



## FAMILIES FIRST QUALITY AWARD

For Family Information Services in England



**Standards & Guidance 2025**

## Executive Summary

**The Families First Quality Award 2025 for Family Information** Services (FIS) in England aims to recognise excellence in providing information, advice, and assistance to families, including those with specific needs.

**Purpose of the Award:** The Families First Quality Award 2025 acknowledges Family Information Services' commitment to delivering high-quality, outcome-focused information, advice, and assistance in line with current legislation and guidance.

**Role of Assessors:** Accredited Families First Assessors collaborate with local authorities and Family Information Services to evaluate and highlight evidence of competence across the standards' Elements.

**Information, Advice, and Assistance (IAA):** IAA activities empower parents and family members to make informed choices about their children's care, health, education, and recreation through accurate information, practical advice, and impartial assistance.

**Assessment Process:** The assessment process involves completing a Self-Assessment Tool and gathering evidence through surveys and virtual interviews to demonstrate compliance with the Standards.

**Certification and Review:** Certification lasts three years, with annual reviews conducted by the Assessor to evaluate progress and identify any changes needed in the organisation or service.

**Standards and Elements:** The FFQA Standards cover various aspects of service delivery, including identifying community needs, ensuring quality provision, engaging with the community, and fostering collaboration and partnership working.

**Optional SEND Elements:** The assessment of SEND Elements is optional and incurs an additional fee, allowing Family Information Services to work towards these standards simultaneously or later.

**Fees for Assessment:** The fees for FFQA 2025 assessments vary depending on whether FIS and SEND Elements are assessed together or separately, with specific costs outlined for each option.

**Glossary of Terms:** The document provides definitions for key terms such as advice, assistance, brokerage service, enhanced childcare database, and family services directory.



## Why the Families First Quality Award 2025

Family Information Services are crucial in empowering parents, prospective parents, and relatives by providing them with essential information, advice and assistance. These services go beyond just essential support; they equip caregivers with the necessary knowledge to make informed choices about their children's care, health, education, and recreation, especially for those with specific needs.

**The Families First Quality Award 2025** is a testament to Family Information Services' commitment to excellence. This respected Award recognises organisations that deliver vital information, advice, and assistance in accordance with the latest legislation and statutory guidance. What sets this Award apart is its focus on tangible outcomes.

Accredited Families First Assessors work hand-in-hand with local authorities and Family Information Services to rigorously evaluate and highlight the evidence of competence across the key Elements within the Standards. These Standards provide a robust quality framework that ensures high-quality service delivery that enriches families' experiences.

By following these benchmarks, Family Information Services can enhance families' lives and foster an environment of support and empowerment.

Choosing a Family Information Service (FIS) with the **Families First Quality Award 2025** means choosing confidence, knowledge, and a commitment to excellence in family well-being.

## What is Information, Advice & Assistance

Information, advice, and assistance (IAA) encompass a variety of activities that empower parents, prospective parents, and family members with the knowledge they need to make informed choices regarding their children's care, health, education, and recreation, including those with specific needs.

### IAA can be defined as:

- **Information** – accurate, up-to-date and objective information about childcare, health, recreation and learning opportunities, progression routes, choices, funding, where to find help and advice and how to access this.
- **Advice** - activities that help parents/carers, prospective parents, and family members gather, understand, and interpret information and apply it to their own situation.
- **Assistance** - provision of an impartial signposting, brokerage, and referral service to specialist support to help parents/carers, prospective parents, and family members meet their information needs and progress.



## Your Assessment

Once you have decided to pursue the **Families First Quality Award/s** (FFQA), it is essential to contact Assessment Services to confirm your intention to be assessed. You can email them at [ffqa@assessmentservices.com](mailto:ffqa@assessmentservices.com).

Assessment Services Ltd will confirm the FFQA Standards you wish to pursue, such as the Family Information Service (FIS) with SEND or the FIS Standards alone. Following this, you will receive a Cost Proposal and invoice; upon payment, an Assessor will begin working with you, and you will gain access to the Assessment Services Self-Assessment Tool, where you can add written narratives and documents to demonstrate how you are meeting the Standards you aim to achieve.

## Your Assessor

Your allocated Assessor will support you through the assessment process. They will work with you to understand you as an organisation/service and begin planning your assessment. Your Assessor will produce an Assessment Plan that identifies the activities to be undertaken during your assessment and includes a timeline for them.

## Self-Assessment & Surveys

Completing the Assessment Services Self-Assessment Tool is crucial for your assessment. It will give your Assessor a comprehensive understanding of your organisation or service, which will serve as the foundation for your assessment. While you complete your Self-Assessment, surveys will be distributed to your staff, partners, service users, and parents/guardians to request relevant feedback regarding your service provision regarding the Standards' requirements.

## Assessment Point One

Your Assessor will undertake a 'desk-top' review of the information / evidence you have provided via the Assessment Services Self-Assessment Tool. The feedback from the Surveys will also be analysed at this stage. This assessment point activity will help to identify those areas where you have provided evidence against the Standards and gaps where further evidence is needed. Your Assessor will give you feedback following this 'desk-top' review and agree on how the summative evidence will be gathered.

## Assessment Point Two

Your Assessor will carry out the summative evidence-gathering activity. You will be required to arrange virtual interviews or opportunities to observe activities, all of which will have been coordinated with your Assessor. You must provide a timetable or schedule at least five days before the evidence-gathering occurs.



## Certification

Your certification lasts three years, and your Assessor will contact you throughout that period. Twelve and twenty-four months after your Certification date, your Assessor will contact you to arrange an annual review. This remote intervention enables you to evaluate and discuss your progress in the previous twelve months and identify any changes to your organisation or service.

## Application

To receive the Family First Quality Award 2025, Family Information Services in England must meet all the **FIS Elements** in Standards 1 to 12. The **SEND Elements** of the Family First Quality Award 2025 are **not mandatory**. However, assessing against these Elements incurs an additional fee. Depending on your preference, you can work towards the SEND Standards simultaneously with the FIS Standards or later.

## Assessment Fees 2025

The following fees apply to all Family First Quality Award 2025 assessments:

- FIS and SEND Elements assessed together: £2100 + VAT.
- FIS Elements assessed only: £1700 + VAT.
- SEND Elements as a top-up assessment: £1400 + VAT.

## The Standards & Elements 2025

The pages below outline the **Families First Quality Award Standards 2025** for Family Information Services (FIS) in England.

They also refer to What This Might Mean in Practice, emphasising the evidence a FIS may provide to demonstrate its compliance with individual Elements.

Assessors evaluate various forms of evidence and report their findings to support continuous improvement.

Throughout the Standards, "parent/carer" encompasses anyone with parenting responsibilities, including mothers, fathers, teenage parents, foster carers, guardians, grandparents, and adoptive parents.



## Standard 1: Identifying Needs

**The Family Information Service uses census data, an Equality Impact Assessment, and a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment to identify community needs.**

**FIS Element 1.1:** The Family Information Service utilises its extensive knowledge of the local population and demographics to design, tailor, and deliver services that are effective, accessible, and responsive to the needs of the people it serves.

### What This Might Mean In Practice:

- You have used census data, an Equality Impact Assessment, and a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment to identify community needs, aiding in determining the percentage of disabled children and young people requiring access to local services.

**FIS Element 1.2:** The Family Information Services is designed and planned while considering the faith, gender identity, sexuality, disability, race, marital status, first language spoken and cultural and family backgrounds of the families, as well as the needs of non-users, clients, and professionals in the local community.

### What This Might Mean In Practice:

- Using the Equality Impact Assessment, the Equality Act 2010, and the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment has improved your Service Plans.
- Working with the senior leadership team to create strategic plans for the local authority has helped develop a comprehensive FIS Team Plan that addresses community needs.

**FIS Element 1.3:** The Family Information Service identifies differentiated levels of brokerage to support families prioritised locally.

### What This Might Mean In Practice:

- The differentiation you identified includes families in financial hardship, children in need known to Children's Social Services, those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), looked-after children, and recently adopted children.

**FIS Element 1.4:** The Family Information Service gathers information from local childcare providers and associated services, which informs the local childcare sufficiency assessment and planning.

### What This Might Mean In Practice:

- You have used the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment to inform plans when working alongside childcare providers and associated services.

## AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FOLLOWING SEND ELEMENT IS OPTIONAL

**SEND Element 1.5:** By building solid relationships with families and commissioners, the Family Information Service better understands the needs of parents/carers of young people with SEND, enabling them to act as advocates.

### What This Might Mean In Practice:

- Participating in strategy meetings with senior leaders and operational managers has allowed you to help create a shared vision for service improvement and achieve common objectives.



## Standard 2: Quality of Provision

The Family Information Service has robust quality standards and assurance procedures for providing information, advice, and assistance.

**FIS Element 2.1:** The Family Information Service has established rigorous quality standards and robust assurance procedures for providing information, advice, assistance, and brokerage and partnership work.

### What This Might Mean In Practice:

- You have implemented staff training, established clear policies, updated information regularly, conducted quality assurance checks, and sought feedback from service users.

**FIS Element 2.2:** The Family Information Service ensures that its online directories (Family Service and Enhanced Childcare Directory) are accurate, comprehensive, and compliant with legislation and guidance.

### What This Might Mean In Practice:

- Directories are frequently updated to ensure the information remains current and relevant.
- You collaborate with partner organisations to enhance directory offerings and support for families.
- Compliance with data protection regulations, maintaining confidentiality etc. is maintained, and you follow best practices for information sharing.

**FIS Element 2.3:** The Family Information Service encourages providers to update their information in the Family Service Directory and Enhanced Childcare Directory.

### What This Might Mean In Practice:

- Your directories are updated at least once per term on January 1, April 1, and September 1.
- You send system-generated reminder emails to providers to review and update their entries.
- Providers register online, consent to include their information, and upload data into a review template.

**FIS Element 2.4:** The Family Information Service has implemented systems and processes to ensure that the data in its directories is consistent and that this information is regularly reviewed and monitored.

### What This Might Mean In Practice:

- Entries in your directories follow a standard format, providing details of opening hours, costs, vacancies, age ranges, and the most recent inspection report outcome.
- A link is included to the most recent report and information about SEND support.
- Also, see SEND2.8 below.

**FIS Element 2.5:** The Family Information Service provides a platform for families with children and young people (with or without SEND) to provide feedback regarding their experiences with the services supplied.

### What This Might Mean In Practice: You:

- Clearly explain and make easily accessible the feedback area of the Local Offer, so families know how their feedback will be addressed.
- Create internet forums and social media platforms for families to discuss issues and for the FIS to share helpful information.



- Direct families to online forums and social media offered by relevant services, such as the Parent Partnership Service, local charities for children with SEND, and the local youth authority website.
- Provide publications or links that assist families of children and young people with SEND.
- Invite family members to participate in virtual advisory groups, forums, or a FIS parents' forum.

#### **AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FOLLOWING SEND ELEMENTS IS OPTIONAL**

**SEND Element 2.6** The Family Information Service ensures that information is easily accessible and understandable for SEND children, young people, and their parents/carers, using plain language and simple visuals instead of professional jargon.

#### **What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Your Code of Practice outlines a fair and consistent feedback collection process.
- Managers and staff understand this process well and can detail measures for accessibility. They can also share specific examples of improvements made based on feedback.
- Improvements may involve policy changes, new technologies, or modifications to enhance physical accessibility.

**SEND Element 2.7** The Family Information Service and the families it supports know who to contact with a comment or complaint if early years and childcare providers fail to meet the needs of SEND children or deny children access due to having SEND.

#### **What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Staff and families are informed about who to contact for comments or complaints regarding early years and childcare providers that fail to meet the needs of children with SEND or deny entry. They are also familiar with the FIS process for addressing these issues.

**SEND Element 2.8** The Family Information Service has implemented systems and processes to ensure that the data in its directories are consistent, that this information is regularly reviewed and monitored, and that it is relevant to families with children and young people who require support for SEND. Also, see FIS 2.4 above.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:** The following is a list of potential actions you may have taken:

- You have a designated staff member responsible for maintaining the accuracy and quality of your directories.
- Your directories include information on universal services such as Family Hubs, children's centres, schools, early education programmes, health services (including the Healthy Child Programme, health visiting, and school nursing), childcare providers, and colleges.
- They also feature targeted support services like positive activities, short break information and providers, respite care, social services, education and health programmes, parenting programmes, and relevant organisations, along with their eligibility criteria.
- Your directories offer a Rate and Review feature where families and service users can provide feedback on services and the Local Offer.
- Additional links may include general information, referral pathways, payment options for services, and support resources.



**SEND Element 2.9** The Family Information Service maintains a listing of universal services that can cater to families with SEND while fulfilling their legal obligations.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Information about universal services includes Family Hubs, children's centres, schools, early education, health services such as the Healthy Child programme, health visiting and school nursing teams, and childcare providers and colleges.

**SEND Element 2.10** The Family Information Service has systems and processes that ensure its directories hold information about specific/targeted services for children and young people with SEND and their families.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Families receive accurate information through collaboration with local authorities and agencies to update service directories.
- Your directories include details on positive activities, short break providers, respite care, social services, health services, parenting programmes, and service eligibility criteria.

**SEND Element 2.11** The Family Information Service has systems and processes that ensure its directories hold information about services for young people to help them prepare for adulthood, with particular attention given to those with SEND.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- See SEND 2.10 above.

**SEND Element 2.12** The Family Information Service offers comprehensive, easily accessible directories that provide information on short and long-term healthcare services, including specialised care teams for children with life-threatening illnesses.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- The health services information in your directories includes syndicated information directly from NHS Choices.

**SEND Element 2.13** The Family Information Service safeguards the accuracy of its directories by implementing systems and processes that collect information from families and service users about individual services or the Local Offer in general.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Your Rate and Review facility provides information about services and the Local Offer for families and service users.

**SEND Element 2.14:** The Family Information Service has systems and processes that ensure its directories include, or have links to, information and guidance about using services that benefit families of children with SEND.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Links to other information and guidance includes general information, referral pathways, paying for services, advice and support.



## Standard 3: Engagement & Consultation

The Family Information Service actively involves the local community in designing, planning, delivering, quality-assuring, and evaluating its services.

**FIS Element 3.1:** The Family Information Service actively involves its local community in designing, planning, delivering, assuring quality, and evaluating its service.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:** You:

- Engage with community leaders to assess parents'/carers' needs through surveys, focus groups, and outreach.
- Collaborate with local providers to ensure families access necessary resources and support.
- Utilise multiple communication channels to gather feedback from parents/carers and keep the community updated.
- Regularly evaluate services and seek input from parents/carers and stakeholders to align with community needs.

**FIS Element 3.2:** Families are aware of the services they can expect from the Family Information Service, their responsibilities while using the service, and the support available if they do not receive the services they can reasonably expect.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- You have a promotional plan to ensure families access relevant information through outreach activities, a website, and FAQs.
- Data protection and record-keeping procedures are shared with parents/carers, along with your Statement of Service, which includes features and feedback complaint information.

**FIS Element 3.3:** The Family Information Service provides families with information on safe practices for accessing services listed in its directories for families with or without SEND.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- You inform parents/carers about verifying childcare providers' credentials, references, and accreditations, including recommendations from current users.
- The providers are properly accredited and adhere to safety and quality standards.
- Your website's Local Offer includes guidance on safe childcare selection practices.

### AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FOLLOWING SEND ELEMENTS IS OPTIONAL

**SEND Element 3.4:** The Family Information Service understands the importance of involving local families with children and young people with SEND in the ongoing review and sustainability of the Local Offer and has examples of successful engagement.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- To ensure that the Local Offer remains relevant over time, you involve families in its review and sustainability. You may have done this through surveys, focus groups, consultations, and feedback sessions.
- Collaborating with local parent groups, schools, and other community organisations can also help ensure that the Local Offer meets the needs of local families.

**SEND Element 3.5:** The Family Information Service understands the importance of involving young people with SEND in preparing and reviewing the Local Offer, directly or through the responsible service or organisation and has examples of successful engagement.



**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- You collaborate or have a formal contract with your local Parent Partnership Service, SEND, or Youth Services outlining the review process for the Local Offer and each service's roles, responsibilities, and contributions.

**SEND Element 3.6:** The Family Information Service directories and their functionality regarding the Local Offer are developed in consultation with families with children and young people with SEND.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- A client involvement strategy outlines how families with children/young people with SEND are involved in developing, designing, and reviewing your directories.

## Standard 4: Leadership, Policy & Culture

**The Family Information Service treats all families respectfully through policies, practice, and leadership role modelling.**

**FIS Element 4.1:** Systems are in place to enable decisions to be made at a local authority strategic level regarding the planning of its Family Information Services, which ensure the delivery of appropriate and quality-assured information, advice, and assistance to families.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Manager and senior leader members meet to review and plan services and objectives.
- They might also participate in strategic multi-agency meetings for common interests and provide periodic reports to Cabinet about service planning.

**FIS Element 4.2:** The Family Information Service has established strategic objectives, priorities, targets, and performance indicators to support the delivery, review, and evaluation of relevant local strategic plans.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Your FIS Plan is regularly reviewed and updated based on performance and the local authority's Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan.

**FIS Element 4.3:** The Family Information Services published Statement of Service outlines its commitment to providing impartial, confidential Information, Advice, and Assistance, a brokerage service and creating and maintaining a Local Offer.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- This document details available advice topics, delivery methods, target client groups, personal information handling, and how to give feedback or file complaints, along with staff and parent/carer expectations.

**FIS Element 4.4:** The Family Information Service has developed and implemented appropriate staff and service delivery policies. These policies are reviewed regularly, and action is taken to improve and develop them when necessary.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:** Your policies include but are not limited to:

- HR-related policies.
- Health and Safety relating to staff (lone working/off-site working) and parents/carers.



- Equality (including age, gender, disability, race, religion, belief, and sexual orientation).
- Impartiality and confidentiality.
- Assessing and meeting the needs of individuals for IAA/support.
- Engaging with mothers and fathers and their families.
- Data protection and data sharing.
- Information management and quality assurance.
- The monitoring and evaluating information, advice, and assistance provision.
- Compliments, Comments, Complaints and Appeals.

**FIS Element 4.5:** The Family Information Service staff who lead, manage, and deliver information, advice, assistance, and brokerage services understand the legislation impacting their work.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Staff participate in webinars and training on relevant legislation.
- A team member informs colleagues, service providers, partners, and parents/carers about legislative requirements.

**FIS Element 4.6: The** Family Information Service actively strives to ensure its workforce and partners reflect the diversity of its wider community.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- A staff and parent representative team accurately represents your community's diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- This team is deployed to effectively engage with families to encourage participation in activities and initiatives.

**FIS Element 4.7:** The Family Information Service's policies and procedures for recruiting and selecting staff comply with current legislation, best practices, and guidelines on safeguarding and equal opportunities.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Recruitment documentation verifies that all required safeguarding checks are completed and that your recruitment process is comprehensive, adhered to appropriately, and aligned with the relevant regulations and guidelines.

**FIS Element 4.8** The Family Information Service regularly reviews and assesses staff training needs, which informs policies and training plans, including brokerage, as required.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Induction paperwork shows you assess the training needs of new employees.
- Completed staff appraisals include reviews of their training needs.
- Your team training plan aligns with the needs of the organisation, team, and individual.

**FIS Element 4.9:** The Family Information Service actively seeks to obtain appropriate resources to support partner organisations effectively.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- You contribute to funding proposals to support partnership activities with shared goals and/or you might have shared resources for joint partnership-related efforts.



**FIS Element 4.10:** The Family Information Service's leaders and managers role model the agreed behaviours and attitudes which support its desired culture and values.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:** Your leaders and managers:

- Exhibit the desired behaviors and attitudes in their interactions and act as role models.
- Communicate regularly to ensure understanding of the organisation's values and culture.
- Participate in learning and development to acquire necessary skills and knowledge.

#### **AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FOLLOWING SEND ELEMENT IS OPTIONAL**

**SEND Element 4.11:** Through policies, practice, and leadership role modelling of behaviours, all families engaging with the Family Information Service are treated with dignity and respect, and sensitivities around children and young people with SEND are considered and implemented.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:** When staff are working with families, they:

- Offer services face-to-face in a location that considers the needs of the parent/carer/family.
- Have access to a British Sign Language Interpreter/Translator.
- Have a Statement of Service which refers to your brokerage service.
- Have staff who specialise in outreach/brokerage/SEND work.
- Include information on specialist services and how to contact them in your directories.

## **Standard 5: Staff Professionalism & Approach**

**All Family Information Service staff responsible for managing and delivering the service possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and qualifications to provide a high-quality service to families.**

**FIS Element 5.1:** All Family Information Service staff responsible for managing and delivering information, advice, assistance, and brokerage possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and qualifications to provide a high-quality service to families.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- For brokerage roles, the minimum recommended level of training is an NVQ Level 3 Certificate in Advice and Guidance or equivalent experience.
- Staff follow professional codes of conduct.
- Staff can access diverse development opportunities on topics including the benefits system, debt management, housing, employment, equalities, data protection, safeguarding, and mental health support.
- Staff performance, appraisal paperwork, and training records are maintained.

**FIS Element 5.2:** The Family Information Service offers information through various outlets to cater to families and young people's diverse needs and abilities in its locality.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- You have a communication strategy for delivering information.
- Staff can explain the various ways in which families can obtain information.
- You provide services in community languages.
- Staff have access to a British Sign Language Interpreter or use visual aids.
- Staff provide large print or braille information for families with visual impairments.



- Staff offer email or text communication for families who prefer them.
- Staff provide information verbally or through audio recordings for families with difficulty reading or writing.

**FIS Element 5.3** The Family Information Service staff know and understand guidance and statutory documentation relevant to their role.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Your policies and procedures are regularly audited and updated with relevant guidance and statutory documentation.
- Staff can explain changes made in response to updated legislation and guidance.

**FIS Element 5.4:** The Family Information Service staff can describe how they provide up-to-date, accurate, confidential, impartial information, advice, and assistance free/funded at the point of delivery.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Your staff can explain and give examples of the information, advice, assistance, signposting, and referral services available for young people and their parents/carers.
- Staff are confident that what they share is up-to-date and accurate.
- Services meet all relevant legal requirements, national standards, and your goals.
- Your Local Offer is comprehensive and regularly updated with correct information and contact details.
- Content may include information on the law, education and learning, health and care assessments and plans, social care, leisure, social opportunities, advice and support, personal budgets, preparing for adulthood, and transport.

**FIS Element 5.5:** The Family Information Service staff understand the processes required should an immediate referral for specialist assessment and support be undertaken where they have a reason to believe a client or child is at risk of harm.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- A named person/responsible officer oversees safeguarding policy/procedures.
- You ensure that all safeguarding procedures are set up and adhered to, including keeping correct records of all referrals in line with relevant legislation and organisational methods.
- Staff have the necessary knowledge and skills needed in these circumstances which might be gained by providing examples of when immediate referrals have been made.

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FOLLOWING SEND ELEMENTS IS OPTIONAL**

**SEND Element 5.6:** The Family Information Service staff can describe how they provide information, advice, assistance, support, and, where appropriate, brokerage services that cover SEND, health and social care for young people (aged 0-25) and their families, either directly or by signposting to the relevant Service or organisation.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- See FIS 5.4 above.

**SEND Element 5.7:** The Family Information Service staff responsible for providing information, advice, and assistance, as well as brokerage, understand their obligations to deliver the SEND Code of Practice requirements.



**What This Might Mean In Practice:** You may have supported staff by:

- Providing specialised training on the SEND Code of Practice.
- Developing resources such as guidance documents, checklists, and toolkits.
- Encouraging staff to collaborate with professionals and organisations supporting families with SEND, such as social workers, health care professionals, and educational specialists.

**SEND Element 5.8:** All Family Information Service staff understand their role in improving the provision for families with children and young people with SEND.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- As SEND 5.7 above.

**SEND Element 5.9:** Family Information Service staff clearly understand the information, advice, assistance, and brokerage they can provide to families of children with SEND and know when to refer the family to another service, department, or organisation.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Staff participate in regular training to enhance their knowledge of services available for families with children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- Staff maintain connections with other organisations to facilitate timely referrals for families.
- Current records of services and support are meticulously kept and shared with families to assist them in making informed decisions.

**SEND Element 5.10:** The Family Information Service has robust processes for capturing basic family information at initial contact and transferring it with the referral, which helps with early identification of needs and better outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Staff are trained to ask pertinent questions and gather essential information about families and children's needs.
- Information is accurately recorded and shared with relevant services involved in the child's care.
- Regular reviews ensure that processes remain practical and aligned with the latest guidance and best practices.

**SEND Element 5.11:** Family Information Service staff receive relevant initial training and continuous professional development (or have timebound plans to receive such training) to ensure they possess the knowledge to meet the needs of families with children with SEND within the scope of their role.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- See FIS Element 4.8 above.

**SEND Element 5.12:** The Family Information Service staff can explain personal budgets and how they share information with parents/carers of children with SEND, including eligibility criteria and access.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**



- Staff ease concerns related to funding and service provision by offering guidance on setting up bank accounts, managing personal assistants, and reclaiming expenses, either directly or by referring to the appropriate services.

**SEND Element 5.13:** The Family Information Service contributes to raising parents'/carers' understanding and awareness regarding direct payments and personal budgets.

**SEND Element 5.14:** The Family Information Service staff confirm that they understand how the money provided as direct payments/personal budgets can be spent and are confident that they can explain this to parents/carers and young people.

**SEND Element 5.15:** The Family Information Service staff can describe the help families of children with SEND receive that enables them to understand the range of options available to make informed choices about their child or young person's education, health, and care.

**SEND Element 5.16:** The Family Information Service staff can explain how they raise awareness about parents/carers' vital role in their child's education, health, and care and Education, Health, and Care Plan.

**SEND 5.17:** The Family Information Service staff confirm that they understand the local procedures for appealing against a decision about an Education, Health and Care Plan, the personal budget allocation and quality service to families.

#### **What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Staff are well-informed about the local procedures for appealing against a decision about an Education, Health and Care Plan or the personal budget allocation.
- Transparent and accessible information on the appeals process is available for families.

## **Standard 6: Range of Information**

**The Family Information Service provides an extensive range of information, advice, and assistance in various locations, formats, and mediums that families can access.**

**FIS Element 6.1:** The Family Information Service provides an extended range of information, advice, assistance, and, where appropriate, brokerage services delivered in various locations, formats, and mediums that families can access.

#### **What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- **2024 Statutory Guidance C.16** states consider how the information published on childcare could also signpost or refer users to broader services for parents or children, such as child and adolescent mental health services, employment services or the local family hub.
- **2024 Statutory Guidance C.17** states consider whether other information on childcare (which is not listed in Schedule 1 to the 2007 Regulations, but which is of help to parents) could be published, such as promoting the availability of wraparound childcare in their area, and signposting to where childcare providers work in partnership with others to offer more wraparound services for parents.



- Your promotional plan includes an events calendar detailing activities with community partners to boost parent/carer engagement. This information is available electronically on the local authority's website and in various formats to meet the diverse needs of families.

**FIS Element 6.2:** The Family Information Service provides families with the categories of information prescribed in the regulations about registered childcare published by Ofsted.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Staff can explain the available information and its distribution to families in the area.
- There may be an outreach service or information point advertised to families.

**FIS Element 6.3:** The Family Information Service provides families with the categories of information prescribed in the regulations about non-registered childcare.

**FIS Element 6.4:** The Family Information Service helps families find the information they need about childcare options beyond their local authority without having to contact neighbouring authorities.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- You collaborate with other FIS to share information on your website using embedded widgets.
- Staff can provide examples of assisting families with information from external sources. This has been achieved by working with local authorities/organisations and using technology to gather data from other websites and/or embed widgets.

**FIS Element 6.5:** Family Information Service proactively identifies and engages with potential sources of information for the Enhanced Childcare Directory and Family Service Directory.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Each team member has responsibility for identifying and engaging with potential Enhanced Childcare Directory, Family Service Directory, and Local Offer information sources.
- You use team meetings to update colleagues on possible sources of information.

**FIS Element 6.6:** The Family Information Service publishes clear and transparent information about how parents/carers can access their early education free/funded childcare entitlement.

**2024 Statutory Guidance C6** states the Family Information Services ensures that parents/carers are aware of the local authority procedures to check eligibility for free places for disadvantaged 2-year-olds and to check and verify eligibility for free entitlements for foster children.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Your website and leaflets are designed to be user-friendly, with clear and concise information.
- Eligibility criteria for funded early education, including the age range of eligible children and family income thresholds is provided. Details on various types of funded early education, such as free childcare hours, early education vouchers, and tax credits, are also available.
- The information is up-to-date and accurately reflects any changes in eligibility criteria or funding levels on your website and leaflets.
- Information is available in different formats, such as audio or visual.
- Contact information for your organisation is made available to families.



## AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FOLLOWING SEND ELEMENTS IS OPTIONAL

**SEND Element 6.7:** The Family Information Service's directories provide information about services and support for families with children with SEND aged 0-25.

**SEND Element 6.8:** The Family Information Service supports families with children and young people with an Education, Health, and Care Plan to identify their preference for state academies, free schools, and further education colleges directly or by signposting them to the relevant information sources.

### What This Might Mean In Practice:

- Directories include information on the differences between maintained, mainstream, and special schools and further education provision and provide contact details for additional information, such as school/college admissions processes.

**SEND Element 6.9:** The Family Information Service provides appropriate information, advice, and assistance for families with children and young people with SEND. This includes, but is not limited to, support available to individuals during the SEND coordinated assessment and planning process, early years and childcare services, family hubs/children's centres, support for children with SEND, the statutory assessment process and Education, Health and Care Plans.

**2024 Statutory Guidance C15** states that the Family Information Service ensures that parents of children with special educational needs or a disability are able to access relevant information about childcare quickly and easily. This may involve linking to or incorporating key information from the local authority's Local Offer for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities with the information on childcare published by the Family Information Service, and vice versa.

### What This Might Mean In Practice:

- Your service provides the latest SEND information.
- You have trained staff who offer impartial, tailored advice.
- Effective communication channels, like a helpline and email, ensure parents and young people can access needed information.
- You collaborate with local authorities and healthcare providers to meet all families' needs.

## Standard 7: Access to Information

**The Family Information Service ensures families can easily find and utilise pertinent information and services locally and nationally.**

**FIS Element 7.1:** The Family Information Service ensures that families can easily find and utilise pertinent information and services available locally and nationally.

**2024 Statutory Guidance C10** states that Family Information Services ensures that they publish their information in a way that best suits parents' and other users' needs and aligns with local and central government's aspirations for increasing transparency and open data standards

### What This Might Mean In Practice: You will have:

- Developed a user-friendly and navigable website.
- Processes to regularly update information across the website and other platforms.
- Information provided includes brochures, articles, videos, and audio resources.



- Organised community outreach activities, such as workshops and fairs.
- Partnered with schools and service providers to create a resource network.
- Utilised social media to share information and engage with families.

**FIS Element 7.2:** The Family Information Service helps families understand that they can access their entitlement free/funded at the point of delivery without applying additional charges, top-up fees or terms and conditions of access.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Your website and leaflets provide detailed information on the criteria determining eligibility for free/funded childcare entitlement and the practical implications of such entitlement.

**FIS Element 7.3:** The Family Information Service has processes that ensure that information about its services reaches as many disadvantaged and marginalised groups within the local community as possible.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- The Equality Impact Assessment and your Childcare Sufficiency Assessment has informed the objectives and targets for your annual FIS Plan.

**FIS Element 7.4:** Families who face difficulties accessing the Family Information Service are provided the necessary help to overcome these obstacles.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Brokerage effectively addresses families' needs, with successful case studies.
- The service team maintains detailed records to assess effectiveness and follows up on signposting and referrals to meet families' needs.
- Service shortcomings are noted and reported for future planning improvements.

**FIS Element 7.5:** In providing access to the Family Information Service, consideration is given to the differing needs and abilities of families with children and young people.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Services are accessible through various channels, including online, phone, and in-person options, to meet different preferences.
- Information is available in multiple formats, such as audio, video, and written materials, to accommodate diverse learning styles.
- You provide tailored support and guidance to families based on their unique needs.

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FOLLOWING SEND ELEMENTS IS OPTIONAL**

**SEND Element 7.6:** The Family Information Service has arrangements to offer additional assistance and childcare brokerage for families with children and young people with SEND who would otherwise have difficulty accessing early years, childcare or out-of-school places.

**2024 Statutory Guidance** states that a brokerage service for parents needing further support to find childcare that is suitable for their needs, including for parents of children with special educational needs or a disability, must be provided.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- You have created a SEND brokerage policy and procedure in collaboration with your key partners to ensure effective communication and coordination.



**SEND Element 7.7:** The Family Information Service has processes that ensure that SEND information is accessible to those who need it, can be easily found via its web pages, and appears in search results on various channels and platforms.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Search engine optimisation (SEO) techniques are applied to ensure your web pages contain relevant information about SEND.
- You collaborate with other local authorities to ensure their data is accurately displayed in search results.
- Metadata, keywords, and tags are used to make information easily discoverable.
- Also, see 7.1 above.

**SEND Element 7.8:** The Family Service directories are organised in a manner that helps all families navigate the range of services available, with a particular emphasis on the information pertinent to the family of a child or young person with SEND.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:** Below is a list of things you may have actioned to ensure the directories function smoothly:

- Each entry follows a standard format, detailing costs, access, transportation, and eligibility.
- Directory symbols are clearly explained and accessible with one click.
- Outcomes of mandatory accreditations are presented in plain language, including results from Ofsted inspections and local authorities, related to short breaks for families with SEND.
- Public feedback methods are moderated, and potentially libellous accusations are directed to the appropriate organization without publication.
- A designated staff member oversees quality assurance, and information is moderated to ensure legal compliance.
- Resources like checklists, accreditation guides, and tips for service providers are available.
- Safeguarding procedures are in place for allegations against services listed in the directories.
- The directories include safeguarding information to guide the public on reporting concerns about vulnerable individuals or service providers.

**SEND Element 7.9:** The Family Information Service directories are accessible to members of the public with additional needs or disabilities.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Consideration has been given to users with visual or hearing impairments accessing the site directly or via a screen reader.
- Your directories allow users to view information in large print or convert text to audio format.

## Standard 8: Delivering Impartial, Objective Information

**The Family Information Service provides families with accurate and impartial information about available services and organisations while considering any legal requirements for providing this information.**

**FIS Element 8.1:** The Family Information Service provides families with accurate and impartial information about available services and organisations while considering any legal requirements for providing this information.



**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Online directories include your Local Offer, childcare options, and available activities or support services.
- Staff explain how directories are updated, and partner organisations confirm their role in maintaining current information.
- Staff outline the types of information available and its delivery methods.
- An outreach service or information point may also be promoted to families.

**FIS Element 8.2:** The Family Information Service offers information through various outlets to cater for families and young people's diverse needs and abilities in its locality.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- You have a communication strategy in place which involves staff members conducting outreach work and / or local authority information points that offer public information.

**FIS Element 8.3:** The Family Information Services is delivered while considering the faith, gender identity, sexuality, disability, race, marital status, spoken first language, cultural and family backgrounds of the families, and the needs of non-users, clients, and professionals in the local community.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- A public statement on equality and diversity is in place.
- Services are offered through various channels, with staff skilled in assisting families in their preferred language.
- Engagement with communities and stakeholders helps identify needs for tailored solutions.
- Staff have been trained on relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010.

**FIS Element 8.4:** The Family Information Service offers confidential and unbiased advice and assistance, but in cases where a child or young person is at risk of significant harm or the childcare provision fails to meet legal or quality requirements, relevant agencies are notified through the local processes for raising concerns.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Your induction, training, performance management records show and your staff confirm that you update and check compliance with legislation and procedures related to providing information, advice, assistance, safeguarding, referrals, record-keeping, and confidentiality.

**FIS Element 8.5:** The Family Information Service has implemented procedures to record, challenge, and rectify issues with family access to free/funded childcare entitlements.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- You have policies for recording when families report issues accessing their free/funded childcare, including inappropriate charges or circumstances involving children with SEND.
- If providers or parents report a lack of early education places, the issue is promptly addressed and resolved.
- Your systems enable quick resolution of these issues or ensure the information is forwarded to the appropriate team for action.



## **AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FOLLOWING SEND ELEMENT IS OPTIONAL**

**Send Element 8.6:** The Family Information Service provides impartial information, advice and assistance to families with children and young people with SEND that is confidential, impartial, and free/funded at the point of delivery in a manner that promotes family independence, choice, and control.

### **What This Might Mean In Practice:**

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## **Standard 9: Collaboration & Partnership Working**

**The Family Information Service assesses local families and service providers to form partnerships for delivering information, advice, and assistance and identifies gaps and shortcomings in existing provisions.**

**FIS Element 9.1:** The Family Information Service assesses local families and service providers to form partnerships for delivering information, advice, assistance, and brokerage services and has arrangements in place to identify gaps and shortcomings in existing provisions.

### **What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- The Equality Impact Assessment and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, along with survey analysis, determine necessary partnership agreements.
- You have successfully established partnerships with key support agencies, and your staff can provide examples based on identified needs.

**FIS Element 9.2:** The Family Information Service establishes local partnership agreements with relevant services, clearly outlining each partner's roles and responsibilities.

### **What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Partnerships include local libraries, Jobcentre Plus, Family Hubs, Children's Centres, and health and education services.
- You regularly review partnership agreements and meet to plan and evaluate joint objectives.
- Partner organisations are preferably located within the local authority area to support economic and ecological resilience.

**FIS Element 9.3:** The Family Information Service makes specialist services available to families who need further support and information, and systems and processes ensure that families are appropriately referred and supported to access this help.

### **What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Relevant legislation and procedures are followed when recording signposting and referrals
- You ensure the referral is made to the appropriate service/organisation and follow up as necessary.

**FIS Element 9.4:** The Family Information Service has systems and processes which monitor referrals to and from specialist services and multi-agency teams.

### **What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- To ensure that support needs are met, you follow-up referrals for additional support and update associated records accordingly.



**FIS Element 9.5:** The Family Information Service conducts transparent procurement and contracting of information, advice, and assistance services in accordance with relevant laws, regulations, and guidelines.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- If your local authority outsources its information service, it follows its Procurement Policy for a fair and transparent process, ensuring the provider meets required standards.
- Potential impacts on service quality and employee welfare are assessed and steps are taken to mitigate any negative effects.
- The ecological impact and carbon footprint are considered, prioritising local providers when possible.

**FIS Element 9.6:** The Family Information Service's work is supported by collaboration and multi-agency work, which provides a wraparound service when possible.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- A wraparound service offers coordinated support for children and families, addressing emotional, social, educational, and health needs through a holistic plan.
- There are opportunities to collaborate with agencies to enhance services and reach a broader audience, such as staff participating in parenting classes or outreach workers using partner facilities.
- You organise community events with other agencies to foster a sense of community.

**FIS Element 9.7:** The Family Information Service shares relevant good practices with other services, local authorities, information services, partner agencies, and national bodies where appropriate.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- You participate in sharing good practices at regional/national conferences held by the National Association of Family Information Services (NAFIS).
- You may deliver presentations to the local authority's managers regarding your FIS's work.

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FOLLOWING SEND ELEMENTS IS OPTIONAL**

**SEND Element 9.8:** The Family Information Service proactively seeks to develop positive working relationships with all key partners and stakeholders, including the Parent Partnership Service, to provide a high-quality service to families with children and young people with SEND.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Staff recognise the significance of collaborating with key partners, including health services, social care, early years, childcare, children's centers, Family Hubs, schools, SEN/inclusive services, and youth services.
- Staff are aware of the partners that assist parents in navigating the SEND process.
- Staff participate in establishing information signposting arrangements and support through co-located services, triage, and referrals.



**SEND Element 9.9:** The Family Information Service ensures partner organisations know the support provided to families regarding access to early education and childcare, including specific or specialist support/brokerage for families with children and young people with SEND and any financial assistance available to help pay for childcare such as the Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Your marketing plan includes activities to raise awareness and encourage partner support for families with children and young people with SEND in early education.
- Activities feature targeted campaigns, workshops, training sessions, and information sharing to improve the visibility of SEND-friendly services.

**SEND Element 9.10:** The Family Information Service advises partner organisations to redirect their websites to the Local Offer, providing a seamless/wraparound service for families.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Partner organisations, including schools, council, health, and community sectors, collaborate to provide an integrated service approach.
- Guidance is offered with service provider update forms, including a concise URL, logo for identification, and standardised text for consistency.
- An embedded widget on other websites allows users to access relevant information easily.

## Standard 10: Delivery, Outcomes and Impact

**The Family Information Service evidences the impact of its services by collecting relevant data and analysing the development and educational outcomes of children receiving these services.**

**FIS. Element 10.1:** The Family Information Service acknowledges the significance of granting children their full entitlement to early education and can demonstrate how it has facilitated this in various ways.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- You can evidence the impact of accessing full entitlement to grant-funded early education by collecting and analysing data on the development and educational outcomes of children receiving these services. This data may include academic achievement, attendance, behaviour, and overall readiness for school.
- Surveys or focus groups with parents and teachers gather qualitative feedback.

**FIS Element 10.2:** The Family Information Service acknowledges the significance of collaborating with appropriate partners on the effects of poverty on children's education and progress and can provide examples of how it has supported children, particularly those from financially disadvantaged families, to make the most of their childcare entitlements.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:** To evidence the outcomes, you gather management information such as data on the number of families you have supported, the types of support provided, and the impact of that support on children's education. You may:

- Conduct research on poverty's impact on children's learning and development to inform awareness campaigns and educational programmes for parents and educators.



- Collaborate with government agencies, community organisations, and schools to help financially struggling families access resources like free school meals.
- Assist families in navigating the welfare system and applying for financial aid, child tax credits, and housing benefits.
- Offer workshops for parents to enhance their skills and equip them with tools to support their children's learning and development.

**FIS Element 10.3:** The Family Information Service acknowledges the importance of providing equal opportunities for all disadvantaged children impacted by multiple factors, including but not limited to mental health issues, food poverty, lack of internet access, and overcrowded and noisy homes and takes action to ensure that these children can fully utilise their entitlement to high-quality early education and care wherever possible.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:** You demonstrate the benefits of high-quality early education and care for children from disadvantaged backgrounds through various methods. For instance, you may:

- Conduct surveys and collect data to show the positive impact of access to these services on the children's cognitive development, social skills, and overall wellbeing.
- You organise workshops and events highlighting the success stories of children who have benefited from early education and care.

#### **AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FOLLOWING SEND ELEMENTS IS OPTIONAL**

**SEND Element 10.4:** The Family Information Service acknowledges the significance of collaborating with appropriate partners on the effects of poverty on SEND children's education and progress and can provide examples of how it has supported children, particularly those from financially disadvantaged families, to make the most of their childcare entitlements.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- As FIS10.2 above, but for SEND children and young people.

**SEND. Element 10.5:** The Family Information Service acknowledges the importance of providing equal opportunities for all disadvantaged children with SEND impacted by multiple factors, including but not limited to mental health issues, food poverty, lack of internet access and overcrowded and noisy homes and takes action to ensure that these children can fully utilise their entitlement to high-quality early education and care wherever possible.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- As FIS 10.3 above, but for SEND children and young people.

## **Standard 11: Performance Improvement**

**The Family Information Service's accessibility, use and effectiveness of its provision are monitored, regularly reviewed, and evaluated, and the data is used to inform the service improvement plan.**

**FIS Element 11.1:** The Family Information Service's accessibility, use and effectiveness of its provision are monitored, regularly reviewed, and evaluated, and the data is used to inform the service improvement plan.



**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- You use the Plan, Do, Review Planning Cycle to set objectives and targets and track your progress against performance indicators and milestones.
- Staff regularly gather and document feedback at the point of delivery.
- Families and professionals who use your service and online directories provide feedback.
- You utilise the Equality Impact Assessment and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment to guide your Family Information Service Team Plan.

**FIS Element 11.2:** The Family Information Service reviews its referral systems and processes with specialist service providers at least quarterly, taking action to rectify any areas for development.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:** To ensure that the information in your directory for specialist services is up to date, you:

- Send reminders to providers every quarter
- Your staff routinely check the accuracy of this information when contacting the services.
- You organise events or regular meetings with specialist services to review referral systems.
- You request provider feedback, and partnership agreements are reviewed to identify any necessary actions.

**FIS Element 11.3:** The Family Information Service values feedback from stakeholders, including staff, early years and childcare providers, referral agencies, key partners, and families, and takes action to improve based on their input while communicating updates to these groups.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- You have a structured/regular feedback processes in place for key stakeholders using methods, such as surveys, focus groups, or interviews.
- The feedback is analysed and used to identify areas for improvement, and a SMART action plan is developed with clear timelines, responsibilities, and resources needed.

**FIS Element 11.4:** The Family Service directories are set up to allow them to be regularly reviewed, analysed, and used to inform local strategic planning and service commissioning.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Local authorities, service providers, and other relevant agencies are encouraged to review and analyse the directories regularly to ensure their information is correct and current.
- Feedback from families who have used the directories has been collected and incorporated into the review process to ensure that the directories meet their needs.

**FIS Element 11.5:** The Family Information Service has systems and processes that enable its brokerage service to provide information about 'gaps' in service provision in their area and inform local delivery planning.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Brokerage is used to meet needs, with staff keeping records for monitoring purposes.
- Any gaps in provision are recorded.
- The Childcare Sufficiency and Equality Impact Assessments support local delivery planning.
- You engage with assorted services to develop the brokerage service and inform delivery planning.



**FIS Element 11.6:** The Family Information Service takes feedback from families and professionals on the adequacy of information provided and takes action based on this feedback.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- Your website lets parents/carers, as well as professionals, offer comments and feedback.
- Additionally, you may use forums or focus groups to collect feedback.
- You publish a 'You said... We did' detailing the changes made in response to feedback.
- Newsletters could also be used to communicate the actions taken in response to feedback.

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FOLLOWING SEND ELEMENTS IS OPTIONAL**

**SEND Element 11.7:** The Family Information Service online directories performance review processes ensure that early years and childcare providers improve their information to assist families with children and young people with SEND to make informed choices about early education, schools, specialist education provision, and childcare.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:** You may have taken the following actions:

- Collected and stored information regarding Special Educational Needs Coordinators).
- Collected and stored information about the relevant staff training and their experience working with children with SEND in the Enhanced Childcare Directory.
- Aided early years settings and schools in ensuring their information is updated.

**SEND Element 11.8:** The Family Information Service has a process for directing any public feedback, complaints, or compliments regarding another SEND service to the appropriate individual or organisation.

**SEND Element 11.9:** The Family Information Service has systems and processes that ensure that information about any potential gaps in SEND service provision identified by the public is passed on to the relevant service, department public health colleagues or Commissioning Groups.

**What This Might Mean In Practice:**

- A dedicated team member receives and processes public feedback, assesses service gaps, and partners with relevant providers and health departments for timely information sharing.
- Established protocols address public concerns and provide updates on actions taken to enhance SEND provision.



## Using the FFQA Standards

When an Assessor works with you for the first time, they need to see, hear, or experience how the outcomes for each Element are being met. Organisations like Family Information Services (FIS) are structured differently and have unique approaches and resources. For instance, the local authority may require the FIS management team to align with key policies, plans, or documents. When assessing a FIS against the Family First Quality Award Standards, the Assessor will consider these differences and evaluate them accordingly.

### GETTING STARTED

To fully benefit from the Families First Quality Award, it is vital to involve all staff members in the process. This includes leadership, administration, those who have direct contact with families, and other individuals working within the Family Information Service (FIS). To engage your staff, families, and parents in achieving the Families First Quality Award, consider establishing small working groups incorporating a range of staff members to evaluate different Standards. Additionally, conducting a brief online survey on a topic pertinent to the Standards can assist in gathering insights into staff and parent/carer opinions. For instance, you might assess their views on the quality of information provided.

When reviewing the Standards, it is crucial to identify the evidence available to demonstrate that they are being met. This evidence may include management information such as needs assessments, self-evaluation and assessment forms, reports, and external evaluations of local services' quality, coverage, and impact on outcomes for parents, prospective parents, and families. For example, you could collect this information by examining inspection and assessment reports.

### NEXT STEPS

After reviewing the available evidence and identifying areas requiring improvement, it is crucial to develop a plan of action to address them. This process involves setting clear priorities and objectives and agreeing on targets with your staff and partners. Determine the necessary actions, assign responsibilities for each task, and establish a timeline for completion. Be sure to monitor tasks regularly, identify any early issues, and address them promptly. Include the results and any feedback in the next review and planning phase.



## Glossary

<b>Advice</b>	Advice is an activity that helps parents, prospective parents, and family members gather, understand, and interpret information and apply it to their own situations.
<b>Assistance</b>	Assistance is the provision of an impartial signposting, brokerage, and referral service to provide specialist support to help parents, prospective parents, and family members meet their information needs and progress.
<b>Brokerage Service</b>	A Brokerage Service is typically provided via a local authority Family Information Service and is a Duty in the Childcare Act 2006. The service must further assist parents with particular difficulties finding childcare that readily meets their needs. Brokering involves helping the family by acting as an intermediary when, for any reason, a family might find it challenging to access the service themselves.
<b>Enhanced Childcare Database (ECD)</b>	ECD is a database (usually maintained by Family Information Services) containing all Ofsted registered childcare providers and childminders, with additional information added by the providers themselves (such as opening hours and fees). Information in the directory usually covers the local authority's geographical area and is accessible via the Internet and by phoning a Family Information Service helpline. Not all childcare providers choose to have their details published on the Internet.
<b>Family Services Directory (FSD)</b>	FSD is a database (usually maintained by a local authority or a Family Information Service) containing services for parents, children and young people added by a local authority or the organisations running the services. Information in the directory usually covers the local authority's geographical area and is accessible via the Internet and by phoning a Family Information Service helpline. The directory may be advertised using a particular title or brand determined by the local authority.
<b>Information</b>	Information should be accurate, up-to-date and objective. It can include information about childcare, health, recreation and learning opportunities, progression routes, choices, funding, where to find help and advice and how to access this.
<b>Wraparound Service</b>	A wraparound service refers to a comprehensive, coordinated approach to providing supports and services to children and families. The goal of wraparound services is to create a holistic plan that addresses the various aspects of a person's life, including emotional, social, educational, and health-related needs.



## Want to Talk about Assessment?

If you would like more information about the **Families First Quality Award 2025**, including the provision of advice and assessment, please do not hesitate to contact:



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