Pathways

Delivery

Early Years	School Age	Young People	Families
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Children's Centres Parenting Programmes Portage	School Nurses Participation Multi Agency Psychology Support	Adolescent Development Service Youth Justice Team Axis	Stronger Families Locality Teams Brilliant Parents Adult Education Parenting Programmes

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Our Vision



The overall aim of Stronger Families is that:

'Hillingdon's families are empowered to be and feel strong, safe and healthy through the provision of early and targeted support to reach their full potential'

Whilst most children, young people and their families in Hillingdon have a good quality of life with minimal additional support from public services, there are some who find life more challenging for a variety of reasons. At different times in their lives, children, young people and their families face circumstances that mean they may need additional support and help from universal, targeted and specialist services. There is national evidence that helping families as early as possible and providing support at the right time by the right person can reduce the likelihood of problems escalating (and the need for more serious interventions) and improve long term outcomes for children, young people and their families, enabling them to move on from difficulty



Our Early Help Strategy takes into account Hillingdon's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). There are also linked priorities and shared expectations in other local strategies such as for Emotional Health and Wellbeing and SEND, and our Life (Permanence) Strategy in Children's Social Care.

Our Priorities

Establishing a locality model for Stronger Families

Understanding and addressing the impact of Covid-19 on families and communities.

Meeting the needs of children and young people with additional needs in a range of areas via a joint commissioning approach.

Developing family strengths and empowerment.

Prevention of abuse and neglect, and providing a multiagency approach to protecting children and young people from being involved in criminality.

Focusing on permanent and enduring living situations for children and young people.

A focus on early mental health and wellbeing support.



Fewer children are obese, fewer children and young people and parents have mental ill-health and fewer children & young people misuse substances.

Hillingdon's Corporate Plan Objectives include

Strengthening families where children are at risk:

- Targeting effective early help and support will strengthen families, keep children and young people safe and improve their life chances.
- Ensure that children and families have swift and co-ordinated access to the right services at the right time
- Achieve positive and sustained change by working with the whole family- 'Think Family'
- Achieve permanence for children and young people at the earliest opportunity

We believe that every child should have the opportunity to reach their full potential and that children and young people are best supported to grow and live permanently within their own families where it is safe to do so.

By working together, we will develop flexible services that are responsive to children, young people and families' needs, and provide the right level of help at the right time and by the right person. This will support a shift of focus away from managing short-term crises towards effective intervention and support for children, young people and their families at an earlier stage.

2

Hillingdon's Stronger Families Principles

We are committed to the following principles that inform the way we work with children, young people and families:

- As soon as any professional is aware that a child/young person has any additional needs he/she will talk to that child and their family and offer advice and support to meet that need
- Practitioners in all services and teams across directorates will work together and with the family to meet additional needs
- Families will be empowered to identify their own challenges, needs and solutions. In most cases, outcomes for children and young people will only be improved by supporting and assisting parents/ carers to make changes
- Early help assessments must take into account and include the whole family so as to allow for a swift move into the stronger families plan
- We will offer support and services to help families find their own sustainable solutions.
- Our aim is always to build resilience in children, young people and families and provide the resources to families so they are empowered and enabled to overcome their own difficulties for the remainder of their lives
- Where families may come back for a service throughout their lifespan, this is not a sign of failure but that families know where to come for support as their needs change

Stronger Families intervention spans a range of need and is provided at the point at which the services offered to every child and family (universal) no longer supports the individual to reach their full potential. Early help can be delivered at both a single agency and multi- agency level in accordance with identifying additional need and responding to it with the right service.

While the pan London threshold document is a recognised guide, the principle of 'right person at the right time' will ensure children with additional needs receive help and the Early Help assessment is crucial to determine service delivery based on assessed need.

We will ensure that we



Work to empower families to be strong
take the time to understand their needs fully



Work together across the whole system
aligning our resources so we can best support families and do what needs to be done when it needs to be done and by the right person



Focus on preventing problems
before they occur and offer flexible responsive support when and where it is required



Use tried and tested methods whilst embracing innovation
Knowing that it is not the method on its own that makes a difference but the quality of the relationship



Build the resilience
of parents, children, young people and communities to support each other.



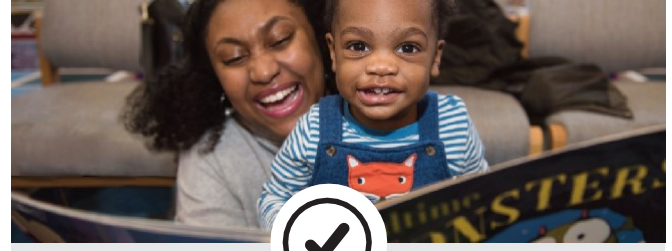
Be clear
Ensuring a shared understanding and informed consent about what we are trying to achieve and why

What success looks like



Children & Young People

- Are physically and emotionally healthy.
- Are not retraumatised by services or unsafe contexts
- Are supported by their families and communities and - when necessary - by professionals to be happy and to thrive and to experience education.
- Are active participants in the design and review of services offered to them as individuals or groups.
- Live and engage in contexts that are as safe as we can make them



Parents

- Are not retraumatised by services
- Know where to get help if they need it
- Have trusted relationships with practitioners, neighbours and other parents
- Are assisted via supportive relationships to tap into their strengths



Communities

- See it as their collective responsibility to support parents, children and young people.
- Are providing sustainable support through individuals, community groups, business and voluntary organisations
- Are understood and valued by practitioners as being part of the solution



Practitioners

- Are the people that families want to work with.
- Focus first on families and their strengths
- Identifying where families may have been re-traumatised by services
- Work closely with families to understand what they need, and build trusting relationships to build on strengths
- Have a shared vision and understanding of outcomes and success
- Are skilled, knowledgeable and are co-creating and co-delivering approaches that work

3

Hillingdon's Early Help Framework



The effective delivery of Early Help in Hillingdon is underpinned by eight components: **Guidance, Assessment, Support, Access, Workforce Development, Insight, Influence and Co-production, Governance and Performance Management.**

4

Guidance

The Pan London Threshold Document prompts practitioners to consider the whole family situation and any related safeguarding concerns and to consider the right intervention.

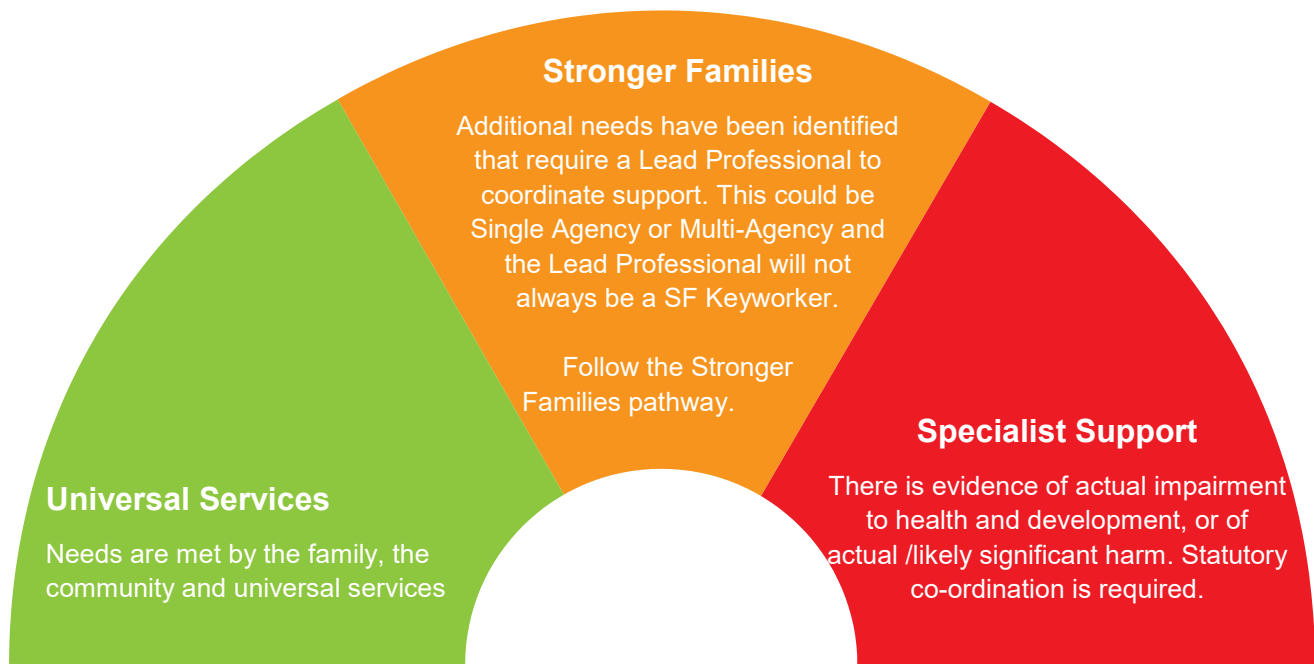
The Early Help Assessment and the Triage process via the Stronger Families Hub provides the single route into services for additional needs.

Sources of advice, support and information are also provided.

Working Together 2018



Hillingdon Thresholds of Need and Support Framework Thresholds



Professionals will assess children to ensure that their general needs are met.

Requires a targeted response which could be a single agency response, a coordinated Lead Professional response from universal settings, or where needs are more complex led by a Stronger Families Key Worker.

Requiring a specialist response by a Social worker / specialist worker where the child is in need or at risk.

Stronger Families aims to prevent escalation of risks and needs for children, young people and families. We aim to provide a range of different responses at the right time to meet the family's needs and to support empowerment and control of resolving their issues and challenges.

5

Assessment

Early Help Assessment (EHA)

When there is an indication that children and their families have unmet needs that are negatively impacting on their outcomes, then an EHA should be undertaken.

The assessment is about engaging a child, young person, parent or family in a conversation about identifying the challenges and thinking about how to get things going well again.

Taking a whole family Early Help approach through an assessment means that:

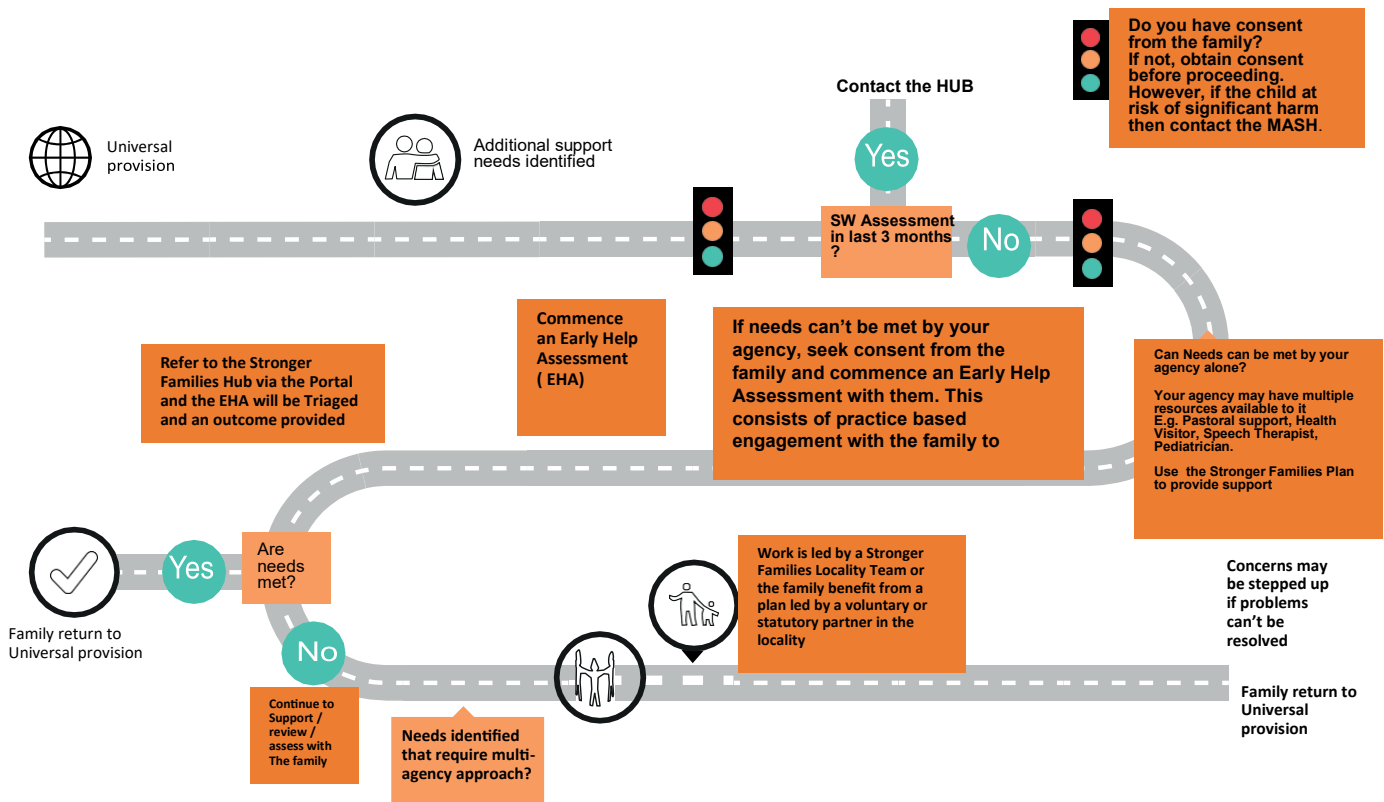
- all aspects of life - home, work, school/college, social, community and mental health and wellbeing are taken into account
- the whole person/whole family situation and what matters most to them is understood
- the impact of what's not working well for all family members is understood
- a family's strengths are recognised and built on
- families are encouraged to access community resources and support independently without waiting for an assessment to end
- a person's readiness to change is recognised so that support is offered at the right time
- practitioners' expertise, judgement and advice are recognised
- the EHA will be used to coordinate support from partners as part of the agreed plan
- one assessment can be used for the whole family

Referral pathways and service delivery

1 Where external agencies can't meet need themselves they should complete an Early Help Assessment and upload this to the Portal which is the gateway to the Stronger Families Hub. The content of the EHA will be analysed within the Hub and the right service identified. The outcome may be Children's Social Care, Locality based keyworking, SEND, Adolescent Development Services or Children's Centres.

2 Families who are being worked with in the remit of CIN/ CP or who are reunified with their families from care/ custody may benefit from Stronger Families keyworking via the locality teams.

A 'step down' to Stronger Families keyworking is possible via (i) a manager to manager conversation and consent based service plan (ii) The social worker referring the family to a local partner organisation themselves with advice from the SF Manager where needed.



The **Stronger Families Pathway** (see above) ensures a timely and coordinated response to support for families. It also ensures that there is a practice based response to families from the start and that the right person/ service is identified at the right time to provide support.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL



Liquid Logic provides a way of recording the assessment of needs and support offered. Starting the Early Help Assessment will ensure effective information sharing and will help to evidence the progress made. It will also save duplication and time in the future if you need to invite other practitioners to be involved in the Team Around the Family. The tools we use will be integrated into Liquid Logic and assessments, plans and referrals can be shared appropriately. We will use Liquid Logic to manage and monitor the effectiveness of outcomes for children, young people and families.

Support for Families: Early Help across the system

“Local organisations and agencies should have in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs of individual children and families. Local authorities should work with organisations and agencies to develop joined-up early help services based on a clear understanding of local needs. This requires all practitioners, including those in universal services and those providing services to adults with children, to understand their role in identifying emerging problems and to share information with other practitioners to support early identification and assessment.”

Working Together 2018



Examples of Stronger Families work across the partnership

Brilliant Parents are volunteers provided by MOPAC funding. Their role is to support families who are experiencing difficulty and have a child over 12-18/ at risk of exploitation – their role complements and provides a response to targeted need as part of the overall offer around parenting support that Brilliant Parents provides to Children Services.

The Axis Project - uses advanced analytics to gather, triangulate and analyse information from multi-agency partners, community groups and the public to identify those at risk of criminality and exploitation. The project synthesises soft and hard intelligence to identify trends, themes, locations and associations then uses these to inform operational and strategic activity- making families, children and contexts safer and stronger. The service is consent based and is offered early, via grass roots youth workers.

Kooth is an online counselling support service for children and young people aged 10 and upwards.

Attention Hillingdon is an 8 week programme in our Children's Centres to support children's attention and listening skills. **Parenting** is a 5 week course designed to build parental confidence in all areas of parenting

Supporting Autism is a support group for parents providing information and guidance

Youth Employment Initiative which aims to get 16-29-year olds into training or employment.

Hillingdon Adult and Community Learning partner with Stronger Families to tackle unemployment in the borough. This partnership provides an intensive local support system, bringing closer working with other public services, including troubled families, Stronger Families, Youth Justice, leaving care services, public health, mental health services, to ensure all parents and young adults have access to education, qualifications and employment. Helping adults into education is a key element of developing strengths and empowering the whole family

PATCH -an innovative health service providing in home care to young people so as to avoid their hospitalization. GPs work with consultants to share skills regarding care at home.

Integrated Therapies are the therapies to provide speech and language and OT support, and also sensory support for neurodiverse children and young people

Psychology Support. As part of Hillingdon's Multi Agency Psychology Support Service, (MAPS) the Stronger Families teams have access to clinical consultation so that we work with families from a trauma informed perspective.



In the light of a global pandemic in 2020 and increasing levels of risk and need we must act now to create meaningful actions from our partnerships across agencies and directorates to support significantly improved outcomes for children, young people and families.

We know that demand for services is highest from families with a number of complex and overlapping needs around health, safeguarding, emotional and mental health and wellbeing and poverty.

Building Stronger Families means transforming the way ALL professionals work with each other and with families, and developing the right culture, systems and behaviours that support delivery of the new model across the partnership. We must work in ways that will empower families to become stronger at the earliest stage, making positive changes and building resilience to prevent problems from arising or getting worse.

Local Networks

Our locality approach will be based on a detailed understanding of local need, future need and existing providers supported by strong stakeholder engagement throughout. Each community is different and while the principles of the approach will be the same, the solutions may differ.

Our Stronger Families keyworking teams are part of a local network of voluntary sector and statutory local partners who deliver services within the locality.

Local networks will ensure that we have a range of partners getting together regularly to discuss local need and consider emerging trends and the needs of families in the area. Locality Managers deliver surgeries which are a key element of our relationship based practice approach and ensuring that we are able to organise ourselves around the principles of help; as early as possible, by the right person, to empower families to become stronger.

The networks have a 'dotted line' to the overarching strategic group sitting within the Safeguarding Partnership – the Stronger Families Subgroup.

The purpose of our locality networks is to:

- determine the locality profile based on current knowledge
- identify unmet needs and gaps in provision from the group's perspective within the remit of Stronger Families
- agree and own an integrated action plan based upon the above and outlining activities for a local partnership approach
- ensure that each partner meets their identified obligation regarding the plan and has accountability for delivery
- develop and monitor the action plan

Locality Surgeries

One of the proposed functions of the Stronger Families keyworking team is to provide guidance and support to agencies in local groups. Surgeries are held in each locality where practitioners can seek advice, particularly where step-up or a change of plan is being considered. Where needs are relevant to the Stronger Families criteria but multiple or complex and progress is stuck, the use of locality surgeries will be implemented to take a more focused and holistic view of family problems. This may result in identification of gaps in provision or significant barriers to outcomes being met which can then be addressed through collaborative solutions and if necessary commissioning or procurement through the resources of the partnership.

The Early Help Hub is the single point of contact for all safeguarding and Stronger Families concerns/requests for support regarding children and young people in Hillingdon.

It brings together expert professionals, from services that have contact with children, young people and families, making the best possible use of their combined knowledge and information to keep children and young people safe from harm.

The Early Help Hub is the front door to our Multiagency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):

The MASH - Information Gathering for Safeguarding Referrals

Early help hub and 24 Hr Triage	The MASH Information Gathering Hub
Triage Officers - both for Stronger families/ Social Care Advanced Practitioners	Advanced Practitioners (covers both elements) Early Intervention Police Health Metal Health Housing Probation Housing

Referral to the Early Help Hub is via Early Help Assessment

It is expected that where there is an existing Early Help Assessment completed within 3 months this will accompany any referral for support from specialist services unless there is immediate risk to a child that requires an urgent response. If any professional believes a child is at risk of significant harm, they must ring their concern through to the Hub on 01895 556 006.

The receipt of an Early Help Assessment may result in one of the following outcomes:

- The Senior Practitioner in the hub will triage this assessment then advise and support provide to the lead professional on how to provide a Stronger Families plan, this can include signposting to known community resources
- allocate the work to the Stronger Families Key Working Service to co-ordinate and lead a Stronger Families Plan.
- If there is identified complex needs or areas of significant risk then and Children and Family Assessment be undertaken by Social Care

A decision will be taken within 24 hours as to the most appropriate response. The referrer will receive written notification of the decision taken within 3 working days

Step Up

If there is a current Stronger Families Keyworking led plan and the team assesses that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm and the intervention is not reducing this then the case should be referred back to the Triage team and child protection procedures followed. A case discussion to review threshold would also be an appropriate course of action.

The Stronger Families Team Leader or the keyworker could undertake these actions. The team leader should have a reflective discussion with the keyworker to establish the need for referral for statutory intervention.

WHAT'S
WORKING
WELL



Development of the new front door that includes Stronger Families - linking this closely with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has meant that many referrals into Stronger Families originate within the MASH, which demonstrates that through joint triaging families can access support at an earlier stage rather than being diverted away until the threshold for statutory work services is met.

Step Down to Stronger Families

Where possible families should not have to tell their stories many times. All staff working with families should be providing support and interventions to empower families and reduce concerns. It is a key part of Hillingdon's Life Strategy (Permanence Strategy) that we aim to build enduring care and family relationships around children and we start with the family.

Children and young people can step down to a Stronger Families Plan following the review and assessment of ongoing risk from a social work assessment, where there has been a child in need plan, a child protection plan and including where some children and young people may return home from care or custody with Stronger Families support.

Step downs to Stronger Families keyworking can only be agreed between the Social Care and Stronger Families Manager. This should be done in consultation with the family and the professional network. The SF TM may suggest an alternative locality resource. Social Care staff may refer to universal services themselves or a local voluntary or statutory organisation as part of their closure plan.

WHAT'S
WORKING
WELL



Clear processes with 'challenge and support' opportunities have been developed to step cases "up" and "down" threshold levels (ensuring cases are appropriately monitored and are managed at the appropriate threshold).

7

Workforce development

Delivery of Stronger Families requires effective working between professionals and between services including an understanding of each other's role, responsibility, organisational culture and values. We will develop a programme of multi-agency learning and development to strengthen and enhance the Stronger Families offer, using our partnership networks to build on the delivery of evidence-based practice. This includes:

- Awareness raising to ensure that the thresholds relating to risk are clearly communicated and understood between professionals so that families can move between Stronger Families and specialist statutory intervention at the right time.
- Information sharing and conversations between professionals to identify families who would benefit from Stronger Families intervention
- Implementing whole-family approaches and undertaking strengths-based assessments of families including effective conversations and engagement with children, young people and families
- Holding and managing risk
- Embedding tried and tested approaches across the partnership
- Developing on-line resources for practitioners about evidence-based approaches and interventions

8

Insight, influence and co-production

We are considering more innovative and creative techniques such as youth forums, web based internet surveys, videos, peer-support systems, informal workshops and champion schemes to engage children, young people and families to develop a greater insight into what works for families. The voice of children, young people and families is vital in delivering our Stronger Families offer.

Understanding what it is like to be a child or young person in Hillingdon and what the day to day challenges are that families face provides a constant flow of ideas, thoughts and feelings that will drive decision making and ensure 'sensible' intervention that looks right at a community level.



9

Commissioning

We recognise that effective commissioning cannot be achieved in isolation. Collaboration & Co – production with all stakeholders including local residents and key services such as adult services, public health, schools, housing and NHS partners is necessary in order to deliver a successful wider system with effective service delivery. We have a history of working collaboratively with the local NHS, our integrated therapy service seeks to provide early help for people to meet needs, regardless of a diagnosis, we have begun to think about how we join up our transition offer to better support CYP and their families and our emotional wellbeing prototyping brings together professionals to offer early support to families and CYP. We want to build on the collaborative approach seen through Stronger Families provision and stakeholders are working together to develop an integrated model of early intervention that supports the new Primary Care Neighborhoods and locality working.

This will support the development of a more integrated system of support, promote innovation and improve sustained and embedded outcomes for families in their communities. There is no doubt of the importance of social value to the commissioning of Stronger Families, particularly in relation to the social and economic elements facilitating resilience and sustainability and consideration to the wider benefits of early help in general will be key in future commissioning models.

The development and delivery of Stronger Families in Hillingdon will be dependent on a more tactical approach to commissioning by further working with partners and stakeholders developing joint delivery models and a menu of options to recognise the different approaches needed within different communities and localities to achieve the same outcomes. Also realising the potential of funding from other sources. Commissioning for Social Value ensures that maximum benefit is derived from every pound of public money spent. Cost benefit analysis will need to be programmed into the business case for commissioning. To further develop and maximise the benefits of collaborative or joint commissioning a 'maturity' assessment will be undertaken in conjunction with key stakeholders.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL



Joint work led by the Clinical Commissioning Group is well underway in the production of a new model for the provision of emotional health and wellbeing services. The new model aligns CAMHS specialist services more closely with Stronger Families, meaning that children, young people and their families will be able to receive support closer to home and that providers are able to work in a more joined up way. CAMHS link workers will be employed to work closely with Tier 2 emotional health and wellbeing services and ensure that children and young people who need specialist services can access these quickly. These link workers will also assist children and young people transition into community based services as specialist support is no longer required.

10

Governance

The Safeguarding Partnership has overarching responsibility for this strategy. Performance will be managed through partnership structures and in addition, Stronger Families reports to the Hillingdon Health and Care Transformation Board. Quality Assurance and challenge will be provided via the Stronger Families subgroup and the Safeguarding Partnership.

Individual agencies will be responsible for meeting their own performance management arrangements which the partnership expects will incorporate targets for delivering the wider strategy and meeting shared outcomes.





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