“Your support is excellent and very helpful to our families. Thank you.” (Childcare Provider)

“We are extremely impressed with your knowledge, courteous manner and efficiency. We consider you a great resource - you should have asked what you do well - I’d have gone on and on!” (Family Placement Team)

“I would just like to say that everytime I phone FIS reply is friendly helpful and I always feel like they are interested in the family I am trying to help. Thank you” (Social Worker)

I requested information with regards to Childminders. It was sent very promptly and was helpful. The person I dealt with was extremely helpful and friendly; excellent service! (Parent)
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1. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT TO THE FAMILY INFORMATION SERVICE

The Family Information Service was developed to address Section 12 of the Childcare Act 2006; to provide information, advice and assistance to parents and to ensure parents and prospective parents can access the full range of information they may need for their children right through to their 20th birthday.

The Service is both proactive an inclusive; reaching those parents who might otherwise have difficulty accessing information and inclusive; targeting parents and prospective parents including fathers, mothers, absent parents, foster parents, those with parental responsibility and others with care of a child such as grandparents.

For further information on the remit of our service, the variety of methods of contact and outreach that the service has developed and the range of information and support that is offered by the Family Information Service, please refer to appendix 1.
There were 25,248 logged contacts with FIS for the financial year 2011/12. According to the 2011 Census population estimates of England and Wales, Bath & North East Somerset had a total population of 176,016. Coupled with a population of under 20 years old reaching 40,788 (or 23.2% of the total population) this demonstrates that a high proportion of families within Bath & North East Somerset that are accessing the Family Information Services.

A logged contact is:
- anyone who contacts the service for information via telephone, email, text or in person
- anyone who requests information at an outreach event, meeting or forum
- anyone who attends and receives information at an outreach event (e.g. information pack) or as part of a promotional event
- The 2011/12 contacts were broken down in the following way:
  - 2144 Helpline, email, telephone and text contacts
  - 22,425 Outreach level 1 & 2 enquiries and contacts
  - 679 Outreach (including Information and Advice and Support for Families with a Disabled child) level 3 & 4 enquiries

These figures are not comparable with last year’s due to a different recording method employed by the team. However, having identified that over 20% of contacts were made through email contact in 2011/12, we will be developing an on line enquiry form. This will enable our email customers to self help; the on line form will prompt them to give us full information to enable us to find a service or care solution. We will establish with them a more efficient information exchange particularly in the case of more complex queries, such as childcare requests.

There is significant research to suggest that individuals and families on lower incomes are less likely to have access to a landline. This is a central feature of several reports such as ‘Hung Up’ a report published by Leeds Citizen’s Advice Bureau in 2009 and further explored by CAB in a national survey 2010. In line with these findings and following an internal service review, investigating ways to make our service more accessible, we will also be advertising our local rate phone number alongside our 0800 number and mobile number to encourage those who would like to contact us by mobile phone to do so.

Handling contacts combines work from the Outreach team, Development Worker for disabled children and the Information and Advice Officer along with direct support from the Information Team. In addition to dealing with customer contacts and queries, we have also had a significant increase in the number of people accessing information directly through the web.

On average there were over 10,000 visits per month to the FIS pages of the Bath and North East Somerset Council website recorded for the year 2010/11. During this financial year the public website has been through a period of redesign and as such, the period activity recording during this time was inconsistent. With the new website now in place and with the help of Google analytics, an accurate picture of visits will now be recorded.

In addition to the Council website, we also received 16,000 visits per month to the Bath & North East Somerset maintained section of the 1 Big Database website. This represents a rise of 8,000 visits per month.
month since 2010/11. Developments of an inclusion portal, Rainbow Resource, improved search functionality and the design of a ‘smart phone’ view for 1 Big Database and Rainbow Resource have resulted from customer feedback. 20% of 1 Big Database/Rainbow Resource users now access information through a smart phone or mobile device and a number of families with disabled children wanted a site which specifically detailed inclusive provision.

The new Bath & North East Somerset Council website that has recently been commissioned aims to be more user-friendly and also more accessible to smart phones and tablets. In an effort to access a wider audience, the Family Information Service intend to have a significant presence on the new website, including event information, access to our enquiry form and links to relevant organisations and information sources (1BigDB and Rainbow Resource for example). Furthermore we have developed a Facebook page, which we hope to launch in the coming months following a period of staff training. Strengthening our web presence potentially has the same benefit as using a local rate number, in that individuals on low incomes are more likely to be able to access the web on their mobile phones rather than through a PC or laptop.

Of the total logged contacts to FIS, 62% of the contact was directly from a family member, 23% was via a professional or intermediary and 15% recorded as other. Because these comparable figures generated in 2010/11 were not recorded using the same method across team throughout the year, a more robust recording method was developed for 2011/12. During the last financial year, the Family Information Service has carried out considerable work with professionals who work with families; offering support and advice and strengthening our professional network.

3. WHAT INFORMATION CUSTOMERS REQUESTED & HOW THEY ENGAGED WITH FIS

Information requested directly by families and intermediaries through the Information Team was broken down in the following way:

From the Information Team:

- Childcare 44.1%
- Activity information 14.1%
- Specialist SEN information 10.5%
- General information 8.0%
- Family support 7.7%
- Working with children 6.7%
- Children’s Centre information 3.7%
- Potential Provider 3.7%
- Economic wellbeing 0.9%
- Choice Advice 0.6%
From the Outreach Team:

- Childcare 2.5%
- Activity information 16.2%
- Specialist SEN information 2.5%
- General information 59.1%
- Family support 7.7%
- Working with children 2.5%
- Children’s Centre information 4.1%
- Potential Provider 0.0%
- Economic wellbeing 3.1%
- Choice Advice 1.8%
- Information & advice sessions 0.6%

4. HOW CUSTOMERS RATED THE FIS SERVICE

Enquirers are encouraged to offer feedback and evaluation on our service; on average 7% of evaluations were completed and returned. However, a further 234 email responses were received thanking FIS for the usefulness of information and its promptness. In total:

- 99.7% of the replies rated the FIS service well
- 0.3% of the replies rated the service as less than satisfactory (this equates to 1 response out of 302)

Of the customers who responded with a formal evaluation 100% felt they were fairly treated in their dealings with FIS

In addition to the ongoing evaluation, during the summer of 2011, a short service evaluation was sent to professionals asking them about their experiences of FIS. There was an 8% return rate. Of these responses, 90% stated they had been able to contact FIS easily. 88% of responses said FIS replies were useful, clear and timely.

To overcome the difficulty in gaining feedback from customers, this financial year we intend to focus on targeting the opinions of new parents through a ‘New Parents Survey’. Based on the packs that are provided to them by FIS, we would like to contact new parents about whether they received the new parent packs, how helpful they were and how they could be improved for example. This initiative could also potentially incorporate Facebook and Twitter as a means to respond thus linking with other current endeavors being pursued by FIS and the wider Council.
5. CUSTOMER ETHNICITY

The following graph is an ethnic breakdown of the customers who contacted FIS in 2011/12. These figures demonstrate that our customers demographic is more diverse than the demographic of Bath & North East Somerset Demographic as a whole; evidenced by ONS mid-year population estimates, 2010 that determined that 88.1% of the Bath & North East Somerset population considered themselves ‘White British’.

- White British 81.3%
- White Irish 0.8%
- Any other White Background 8.4%
- Bangladeshi 0.4%
- Indian 1.3%
- Pakistani 0.2%
- Any other Asian Background 0.8%
- African 1.2%
- Any other Black Background 1.3%
- Chinese 0.8%
- White/Asian 0.4%
- White/Black African 0.6%
- White/Black Caribbean 0.6%
- Any other Mixed Background 0.8%
- Any other Ethnic Background 1.2%
- Refused 0.2%

6. HOW CUSTOMERS HEARD ABOUT FIS?

Customers heard about us in a variety of ways – the most popular ways recorded were:
- Repeat callers who had previously used the service
- Website (Council, 1 Big D, internet)
- Outreach via a children’s centre, community or school event
- Local Authority (including FIS promotion)
- Health contact
- Word of mouth
- Childcare Provider
- Job Centre Plus
7. MEASURABLE TARGETS: BUSINESS PLAN 2011-12

1. Number of logged contacts to exceed average of 400 per calendar month (pcm) – exceeded.

2. Number of logged contacts to BME groups to exceed average of 5 pcm – not met. However, irrespective of this we have increased the number of Black Minority Ethnic people who have accessed our service since 2010/11. This will also be one of the priorities of the of the FIS Volunteer who has joined our team.

3. 99.7% of customer satisfaction evaluations received to rate FIS at Satisfactory or above - achieved.
Number of Level 3 and 4 Outreach contacts to exceed average 50 pcm – achieved.

4. Number of 1 Big D hits to exceed average 7000 pcm – exceeded.

5. Number of logged SEN contacts to exceed average 45 pcm – exceeded. We have logged an average of 92 SEN contacts per month due to the extensive work with the ‘Aiming High for the Disabled Children’ and Partners that has been spearheaded by Mary-Jane.

6. Satisfactory and above evaluations of Babysitting Course to exceed 98% - exceeded.

8. IDENTIFIED GAPS

1. As with many service evaluations, it is often difficult to get feedback from the public. In order to increase the quantity of feedback we receive, we will be carrying out a programme of phone calls to service users and the feedback recorded. The short evaluation slip will continue to be used by the outreach team and will also be made available online.

2. The result of the Professionals Survey is included in the Appendix. The aim of this survey was to gain feedback from colleagues and professionals about their satisfaction with the service, which we found to be very positive. Next year our main focus will be around a ‘new parent’ survey.

3. Collection of ethnicity data to be more accurate at point of enquiry to enable more detailed analysis.
Reinforced outreach priority to make positive contact with existing and emerging faith and culture groups

4. 2011 – 2012 Target not met – contact with BME groups – manager and outreach team to embrace this as a priority. A number of strategies will be employed to drive this forward such as the use of ‘multicultural story sacks’, which could be sent to early years providers and through networking at events such as the recent Polish evening. Events such as this will contribute to an activities log, which will feature in the next annual report.

5. Previous statistical reporting was skewed by the amalgamation of the helpline and outreach activity. To address this issue, from April 2011 onwards, separate helpline and outreach statistical reporting has taken place. Additionally, this financial year we have received some additional expertise on statistical recording in order to streamline and improve processes and increase efficiency.
## 9. 2012-13 SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Minimum Standard</th>
<th>Measurable Targets</th>
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</table>
| 1. To provide an integrated information and advice service to parents, or prospective parents, and for families with children and young people aged 0 – 20 years, including childcare and other family related services and activities. | 1. 40 hour helpline, email, text and web information service  
2. Information gathering, monitoring, updating and marketing service  
3. Maintenance of the FIS resource library – both electronic and manual  
4. Updating of provider details on ONE  
5. Updating and maintenance of the 1 Big Database, the Rainbow Resource on line and management of the events calendar for B-Active  
6. Maintenance and updating of FIS and People and Communities website  
7. Monitoring and evaluating the service with clients | 1. Number of logged contacts to the helpline to exceed average of 250pcm  
2. Number of logged contacts to BME groups to exceed average of 5 pcm  
3. 99% of customer satisfaction evaluations received to rate FIS at Satisfactory or above  
4. Number of Level 3 and 4 Outreach contacts to exceed average 50 pcm and number of Information and Advice contacts to exceed 40 pcm  
6. Number of SEN and Disability contacts to exceed 75 pcm |
| 2. To provide an integrated information and advice service for professionals who work with families with children and young people aged 0 – 20 years, including childcare and other family related services and activities. | 1. 40 hour helpline, email, text and web information service  
2. Information gathering, monitoring, updating and marketing service  
3. Updating of provider details on ONE  
4. Updating and maintenance of the 1Big Database, Rainbow Resource and contribution to Young People’s web pages  
5. Maintenance and updating of FIS and People and Communities website  
6. Monitoring and evaluating the service with clients |  |
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<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Minimum Standard</th>
<th>Measurable Targets</th>
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<tr>
<td>Somerset.</td>
<td>portal</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. To provide an information and advice service for the parents of disabled children, and children and young people with additional needs. To include childcare choices, family related services, activities and support through the Transition process to Adulthood with young people up to 24 years.</strong></td>
<td>1. 40 hour helpline, email, text and web information service 2. Information gathering, monitoring, updating and marketing service 3. Maintenance of the FIS resource library - both electronic and manual 4. Monitoring and evaluating the service with clients</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. To be the first point of contact for potential childcare providers</strong></td>
<td>1. 40 hour helpline, email, text and web information service 2. Maintenance and updating of FIS web site 3. Updating of provider details on ONE 4. Set up of pathway for potential childcare providers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6. To provide information and guidance for prospective employees about careers, training and qualifications in the Childcare Sector</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>8. Work with Employers to raise awareness of child related issues and</strong></td>
<td>1. Members of Business West 2. Attendance at events organised through Business West to reach local employers</td>
<td>10. Discussion with Worklessness Programme and Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Minimum Standard</td>
<td>Measurable Targets</td>
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<td>their effect on employment</td>
<td>3. Regular meetings with Job Centre Plus to raise awareness of employment/unemployment new and current initiatives and benefits issues including Universal Credit and Welfare Reform</td>
<td>Sustainability to be involved in local employer support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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10. CONCLUSIONS AND CHALLENGES

The FIS Team has worked conscientiously and professionally throughout the year. There has been an obvious improvement in information access for families with a child or young person with an additional need and ongoing work is in place with SEN and disability services through health and education to continue this improvement.

The challenges for the next year will be:

- How the LA restructure will impact on FIS service delivery
- How the LA budget implications will impact on FIS service delivery
- How the changing priorities of partners will impact on FIS service delivery
Appendices:

1. FIS background
2. Staff Organisation Chart
3. Professionals Survey 2011
4. Service Delivery Plan for 2012 - 2013
5. Family Information Service background
6. Staff Organisation Chart
7. Professionals Survey 2011

Appendix 1: FIS Background

Remit of the Service – meeting the statute

1. Enquiry handling, fulfilment and ‘holding the baton’ for callers to ensure contact with the service they need - delivery to the public and/or professionals. Being the first point of contact for enquirers to People and Communities – especially families

- Telephone helpline (including Freephone and local number)
- Text access
- Email contact
- Face to face through a planned programme of outreach
- Web pages
- Development of Social Networking facility

2. Support for Childcare and Activity Providers – maintenance of accurate care scheme records to enable families to make informed childcare choices and service marketing

3. Maintenance of a comprehensive resource library including 1 Big Database the Family Services Directory, which now includes information for young people previously branded B-Active, and Rainbow Resource the online directory and news up date for families with disabled children and young people. Production of information packs for professionals distribution eg New Parent Packs via Health Visitors
4. Marketing Service for Children’s and Young People’s Services including voluntary, private and commissioned services. Point of access for information about available parenting support, including universal and targeted activity

5. Contribution to the intelligence for the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment especially mapping and gapping childcare need as a result of parent/carer contact and experience of accessing appropriate childcare

6. Bespoke information packages for families, offering childcare choices, family support services, sustainable economic wellbeing strategies and appropriate family activities

7. One to one brokerage service for parents and carers seeking childcare, family support services, positive activities and access to benefits support

8. Outreach and marketing service – planned programme of outreach to a variety of community locations focussing on the hard to reach and non-engaging community

9. Development Worker to support families with a disabled child or young person to include children and young people with any additional need:

   The Development Worker has a role in supporting families from early diagnosis throughout their child and young person’s life to early adulthood. The service offers:

   - One to one brokerage for families to access appropriate services
   - Detailed parent/professional information bulletins
   - Support via the helpline or at one to one meetings
   - Maintenance of a database of activities, organisations, services and news items
   - Informative web pages
   - Regular contact with relevant service providers (including voluntary sector)
   - Strategic input to service development

10. Information and Advice Service across the Local Authority offering:

    The Information and Advice Service is delivered flexibly as a balanced mix of one to one sessions with families, drop in sessions on request and through informal attendance at parents’/carers’ groups. The main functions of the service are:

    - Acting as a baton holder for local families with a range of needs signposting to, and accessing, a appropriate statutory, private and voluntary run services
    - Supporting prospective parents/carers with information about maternity and employment rights and other maternity/paternity benefits
    - Providing support to workless households by referring to appropriate work programmes and preparation for employment and training
    - Informing families about debt and other financial support including one off grants/social fund applications
    - Offering support to increase the take up of registered and formal childcare
    - Offering support to increase the take up of Childcare element of WTC
- Offering support to increase the take up of free school meals

11. Choice Advice Service:
- Increased universal awareness raising with families about how and when to access school places: at reception and secondary transition. Including public adverts, targeted leaflet drops and FIS outreach
- One to one sessions for parents and carers who need support in successfully completing the application process

12. Working in the Childcare Sector:
- College and school awareness sessions – Working with Children
- Attendance at careers and options evenings in schools
- One to one bespoke sessions for clients – pathways to training and working with children
- Targeted recruitment campaigns, including advertising and information sessions
- Design and delivery of 6 week Babysitting awareness courses – pre childcare work, valuable work experience for personal statements/cvs and early parenting awareness

13. Short Breaks for Disabled Children and Young People – commissioned delivery of the Information Duty:
- On line portal of services, organisations and events for families with a disabled child or young person (www.rainbowresource.org.uk)
- Detailed parent/professional information and news bulletins
- Helpline support
- Web page support

Appendix 2: Staff Organisation Chart
Appendix 3: Professionals Satisfaction Survey June/August 2011

In order to ensure we are providing a useful and valuable resource for partners and professionals who work closely with families in Bath and North East Somerset, the Family Information Service sent a short service evaluation to those professionals.

The evaluation was sent electronically or by post to all children’s services staff, childcare providers, library staff, schools, Extended Services Coordinators and Parent Support Advisors, GP surgeries, Health Visitors, school nurses, midwives, ante-natal clinics, hospitals, commissioned services, youth workers, Job Centre Plus lone parent workers, Southside Project staff, First Steps Children Centre staff, Connexions advisors and Council Connect.

They were asked:

- if they were able to make contact with us easily,
- what information they request from us on a regular basis,
- whether this information is useful, clear and timely,
- to rate our response time to enquiries
- to suggest any improvements or gaps in the service.

We also used it as an opportunity to offer to attend staff meetings, or community and parents groups.

Number of service evaluations sent: approximately 1,110
Number returned: 94 (8% return rate)

Respondents:
- Children’s Services staff: 54
- Childcare Providers 11 (5 childminders, 6 group providers)
- commissioned services 5
- 6 health contacts 6
- library staff 5
- anonymously 8
90% of responses stated that they were able to contact us easily. Only 2 respondents replied that they hadn’t known of our existence; we have now furnished them with information explaining what we do and how to contact us.

88% of responses said we were useful, clear and timely. Only 1 response said we were not, with the reason given that sometimes the information is out of date.

When asked to rate the Family Information Service on response time to enquiries they replied as follows:

- Excellent: 54
- Good: 31
- Satisfactory: 2
- Poor: 0

The responses listed requesting information on:
- Childcare: 33
- Family leisure activities: 31
- Other: 27
- Working with children/ childcare training: 23
- Family Support Services: 23
- Children’s Centre’s: 22
- Tax credits or benefits: 19
- Early Years’ Entitlement: 18
- New Parent Packs: 17
- Parenting Information: 15
- Disability and Special Educational Needs: 13

Suggestions for improvements:

"I usually ask for someone to contact the young parents direct. It’s always useful to know that this contact has been made!” (Connexions advisor)

"More funding so that you can employ more outreach workers to contact targeted and non-targeted families. As a non-targeted family, it would be nice to have occasional contact with an outreach worker at toddlers group, events in the local parks, or even at soft play centres.”
“Only that I keep telling families about you as they have never heard of you.”

“More youth materials?”

**Positive comments:**

“Your support is excellent and very helpful to our families. Thank you.” (childcare provider)

“Very helpful service. If cannot be given the information immediately FIS get back to me” (Social Worker)

“No gaps to note, this is a clear, efficient, and supportive service for local families.”

“We are extremely impressed with your knowledge, courteous manner and efficiency. We consider you a great resource - you should have asked what you do well - I’d have gone on and on!” (Family Placement Team)

“I would just like to say that everytime I phone FIS reply is friendly helpful and I always feel like they are interested in the family I am trying to help. Thank you” (Social Worker)

“You are extremely helpful when families do speak to you.” (Disabled Children’s Team)

“I have only recently begun to make regular use of your service, to date it has been very helpful and quick to respond. I look forward to making more use of service you offer.” (Inclusion Playworker)

**Outcomes:** Collaborative working requests (or to continue working with) Drugs and PSHE advisor, Early Years’ Advisory teacher, Common Induction Training, parenting support groups and Family Placement Team.