



FAMILIES FIRST QUALITY AWARD

Family Information Services in England

Standards, Outcomes & Self & External Assessment Capabilities August 2026



About Assessment Services

Assessment Services Ltd is a leading assessment centre with over 30 years of accreditation experience. Our commitment is clear: we ensure that our assessment processes deliver real value to organisations.

Guided by our philosophy "**We Care...We Assess...We Add Value,**" we have developed and accredited numerous standards across various sectors, including:

- Aspiring to Deliver Excellence in Care
- Customer Service Excellence
- Families First Quality Award for Organisations in England and Wales
- Investors in People
- Leadership and Management
- Information and Guidance for voluntary and not-for-profit organisations
- matrix – Information, Advice & Guidance
- One Planet Standard
- Quality Assessments, National Citizen Service Trust
- Supply Chain Partnership Standards
- SFEDI Qualifications, including the Level 5 and Level 7 Certificates in Professional Business and Enterprise Support Services.
- The Strategic Growth Pathway

About The Families First Quality Award Suite of Standards

The **Families First Quality Award (FFQA) Suite of Standards** is a nationally recognised, family-focused quality assurance and improvement Award. Developed by Coram Family and Childcare, the UK's first and longest-serving children's charity, and Suffolk County Council, the Standards have been assessed by Assessment Services Ltd, the sole assessment body, since 2018.

The Suite brings together a growing family of specialist Standards that strengthen family engagement, improve access to support, promote inclusion and safeguarding, and provide independent assurance of quality, effectiveness, and impact.

The FFQA Suite has been developed in response to increasing national expectations around:

- Accessible information, advice, and assistance
- Co-production and family voice
- Early intervention and prevention
- Equity and inclusion
- Evidence-led improvement
- Integrated family support
- Partnership working
- Safeguarding and wellbeing

The Suite provides Family Information Services and Schools with a structured, proportionate, outcome-focused Award that demonstrates compliance and accountability and captures the lived experiences and outcomes of children, young people, and families.

Together, the FFQA Suite provides a coherent quality architecture that helps organisations demonstrate excellence across family engagement, service delivery, leadership, and integrated support.

About This Award

This Award sets out quality Standards for **Family Information Services in England**, providing a framework for evaluating effectiveness, consistency, and impact. It highlights the statutory duty to provide families with information on early education, childcare, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and broader family support.

The Standards cover understanding local needs, ensuring information quality, engaging families, professional practice, inter-agency collaboration, equitable access, and listening to families to inform services. Intelligence-led planning, inclusion, safeguarding, and SEND assurance are central themes throughout. The final Standard focuses on outcomes, impact, and continuous improvement, informed by data, feedback, and monitoring.

This Award assesses the quality and effectiveness of Family Information Service delivery. It does not replace regulatory inspections, professional regulation, safeguarding audits, or provider registration arrangements.

Collectively, the Standards provide an evidence-based framework for self-assessment, peer review, and service enhancement, enabling Family Information Services to deliver accessible, high-quality support. The Award also reflects the statutory duties placed on local authorities under the Childcare Act 2006, including the Section 12 duty to provide information, advice, and assistance to parents and prospective parents.

The **Families First Quality Award for Information Services in England** (Award) supports the Families First Partnership Programme by promoting early intervention, collaboration, lawful information sharing, safeguarding, and family involvement.

Links With Key Families First Partnership Requirements

This Award has been established to align with the Families First Partnership programme's principles, direction, and delivery expectations.

Although the Family Information Service does not provide statutory family support or child protection services, the Standards clearly reflect the programme's focus on early intervention, whole-family working, multi-agency collaboration, lawful information sharing, safeguarding confidence, and families' meaningful involvement.

This Award positions the Family Information Service as a preventative, enabling service within the broader system of help, support, and protection. It emphasises intelligence-led planning, clear referral and escalation pathways, partnership working across education, health, social care, and the voluntary sector, and a strong focus on equity, SEND inclusion, and reducing barriers to access.

In doing so, this Award supports local **Families First Partnership** programme arrangements by strengthening the foundations of access, information quality, family voice, and system intelligence, thereby enabling Family Help and safeguarding services to operate effectively, as detailed below:

Where Family Information Services operate within or alongside Family Information Services, the Award recognises the distinct contribution of the FIS in providing information, advice, assistance, brokerage, and system intelligence, and in serving as an enabling, preventative, and navigational service that supports access, early identification, information quality, and family voice.

In summary, the Standards provide a proportionate, evidence-based framework for self-assessment, peer review, assurance, and service improvement, enabling Family Information Services to deliver high-quality, accessible, and equitable support for families across England.

Design Principles Behind This Award

- **Assessable and Proportionate:** Outcomes can be evidenced through day-to-day practice
- **Outcome Clarity:** Each outcome answers the question: What difference does good Family Information Service practice make?
- **SEND by Design:** SEND is not a separate bolt-on but a core lens throughout the Award
- **Statutory Confidence:** Explicit grounding in childcare, SEND, safeguarding and equality duties
- **Voice and Co-Production:** Families, children and young people shape services

Using The Award Standards

The following provides information, advice and guidance for Family Information Services wishing to use the Families First Quality Award to:

- Achieve external validation of their service for leaders, commissioners and funders
- Gain an external assessment of their processes and approaches to delivering their service
- Review and develop their service offer through a self-assessment

Definitions of information, advice, assistance, and guidance (IAAG) are intended to equip parents, carers, prospective parents, and family members with essential knowledge to make informed decisions about children's care, health, education, and recreation, including support for those with specific needs. Throughout the Award, providing accurate, accessible and consistent Information, Advice, Assistance and Guidance (IAAG) is a core principle. Families should receive high-quality support regardless of their point of entry to services.

Information comprises accurate, up-to-date details on childcare, health, recreation, learning opportunities, progression routes, choices, funding, where to find help and advice, and how to access these resources. Information consists of facts or details provided to an individual to help them understand a situation or make a decision. This does not include personal opinions, recommendations, or interpretations of what the individual should do. It is objective, straightforward, and presented as-is.

Advice activities support parents, carers, prospective parents, and family members in gathering, understanding, and interpreting information, and in applying it to their own circumstances. Advice involves helping someone understand their options and offering suggestions tailored to their specific situation. It often builds on information but also draws on additional input from the adviser.

Assistance involves providing impartial signposting, brokerage, and referrals to specialist support, helping parents, carers, prospective parents, and family members meet their information needs and make progress.

Guidance entails providing more in-depth support, often focusing on long-term issues or decisions. It is typically offered by someone with greater expertise or training in handling complex situations. Guidance may involve analysing the individual's wider circumstances, discussing feelings or objectives, and helping them explore options.

Brokerage within a Family Information Service (FIS) is a specialised, free support service that acts as an intermediary between parents and childcare providers. It helps families find suitable childcare when they need extra assistance, such as navigating complex Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or arranging emergency care.

In the Standards, the term '**parent/carer/families**' broadly refers to anyone with parenting responsibilities, including mothers, fathers, teenage parents, foster carers, other carers, guardians, prospective parents, grandparents, adoptive parents, and family members.

Features, Explanations & Definitions

The Families First Quality Award for Family Information Services in England comprises **8 Standards** and **42 Outcomes**.

- Each **Outcome** is clearly referenced and titled, and it outlines the result that a Family Information Service is expected to achieve. This forms the central focus of the assessment conducted by an Assessment Services Assessor.
- A brief description of the **Significance** of each **Outcome** is included so that the Family Hub can better understand its importance.
- **Practice Insights** and **What an Assessor May See/Hear** provide illustrative examples of actions, documents, and approaches that Family Information Services might adopt to meet the requirements of each **Outcome**. These examples aim to support Family Information Services in evaluating their service and considering the wider impact on families and young people. They are **not mandatory**. Each Family Information Service undergoing assessment is unique and will pursue the Award in ways that reflect its specific circumstances.
- **The Self-Assessment/External Assessment Capability Building Blocks** enable both the Family Information Service and the external Assessor to assess the achievement level for each **Outcome**.
- Each **Outcome** includes an **Aspirational Measurable Benchmark** to help achieve measurable results.

External Assessment

Once a Family Information Service decides to pursue the **Families First Quality Award**, it should contact Assessment Services to confirm its intention to be assessed. This can be done by email at ffqa@assessmentservices.com or by booking an appointment to speak with Richard at Assessment Services. This can be done by clicking the link "[Schedule a Call with Richard Adkins](#)".

Following the conversation with Richard or your Registered Assessor and confirmation that the Family Information Service wishes to proceed with an external assessment, a cost proposal and an invoice for the assessment fees will be issued.

Assessment Philosophy

Assessment Services recognises that every organisation is different. The sophistication of an organisation's arrangements should always be proportionate to its size, purpose and complexity. Assessment, therefore, focuses on how effectively organisational capabilities support understanding, inform decision-making and continual improvement, rather than on the volume of documentation, data or systems in place.

Professional judgement is central to every Assessment Services framework. Assessors are encouraged to recognise excellence within the context of the organisation being assessed, ensuring that assessments remain fair, consistent and developmental.

Assessment Methodology

Assessment Services does not measure how much an organisation does; it measures how capable it has become. An external evaluation of a Family Information Service for the **Award** involves several steps:

- 1) **Self-Assessment:** Family Information Service staff begin by completing the Assessment Services Self-Assessment Tool, an electronic management platform. At this stage, the Family Information Service will provide:
 - **A Written Narrative:** A clear and concise summary of relevant policies, procedures, practices and behaviours associated with the outcome, added to the Assessment Services Self-Assessment Tool as appropriate

- **Organisational Documentation:** Key documents from the Family Information Service that demonstrate alignment with the requirements of the outcome
 - **Your Considered Capability Building Block Score:** You are encouraged to provide your own self-assessment Building Block Score based on the achievement levels described below
- 2) Desktop Review:** Using the Assessment Services Self-Assessment Tool, the Assessment Services
- Assessor will conduct a comprehensive desktop review of the documentation and written submission.
 - This process identifies where substantive evidence meets the outcome requirements and highlights any areas that require further information.
- 3) Assessor Fieldwork – Remote Interview Evidence Gathering**
- The Assessor will carry out interviews or discussions with:
 - Family Information Service managers and frontline staff
 - Partner agencies such as Family Hubs, voluntary or community sector organisations, and child care providers
 - Parents and carers
 - They may also observe Family Information Service activities when appropriate

The assessment methodology is designed to support assurance and continuous improvement.

Outcome Achievements

During the assessment, each **Outcome** is evaluated individually against the Capability Building Block Achievement Levels. Collectively, the **Outcomes** provide a comprehensive picture of the FIS's service maturity. Each **Outcome** receives a single Achievement Level.

- **Capability Building Block Achievement Level 1 Point - Limited Evidence:** Evidence from the Family Information Service, families, and partner organisations indicates that the Outcome requirements are applied inconsistently or are too new to confirm effectiveness, so significant improvement is needed.
- **Capability Building Block Achievement Level 2 Point - Satisfactory:** Evidence from the Family Information Service, families, and partner organisations indicates that the requirements outlined in the Outcome are being met to a satisfactory standard; however, there remains scope for further improvement.
- **Organisational Capability Building Block Achievement Level 3 Points - Good:** Evidence from the Family Information Service, families, and partner organisations indicates that the Outcome's requirements are consistently applied and firmly established. Only minor opportunities for further improvement remain.
- **Organisational Capability Building Block Achievement Level 4 Points - Excellent:** Evidence from the Family Information Service, families, and partner organisations demonstrates that the Outcome requirements are fully integrated, implemented creatively and innovatively, and consistently exceed standard expectations.

The individual building-block scores for each outcome will be shared with the FIS to enable a review of strengths and areas for ongoing development.

Overall Achievement Award

Each Standard will receive an achievement level based on the average of the points given to each **Outcome** by the Assessor. These will then be combined to produce an overall achievement level for the Hub.

Average Score	Achievement Award
1.00–1.74	Capability Building Block Achievement Level: Limited Evidence/Not Met. The written and oral evidence presented during the assessment indicates that the Family Information Service needs to further development and/or embed their policies, procedures, practices, and behaviours to fully meet the requirements of the Families First Quality Award
1.75–2.49	Capability Building Block Achievement Level: Satisfactory/Met. The written and oral evidence presented during the assessment indicates that the Family Information Service generally has the policies, procedures, practices, and behaviours that meet the requirements of the Families First Quality Award but has areas for improvement.
2.50–3.24	Capability Building Block Achievement Level: Met/Good. The written and oral evidence presented during the assessment indicates that the Family Information Service has demonstrated policies, procedures, practices, and behaviours that meet the requirements of the Families First Quality Award and are consistently applied and firmly established, with only minor opportunities for further improvement remaining.
3.25–4.00	Capability Building Block Achievement Level: Met/Excellent. The written and oral evidence presented during the assessment indicates that the Family Information Service has policies, procedures, practices, and behaviours that are fully integrated, implemented creatively and innovatively, and consistently exceed the requirements of the Families First Quality Award.

Accreditation

Once achieved, the **Families First Quality Award for Family Information Services** accreditation is valid for 3 years. As part of the accreditation, the Family Information Service must demonstrate its continuous quality improvement activities through annual reviews. These remote, 'light-touch' reviews provide an opportunity to discuss progress over the preceding year and identify any adjustments or improvements made.

The Family Information Service will be invited to showcase its achievements by preparing a case study and engaging in social media outreach. Additionally, a certificate, congratulations pack, and logo details will be provided for use on your website and related platforms.





FAMILIES FIRST QUALITY AWARD STANDARDS & OUTCOMES

Standard 1: Understanding Local Need & Demand

This Standard focuses on how effectively the Family Information Service (FIS) understands the needs of local families and uses insight to inform service planning and childcare sufficiency. It emphasises the importance of community insight by encouraging the FIS to regularly analyse demographics, demand patterns, and emerging needs, thereby enabling informed decision-making and targeted support. Through the systematic gathering and evaluation of information from families, partners, and relevant data sources, the FIS can set clear objectives, adapt plans in line with local strategies, and demonstrate how applied intelligence leads to improved outcomes for families.

Outcome 1.1 Community Insight: The Family Information Service demonstrates a clear understanding of the local population it serves, including demographics, demand patterns and emerging family needs.

Significance: A FIS is most effective when it understands its community. By analysing local needs and family circumstances, it can plan more effectively, target support, and provide intelligence to inform services and improve outcomes. By consistently gathering and assessing up-to-date information from families, partners, and key data sources, the FIS can identify emerging trends and anticipate future requirements. This proactive approach not only ensures that the FIS remains aligned with the evolving priorities of local strategies but also enables the setting of clear objectives and the effective measurement of progress, thereby ensuring that families receive the most relevant and impactful support.

Practice Insight Examples:

- Apply insights to childcare evaluations, local planning, and partnership focus areas
- Assess community insights at least quarterly
- Continuously update plans to ensure alignment with local strategies and to reflect community requirements, maintaining service effectiveness
- Gather information from families, partners, providers, and key data sources
- Regularly analyse trends to anticipate emerging demands and guide future planning
- Senior leaders demonstrate how applying community intelligence leads to better family outcomes
- Set clear objectives and priorities based on local needs
- Use performance metrics to measure strengths and pinpoint areas for improvement

What An Assessor May See:

- Childcare sufficiency assessments documentation
- Enquiry trend analysis and trend analysis reports highlighting emerging demand
- Evidence of regular review of community needs
- FIS service usage statistics
- Local authority Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
- Local authority family needs assessments and use of enquiry data and service usage patterns
- Local population or demographic analysis
- Mapping of childcare provision across the local area

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff describing the needs and experiences of key cohorts in their local population
- Staff explaining local demand pressures confidently

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing its understanding of local needs. It collects demographic and enquiry data, tracks trends, and periodically reviews this information to inform operations.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently uses intelligence to inform decision-making. It regularly applies community intelligence to decision-making, planning, resource allocation, and performance reviews.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS anticipates change and proactively improves services. It integrates intelligence from multiple sources, including families, partners, providers and wider local authority information.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS influences the wider system through trusted intelligence and strategic leadership. It provides reliable data and strategic guidance, supporting local authorities and partners with community insights and advanced analysis to inform system-wide planning and family support.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥85% of service planning documents incorporate up-to-date demographic data, demand patterns, and identified family needs, and are reviewed and refreshed at least annually, as verified by an independent audit.

Outcome 1.2 Inclusive Needs Analysis: The Family Information Service is designed and planned to meet the needs of families from diverse communities, including those experiencing poverty or disadvantage, and of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Significance: An effective FIS understands the barriers faced by all families by engaging with disadvantaged communities, children with SEND, and seldom-heard groups. Embedding inclusive needs analysis into planning ensures that high-quality support is accessible to every family. Actively including underrepresented groups in data collection and engagement keeps the FIS relevant and impactful. Ongoing assessments and collaboration inform strategic priorities, improving accessibility and aligning services with local family realities.

Practice Insight Examples:

- Data is gathered from underrepresented groups, such as families in poverty, children and youth with SEND, minority communities, and partner organisations.
- Families from varied backgrounds, including those facing poverty or raising children with special needs, are consulted to identify community needs.
- Feedback from underrepresented families has shaped service development
- Inclusive needs assessments are conducted at least quarterly
- Inclusive language embedded in planning discussions
- Insights into inclusivity inform strategic planning, service redesign, and partnership priorities
- Surveys, focus groups, and community partnerships provide diverse input for inclusive, targeted service planning.
- There is clear evidence of progress in accessibility, inclusion, or increased service use

What An Assessor May See:

- Action plans updated to improve service delivery following an inclusive needs analysis
- Collaboration with SEND coordinators, specialists, or multi-agency partners in planning
- Consultation records verify family and community input in identifying barriers and needs
- Data from families across diverse backgrounds informs the needs analysis
- Mapping data shows that FIS serves individuals facing poverty, homelessness, or disadvantage
- Materials are provided in multiple languages and formats to support cultural responsiveness
- Needs analyses cover poverty, digital exclusion, and transport barriers affecting access
- Records show targeted outreach efforts in deprived areas or among low-income families
- Service records confirm that SEND needs are considered in planning

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff, families, and partners confirm FIS's commitment to including underrepresented groups and addressing SEND needs

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing its approach to inclusion and equity, primarily responding to individual requests rather than conducting systematic analysis, despite collecting data on disadvantaged groups and those with SEND.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently adopts an inclusive approach to service planning, regularly assessing community needs including those of disadvantaged groups and individuals with SEND to inform resource allocation and improve accessibility.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS actively removes barriers and promotes equity by collaborating with communities, partners, and organisations. Input from seldom-heard groups informs services and improves accessibility.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS influences wider systems to improve equity and inclusion for all families. It leads on equity and inclusion, ensuring that the experiences of disadvantaged families, children with SEND, and underrepresented groups inform partnership planning and service development.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥80% of all needs analysis and service planning activities each year demonstrate documented engagement with these key cohorts.

Outcome 1.3 Intelligence-Led Planning: The Family Information Service uses intelligence gathered from families, providers and partners to inform service planning, childcare sufficiency assessments and prioritisation.

Significance: A strong FIS draws on insights from families, providers, partners, and activities to inform decisions about priorities and resources. As the service grows, intelligence-led planning shapes both strategy and operations, helping to keep services responsive and focused on better outcomes for children, young people, and families. By systematically gathering and analysing feedback from these key stakeholders, the FIS can adapt to emerging needs and trends, ensuring that service development genuinely reflects the community it supports. This ongoing process not only enhances accessibility and quality but also fosters trust and collaboration across the partnership network, ensuring that improvements are both data-driven and rooted in the lived experiences of local people.

Practice Insights:

- Analyse data to identify trends, drive service improvements, and adapt support to local needs
- Collect information and feedback from families, partners, and service providers through regular enquiries
- Families, providers, and partners consistently share insights
- Intelligence informs strategic planning and key decisions
- Learning is shared across partnership networks
- Review intelligence quarterly, drawing on diverse data sources
- Service enhancements are achieved through data-driven decisions

What An Assessor May See:

- Brokerage records informing planning
- Case examples in which family enquiries highlighted emerging issues
- Evidence of collaboration with childcare providers and local partners
- Evidence of information sharing with Early Years teams
- Examples of intelligence feeding into Local Authority decisions
- Examples in which enquiry trends influenced service delivery
- Partnership meeting notes referencing FIS intelligence
- Records showing feedback from providers
- Reports shared with strategic planning groups
- Systems for recording and analysing enquiries

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Confirmation from families, partners, and service providers that they provide feedback to the FIS
- Examples of how the service has developed as a result of the feedback received

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing evidence-informed planning. Evidence of intelligence influencing decision-making is becoming more consistent.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently plans using reliable intelligence. Priorities, resources and service developments are routinely based upon identified needs and emerging trends.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS uses intelligence to enhance services. Intelligence informs collaborative planning with partners and supports continuous service improvement.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS influences strategic decision-making through trusted intelligence. Its evidence and analysis shape childcare sufficiency, prevention, commissioning discussions and broader family support priorities within the local authority.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥75% of planning and prioritisation decisions for the Family Information Service are supported by documented intelligence from families, providers, and partners, as evidenced by quarterly planning reviews.

Outcome 1.4 Identifying Gaps & Pressure Points: The Family Information Service uses enquiry trends, referral patterns and service activity to identify gaps in provision and emerging pressures on families.

Significance: A FIS should do more than answer queries—it identifies unmet needs, barriers, and pressure points. By tracking trends and referrals, it detects issues early, informs local planning, and prevents small problems from escalating. As its capabilities grow, the FIS proactively uses insights to anticipate needs and strengthen the broader support system. This approach means the FIS not only responds to immediate concerns but also collaborates closely with partners to implement evidence-based solutions, ensuring swift action on identified challenges. By embracing diverse perspectives and consistently reviewing data, the FIS enhances inclusivity and keeps pace with changing family needs, ultimately supporting more equitable access and better outcomes for all.

Practice Insights:

- Early identification informs local authority planning and decisions on childcare sufficiency
- Gap and pressure analyses are conducted quarterly to track progress
- Learning outcomes are regularly shared across networks to support prevention
- Measurable outcomes demonstrate reduced service gaps and improved family access
- Needs analysis is regularly undertaken with input from families representing diverse backgrounds, including those who are disadvantaged or have SEND requirements
- Start for Life and Early Years needs are addressed, encompassing childcare provision, the first 1001 days, early language development, health, SEND pathways, and transitions into early education settings
- Use varied engagement methods to include all voices in service planning for greater inclusivity
- Utilise multiple intelligence sources to identify both current and emerging pressures

What An Assessor May See:

- Case studies illustrating how gaps were identified
- Data dashboards or reports
- Evidence of actions taken following intelligence
- Evidence of analysis informing childcare sufficiency work
- Evidence of escalation to relevant strategic groups
- Records of repeated enquiries indicating unmet need
- Reports highlighting shortages in childcare or family services
- Service dashboards showing enquiry patterns

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Communications with partners about emerging pressures
- Examples of escalated gaps
- Examples where gaps were reported to the local authority

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing its ability to identify emerging pressures. It reviews enquiry and referral information periodically and has begun to identify recurring service gaps and areas of increased demand. Some operational improvements are being made in response to identified issues.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently identifies and responds to emerging needs. Findings inform service planning, partnerships, and resource allocation.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS anticipates future demand and works proactively with partners to reduce service gaps. It uses multi-source data to anticipate challenges and collaborates with partners to close service gaps. Gap analysis informs shared planning, prevention, and service improvement.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS drives system-wide progress through predictive analysis and collaboration, supporting local authority planning, childcare, partnerships, and prevention to improve family outcomes.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: All significant trends in enquiries, referrals, and service activity are analysed monthly, and ≥75% of identified gaps or pressures lead to documented action plans within one quarter.

Outcome 1.5 Contribution to Childcare Sufficiency: The Family Information Service provides intelligence and insight for the local authority's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and related planning processes.

Significance: A strong FIS serves as a bridge between families, childcare providers, and local authorities, ensuring that emerging needs and service gaps are identified early. By sharing real-time data on childcare enquiries, gaps, and parental feedback, the FIS enables local authorities to respond proactively to shifting demands, allocate resources more effectively, and shape strategies that support children and families. This collaborative approach not only improves the quality and availability of childcare but also builds trust with partners and the community, making the FIS a valued strategic adviser whose insights directly influence local planning and measurable improvements in family outcomes.

Practice Insights:

- Address Start for Life/Early Years needs, including childcare entitlements, 1001 days, early language, health visiting, SEND pathways, and transitions to early education
- Collect and share data with the local authority on childcare enquiries, gaps, parent feedback, and trends
- Contribute to sufficiency assessments and planning, using frontline insights to inform local childcare strategy
- Link measurable improvements to FIS data and leadership
- Partners trust FIS as a strategic contributor
- Senior representatives attend strategic planning meetings year-round
- FIS intelligence shapes childcare priorities, commissioning, and family support strategies

What An Assessor May See:

- Case studies demonstrating how FIS insight led to the creation or adjustment of childcare provision
- Evidence of FIS and local authority collaboration on sufficiency assessments
- Evidence of FIS input influencing childcare strategies or action plans
- FIS attendance records for local authority sufficiency assessments or planning meetings
- FIS data or reports on childcare demand, availability, and gaps
- Meeting minutes reflecting FIS involvement in discussions on childcare sufficiency
- Reports to stakeholders highlighting how FIS data informed planning decisions

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff describing how they collect and share intelligence with local authority planners
- Testimonies from local authority partners on the value of FIS contributions

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing its strategic planning function. Staff understand how their information supports local planning and begin participating in wider partnership activity.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS reliably supports local strategic planning by providing comprehensive intelligence for Childcare Sufficiency Assessments and other activities. Its input is valued and regularly shapes planning and service priorities.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS supports strategic planning by sharing reliable intelligence, identifying challenges in childcare, and collaborating with partners to develop local strategies. Its efforts help ensure sufficient childcare, aid commissioning, and encourage preventive approaches across the local authority.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS provides strategic leadership, shapes childcare plans, guides commissioning, and supports family strategies across the local authority. It is recognised for its expertise and influence.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥75% of documented childcare provision gaps, as reported by the Family Information Service, are addressed or escalated within three months of identification.

Outcome 1.6 Strategic Planning & Targets: The Family Information Service has set strategic objectives, priorities, targets, and performance indicators to support the delivery, review, and evaluation of relevant local strategic plans.

Significance: Strategic planning uses community insights to guide objectives, allocate resources, and drive improvement. As capability increases, it becomes key to organisational leadership, aligning decisions and resources for better outcomes for children, young people, and families. This approach ensures that strategic objectives, priorities, and targets are underpinned by relevant data, enabling regular monitoring and continuous refinement of practice. By embedding measurable performance indicators and fostering collective organisational learning, the FIS can demonstrate clear impact, support the achievement of local priorities, and contribute to the effective delivery and evaluation of strategic plans.

Practice Insights:

- Align financial planning with strategic priorities
- Define measurable targets and performance indicators and regularly monitor progress against them
- Organisational learning leads to revised priorities and measurable improvements
- Performance indicators are consistently met or exceeded
- Senior leaders demonstrate how strategic planning has influenced wider local authority priorities
- Review strategic objectives formally at least quarterly
- Set clear objectives and priorities that align with local strategies
- Use this information to evaluate effectiveness, make improvements, and demonstrate its contribution to wider local goals and plans

What An Assessor May See:

- Alignment with local authority strategic plans
- Data showing targets / KPIs
- Evidence of regular performance review meetings
- Evidence of reporting to senior leadership or governance structures
- Examples of data impacting decision making
- Examples of service improvements based on performance data
- FIS service plans or delivery plans
- Performance monitoring reports

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff describing service priorities
- Staff knowledge of the impact of targets on service delivery

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing a structured strategic planning process. It has established priorities and performance measures, but planning remains largely operational, with limited alignment among local intelligence, organisational objectives and resource allocation.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently aligns strategy, performance and resources. It has identified strategic objectives, priorities, targets and performance indicators, which are routinely reviewed.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS uses strategic leadership to drive continual improvement. Performance information, financial management, and community intelligence are integrated to support informed decision-making, continuous improvement, and organisational resilience.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS provides strategic leadership for lasting improvement, effectively combines planning, finances, and performance, and quickly adapts to changing needs while influencing local authority priorities.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥80% of strategic objectives, priorities, targets, and performance indicators are established, tracked, and reviewed at least quarterly, with progress reported to relevant stakeholders and integrated into local strategic plan evaluations.

Standard 2: Information Quality, Accuracy & Assurance

This Standard focuses on how effectively the Family Information Service develops the governance, systems and culture needed to ensure that information remains accurate, compliant and responsive to changing local needs. It considers how information is quality assured, how providers are supported to maintain accurate records, how specialist information is managed and how performance monitoring continually strengthens confidence in the information families rely upon.

Outcome 2.1 Quality Standards & Governance: The Family Information Service has clear quality standards and assurance arrangements that govern the provision of information, advice, assistance, and brokerage services.

Significance: Families rely on the FIS to provide accurate, impartial and trustworthy information, advice, assistance and brokerage. Strong quality standards and governance arrangements underpin this confidence by setting clear expectations, ensuring consistent ways of working and providing effective oversight of service quality. Governance ensures that information is managed responsibly, quality is maintained, and continual improvement is embedded in everyday practice. By developing robust quality assurance arrangements, the FIS strengthens accountability, promotes consistency and provides assurance to families, providers, partners and commissioners that the services they receive can be relied upon.

Practice Insights

- Collect feedback from families to ensure the service remains accurate, consistent, and reliable
- Data from audits, complaints, and feedback directly supports governance and quality
- Establish clear quality standards for information, advice, assistance, brokerage, warm handovers, uniform guidance, and support for families regarding their entitlements and choices
- Maintain comprehensive staff guidelines and conduct routine audits and reviews to promote adherence to established policies
- Position the directory function as a central element of information, advice, assistance, and brokerage
- Quality standards and governance arrangements are systematically implemented, monitored, and reviewed to ensure the quality, consistency, and reliability of information, advice, assistance, and brokerage
- Senior leadership evaluates quality assurance outcomes at least quarterly
- The rigorous audit programme continually reinforces high standards
- The team consistently ensures compliance with quality standards

What An Assessor May See:

- Documented quality assurance framework
- Evidence of regular quality monitoring or audits
- Evidence of reporting to senior leadership or governance boards
- FIS service specification or operating standards
- Governance arrangements showing oversight by the local authority
- Internal review processes for directory content
- Management reports reviewing information quality
- Quality standards or service specification
- Service policies covering information accuracy and quality

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff explaining/understanding how quality is governed/assured

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): FIS is developing consistent governance arrangements to promote quality, accountability and reliable service delivery. Roles, responsibilities and quality assurance processes are becoming more consistent, thereby supporting improved oversight of service quality.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): FIS consistently ensures the quality of its services through well-established governance and quality assurance arrangements. It consistently applies quality assurance processes to maintain the accuracy, reliability and integrity of information, advice, assistance and brokerage.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens quality governance through evidence-informed learning, effective oversight and continuous improvement. Quality assurance is integrated into decision-making, thereby continually improving service consistency and reliability.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through a culture in which quality governance continually strengthens organisational capability, inspires confidence, and ensures the integrity, consistency, and reliability of services for children, young people, and families. Quality assurance is embedded throughout the organisation, providing confidence that information, advice, assistance, and brokerage consistently meet the needs of children, young people, and families.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥75% compliance with established quality standards and assurance frameworks, as verified by annual independent quality audits, with no major non-conformances.

Outcome 2.2 Privacy & Data Protection: The Family Information Service safeguards customer privacy and personal data in line with applicable data protection legislation.

Significance: Children, young people and families often share personal and, at times, highly sensitive information with the FIS when seeking advice, support and guidance. Their willingness to do so depends on confidence that their personal information will be handled lawfully, respectfully and securely. Effective privacy and data protection arrangements therefore protect not only personal information but also the trust that underpins positive relationships between families and the FIS.

Practice Insights:

- Apply robust security measures, including storage, restricted access, and ongoing privacy training
- Collect, process, and share customer data openly and in line with legal requirements
- FIS's information management is trusted by partners and families
- Privacy safeguards are consistently maintained, monitored, and improved to protect personal data
- Senior leaders regularly review governance to drive continuous improvement
- Share information to support families while safeguarding confidentiality
- Staff uphold high standards of information stewardship
- Use audits and incident reviews to enhance governance practices

What An Assessor May See:

- Audits of data management practices and privacy policies
- Consent procedures for recording family information
- Data protection impact assessments where relevant
- Data protection policy and information governance procedures
- Evidence of Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) registration
- Evidence of regular data protection or information governance audits
- Privacy notices provided to families
- Procedures for handling and storing personal information
- Secure systems used to record enquiries
- Staff training records relating to UK GDPR, ICO registration, and data security
- UK GDPR and ICO registration in place

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff explaining how data is collected, stored, and shared in line with legislation

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing consistent practice to promote lawful, respectful and secure information handling. Staff demonstrate increasing confidence in handling personal information appropriately, recognising their responsibilities and seeking advice where necessary.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently protects personal information through well-established practices, professional confidence and effective governance. Privacy and data protection are embedded in routine practice.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens its capability to protect personal information through evidence-informed learning, effective oversight and continual improvement. Privacy arrangements are routinely reviewed using performance data, feedback, audit findings and organisational learning.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS fosters a culture in which safeguarding personal information builds trust and professional confidence, enabling secure support for children, young people, and families. Confidentiality and accountability are embedded throughout the organisation, ensuring that all stakeholders trust the management of personal information to achieve positive outcomes.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥85% of staff complete annual data protection training, and no substantiated data breaches are reported each year, and full compliance is confirmed by biannual data protection audits.

Outcome 2.3 Accurate & Compliant Information: The Family Information Service ensures that all digital services and directories provide accurate, comprehensive, and up-to-date information, including both registered and non-registered childcare, in line with statutory requirements and guidance.

Significance: Families rely on accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date information when making important decisions about childcare, early education and wider family support services. Incomplete, inaccurate or out-of-date information can delay access to support, reduce confidence, and affect the quality of decisions made by children, young people and families. Maintaining accurate and compliant information is therefore fundamental to ensuring that families receive reliable guidance and can access the services and opportunities available to them.

Practice Insights:

- Compliance and swift action meet statutory requirements
- Digital directories offer reliable, up-to-date childcare details
- Formats are accessible and inclusive
- Information is accurate, neutral, and accessible for families and professionals
- Processes ensure smooth brokerage, handovers, advice, and clear guidance
- Reviews proactively spot emerging needs
- The service promotes quality through wider partnerships
- Verification and feedback maintain information quality

What An Assessor May See:

- Compliance checks against statutory guidance
- Directory review schedules
- Evidence of monitoring the accuracy of childcare information
- Evidence of regular updates to provider information
- Evidence that information is accessible and understandable for families
- Online childcare and family services directory
- Provider update systems and mechanisms
- Records of directory maintenance or review cycles
- Scheduled review process for directory information

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff explaining consent procedures and how information accuracy is maintained

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing a trusted system. Information is mostly accurate and accessible, with reactive updates and inconsistent content reviews. Basic checks are conducted to identify inaccuracies and missing information.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS reliably provides trustworthy, accurate, impartial, and accessible information across all channels. Review processes support informed decision-making and fair access to services. Information quality assurance is embedded in routine practice.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS builds trust by delivering high-quality information, regularly checking for updates, and incorporating community input. It keeps content accessible and relevant. Quality assurance processes proactively identify emerging issues before they affect families.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS is regarded as an authoritative source, relied on by families and partners for accurate, accessible data. It sets information standards and shares knowledge to strengthen wider services. Accurate, comprehensive and reliable information is consistently maintained through robust quality assurance, proactive governance and continual improvement.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥75% of digital services and directories contain accurate, comprehensive, and up-to-date information, as evidenced by quarterly accuracy checks and full alignment with statutory guidance.

Outcome 2.4 Provider Engagement & Updating: The Family Information Service has systems to encourage, support and challenge providers to keep their directory information accurate and up to date.

Significance: Families make important decisions based on the information available through the FIS. The accuracy and reliability of that information depend not only on the FIS itself but also on the providers who contribute to local directories and information services. Effective provider engagement helps ensure that information remains accurate, comprehensive and current, enabling families to make informed decisions with confidence. By encouraging, supporting, and appropriately challenging providers to maintain high-quality information, the FIS strengthens the integrity of its directories, promotes shared accountability, and improves the overall quality of the information available.

Practice Insights:

- Errors or outdated details are promptly corrected, and updates or changes are clearly communicated to ensure families always have access to reliable, up-to-date information
- Established processes are used to review and verify the accuracy of its information, including feedback from families and partners
- Improvement actions are evaluated and shown to deliver measurable impact
- Multiple sources of evidence are routinely analysed to identify trends and opportunities
- Organisational learning is actively shared with partners and influences wider service improvement
- Quality review is fully embedded within organisational leadership and decision-making

What An Assessor May See:

- Communication with providers requesting updates
- Evidence of follow-up when information is missing or outdated
- Evidence of regular provider engagement activities
- Guidance or support materials for providers on updating information
- Newsletters or communications sent to providers
- Provider update forms or online
- Staff demonstrates curiosity, reflection and ownership of continuous improvement.
- Templates for updates
- Training or information sessions for childcare providers
- Version control records for directory entries

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Provider feedback about the directory update process and systems
- Staff describing the update process

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Capability Limited (1 Point): The FIS is developing consistent approaches to foster provider ownership and improve the quality of published information. Providers increasingly recognise the importance of keeping information current and complete.

Capability Satisfactory (2 Points): The FIS consistently promotes shared responsibility for maintaining reliable information throughout the provider network. Provider engagement is embedded in routine practice.

Capability Good (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens provider engagement through collaboration, learning and shared accountability for information quality. Providers recognise their role in maintaining information that families can rely on with confidence.

Capability Excellent (4 Points): The FIS leads through a culture that strengthens provider engagement and collective ownership of information quality, ensuring families can consistently rely on accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date information. A culture of continuous collaboration and mutual accountability strengthens confidence in local information services and supports better outcomes for children, young people and families.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥75% of providers update their directory information at least once every six months, supported by proactive engagement initiatives and monitored via directory update logs.

Outcome 2.5 SEND & Specialist Information Assurance: The Family Information Service ensures that information on children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), as well as on other specialist family support services, is accurate, comprehensive, accessible and regularly reviewed.

Significance: Families seeking information about Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and other specialist support services often make significant decisions at challenging, emotional times. They rely on information that is accurate, comprehensive, accessible and sensitive to their individual circumstances. Inaccurate, incomplete or outdated information can create unnecessary barriers, heighten anxiety and delay access to the support children, young people and families need. By ensuring the quality and reliability of SEND and specialist information, the FIS promotes confidence, supports informed decision-making and strengthens equitable access to local services.

Practice Insights:

- Ensure information on SEND services, the Local Offer, health services, transitions to adulthood, and specialist provision is easy to find and clearly labelled on their website and in directories
- Regularly review and quality-assure this content to ensure it is accurate, comprehensive, accessible, and meets the needs of families seeking specialist support
- Embed specialist information assurance within organisational practice
- Work collaboratively with specialist providers and partners to maintain information quality

What An Assessor May See:

- Accessible formats for SEND and specialist provision-related information
- Clearly identifiable sections on SEND specialist provision information within the directory
- Evidence of collaboration with SEND specialist provision teams or partners
- Guidance for families navigating SEND specialist provision services
- Information on specialist childcare and support services
- Information relating to transitions to adulthood
- Links to or integration with the Local Offer

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Feedback from families confirming information clarity
- Local Offer navigation
- SEND partners confirming accuracy

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Capability Limited (1 Point): The FIS is developing systematic approaches to strengthen confidence in specialist information. Information on SEND and specialist services is routinely reviewed and updated.

Capability Satisfactory (2 Points): The FIS consistently ensures the quality, accessibility and reliability of specialist information through effective governance and collaboration. Specialist information assurance is embedded in routine practice.

Capability Good (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens specialist information assurance through collaboration, evidence-informed improvement and responsive organisational learning. Emerging needs, changes in provision and lessons learned are proactively used to improve the quality, accessibility and usefulness of information.

Capability Excellent (4 Points): The FIS leads through a culture in which specialist information assurance strengthens equity, confidence and informed decision-making for children, young people and families with additional or more complex needs. It continually works with partners, providers and families to improve the quality, accessibility and relevance of specialist information, ensuring that those with additional or more complex needs can access it with confidence.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥75% of families with SEND or specialist needs report that the information was easy to find, relevant, and up to date.

Outcome 2.6 Monitoring, Review & Correction: The Family Information Service routinely monitors, reviews and corrects information to ensure that published information remains accurate, reliable and up to date.

Significance: Accurate information cannot be ensured by publication alone. Information changes continually as services develop, eligibility criteria shift, new provision becomes available, and existing services evolve or cease. Without effective monitoring, review and correction, information can quickly become outdated, eroding confidence and potentially preventing children, young people and families from accessing appropriate support. By routinely monitoring the quality of published information, identifying inaccuracies and responding promptly to emerging issues, the FIS strengthens the reliability of its services and maintains public confidence.

Practice Insights:

- Directory accuracy is monitored, with follow-ups conducted as needed to correct outdated or inaccurate details, ensuring families have access to reliable service information
- Monitoring, review, and correction arrangements are systematically implemented, evaluated, and continually improved to maintain the accuracy, reliability, and integrity of published information
- Providers receive regular reminders to update directory listings via automated emails, online portals, or support sessions

What An Assessor May See:

- Audit trails documenting changes to content
- Evidence of continuous improvement processes
- Examples of corrections to information
- Examples of feedback received, and actions taken
- Monitoring reports identifying inaccuracies
- Records demonstrating responsiveness to feedback
- Scheduled reviews of information and directory entries
- Systems for recording and responding to feedback
- Version control or content management systems

What An Assessor May See:

- Feedback from families about information quality
- Staff describing review processes

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Capability Limited (1 Point): The FIS is developing systematic approaches to strengthen the ongoing accuracy and reliability of published information. Staff understand their responsibilities for maintaining information quality.

Capability Satisfactory (2 Points): The FIS consistently ensures information quality through well-established monitoring, review and corrective action. Monitoring, review and corrective action are embedded within routine organisational practice.

Capability Good (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens information assurance through proactive monitoring, organisational learning and evidence-informed improvement. It analyses monitoring data, user feedback, provider updates and quality assurance findings to identify recurring issues, improve review processes and enhance the reliability of published information before inaccuracies affect families.

Capability Excellent (4 Points): The FIS leads through a culture in which continual monitoring, review, and learning sustain confidence in the quality, reliability, and integrity of information provided to children, young people, and families. Monitoring arrangements are intelligent, proportionate, and responsive, enabling emerging issues to be identified and addressed promptly. Information quality is sustained through a culture of continual review, learning, and improvement, ensuring that children, young people, and families can consistently rely on accurate and trusted information.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: 100% of published information is reviewed for accuracy at least every six months, and all identified errors are corrected within ten working days, with corrections tracked in information management logs.

Outcome 2.7 Transparency, Accountability & Public Confidence: The Family Information Service demonstrates openness, accountability and transparency in how it provides information, advice and assistance by publishing a Statement of Service (SOS) that explains its role in delivering impartial, confidential Information, Advice, and Assistance, offering a brokerage service, and creating and maintaining a Local Offer.

Significance: A published SoS sets clear expectations for families regarding the support they can receive and reinforces the FIS's commitment to impartiality, confidentiality, and transparency. Trust is strengthened when organisations are open about how they work, how decisions are made, and how services continue to improve. Transparency enables families and partners to understand what they can expect from the FIS and provides confidence that it is accountable for the quality of its services.

Practice Insights:

- Ensure the SoS is easily accessible on the website and in printed materials, and reference it when engaging with families and partners to promote understanding
- Regularly update a publicly available SoS that clearly sets out what families can expect, including the impartial, confidential nature of its information, advice and assistance, as well as its brokerage and Local Offer responsibilities
- Routinely communicate performance, learning and improvement, enabling families, partners and stakeholders to maintain sustained confidence in the quality and integrity of services

What An Assessor May See:

- Availability of the SoS across various sources and languages
- Clear explanation of how families can access the service
- Evidence that the statement is reviewed and updated periodically
- Evidence that the statement is accessible to families
- Information on impartial and confidential service delivery
- Links between the statement and relevant legislation or guidance
- Published Statement of Service available online and in print
- Statement outlining the scope of information, advice and assistance

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Families confirming they were informed about the Statement and understand what FIS offers
- Staff explaining how content matches what they provide

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Capability Limited (1 Point): The FIS is developing transparent practices. It routinely communicates information about its services, quality arrangements and performance. Families and partners increasingly have confidence that the organisation is open and responsive.

Capability Satisfactory (2 Points): The FIS consistently demonstrates openness and accountability. Information on performance, quality and improvement is routinely shared, enabling families, partners and stakeholders to understand how the organisation maintains confidence in its services.

Capability Good (3 Points): The FIS uses transparency to strengthen public confidence. Performance information, improvement activities and organisational learning are openly communicated, thereby reinforcing confidence in the Family Information Service.

Capability Excellent (4 Points): The FIS is recognised for its integrity, openness and accountability. It openly shares learning, performance and improvement with families, partners and the wider community, strengthening confidence across the local system and influencing wider organisational practice.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: The published Statement of Service is reviewed and updated annually, and ≥90% of responding families report confidence in the service's impartiality and transparency.

STANDARD 3: Accessible & Inclusive Information Delivery

This Standard focuses on how effectively the Family Information Service (FIS) ensures families can access information, advice, and assistance in ways that meet differing needs and preferences. Building on this, the FIS is committed to providing accessible formats and utilising multiple channels—such as digital, phone, and face-to-face outreach—to ensure that support reaches all families. Safeguarding procedures are integrated into service delivery, and staff actively help families overcome barriers.

Outcome 3.1 Multiple Channels of Access: The Family Information Service provides families with information through a range of formats, channels, and locations to meet their diverse needs.

Significance: Not all families access information in the same way. Personal circumstances, disability, language, confidence, digital access, location and individual preferences all influence how families seek support. Providing multiple access channels helps ensure that information, advice and assistance are available in ways that are convenient, inclusive and responsive to individual needs. As organisational capability develops, accessibility becomes integral to service design, enabling more families to access timely support and reducing barriers to inclusion.

Practice Insights:

- Provide information that is accessible to families, regardless of their specific needs, such as disabilities, language differences, or lack of internet access.
- Share details through multiple channels, including online directories, printed resources, phone support, in-person sessions, and community outreach events.

What An Assessor May See:

- Evidence of families accessing the service through different channels
- Face-to-face information sessions or drop-in services
- Family Information Service website or online directory
- Information points in community locations (e.g. libraries, Family Hubs, children's centres)
- Outreach activities in community settings
- Printed information materials
- Social media or digital communication channels
- Telephone advice or enquiry service
- Website, phone, face-to-face, outreach

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Families describing how they access information
- Staff discussing formats for information and how families access information in different ways

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing inclusive access to information. A range of information channels is established and regularly promoted. Staff understands the importance of offering alternatives to meet differing family needs.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS continually improves accessibility through responsive service design. It continually reviews how families access information and adapts delivery methods in response to changing needs, feedback and emerging technologies.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS improves access by regularly updating service design based on feedback, changing needs, and new technologies.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through inclusive and accessible information delivery. It is recognised for providing highly accessible, inclusive and flexible access to information. It anticipates changing needs, reaches families who might otherwise experience barriers and shares good practice to improve accessibility across the wider partnership.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥80% of families report being able to access information in their preferred format, channel, or location, as measured by annual user surveys and quarterly access audits.

Outcome 3.2 Removing Barriers to Access: The Family Information Service actively reduces barriers arising from disability, language, literacy, digital exclusion, poverty, or other factors.

Significance: Every family should be able to access information, advice and assistance, regardless of their personal circumstances. Barriers such as disability, language, literacy, digital exclusion, poverty or social isolation can prevent families from accessing the support they need. An excellent FIS does not wait for barriers to become apparent; it actively identifies, understands and removes them. As organisational capability develops, inclusion becomes integral to service design, ensuring that no family is disadvantaged in accessing information and support.

Practice Insights:

- Collaborate with community organisations to extend outreach to families experiencing poverty or other difficulties. This partnership ensures that services remain available to all individuals, regardless of their circumstances.
- Offer translation and interpretation services to families as needed. Additionally, provide assistance to those who encounter challenges with reading or accessing digital resources, fostering inclusion and equitable access for all.
- Present information in clear, accessible formats, enabling families to obtain necessary support and guidance irrespective of their familiarity with specific technologies or terminology.

What An Assessor May See:

- Accessible website features (e.g. screen reader compatibility)
- Alternative contact options for families unable to access digital services
- Evidence of support for families experiencing digital exclusion
- Examples of tailored support
- Information available in Easy Read or accessible formats
- Reasonable adjustments made for families with disabilities
- Staff supporting families to access online information
- The FIS website adheres to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), enabling independent access for families with disabilities
- Translated materials or language support
- Use of interpreters or translation services, Easy Read, and assisted access

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Family feedback confirms barrier-free access and recognition of individual needs
- Staff describing how barriers are identified and addressed

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Capability Limited (1 Point): The FIS is developing inclusive methods to reduce access barriers and makes reasonable adjustments as needed. It provides a range of adjustments to support differing needs, including language, disability and digital access.

Capability Satisfactory (2 Points): The FIS consistently adapts to different needs, ensuring all families can access services equitably. Information, advice and assistance are routinely tailored to meet differing needs, ensuring families can access services equitably regardless of their circumstances.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS anticipates and mitigates barriers before they affect families. Accessibility is built into service planning rather than added in response to individual requests.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through proactive inclusion and equitable access. It collaborates with partners and communities to identify emerging barriers, develops innovative approaches to inclusion, and shares learning to improve accessibility across the wider local system.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥80% of families accessing the service confirm that the information was available in an accessible format or in a language suitable to their needs.

Outcome 3.3 Outreach to Marginalised Groups: The Family Information Service undertakes targeted outreach and engagement to ensure that underrepresented, disadvantaged, marginalised and harder-to-reach families are aware of and can access its services.

Significance: Some children, young people and families face greater barriers to accessing information and support due to social, economic, cultural or personal circumstances. Waiting for these families to find the service can unintentionally reinforce inequality. Effective outreach ensures that support reaches those who may benefit most, helping to reduce disadvantage, improve inclusion and strengthen community confidence. As organisational capability develops, outreach becomes a planned, evidence-informed activity that proactively engages communities rather than relying solely on traditional service delivery.

Practice Insights :

- Active collaboration with local partners, community organisations, and frontline services is undertaken to identify and engage marginalised or disadvantaged families.
- Families are informed about the service and enabled to access essential support through participation in community events, the dissemination of information via trusted intermediaries, and the implementation of tailored communication strategies.

What An Assessor May See:

- Campaigns or initiatives to reach underrepresented families
- Data analysis identifying communities with lower service engagement
- Evidence of attendance at community events
- Evidence of targeted engagement with specific communities
- Information sharing with schools, health services, and family support services
- Outreach plans or engagement strategies
- Partnerships with organisations supporting disadvantaged families
- Promotion of services through community groups

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff describing how the service promotes awareness among underrepresented, disadvantaged, marginalised and hard-to-reach families

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Points): The FIS is developing targeted approaches to reach underrepresented families. Partnerships are beginning to support engagement with these communities.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Point): The FIS consistently reaches families who might otherwise be excluded. It routinely draws on local intelligence, demographic data and community relationships to engage marginalised groups and improve equitable access.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS actively improves inclusive outreach by learning, partnering, and applying evidence-based methods. It adapts its strategies in response to feedback and evolving community needs and evaluates what works best.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS demonstrates leadership through proactive, inclusive and community-centred outreach. It collaborates with community organisations and trusted partners to co-design outreach approaches, share effective practice and help reduce inequalities across the local system.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: Targeted outreach increases engagement among underrepresented, disadvantaged, and marginalised groups by $\geq 25\%$ within 12 months, as measured by demographic analysis of service users and by outreach event participation records.

Outcome 3.4 Safe, Impartial & Confidential Delivery: The Family Information Service provides impartial, confidential, and unbiased information, advice, support, and brokerage, either free of charge or funded at the point of delivery.

Significance: Families need confidence that they can seek information, advice and assistance in a safe, respectful and bias-free environment. Safe, impartial and confidential delivery enables families to discuss sensitive issues openly, supports informed decision-making and protects individual rights and dignity. It also reinforces confidence in the FIS's integrity and professionalism.

Practice Insights :

- Clear policies and comprehensive staff training ensure that all information, advice, assistance, guidance, and brokerage services are delivered confidentially, impartially, and without judgement.
- Families receive free access to services, with their privacy and preferences always respected.
- Leaders promote a culture in which professional integrity and safeguarding are integral to everyday practice.

What An Assessor May See:

- Confidentiality policies and procedures
- Evidence that services are provided free of charge or funded at the point of delivery
- Examples demonstrating that families receive balanced information about available services
- Feedback from families indicating trust in the service
- Information explaining that advice is impartial
- Privacy notices provided to families
- Staff training on confidentiality and impartiality

What An Assessor May See:

- Staff describing how impartiality is maintained

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing trusted, respectful service delivery. Staff apply organisational policies on confidentiality, safeguarding and impartiality.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently provides safe, impartial and confidential support. Staff demonstrate professional judgement, maintain appropriate confidentiality, and ensure information is provided fairly, consistently and without bias.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS consistently improves ethical and professional standards. It regularly reviews practices, reflects on learning, and ensures services are safe and ethical. Staff handle complex situations with trust, confidentiality, and integrity.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through ethical, trusted and professionally accountable practice. Safe, impartial and confidential delivery is fully embedded in organisational culture, influencing partnership working and contributing to high levels of public confidence in the service.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥75% of families surveyed confirm that the information and support they received were impartial, confidential, unbiased, and free at the point of delivery, as evidenced by post-interaction surveys and independent reviews.

Outcome 3.5 Safeguarding & Escalation: The Family Information Service has clear safeguarding and escalation procedures that ensure concerns about children, young people or vulnerable adults are recognised, appropriately addressed and referred in line with local safeguarding arrangements.

Significance: Families place considerable trust in the FIS, often sharing information that may indicate a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at risk of harm. Effective safeguarding arrangements ensure that concerns are promptly recognised, appropriately managed and escalated in line with local safeguarding procedures. Strong safeguarding practice protects individuals, strengthens professional confidence and reinforces public trust in the service.

Practice Insights :

- Clear, regularly reviewed safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, and all staff are trained to comply with them.
- Establish clear escalation routes for raising concerns about the safety of children, young people, or vulnerable adults, or about the quality of services, ensuring timely referrals to the appropriate authorities or partners as necessary.
- Leaders promote a culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Work with staff to ensure safeguarding responsibilities are understood as part of everyday professional practice, not merely as a procedural requirement.

What An Assessor May See:

- Clear escalation routes and referral pathways
- Examples of safeguarding concerns appropriately escalated
- Guidance for staff on recognising safeguarding concerns
- Links with local safeguarding partnerships
- Records of appropriate action taken when concerns arise
- Safeguarding policies and procedures
- Staff safeguarding training records

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff explaining their safeguarding responsibilities
- Staff describing the safeguarding reporting and escalation procedures

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing effective safeguarding practices. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and are familiar with local referral pathways.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS reliably protects children, young people, and vulnerable adults through assured professional conduct. Staff can identify potential safeguarding concerns, take appropriate action, and collaborate effectively with partner agencies to ensure timely referrals and appropriate support.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS regularly reviews and strengthens its safeguarding procedures in response to incidents, audits, and case reviews. Leadership fosters a strong safeguarding culture and promotes continuous improvement through learning and professional reflection.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads by fostering a culture of safeguarding excellence and shared responsibility. Staff consistently exercise sound professional judgement, safeguarding learning informs organisational development, and the service contributes to strengthening safeguarding practice across the wider partnership.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥95% of appropriate staff are trained annually in safeguarding and escalation procedures, and all safeguarding concerns are addressed and referred within 24 hours, as documented in safeguarding logs and compliance audits.

Outcome 3.6 SEND Inclusive Information: The Family Information Service provides accessible, accurate and comprehensive information, advice and assistance for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families, thereby supporting informed choice and equitable access to services.

Significance: Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), together with their families, often need timely, accurate and accessible information to navigate education, health, social care and community support. High-quality SEND information helps families understand their rights, make informed choices and access appropriate services with confidence. It also supports joined up working across agencies and contributes to improved outcomes for children and young people.

Practice Insights :

- Collaborate with families and local SEND networks to regularly review and update content, ensuring it remains relevant and supports independent decision-making
- Continuously enhance SEND information through ongoing learning, regular reviews, and feedback
- Ensure that information for families with children and young people who have SEND is provided in accessible formats, such as easy-read guides, large print, and translated materials
- Work efficiently with partners across education, health, social care, and the voluntary sector to maintain comprehensive and coordinated information

What An Assessor May See:

- Accessible information explaining SEND services and support
- Dedicated SEND information resources
- Evidence of collaboration with SEND teams or partners
- Examples of reasonable adjustments for SEND families
- Feedback from families of children with SEND
- Information about specialist childcare or services
- Links to or integration with the Local Offer
- Materials supporting families through SEND processes

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Families describing clarity and usefulness
- Staff describing how SEND families are supported

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is building confidence in its ability to support children and young people with SEND and their families. SEND information is routinely reviewed to ensure accuracy and accessibility.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently provides trusted, inclusive SEND information. Staff confidently support families in understanding available services, entitlements, and local pathways.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens inclusive SEND support through collaboration and learning. Feedback, legislation, and emerging good practice are routinely used to inform decision-making, improve accessibility, and respond to changing needs.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads by providing inclusive, trusted and family-centred SEND information and support. Families, professionals and partners value its expertise, and the organisation actively contributes to improving the accessibility, quality and consistency of SEND information across the wider partnership.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥75% of families of children and young people with SEND rate the information and assistance as accessible, comprehensive, and helpful in supporting informed choices, as measured by annual SEND user surveys.

Outcome 3.7 Digital Accessibility: The Family Information Service ensures that its online resources and directories, including partner information, are accessible and developed in accordance with established accessibility standards.

Significance: Accessible digital resources enable all families, including people with disabilities and those who use assistive technologies, to find, understand and use the information and support they need. Poorly designed websites, directories or downloadable documents can create significant barriers, even when the underlying information is accurate and comprehensive. Digital accessibility also helps ensure that families can navigate information independently, locate relevant services and make informed choices without being unnecessarily excluded by the way information is presented. Because the FIS may also host or publish information supplied by partners, effective assurance must extend beyond content produced directly by the service.

Practice Insights :

- Embed design, commissioning, publication, testing, and review of online information within the quality review cycle
- Keep an up-to-date accessibility statement
- Lead on public-sector accessibility, including requirements, statements, accessible documents, routine WCAG 2.2 AA testing, and alignment
- Maintain websites and online directories to meet WCAG standards, including screen-reader compatibility, alt text, and easy navigation
- Test digital resources regularly, address feedback, and ensure content is accessible to all users

What An Assessor May See:

- Accessible design features in online directories
- Clear navigation and search functionality for families
- Confirmation of alignment with relevant accessibility standards
- Evidence of testing digital platforms for accessibility
- Online information templates
- Templates used to ensure consistent, accessible online information
- User feedback on digital accessibility
- Website accessibility statement

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Families confirming accessibility and currency of information
- Staff describing processes used to maintain accessible digital information

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing consistent approaches to accessible digital information. Staff understands key accessibility requirements, and processes are being developed to improve navigation, document accessibility, image descriptions and compatibility with assistive technologies.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently provides accessible and usable digital information. Websites, directories and downloadable information are developed and reviewed in accordance with established accessibility standards.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens digital accessibility through assurance, testing and user insights. It routinely tests its digital resources through a combination of technical checks, user feedback and accessibility reviews.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through inclusive digital design and system-wide accessibility assurance. Accessibility is embedded in all digital development from the outset; users with varying access needs are involved in review and improvement, and learning is shared with partners to strengthen accessibility across the wider local information system.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥95% of online resources and directories comply with WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility standards, as verified by quarterly accessibility audits.

STANDARD 4: Skilled Workforce & Professional Practice

This Standard recognises that excellent Family Information Services (FIS) are built through workforce capability. It follows the journey from recruiting the right people, through developing competence and professional practice, to building the specialist knowledge and confidence needed to support families safely, consistently and effectively.

Outcome 4.1 Recruitment & Selection: The Family Information Service's recruitment and selection process complies with current legislation, best practice, and safeguarding and equal opportunities guidelines.

Significance: Recruitment and selection form the foundation of workforce capability. Effective recruitment ensures that the FIS appoints people with the values, behaviours, and potential to deliver high-quality information, advice, and assistance while meeting safeguarding responsibilities, employment legislation, and equal opportunities requirements. Fair, transparent and robust recruitment processes help build a workforce that reflects the communities it serves.

Practice Insights :

- Continually review recruitment practices to strengthen workforce capability
- Ensure policies are in place that promote equal opportunities and prevent discrimination throughout the recruitment process, ensuring a safe and diverse workforce
- Maintain robust selection processes that support fair and evidence-based decision-making
- Recruitment effectively finds candidates whose values, behaviours, and skills match the Family Information Service's purpose and duties.
- Comprehensive procedures, including background checks and assessment criteria, ensure candidates meet all legal and professional standards.

What An Assessor May See:

- Documentation demonstrates compliance with regulations, including the Equality Act 2010
- Documents and new recruits confirm that the recruitment procedure was followed
- Equality and diversity considerations within recruitment processes
- Evidence of fair and transparent recruitment processes
- Evidence of references and background checks (e.g. DBS where applicable)
- Induction processes for new staff
- Interview documentation and scoring records
- Job advertisements and recruitment documentation
- Recruitment and selection policies and procedures

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff confirming that recruitment procedures were followed appropriately

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing a consistent, values-based recruitment capability. Managers understand safer recruitment principles, equal opportunities responsibilities, and the importance of appointing individuals whose values align with the service's aims.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently recruits individuals who enhance workforce capability and professional practice. Recruitment decisions are evidence-based, transparent, and aligned with organisational objectives.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS enhances workforce capability through evidence-based recruitment, demonstrates innovative and inclusive practices that attract and retain talent, and shares lessons learned with partners.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS sets the standard in recruitment, strengthening workforce capability, diversity, and professionalism through innovative and inclusive methods, attracting and retaining top talent, and sharing best practices with partners.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: 100% of new staff recruitment files contain documented evidence of compliance with legal, safeguarding, and equal opportunities requirements.

Outcome 4.2 Competent and Confident Staff: The Family Information Service ensures that staff have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to provide high-quality information, advice, and assistance appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.

Significance: Families rely on the FIS to provide accurate, impartial, and timely information to support informed decision-making. This depends on staff having the knowledge, practical skills, and confidence to respond effectively to a wide range of enquiries, while recognising the limits of their role and when specialist support or referral is required. Competent and confident staff contribute to service quality, consistency, and public trust, enabling families to receive professional support regardless of who they speak to.

Practice Insights :

- Leaders foster an environment of continuous learning and support, empowering staff to address enquiries effectively, provide accurate guidance, and deliver exceptional assistance and brokerage services
- Routine training, professional development, and supervision ensure that team members remain up to date with best practices, relevant legislation, and local service updates
- Professional confidence and reflective practice are integral to daily service delivery
- Learning is facilitated through comprehensive induction processes, structured supervision, mentoring, and continuous professional development

What An Assessor May See:

- Evidence of staff knowledge of childcare, family services and local provision
- Evidence that staff are confident in responding to family enquiries
- Evidence that staff understand their roles and responsibilities
- Job descriptions and person specifications for FIS roles
- Performance review or appraisal documentation
- Staff qualification certificates or evidence of relevant professional experience
- Supervision records demonstrating ongoing support for staff

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff explaining how they support families seeking information and advice
- Staff describing their skills and how they put them into practice

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing a capable and confident workforce. Learning opportunities support greater confidence and consistency in delivering information, advice and assistance.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently develops and maintains a competent and confident workforce. Staff consistently demonstrate the knowledge, skills and confidence required to respond professionally to enquiries, exercise sound judgement and recognise when additional support or referral is needed.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens workforce capability through learning and professional development. It proactively reviews workforce capability, identifies emerging development needs, and provides opportunities for advanced learning, coaching, and professional reflection.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through a highly skilled, confident and continuously developing workforce. It demonstrates a culture of professional excellence. Staff are highly knowledgeable, confident and reflective practitioners who actively contribute to organisational learning, mentor colleagues and support the continual improvement of professional practice across the wider service.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: 100% of staff meet the required competency standards for their role, and ≥85% self-report high confidence in their roles, as measured by annual competency assessments and staff surveys.

Outcome 4.3 Clear Policies and Procedures: The Family Information Service maintains clear, up-to-date policies that guide professional practice, including safeguarding, confidentiality and information sharing, and regularly reviews and updates them as necessary.

Significance: Clear, current and well-understood policies provide the foundation for safe, consistent and professional practice. They help staff understand their responsibilities, support confident decision-making and promote consistency in the delivery of information, advice and assistance. Policies on safeguarding, confidentiality and information sharing are particularly important for protecting children, young people and families while ensuring legal and professional responsibilities are met. Regular review ensures that policies remain relevant, reflect changes in legislation, guidance and local practice, and continue to support high-quality service delivery.

Practice Insights :

- Create and regularly update documents and policies on key topics such as safeguarding, confidentiality, and information sharing, using the Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance as the standard
- Ensure all staff receive training on these policies, consistently review them as legislation or best practice evolves, and implement necessary changes to uphold professional standards
- Rather than being mere compliance paperwork, policies and procedures should serve as practical frameworks that shape everyday judgement, support ongoing growth, and enhance professional practice

What An Assessor May See:

- A documented suite of organisational policies and procedures
- Application of policies and procedures in practice
- Evidence of policy review cycles
- Examples of policies applied in practice
- Safeguarding policies and procedures
- UK GDPR / ICO registration and privacy policies
- Version-controlled policy documents

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff describing their familiarity with the policies and how they guide their work

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing a consistent approach to implementing professional policies and procedures. Staff understand how these policies support safe, consistent service delivery.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS ensures that policies and procedures are embedded across the organisation and consistently applied in practice. Staff demonstrate confidence in using them to inform professional judgement and decision-making.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens professional practice through dynamic policy development and organisational learning. Policy reviews are informed by legislation, learning, audits, incidents, feedback, and emerging good practice.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS demonstrates exemplary governance, with policies that are not only current and well understood but also actively shape organisational culture and professional behaviour. Learning is shared across partnerships, contributing to improvements beyond the organisation.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: 100% of policies and procedures are reviewed and updated at least annually, and all staff are trained on any changes within one month of publication, with these activities recorded in policy management logs and training completion records.

Outcome 4.4 Safeguarding Knowledge & Practice: The Family Information Service staff are fully aware of their safeguarding obligations and clearly understand the procedures for escalating concerns when necessary.

Significance: Safeguarding is a fundamental responsibility shared by all members of the FIS workforce. Families may disclose concerns directly, or staff may recognise indicators of abuse, neglect or exploitation during routine interactions. Staff must therefore possess not only knowledge of safeguarding responsibilities and local procedures but also the confidence to recognise concerns, exercise professional judgement and take timely, appropriate action. Effective safeguarding practice protects children, young people and vulnerable adults and strengthens public confidence in the service.

Practice Insights :

- All staff receive ongoing safeguarding training to enable them to identify potential abuse or neglect and respond appropriately
- Clear escalation pathways, secure information-sharing practices, and links to local safeguarding systems are in place, all within the organisation's defined role
- Staff consistently demonstrate awareness of their safeguarding duties, confidently identify concerns, follow agreed escalation procedures, and enhance safeguarding skills through continuous learning, supervision, and professional development

What An Assessor May See:

- Clear safeguarding escalation procedures
- Documentation outlining safeguarding roles and responsibilities
- Examples of anonymised safeguarding referrals, where appropriate
- Guidance for staff on responding to safeguarding concerns
- Links with local safeguarding partnerships or boards
- Referral pathways to relevant safeguarding services
- Safeguarding training records for staff

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Safeguarding awareness among staff
- Staff explaining how safeguarding concerns are identified and reported

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is building a workforce that is confident in safeguarding. Staff regularly attend safeguarding training and are familiar with local and referral procedures, as well as appropriate escalation steps.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS demonstrates strong safeguarding knowledge and confidence. Staff consistently identify concerns, exercise sound judgement, adhere to protocols, and escalate issues as needed.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually improves its safeguarding skills through reflective practice, supervision, reviews, and lessons learned from incidents. Staff are adept at handling more complex safeguarding scenarios while maintaining clear professional boundaries.

Good Capability (4 Points): The FIS demonstrates a skilled safeguarding culture in which professional judgement and continuous learning underpin effective protection for children, young people, and vulnerable adults. Staff display confidence, sound judgement, and a proactive approach, regularly sharing insights with teams and partners to strengthen system-wide safeguarding practices.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥95% of relevant FIS staff complete safeguarding training each year and demonstrate correct escalation procedures during quarterly scenario-based audits.

Outcome 4.5 SEND Knowledge & Confidence: The Family Information Service staff understand Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) legislation, the Code of Practice, Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) processes, personal budgets, and the dispute-resolution routes relevant to their roles.

Significance: Families of children and young people with SEND often rely on the FIS to help them understand complex legislation, statutory processes and available support. Staff therefore need sufficient knowledge and confidence to provide accurate, impartial and accessible information, while recognising the limits of their role and when specialist advice or referral is required. A knowledgeable workforce helps families navigate the SEND system with greater confidence, reduces uncertainty and promotes informed choice.

Practice Insights :

- Ensure staff remain up to date with changes in policy and practice, enabling them to confidently answer enquiries, guide families through complex processes, and signpost to relevant support and advocacy services as needed.
- Provide staff with regular training and resources on SEND legislation, the SEND Code of Practice, Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), personal budgets, and dispute resolution options.

What An Assessor May See:

- Evidence of collaboration with SEND teams or partners
- Evidence that SEND knowledge is maintained through ongoing training
- Guidance materials to support staff in advising families
- Training records covering SEND legislation and the SEND Code of Practice

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Feedback from families demonstrating clarity of SEND advice
- Staff describing the EHCP process, personal budgets and support options
- Staff explaining legislation and local implementation priorities
- Staff providing consistent and accurate SEND information

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing a workforce capable of confidently supporting families navigating SEND. Staff receive ongoing training to deepen their understanding of SEND legislation, the SEND Code of Practice, EHCP processes, personal budgets and dispute resolution.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently develops knowledgeable and confident SEND practitioners. Staff consistently provide accurate, impartial information appropriate to their role, confidently explain key SEND processes, and recognise when specialist advice or referral is required.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens SEND capability through learning, collaboration and professional development. Staff confidently support families through more complex SEND pathways while upholding professional boundaries.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through a highly knowledgeable, confident and professionally trusted SEND workforce. Staff are recognised as trusted sources of information, contribute to organisational learning, and collaborate with SEND partners to improve the consistency and quality of information available to families.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥95% of relevant staff complete annual training on SEND legislation and practice, with ≥85% demonstrating proficiency in SEND processes and confidence in supporting families, as measured by knowledge tests and feedback surveys.

Outcome 4.6 Learning & Continuous Professional Development: The Family Information Service promotes learning, reflection and continuous professional development, ensuring staff maintain and enhance the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to meet changing legislation and guidance, local priorities, and the evolving needs of children, young people and families.

Significance: Learning and continuous professional development are essential to maintaining a knowledgeable, adaptable and confident workforce. The legislative, policy and operational environment in which a Family Information Service operates continues to evolve, requiring staff to reflect, refresh their knowledge, develop new skills and respond confidently to emerging priorities. Continuous professional development enables staff to improve the quality of the information, advice and assistance they provide, strengthens professional judgement and supports innovation, resilience and service improvement.

Practice Insights :

- Encourage staff to reflect on their practice, pursue relevant qualifications, and stay informed about legislative changes and best practice to continually improve the quality of service for families.
- Regularly assess staff training needs, provide comprehensive induction for new team members, and offer ongoing learning opportunities, including workshops, courses, and peer support.
- Sustain and continually strengthen workforce capability throughout people's careers.
- Use supervision, appraisal and reflective practice to identify development needs.

What An Assessor May See:

- A process for evaluating the impact of continuous professional development (CPD) on service quality for families
- CPD development plans and records
- Evidence of staff attendance at learning interventions
- Evidence that staff learning informs service improvement
- Opportunities for staff to develop knowledge of family services and childcare provision
- Performance management or supervision records
- Reflective practice discussions within supervision sessions
- Supervision or performance management records
- Training needs analysis or workforce development plans
- Training outcomes shared across the team through meetings or briefings

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff describing how training supports their role
- Staff explaining the supervision and reflective practice processes

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing workforce capability through planned learning and continuous professional development. Staff participates in planned learning activities that support role development and maintain current knowledge.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently strengthens workforce capability through continuous learning and professional development. Staff regularly update their knowledge, reflect on their learning, and apply new skills to improve the quality of information, advice, and assistance.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually develops workforce capability through a culture of shared learning, reflection, and innovation. Staff share knowledge, reflect on practice, and support service improvement by drawing on legislation, research, feedback, evaluation, partnerships, and organisational learning.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through a culture in which continuous learning, professional curiosity and shared knowledge drive excellence in workforce capability and service delivery. Continuous professional development is fully embedded within organisational culture.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: 90% of staff participate in at least two CPD activities per year, and ≥75% report that these activities have enhanced their ability to meet current and emerging needs, as evidenced by annual CPD logs and post-training evaluations.

STANDARD 5: Engagement, Voice & Co-Production

This Standard focuses on how effectively the Family Information Service listens to, involves and works alongside families, young people and partners to shape, improve and continually develop its services.

It recognises that meaningful engagement, active listening and genuine co-production strengthen organisational capability and lead to services that better reflect the needs and experiences of the communities they serve.

Outcome 5.1 Service Awareness & Expectations: Families understand what to expect from the Family Information Service and how to raise concerns or complaints.

Significance: Families are more likely to access and benefit from services when they clearly understand the support available, the standards of service they can expect, and how to provide feedback or raise concerns if those expectations are not met. Clear communication promotes openness, transparency and accountability, while helping to build confidence and trust in the FIS. Accessible complaints and feedback processes also demonstrate that the service values families' experiences and learns from them.

Practice Insights

- Clearly communicate service standards, what families can expect, and how to provide feedback or lodge complaints—both online and in printed materials.
- Make this information easy to find and understand, and ensure staff are prepared to explain these processes to families and to support them if concerns arise.
- Use feedback and complaints to improve communication and service quality.

What An Assessor May See:

- Clear procedures and routes for complaints and compliments
- Evidence that complaint information is accessible and visible
- Family feedback on the process
- Information explaining how to raise concerns or complaints
- Information explaining the role of the Family Information Service
- Leaflets or information materials describing the service
- Published Statement of Service
- Website information explaining how families can contact the service

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Feedback from families confirming awareness of the service
- Staff able to explain how families can raise concerns

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing clear, consistent communication about service expectations and feedback. It provides information on its services, expected standards and complaint procedures through a range of accessible channels.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently enables families to understand, access and influence the quality of the service. Feedback mechanisms are trusted and routinely used to inform service improvements.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens transparency and accountability through meaningful engagement with families. Feedback is analysed and used to improve communication, accessibility and responsiveness.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through transparent communication, responsive listening and continuous learning from family experience. It fosters a culture of openness in which families understand not only what they can expect from the service but also how their feedback, concerns and complaints directly shape future service development.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥75% of families indicate in annual surveys that they understand the Family Information Service and know how to raise concerns, as evidenced by fewer unresolved complaints.

Outcome 5.2 Seeking and Valuing Feedback: The Family Information Service proactively solicits feedback from families, young people, providers, and partners.

Significance: Actively seeking feedback demonstrates a commitment to understanding the experiences, needs and perspectives of those who use, deliver and support the FIS. It offers valuable insight into what is working well, where improvements are needed and how services can better respond to evolving community needs. Organisations that actively value feedback foster openness, trust and accountability, and encourage stronger relationships with families, providers and partners.

Practice Insights:

- Review and act on this feedback to inform service improvements and communicate any resulting changes or developments to stakeholders to demonstrate that their input is valued
- Routinely seek, analyse and respond to feedback from families, young people, providers and partners, using these insights to strengthen organisational learning, improve service delivery and inform future development
- Use a range of methods, including surveys, focus groups, suggestion boxes, and online forms, to regularly collect feedback from families, young people, providers, and partners

What An Assessor May See:

- Consultation reports on service development
- Engagement and feedback records
- Engagement with SEND families or parent carer forums
- Evidence of feedback from childcare providers or partners
- Evidence of feedback gathered at events or through outreach activities
- Feedback collected following enquiries or service interactions
- Feedback surveys or consultation exercises
- Online feedback forms
- Records of feedback gathered from families

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff describing how feedback is gathered and recorded

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing consistent approaches to collecting and valuing feedback. Staff understands the importance of listening to feedback and responding positively to expressed views.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently learns from the experiences of those it serves and works alongside. Feedback from families, young people, providers and partners is valued, analysed and used to inform service improvements.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens services through inclusive listening, reflective learning and responsive improvement. Feedback informs planning, decision-making and service development, and learning is shared across the organisation.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS promotes curiosity, openness, and continuous improvement by actively seeking and acting on feedback. Families, young people, providers, and partners know their input is valued, routinely shapes decisions, and guides the service's development.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: 100% of service users, providers, and partners are invited to provide feedback at least twice a year, with a $\geq 35\%$ response rate and all feedback themes reviewed and reported quarterly.

Outcome 5.3 Family & Young People's Voice: Families and young people, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), actively shape and evaluate the Family Information Service and the Local Offer.

Significance: Families and young people are experts in their own experiences. Their insight provides invaluable understanding of how services are experienced, where barriers exist and how support can be improved. By actively involving families and young people—including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)—in shaping and evaluating the Family Information Service and the Local Offer, the FIS ensures that services are informed by lived experience, reflect diverse needs and remain responsive to changing communities. Meaningful participation strengthens trust, improves decision-making and promotes services that are more relevant, accessible and effective.

Practice Insights:

- Actively seek input from families and young people on service design and evaluation, incorporate their feedback into improvements, and keep them informed about how their contributions have influenced changes to the service and the Local Offer.
- Create opportunities for families and young people, including those with SEND, to participate in consultations, focus groups, and service review panels.

What An Assessor May See:

- Co-production workshops or engagement events
- Documentation demonstrating family involvement in reviewing services
- Evidence of consultation on the Local Offer
- Evidence of families' contributions to service development
- Meaningful opportunities for families and young people to influence services
- Participation of SEND families in consultations or engagement activities
- Records of parent carer forums' involvement

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Feedback from young people about services and youth participation groups
- Staff describing how families influence service design

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing meaningful participation and inclusive engagement. Feedback is starting to inform service improvements.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently engages with families and young people to enhance the quality and relevance of its services. Families and young people routinely contribute to the design, review and evaluation of the service and the Local Offer.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens services through inclusive co-production and shared decision-making. Participation is embedded across planning, evaluation and improvement activities.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through authentic co-production, recognising lived experience as an essential partner in leadership, innovation and continual improvement. Families and young people are recognised as genuine partners in shaping strategic priorities, evaluating impact and influencing the ongoing evolution of the Family Information Service and the Local Offer.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥65% of service and Local Offer reviews include direct contributions from families and young people, including those with SEND, as documented in review records and participation logs.

Outcome 5.4 Co-Production in Practice: The Family Information Service can demonstrate tangible changes resulting from feedback and input from families and young people.

Significance: Co-production is demonstrated not by opportunities for participation, but by the difference participation makes. Families and young people are more likely to remain engaged when they can see that their feedback, ideas, experiences and suggestions have influenced decisions and led to meaningful improvements. Demonstrating tangible change builds trust, strengthens accountability and reinforces the value of continued participation. It also enables the FIS to continually evolve in response to lived experience, ensuring services remain relevant, responsive and effective.

Practice Insights:

- Communicate back to families, young people, and partners on the actions taken in response to their feedback, closing the feedback loop and reinforcing a culture of accountability
- Document and share examples of how feedback from families and young people has directly led to service improvements, policy changes, or new initiatives
- Regularly review and report on co-production outcomes, ensuring participants see the results of their involvement and understand the impact of their contributions
- Systematically collect and review feedback, identify areas for improvement, and implement changes informed by user feedback

What An Assessor May See:

- “You said, we did” communications
- Case studies demonstrating co-produced improvements
- Communication to stakeholders and families explaining service changes
- Documentation showing decisions and demonstrating continuous improvement processes
- Evidence that feedback is reviewed and monitored by leadership
- Evidence of service improvements informed by engagement
- Examples of changes implemented following complaints or suggestions
- Meeting notes referencing family recommendations
- Reports showing actions taken in response to consultations and feedback

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Family testimonies
- Feedback from families confirming their views influenced change
- Staff describing improvements resulting from feedback and engagement

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing its capability to translate participation and feedback into meaningful action. Families are informed about improvements arising from their contributions.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently translates lived experience into service improvement. Families are informed about improvements arising from their contributions.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens services by embedding co-production across planning, evaluation and organisational learning. Participation and feedback inform both strategic planning and operational improvements, creating a continuous cycle of learning and development.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through a culture where co-production consistently transforms lived experience into meaningful and sustainable service improvement. Families and young people are recognised as genuine partners in innovation, improvement and evaluation, with their contributions demonstrably influencing strategic priorities, service transformation and the ongoing evolution of the Local Offer.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥65% of documented improvements or new initiatives are implemented as a direct result of feedback and engagement from families and young people.

STANDARD 6: Partnership & System Working

This Standard focuses on how effectively the Family Information Service works collaboratively with partners across the local system to support children, young people and families. It recognises that no single organisation can meet every need alone, and that strong partnerships, shared responsibility and integrated working strengthen organisational capability, improve access to services and deliver better outcomes for families.

Outcome 6.1 Integrated Working Across Services: The Family Information Service collaborates with partners across Local Authority services, including education, health and social care, the voluntary and community sector, the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS), Best Start for Life and Family Hubs, and colleagues within the National Association of Family Information Services (NAFIS) networks.

Significance: Families often need support from multiple organisations and services. Effective partnership working enables the FIS to provide coordinated, consistent, and seamless support, helping families navigate complex systems with greater confidence and reducing the need to repeatedly explain their circumstances. Strong relationships across education, health, social care, the voluntary and community sector, SENDIASS, Best Start for Life, Family Hubs, and professional networks strengthen shared understanding, improve access to information, and promote more integrated support for children, young people, and families.

Practice Insights:

- Collaborate closely with a variety of partners, focusing on better outcomes for families rather than operating independently, for example, by contributing to strategic groups, agreeing escalation routes and recognising partnership influence.
- Connect with other local authorities, health services, childcare providers, and community groups to ensure comprehensive support.
- Engage with NAFIS networks across England to share and implement best practices.
- Partnership with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS), Best Start in Life, and other Family Information Services, and the establishment of clear referral pathways and ongoing communication to streamline access to help

What An Assessor May See:

- Communications demonstrating ongoing partnership working
- Evidence of collaboration with early years teams, SEND services, and family support services
- Evidence of information sharing with partner organisations
- Examples of collaborative projects benefiting families
- Joint initiatives with community organisations
- Partnership agreements or memoranda of understanding
- Records of participation in local partnership meetings

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Partner organisations report that FIS is dependable and knowledgeable, contributes to strategic groups, recognises their influence, and is collaborative, thereby enhancing support for families
- Staff explaining their relationships with partner organisations and the benefits for supported families

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing effective partnership working to strengthen coordinated support for families. Staff understand referral pathways and information-sharing arrangements.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently strengthens integrated service delivery through effective partnership working. It collaborates across services to improve access, coordinate support, and ensure families receive consistent information and effective navigation across organisations.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens the local support system through collaborative leadership and shared learning. Learning, expertise and resources are shared to enhance collaboration across the local area.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through collaborative partnerships that strengthen the capability, resilience and effectiveness of the wider family support system. It plays an active role in developing integrated approaches, shaping partnership priorities, and strengthening collaboration across local, regional, and national networks, benefiting children, young people, and families.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: $\geq 65\%$ of relevant partner organisations participate in at least quarterly multi-agency collaboration meetings, and $\geq 50\%$ of joint initiatives demonstrate improved service coordination and outcomes for families, as evidenced by annual project evaluations and partner feedback.

Outcome 6.2 Clear Referral and Escalation Pathways: The Family Information Service maintains clear referral pathways and monitors their effectiveness.

Significance: Families often need support that goes beyond the FIS. Clear referral and escalation pathways help ensure that children, young people and families are promptly connected to the most appropriate services, reducing delays, duplication and unnecessary barriers. Effective pathways also strengthen confidence among partner organisations by clarifying responsibilities, improving communication and enabling coordinated responses to more complex needs. Regular monitoring enables the FIS to identify barriers, strengthen referral arrangements and continually improve the effectiveness of the local support system.

Practice Insights:

- Develop and maintain clear procedures for referring families to other services or for escalating concerns, as needed
- Ensure families experience smooth, coordinated transitions between services, without unnecessary delay or confusion
- Regularly review these pathways, gather feedback from staff and families, and make improvements to ensure referrals are timely, effective, and easy to navigate
- Support staff in understanding referral responsibilities and thresholds

What An Assessor May See:

- Documented referral pathways to local services
- Evidence of staff making referrals to partner services
- Follow-up processes to ensure families receive support
- Guidance materials explaining referral processes
- Information resources explaining available support services
- Partnership protocols outlining referral arrangements
- Records of referrals made by the service

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Feedback from partners confirming that referral pathways are effective
- Partner confirmation of routes
- Staff describing how families are signposted or referred

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing reliable referral and escalation capabilities across the local system. Referral pathways are documented, communicated and routinely used. Staff understand referral criteria, escalation processes and partner organisations' responsibilities.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently enables coordinated access to services through effective referral and escalation arrangements. These pathways are embedded in routine practice.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens coordinated support through evidence-informed referral and escalation processes. Improvements are implemented to reduce barriers, enhance responsiveness and strengthen integrated working.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through referral and escalation arrangements that strengthen integration, partnership working, and the effectiveness of the wider support system. Families experience seamless transitions between services, and pathway learning contributes to wider system improvement.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥85% of referred families receive support within 10 working days.

Outcome 6.3 Lawful Information Sharing: The Family Information Service ensures that information is shared appropriately and lawfully to support families, in accordance with data protection and safeguarding guidelines.

Significance: Appropriate information sharing enables the FIS to provide coordinated, safe and effective support while protecting the rights, privacy and confidentiality of children, young people and families. Staff must understand when information can and should be shared, when consent is required, and when safeguarding or statutory responsibilities require sharing to protect individuals from harm. Effective information sharing strengthens partnership working, reduces delays and supports informed decision-making across services, while maintaining public confidence in the handling of personal information.

Practice Insights:

- Demonstrate that information is shared lawfully in line with data protection legislation, with staff applying professional judgement, safeguarding responsibilities and data protection requirements to support children, young people and families
- Have clear policies and staff training on when and how to share information, ensuring it is shared only with appropriate partners and always in line with data protection and safeguarding laws
- Keep accurate records of information-sharing decisions and seek consent where required, balancing the need to support families with the responsibility to protect their personal data

What An Assessor May See:

- Consent procedures for information sharing
- Data protection and confidentiality policies
- Evidence of lawful information sharing in practice
- Examples of information sharing supporting family outcomes
- Guidance documents outlining when information can be shared
- Information sharing agreements with partner organisations
- Records demonstrating secure information exchange
- Staff training on information sharing and data protection

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff explaining how confidentiality is maintained
- Staff explanations of family experiences

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing confident and consistent information-sharing practice. Information-sharing procedures are becoming consistently applied.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently enables safe, lawful and effective information sharing across the local system. Lawful information sharing is embedded within day-to-day practice.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens information-sharing capability through learning, partnership and professional reflection. Staff reflect on complex situations and continually strengthen professional judgement through supervision and learning.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through a culture where lawful information sharing strengthens partnership working, professional confidence and better outcomes for families. Staff consistently exercise professional judgement, enabling effective collaboration across organisations while protecting privacy, maintaining trust and safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥85% of information-sharing incidents are fully compliant with data protection and safeguarding legislation, as verified by biannual independent audits, with no substantiated breaches recorded.

Outcome 6.4 Alignment with Families First Partnerships: The Family Information Service coordinates with local Families First Partnerships and early help initiatives to support integrated, comprehensive approaches for families.

Significance: Children, young people and families benefit most when organisations work together within a coordinated system rather than as separate services. Aligning with Families First Partnerships and early help initiatives enables the FIS to contribute to shared priorities, strengthen prevention and intervention, improve access to support and reduce fragmentation across the local system. By working collaboratively with partners, the FIS helps create more seamless experiences for families and fosters collective responsibility for improving outcomes.

Practice Insights:

- Align with Families First Partnerships and early help initiatives to promote shared planning, coordinated delivery, and continuous improvement.
- Collaborate with Families First teams by sharing information, attending joint meetings, and participating in joint service planning and delivery.
- Support integrated action plans by regularly coordinating with partners to provide comprehensive family assistance.

What An Assessor May See:

- Documentation showing how FIS contributes to local planning
- Early help pathways
- Evidence of alignment with early help or family support strategies
- Evidence of information sharing across services
- Examples of coordinated support for families across multiple services
- Examples of joint initiatives supporting families
- Participation in local authority strategic groups
- Records demonstrating the service's role within the local support system

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Partner feedback confirming collaboration
- Staff explaining how the service contributes to the wider system

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Points): The FIS is developing its contribution to integrated family support within the local system. Staff understand how their role contributes to wider early help and family support arrangements.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently strengthens integrated family support through effective system working. Alignment with Families First Partnerships and early help initiatives is embedded in routine practice.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens the local system through collaborative leadership, shared learning and integrated improvement. It proactively works with partners to identify emerging needs, remove barriers and improve the effectiveness of integrated support.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through active system leadership, strengthening integrated partnerships that improve outcomes, build resilience and provide long-term support for children, young people and families. Its leadership, insight and collaborative approach strengthen whole system working, promote innovation and contribute to improved outcomes for children, young people and families.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥85% of relevant initiatives are planned and reviewed in coordination with Families First Partnerships, and at least two joint action plans or projects are delivered and evaluated annually for effectiveness and reach.

STANDARD 7: Equity & Entitlements

This Standard focuses on how effectively the Family Information Service supports children, young people and families to understand, access and benefit from their statutory early education and childcare entitlements. It recognises that timely, accurate and impartial information enables families to make informed choices, reduces barriers to access and promotes equity by ensuring that eligible families can receive the support to which they are entitled.

Outcome 7.1 Supporting Early Education & Childcare Entitlements: The Family Information Service helps families understand and access their statutory entitlements to early education and childcare, which are free or funded at the point of delivery.

Significance: Access to statutory early education and childcare entitlements can make a significant difference to children's development, family wellbeing and parents' ability to work, study or undertake training. Families rely on clear, accurate and impartial information to understand their eligibility, make informed choices and access the support available to them. By helping families navigate entitlement arrangements and reduce barriers to access, the FIS promotes equity, supports informed decision-making and helps ensure that statutory entitlements deliver their intended benefits for children, young people and families.

Practice Insights:

- Provide clarity on eligibility, funded hours, charging transparency, provider information, and support for families to understand and access entitlements without inappropriate barriers
- Provide families with clear, accessible information on early education and childcare entitlements through various channels, including online resources, printed guides, and direct advice
- Provide support with applications, answer questions, and work with local providers to ensure families can easily access and benefit from their statutory entitlements

What An Assessor May See:

- Case examples showing how families accessed entitlements
- Communications promoting childcare entitlement schemes
- Evidence that families are supported in accessing funded places
- Evidence that information is clear and accessible to families
- Guidance materials explaining early education and childcare entitlements
- Information on application processes for childcare funding
- Information provided to families about funded childcare schemes
- No evidence of unlawful barriers
- Staff demonstrating a confident understanding of current statutory early education and childcare entitlements, eligibility criteria and application processes
- Website content explaining childcare entitlements

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Evidence from families that they are supported to access funded places
- Staff able to explain eligibility criteria and entitlement processes.

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing a consistent capability to support equitable access to statutory entitlements. Families are supported in understanding the options available and how to access them.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently enables families to access statutory entitlements by providing accurate information and effective support. Families receive timely, impartial information and practical support to help them access the childcare and early education to which they are entitled.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens equitable access by applying learning and partnership working to reduce barriers and improve family outcomes. It collaborates with partners to raise awareness and reduce inequalities in access.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS is recognised as a trusted source of expertise on statutory entitlements. It works proactively with partners to improve awareness, influence local practice, and ensure that eligible families can access the support available to them, particularly those who may be less likely to engage or face additional barriers.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: $\geq 75\%$ of eligible families report understanding and successfully accessing their statutory entitlement to early education and childcare, as measured by annual family surveys and uptake data.

Outcome 7.2 Equity for Families with SEND: The Family Information Service supports equitable access to services and entitlements, particularly for families facing disadvantage and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), to access early education, childcare, and support.

Significance: Families of children and young people with SEND may face additional barriers to accessing early education, childcare, services and statutory entitlements. When SEND is experienced alongside other forms of disadvantage, these barriers can be even greater. The FIS plays a vital role by providing accessible, accurate and impartial information that helps families understand their options, exercise their rights and access coordinated support. By recognising individual circumstances and reducing barriers to access, the FIS promotes equity, inclusion and informed choice, ensuring that every family has a fair opportunity to benefit from the services and support available.

Practice Insights:

- Actively identify and address barriers faced by families with SEND and additional disadvantages by providing tailored information, one-to-one support, and accessible resources.
- Collaborate with local partners to ensure that these families are aware of their entitlements, receive help with applications, and are supported in accessing inclusive early education, childcare, and support services.
- Develop staff capability to ensure that families with SEND, particularly those experiencing additional disadvantage, can access services and statutory entitlements fairly, with confidence and without unnecessary barriers.

What An Assessor May See:

- Accessible information materials for SEND families
- Adapted information formats
- Collaboration with SEND teams and local services
- Evidence of reasonable adjustments for SEND families
- Evidence of referrals to SEND support services
- Examples of SEND family support journeys
- Information about specialist childcare provision
- Records of support provided to families with complex needs

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Feedback from SEND families about support received
- Staff explaining how SEND families are supported

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing inclusive practice to reduce barriers and promote equitable access for families of children with SEND. Staff recognise that families may face multiple, overlapping barriers to access.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently enables equitable access by recognising individual circumstances and responding flexibly to the needs of families with SEND. This support for equitable access is embedded within routine practice.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens equitable access through partnership working, organisational learning and proactive improvement. Learning is applied to strengthen practice and reduce barriers faced by families with SEND.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS is recognised as a champion of equity and inclusion, working with organisations such as SENDIASS, early years providers, education, health, social care and community organisations to influence local practice, reduce inequalities and improve families' access to services and statutory entitlements for families with SEND.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥85% of families with SEND receive tailored information and support, resulting in a ≥20% increase in uptake of entitlements and services among eligible SEND families within one year, as evidenced by service usage data.

Outcome 7.3 Addressing Disadvantage & Poverty: The Family Information Service recognises the impact of poverty and disadvantage and collaborates with partners to reduce barriers to access and participation.

Significance: Poverty and disadvantage can significantly affect a family's ability to access early education, childcare, information, support and wider opportunities. Financial hardship, social isolation, digital exclusion, housing insecurity, transport difficulties, language barriers and other forms of disadvantage may prevent families from fully benefiting from the services available to them. The FIS plays an important role in recognising these barriers, responding with empathy and collaborating with partners to promote inclusion and reduce inequalities.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥80% of identified disadvantaged families to be engaged with or referred to appropriate support services within the year.

Practice Insights:

- Develop staff capability to recognise disadvantage, understand its impact on families, and work proactively with partners to reduce barriers and improve equitable access across the local system.
- Ensure that information is accessible and relevant to disadvantaged families and proactively reach out to those at risk of missing out on vital services and support.
- Identify families affected by poverty or disadvantage and work with local partners to provide targeted support, such as financial assistance, free childcare entitlements, or community resources.

What An Assessor May See:

- Case studies demonstrating support for families facing financial hardship
- Evidence of collaboration with early help or family support teams
- Evidence of outreach work in disadvantaged communities
- Evidence of targeted engagement with families experiencing disadvantage
- Information on childcare funding support for low-income families
- Information materials addressing barriers to childcare access
- Links with benefits advice services
- Partnerships with organisations providing financial or welfare advice
- Referral pathways to support services

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Families and partners describing the FIS as inclusive, responsive and promoting equitable access.
- Staff able to explain how disadvantage is considered in service delivery
- Staff adapting their approach to recognise differing family circumstances and to reduce barriers

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing inclusive approaches to reduce barriers and promote equitable access. Staff understand how different forms of disadvantage may affect families' ability to access services and adapt their approach to provide appropriate support and signposting.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently enables equitable access by recognising disadvantage, responding proactively and strengthening coordinated support. Reducing barriers associated with poverty and disadvantage is embedded in routine practice.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens equitable access by using evidence, partnership working and organisational learning to address disadvantage. It uses local intelligence, family feedback and partnership working to identify patterns of inequality.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through a culture in which recognising disadvantage, reducing barriers and promoting equity are embedded in decision-making, partnership working and service delivery, enabling every family to access opportunities that improve outcomes and life chances. It proactively identifies emerging needs and helps shape local responses that strengthen opportunities and improve life chances.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥75% of identified disadvantaged families to be engaged with or referred to appropriate support services within the year.

Standard 8: Outcomes, Impact & Continuous Improvement

This Standard focuses on how well the Family Information Service evaluates its performance, measures impact and use evidence for ongoing improvement. It highlights that organisational strength comes from reflection and informed decisions. By tracking results and acting on data, the service enhances quality, access, and effectiveness so children, young people, and families benefit as much as possible.

Outcome 8.1 Monitoring Effectiveness: The Family Information Service monitors accessibility and effectiveness using qualitative and quantitative data.

Significance: Regular monitoring allows the FIS to assess whether its information and support are truly reaching and meeting the needs of families. By using both quantitative (reach and usage) and qualitative (experience) data, the FIS can identify strengths, address gaps, and make evidence-based improvements to its services. By combining quantitative measures with qualitative insights, the FIS gains a more comprehensive understanding of service performance, user experience and areas for improvement.

Practice Insights:

- Collect and analyse data, including service usage statistics, family feedback, and case studies, to assess the accessibility and effectiveness of its services.
- Demonstrate that quantitative (reach and usage) and qualitative (experience) evidence are routinely used to monitor accessibility, evaluate effectiveness, assess impact, and drive continual improvement.
- Use these insights to identify areas for improvement, adjust its approaches, and regularly report its performance to stakeholders.

What An Assessor May See:

- Analysis of enquiry patterns and service demand
- Data dashboards tracking service performance
- Documentation of monitoring key performance indicators
- Evidence that analysis informs decision-making
- Evidence that data is reviewed regularly
- Performance monitoring reports
- Reports measuring service accessibility
- Usage statistics for digital services and enquiries

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff explaining how data informs service delivery

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing evidence-informed approaches to understanding service effectiveness. Quantitative (reach and usage) and qualitative (experience) information is routinely collected and reviewed.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently uses evidence to assess service effectiveness and strengthen organisational performance. It analyses both quantitative (reach and usage) and qualitative (experience) feedback to evaluate accessibility, identify trends and improve service delivery.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens performance through integrated analysis, organisational learning and evidence-informed improvement. Evidence is proactively used to identify emerging needs, evaluate impact and drive continual improvement.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through a culture in which evidence, learning and evaluation continually strengthen organisational capability, demonstrate meaningful impact and improve outcomes for children, young people and families. Performance information is routinely shared with partners to support collective learning and wider system improvement.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: 100% of activities are monitored quarterly using qualitative (e.g., user feedback, case studies) and quantitative (e.g., usage statistics, access rates) data. Findings are analysed and reported to leadership, and at least two service improvements are implemented each year based on this evidence.

Outcome 8.2 Learning & Continual Improvement: The Family Information Service systematically uses performance data, feedback and organisational learning to drive continual improvement in service.

Significance: Monitoring performance only creates value when organisations act on what they learn to improve. By systematically analysing performance data, family feedback, partner insights and organisational learning, the FIS can identify opportunities to strengthen accessibility, quality, responsiveness and outcomes. A culture of continual improvement enables the FIS to respond to changing needs, address emerging challenges and continually refine the design and delivery of services. Learning is not treated as a one-off activity but as an integral part of organisational development, ensuring that evidence consistently informs better decision-making and better outcomes for children, young people and families.

Practice Insights:

- Consistently build capability by reflecting on its practices and using evidence to guide improvements.
- Insights gained are integrated into service improvement plans, with regular updates to practices and training. Progress is monitored to support ongoing learning and achieve better results for families.
- Organisational culture emphasises continuous improvement, enabling the FIS to learn systematically from evidence, adapt to changing needs with confidence, and enhance services through informed, evidence-based decisions.
- Performance data and feedback from families, staff, and partners are regularly reviewed to highlight strengths and identify areas for development.

What An Assessor May See:

- Continuous improvement frameworks or processes
- Documentation demonstrating how feedback drives improvements
- Evidence of organisational learning processes
- Evidence of performance review cycles
- Evidence of regular service review meetings
- Examples of service adjustments following reviews
- Feedback loops
- Learning culture
- Records of actions taken following performance reviews
- Service improvement plans

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Staff describing the learning from performance data

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing systematic approaches to organisational learning and continual improvement.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently learns from evidence and applies that learning to strengthen service quality, accessibility and effectiveness. Learning from performance information, feedback and organisational reflection is consistently translated into measurable service improvements and shared across the organisation.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens its capability through evidence-informed learning, innovation and reflective practice. It integrates learning from multiple sources, evaluates the effectiveness of improvement activities and proactively adapts services in response to changing needs, emerging trends and partnership learning.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through a culture in which organisational learning, continual improvement, and reflective practice continually strengthen capability, inspire innovation, and improve outcomes for children, young people, and families. It demonstrates a mature learning culture in which continual improvement is embedded throughout the organisation.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: At least three significant service improvements are implemented each year, directly resulting from performance data analysis, user feedback, or organisational learning, as evidenced by annual service review reports.

Outcome 8.3 Demonstrating Impact: The Family Information Service can demonstrate its impact on families, including improved access and informed decision-making.

Significance: The purpose of the FIS extends beyond providing information; it aims to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. Demonstrating impact helps the organisation understand how its services influence access to support, informed decision-making, family confidence and the overall experience of navigating early education, childcare and wider family services. By evidencing the difference its work makes, the FIS strengthens accountability, builds confidence among families and partners, and demonstrates the value of investing in high-quality information, advice and support.

Practice Insights:

- Collect and analyse data on how its support has helped families, including increased service uptake, positive feedback, and improved decision-making.
- Demonstrate, using qualitative and quantitative evidence, that services improve access, inform decision-making and contribute to positive outcomes for children, young people and families.
- Share these outcomes in reports and communications to demonstrate value, inform stakeholders, and guide future service development.

What An Assessor May See:

- Case studies demonstrating positive outcomes for families
- Communications highlighting success stories
- Evidence linking service activity to family outcomes
- Evidence of improved access to childcare or services
- Examples of families making informed decisions following advice
- Feedback from families on the value of the service
- Improvement planning
- Reports demonstrating service impact
- Testimonials from partner organisations

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Family and partner testimony
- Staff describing the impact of the service on families

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing consistent approaches to demonstrating the impact of its services.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently demonstrates the outcomes and impact of its services through a balanced range of information. It uses qualitative and quantitative evidence to show how its services improve accessibility, strengthen family confidence and support informed decision-making.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS consistently evidences the outcomes and impact of its services using a balanced range of information. It uses qualitative and quantitative evidence to show how its services improve accessibility, strengthen family confidence and support informed decision-making.

Excellent Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens its impact by evaluating outcomes, learning from evidence and refining services to better meet the needs of children, young people and families. It evaluates the longer-term impact of its work, using evidence from families, partners and performance information to understand how services contribute to improved outcomes across the local community.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥75% of families report improved access to information and more informed decision-making, as measured by annual user surveys and case studies tracking outcomes following engagement with the service.

Outcome 8.4 Identifying & Escalating Gaps in Provision: The Family Information Service identifies gaps in provision and escalates them to inform planning and commissioning.

Significance: The FIS has a unique overview of the information, services and support that families seek, as well as the barriers they encounter in accessing them. Through daily engagement with children, young people and families, the FIS is well placed to identify unmet need, emerging demand and gaps in local provision. Sharing this intelligence with planners, commissioners and strategic partners helps ensure that future services are informed by lived experience and responsive to changing community needs. By contributing evidence that informs planning and commissioning, the FIS strengthens the effectiveness of the wider local system and helps improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

Practice Insights:

- Continually strengthens organisational capability by transforming operational insight into strategic intelligence.
- Demonstrates that intelligence gathered through enquiries, feedback and partnership working is systematically analysed and used to identify, escalate and inform responses to gaps in local provision, planning and commissioning.
- Regularly analyses enquiries, feedback, and service data to spot patterns indicating unmet needs or service shortfalls.
- Report these gaps to local planners and commissioners, contributing evidence and recommendations to help shape future services and ensure resources are directed where they are most needed.
- Systematically identify recurring enquiries, unmet needs and barriers experienced by families

What An Assessor May See:

- Documentation demonstrating escalation of issues
- Evidence of collaboration with planning or commissioning teams
- Evidence of data informing planning decisions
- Evidence of gaps reported to strategic planning groups
- Examples where gaps influenced commissioning decisions
- Records showing how gaps were identified through enquiries
- Reports highlighting gaps in childcare or family services

What An Assessor May Hear:

- Partnership discussions about addressing gaps in provision
- Staff explaining how unmet needs are identified

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing systematic approaches to identifying and communicating gaps in provision. Relevant information is shared with appropriate partners.

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently contributes valuable intelligence that strengthens planning and improves the responsiveness of local services. It regularly provides evidence that informs planning, commissioning and service development across the local area.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens the local system by providing trusted intelligence to inform strategic planning and commissioning. It works proactively with partners to analyse trends, anticipate emerging needs, and influence service planning.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through a culture in which intelligence gathered from families strengthens strategic planning, informs commissioning and continually improves the responsiveness and effectiveness of the wider local support system. It is recognised as a trusted source of community intelligence, providing robust evidence that shapes planning, commissioning and the development of local services. Its insight is routinely valued by strategic partners and contributes to more responsive, inclusive and effective services for children, young people and families.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: ≥85% of identified service gaps are escalated to the relevant planning or commissioning bodies within one month of identification, and follow-up actions are tracked and reported quarterly.

Outcome 8.5 Equity Assurance: The Family Information Service monitors performance to understand the experiences and outcomes of different groups of families, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and other groups who may face disadvantage or barriers to access, using this insight to promote equitable outcomes and continual improvement.

Significance: Not all families experience services in the same way. Children, young people and families with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), as well as those experiencing poverty, language barriers, digital exclusion, rural isolation or other forms of disadvantage, may face additional challenges in accessing information, services and statutory entitlements. Understanding these differing experiences enables the FIS to identify inequalities, reduce barriers and ensure that improvements benefit all families, rather than only the majority. By monitoring performance across different groups, the Family Information Service strengthens accountability, promotes inclusion and continually improves the equity of its services.

Practice Insights:

- Collect and analyse data on the experiences and outcomes of families with SEND, including their access to services, satisfaction levels, and any barriers they encounter.
- Continually strengthen organisational capability by ensuring that improvements benefit all children, young people and families.
- Equity assurance is embedded within organisational practice and use evidence to inform equitable service improvements;
- Use these insights to inform service improvements, develop targeted support, and ensure that provision is inclusive and responsive to the needs of SEND families.

What An Assessor May See:

- Analysis of service use by SEND families
- Assessor hears SEND partner confirmation
- Collaboration with SEND teams when reviewing service performance
- Documentation demonstrating inclusive performance monitoring
- Evidence of adjustments made based on SEND feedback
- Evidence of SEND-focused service improvements
- Feedback from SEND families regarding service accessibility
- Monitoring reports considering SEND access and outcomes

What An Assessor May Hear:

- SEND partner confirmation
- Staff explaining how SEND experiences inform service development

Self & External Assessment Capability Building Blocks

Limited Capability (1 Point): The FIS is developing systematic approaches to understanding equity and to reducing barriers. It

Satisfactory Capability (2 Points): The FIS consistently uses evidence to promote equitable access and improve outcomes for all families. It routinely evaluates the experiences and outcomes of different groups of families, using this evidence to improve accessibility, participation and service quality.

Good Capability (3 Points): The FIS continually strengthens equitable outcomes through evidence-informed learning, partnership working and proactive improvement.

Excellent Capability (4 Points): The FIS leads through a culture in which equity assurance is integral to organisational learning, ensuring that continual improvement benefits all families, reduces inequalities and strengthens opportunities for children, young people and families to thrive. It systematically evaluates the experiences and outcomes of different groups of families, using robust evidence to inform organisational priorities, partnership working and service development.

Aspirational Quantitative Building Block: Performance data for all key user groups are analysed at least quarterly, and targeted actions are implemented to address disparities; ≥65% of families from disadvantaged groups report equitable access and satisfaction in annual equity and inclusion surveys.

England – Legislative Alignment

Standard	Key Duties / Legislation Alignment
Standard 1 – Understanding Local Need & Demand	Childcare Act 2006 – Duty to secure sufficient childcare; Local Authority Childcare Sufficiency Assessments
Standard 2 – Information Quality, Accuracy & Assurance	Childcare Act 2006 – Duty to provide information to parents; SEND Code of Practice (Local Offer information duties)
Standard 3 – Accessible & Inclusive Information Delivery	Equality Act 2010 – Accessible services; SEND Code of Practice – accessible information and participation
Standard 4 – Skilled Workforce & Professional Practice	Safeguarding duties (Working Together to Safeguard Children); Data Protection Act / UK GDPR / ICO registration
Standard 5 – Engagement, Voice & Co-Production	SEND Code of Practice – participation of children, young people and families
Standard 6 – Partnership & System Working	Early Help / Family Information Service development; Local authority multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
Standard 7 – Equity & Entitlements	Early education entitlements; Childcare funding programmes
Standard 8 – Outcomes, Impact & Continuous Improvement	Local authority accountability and service monitoring responsibilities



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