Family Information Service

2014 – 2015 Annual Report
Family Information Service
Annual Report 2014 - 2015

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Quotes from service users:

Thank you to you both for your help and also for listening to me!!! I think it was a bit beyond the call of duty on your part!!!! but thank you. Parent

A telephone conversation with a parent “I used your service last year to find a childminder for my son, you were really helpful then so I thought I would ask for your help again this year”.

Thank you for your prompt information: very much appreciated Parent

Being able to talk openly and honestly with professionals such as your selves has helped me, the other staff and of course most importantly the child and the parents. It is this type of joined up approach that produces results and we are already seeing such changes happening for this person and for our nursery, and I include the part that everyone plays...down to sorting out my funding application forms.
Service Manager
1 Family Information Service - Context

The Family Information Service was developed in 2001 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 to support their children physically, emotionally and socially.

The ethos of our Service is both proactive in reaching those parents who might otherwise have difficulty accessing information and inclusive; targeting parents and prospective parents including fathers, mothers, absent parents, foster parents and others caring for a child.

Previously the Service remit extended up to a young person’s 20th birthday. However due to revised legislation around the support to disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs (SEN), the remit of FIS is now formally extended to include support for young people with additional needs to the age of 25 years. This means that from 1 September 2014 the remit of FIS includes a wider demographic and in fulfilling the information, advice and support requirement of the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 there will also be an additional responsibility to ensure access to information around areas such as education, health and social care relating especially to SEND. FIS is the universal point of contact in providing universal and specialist information, advice and support for families with children and young people with additional needs.

In addition FIS has developed the platform for the searchable SEND Local Offer website for parents/carers, children and young people alongside B-Zine, an e-magazine, for children and young people. Included in the Local Offer is information which supports a family with a child or young person with additional needs. The Local Offer needs to hold details of organisations, services and activities around pre-school, early years, childcare, schools, colleges, play and leisure activities, family support, preparing for adulthood, health and social care. This Government approach aims to enable parents, children and young people to see more clearly what services are available in their area, have an opportunity to review those services and to contribute to the development of new services or identify gaps in service provision. Thus giving more autonomy in choice and ultimately a more informed view of how their funding is spent.

In planning for the inevitable increased work load and budget pressures which have included not only the SEND agenda but involvement in the Council’s Tell Us Once enquiries and the increased offer of 2 year funding and Free School Meals checks, FIS has been working proactively with a Business Analyst to redesign current delivery methods.
in order to grow capacity for these new duties. FIS has implemented the One Council Corporate Customer Service Standards and the Customer First principles, in line with front facing council customer services, and have worked tirelessly to smarten delivery, eradicate unnecessary processes and build more robust web and internet resources for families, who can, to be able to self-serve. As a result web hits to digital resources have increased and Facebook activity has been well used by parents.

Nevertheless access to the helpline via telephone and email has continued to be busy, but the landscape is changing; ten years ago the enquiries to the helpline were of a relatively straightforward nature – a request for a nursery’s details, questions about childcare options or confirmation of the age at which a child could start school and where to find school information - now the Information Team are dealing with much more complex enquiries – calls to the helpline are often complicated in nature, the caller often has anxieties and the calls result in tying together the support of a number of agencies to find a solution to the enquiry. The requirement on the Team is to know more, be inquisitive and invariably to deal with areas of work new to universal delivery.

Hence the formal establishment, in addition to the universal delivery of information and advice to families, the offer of support in two specialist areas:

- Information and Advice for Economic Wellbeing – this service supports families who are unwaged or struggling to manage their finances on a low wage. The service operates in community venues including Children’s Centres, One Stop Shops and with other key stakeholders including Connecting Families and social care. See this year’s report at page 14

- Information and Advice SEND and additional needs – this service supports families with children and young people with additional needs, including SEN and disability and contributes to the offer of Information, Advice and Support as detailed in the SEND Code of Practice (2015). See this year’s report at page 19

The former has developed over two years and is in great demand and the latter is now operating on a regular basis for families with Children’s Centres and specialist pre-school delivery.
2 Enquiry Handling and Customer Contact

During 2014/15, FIS recorded 4275 enquiries by telephone to the universal service, 6881 by email, 26 by text, 76 via the Tell Us Once referral system and 130 by post. In addition 87 enquiries were taken by the Team at community outreach events. The enquirers are a mix of the public, people acting on behalf of families and professional requesting information to support the families they are working with. A huge total of 11475 questions asked – as well as all those corridor conversations and informal meets!

The specialist services delivered a total of 404 one to one sessions to families and the Team visited over 100 services and organisations at meetings, events and team briefings to promote the work of the FIS and its partners, touching base with in excess of 1500 people.

In addition FIS has promoted hundreds of events via the 1 Big Database calendar (which feeds through to the Council Calendar on the public Council Home web page), Facebook and through email networks of organisations and professionals working with families, children and young people.

Key newsworthy articles have been written and included in over 30 different journals, staff newsletters, public magazines and the press over the year. Adverts for FIS appear regularly on the public TV Connect framework and in relevant family magazines and local newspapers per a planned programme of advertising.

The FIS on line presence:

- 1 Big Database, the universal Family Services Directory, received 324,239 visits to pages maintained by FIS: 1 Big Database holds approximately 2500 organisations, services and activity providers in the local area, including childcare providers

- Rainbow Resource, the searchable Local Offer for families with a child or young person with an additional need, was re-launched in September and has received 6,189 visits this year. Browsers on average spend 3 or 4 minutes on the site!

- Facebook – the FIS account has received 27096 visits this year and is linked directly with 80 organisations and services!
3 Customer Insight

Following our work with the business analyst it was agreed that in order to truly understand what our customers want from the service and how well we have performed we would undertake a sample of telephone interviews with our customers in addition to collecting the comments/feedback from our customers.

3.1 General Customer Feedback
The vast majority of our customers are happy with the service they receive from FIS: they tell us we are quick to respond, we listen, we provide a very high level of good customer service and we are well informed. The FIS Team has a bursting folder of compliments to evidence this and has not received one complaint this year.

3.2 Monthly feedback calls
Outbound calls have been made each month to customers who have contacted FIS the previous month. The aim of these calls has been to check in detail how satisfied they were with the level of service they had received, how useful the information had been and to identify areas in which we can improve.

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<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Successful calls</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

We spoke to 95 customers over the course of the year.

3.3 Key findings
The calls made are all to customers who made telephone enquiries to FIS rather than those that emailed.

When asked if they would rather have self served online, ie found the information they wanted by searching our websites and databases, an overwhelming 68% of respondents said they would prefer to call and talk to someone. 22% of respondents said they would rather self-serve and 10% said they had no preference. The 68% of customers stated that they wanted to speak to someone; they wanted to have a dialogue and to gain clarity around subjects. They felt that wouldn’t be possible through self service.
3.4 How do customers find our number?

The data we gathered suggests that Health Visitors are a very good channel for getting the Family Information Service number to families. 31% of our respondents found our number this way. A further 27% found our number online; either through our website or through Google.

With 27% of respondents going online to find our number but still ringing through to use our service, it suggests that either people are unable to find the information they need or that they would prefer to have a conversation with a person. This notion is supported with the majority of respondents (68%) saying they would not prefer to self serve. Anecdotal evidence from feedback calls also supports this.
3.5 How do our customers rate the service delivered?
Customers are largely very satisfied with the service received.

- 84% of respondents stated that we were able to answer all of their questions.
- 87% of respondents felt that our response was timely.
- 76% felt that the information given was up to date.
- 70% were able to find the childcare they needed.
- 75% did not have to change their request to suit their needs.

That only 70% could find the childcare they needed is slightly concerning and one that we will feedback to the Childcare Sufficiency Team.

That 25% of our customers had to change their request to find appropriate childcare is also of concern and again one that we will feedback to the Childcare Sufficiency Team.

It might be useful to revisit a few of the customers we spoke to and drill down into the detail of a few cases to find out exactly what barriers and issues affected them securing suitable childcare.

3.6 Additional findings and comments

- Great service. It’s really good to be able to talk things through with someone.
- People like that they don’t have to press different numbers/choose different options in order to speak to someone.
- People were pleased to call to simply find out if they were entitled to the two year funding and to finish the call with their four digit code and a list of settings being emailed to them.
- Being able to search by childcare providers to find out if they had vacancies would be useful.
- People are aware that some known childminders aren’t coming up on the search list. We need to make customers aware that the lists only show childminders who wish to advertise with us.
- A number of respondents stated that they would like any information sent to be in PDF format.
- Customers identified a lack of childminders in Combe Down, Temple Cloud, Pensford and High Littleton.
- There is a lack of clear information on how to become an Ofsted registered nanny.
- A customer who struggled to find us felt that we should advertise on Bath Mums website and Gumtree as this is where many childminders advertise.

3.7 Continuous improvement
We will address the comments above and have already amended the spreadsheet used to record calls to detail the feedback received. We are now recording the number of unsuccessful calls made and building up a picture of when best to call families. We will also be including the thoughts of email enquirers in the future through the use of an email survey.

4 Service Promotion and Marketing

During the year members of the Family Information Service have attended a large number of conferences, training events, visits to childcare settings, including baby and toddler groups, interagency meetings and events. These are good opportunity for FIS to network and to promote the vast breadth of information that we provide. Regular sessions have been:

- 6 Interagency meetings in the different areas of B&NES
- 30 Reception New Parent Intake evenings
- 11 Year 7 Open evenings at secondary Schools
- Monthly One Stop Shop sessions in Bath and Keynsham
- Stakeholder events at Children’s Centres
- National Play Day
- APEX practitioners meetings

We have also had the opportunity to speak at other team meetings:

- Connecting Families
- First Steps (Bath)
- Youth Connect

Attendance at training courses and conferences also offers networking opportunities in addition to increasing our knowledge base with up-to-date and in-depth information;

- Universal Credits and Sanctions
- Benefits and EAA Nations training
- Benefits for young people
- Personal Independent Plan
- Welfare benefits update
- Talking Money observations
- Housing Law
- Introduction to SEND Reform
• Depression in children
• Fabricated and induced illness
• Child protection and safeguarding
• Induction training
• The Hub introduction
• ihop! – support for children in a family with an offender
• Improving services to LGBT people
• Personal Budgets: (Sirona)
• Epilepsy in children and young adults (Sirona)
• Adult Safeguarding (RNHRD)
• Mental Capacity Act (Sirona)

Several of the team were able to attend training and events that were being provided by other teams and deliver a session on what the Family Information Service can offer, including;

• The Introduction to Childminding Practice (ICP)
• SEND SENCo briefings
• Parents Carers Aiming High meetings
• Family and Childcare Trust – information for parents session
• Children’s Hearing Service working group
• Young parents network
• Wheels for all steering group
• Newly Qualified Teacher training

FIS has had a presence at a number of conferences, providing a stand of information, or information about the service in delegate packs, and we have networked with a range of attendees about the available resources;

• Strategic Director’s meeting for Head teachers
• School admin and finance staff events
• Bath City Conference
• Learning and Skills Partnership meetings (post 16)
• Post 16 College events
• Bath Freshers’ Fair
• CURO housing event
• Bath City Farm
• Older People’s Event
• Step by Step in Children’s Centres
• DHI Meetings
• Universal Credits Advisor meetings
• Family and Friends/ Carers guardianship groups
• Incredible Years parenting courses

FIS has had a Regional and National presence:

• Watershed - Bristol
• Making the most of the Local Offer - Yeovil
• Council for Disabled Children – London
• SWIASS – Taunton
• FIS South West Regional meetings
• Department for Education – London meeting with ministers and officers
• Westminster Briefing – London
• Contribution to National Information Quality Standards for SEND Information, Advice and Support Services

5 Universal Parenting Outreach

In light of the Early Help agenda, and with a number of services targeting resources at key sets of families identified by a range of factors relating to need, universal groups have a part to play.

Parent and toddler groups, and under 5s activity groups, are often the ‘soft’ parenting option that supports families in the early days of having children. Comparing concerns and issues with others experiencing the same is comforting and lifelong friendships are made. Those shy of approaching ‘professionals’ about concerns will often talk to friends, so getting good information to the local communities can have positive benefits.

As a result FIS has reinstated universal outreach visits. We aim to provide an annual visit to any group catering for children 0 – 5 years and their parents – this could be parent and toddler groups, messy play, Mums/Dads and bumps – at the visit we make contact with the organiser and capture the details of where and when the group meets and seek their permission to publicise this on the 1 Big Database Calendar for other parents to see. This enables FIS to provide up-to-date accurate information for all 1 Big Database users and enquirers to the service.

At the same time we meet informally with the parents and helpers in the room and leave information about FIS and how to access our resources. We engage with the group and offer access to Early Years and Safeguarding training and our specialist services. To date this has worked really well. Many parents are first time parents and are not aware what support is available for them. These visits offer an opportunity to provide information in a relaxed and informal way, put a face to the name and introduce FIS
For over 10 year FIS has collated paper folders of useful information for parents – 2500 were compiled and delivered to new parents by Health Visitors each year. This year, in line with the Council’s Digital by Default delivery and to rationalise use of resources (time and printing costs), we added all of the resources from the folder to the Council Website - Information for Parents - and produced postcard size room thermometers highlighting with the web address. Health Visitor’s give the thermometer to all new parents and point out the resources that can be found there. As a result we have only produced 415 hard copy folders for families who have needed to access paper resources; over 2000 families have accessed the resources on line. Pack printing and preparation time has been saved and enables the Information Team to undertake these outreach visits which are proving valuable.

The groups reached this year can be seen in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas visited</th>
<th>No. of parents reached</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southdown Infants – Stay &amp; Play</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roots &amp; Shoots, Bath City Farm</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Harptree Parent &amp; Toddler Group</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jigsaw, Radstock</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midsomer Norton Methodist Toddlers, Midsomer Norton, Bath</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Philip’s and St James’ Church Toddler Group, Odd Down, Bath</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toddlers with a Twist, Bath</td>
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<td>Tweenies, Midsomer Norton, Bath</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emmanuel Church Toddlers, Newbridge</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Martin’s Children’s Centre</td>
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<td>Clutton Mother, Clutton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cameley Messy play</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radstock Messy Play</td>
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<td>Foxhill Stay and Play</td>
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**Total number of groups visited:** 14  **Total number of parents seen:** 249
6 Specialist Information and Advice Service – Economic Wellbeing

This service supports families who are unwaged, or struggling to manage their finances on a low wage, or who have a number of finance related issues. The Information and Advice Officer is full time and has allocated days of the week for specific children’s centre areas to ensure cross authority visibility: Monday Bath East, Tuesday/Wednesday alternates between Somer Valley and Keynsham/Chew Valley, Thursdays First Steps reach area. However, flexibility is offered, diary permitting, to accommodate those parent/carers who are unable to attend an appointment on the day allocated to their area.

Support is offered at face to face appointments, over the phone, sometimes entirely by email or via professionals who are already supporting the family. Families can often be seen on a drop-in basis if not already with a customer.

Face to face appointments are usually held at children’s centres or other council buildings but could be in any public building (home visits are only offered if the supporting professional is also present)

6.1 Breakdown of Information and Advice Service Sessions

Somer Valley (98 sessions)

Keynsham/Chew Valley (41 sessions)

First Steps Bath West (80 sessions)

Bath East (80 sessions)

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Additionally, a further 8 families with older children (mostly Connecting Families referrals) have been supported.

Total number of sessions: 307
Most sessions are attended by one person (although sometimes by more) and occasionally people attend more than one session. On some occasions the parent(s) carer(s) are accompanied to the first appointment by the professional already supporting the family but more often than not the family are happy to attend any subsequent meetings unaccompanied.

Most of the time one session is sufficient for the family who have then been able to act upon any advice given. The sessions are booked for an hour and more often than not run over. However, some families need more support over a period of time and have made repeat visits, sometimes in the weeks following the first appointment, sometimes a year or more after if something arises that they would like advice about.

Specific information has been delivered to small groups where asked to do so by the facilitator. This includes groups facilitated by Southside and children’s centres and the officer has attended outreach sessions where general information about benefits and Universal Credit has been given.

In addition to this, specific information has been given direct to professionals already working with families which include: Southside Project, Health Visitors, Parent Support Adviser (PSA), Social Worker, CC staff, and there are also some sessions that are not included in the above figures since they were with families who have children over the age that is covered by the CC remit.

Customers are able to self-refer (the Family Information Service is publicised in children’s centres, public buildings, childcare providers and at various groups and events). Referrals are also received via the following routes:

- Social workers
- Southside Project
- Health Visitors
- PSA
- Children’s Centre staff
- Off The Record
- Carer’s Centre
- Connecting Families
- Family Nurse Partnership
- Department of Work and Pensions
- St Loyes’
- FIS

Although a customer may have a particular issue they would like to discuss when booking the appointment, it often becomes apparent during conversation that there are other
issues which can be addressed. ‘Unpicking’ the situation and helping the customer to prioritise what action needs to be taken is a key task for the service. The customer receives a follow up call about 6 weeks after the last intervention to see if actions agreed were followed up and whether other support is required.

6.2 Topics covered in Information and Advice Service Contacts
A wide range of subjects have been covered by the service:

- Benefits – families and lone parents. These included benefits to a family where a child was placed back in their care, tax credits, child benefit, healthy start forms etc. Also provision of information to a father who had unexpectedly become a lone parent, adoptive (and soon to be adoptive) parents and assistance to chase up delayed payments
- Maternity rights/benefits including Surestart Maternity Grant
- Better off in work information
- Childcare and information about possible help with funding (inc.2 year funding)
- Tax credit annual declaration completion
- Child benefit application
- Child maintenance options
- Volunteering opportunities (inc. referral to CC volunteer co-ordinator)
- Debt issues
- Income tax issues
- Employment issues
- Help with wording a parking fine dispute letter
- Rent arrears
- Info about how much detail CAFCASS would pass to absent father
- Care to learn
- Funding for study/childcare whilst volunteering
- Housing deposit bonds
- Possible respite
- Housing, including Homesearch information and help to complete form for housing association for someone at risk of eviction because landlady selling property
- Support for family where UK citizen imprisoned in Spain
- Free prescriptions
- Information about setting up as self-employed (including New Enterprise Allowance)
- Benefits for brother wanting Parental Responsibility for sister after the death of their mother
- School application information
• School policy for charging for trips
• Help with fuel bills
• Budgeting
• Benefits for young widow
• TUPE information
• Support/benefits for child with additional needs
• Tax credit explanation
• Universal credits
• Loan sharks
• Council tax information including spare room subsidy
• Carer’s allowance
• Faulty equipment supplied via St John’s Charity
• What practicalities need to be considered following a relationship breakdown
• Help with furniture provision for a victim of domestic violence
• Benefits if a domestic violence victim leaves her partner

General information to raise awareness of Universal Credits is given at appointments along with a ‘Managing your Money’ pack with the view to help people start thinking about budgeting on a monthly basis.

6.3 Positive outcomes
Although follow up calls and/or emails are made or sent, replies are not always received. However, some of the positive outcomes are listed below.

• Receipt of Income Support for lone parent living with her parents (had been previously advised by another agency that she would not be eligible)
• Receipt of various benefits for multiple customers included housing benefit and council tax support, income support, ESA, tax credits, child benefit.
• Customer acted on advice to chase up Experian credit report in order for debt relief order to progress
• Customers feeling in more control of finances and much better about things in general.
• Receipt of appropriate tax credit payments
• Lone parent father attending college to improve qualifications level
• Customers had a better understanding of maternity rights etc. including one who consequently received correct payment from employer and another who received SMP following redundancy when the employer had previously stated it was not payable
• Understanding of UK education system – children of families recently arrived in UK now in school
• Receipt of free prescriptions
• Better knowledge of financial help available and young parent had returned to study
• Lone parent (Dad) had completed his training (funded as a result of a charity application by I&A Officer) and is in a much better place mentally and felt he had a better understanding of what he could expect for his child with additional needs and the school were now ‘on board’
• New registrations for CC services
• Warm Home Discount received
• Increase in housing/council tax benefit payment
• Registration with CC services
• Nursery fees arrears paid by charity enabling the child to remain in attendance
• Council tax arrears paid by local charity
• Water and council tax debt payment plan organised (as a result of signposting to CAB)
• DLA eligibility advised and application submitted (with support from CAB as a result of signposting)
• Better understanding of rent arrears letter and subsequent payment plan organised by CAB (result of FIS referral)
• Suitable childcare accessed
• Mum decided to return to work following maternity leave being better informed about financial implications.
• Successful challenge of parking fine

Some of the enquiries were not within the service scope and so customers were signposted to various other local agencies including: CAB, Housing/council tax support, CURO, Welfare Support Scheme, Bath Employment Law, Community Learning Service, Student Support at college/university, SWAN, PPS, Carer’s Centre, Bristol Credit Union, SEND Partnership Service.

Customers were also signposted to national organisations including: DWP, Gingerbread, Child Maintenance Service, Money Advice Service, Step Change, Corum Children’s Legal Service, HMRC, Working Families, Contact a Family, Shelter, Family Lives, Illegal Money Lending Team.

In addition the I and A Officer supports FIS outreach, attends a variety of stakeholder meetings on behalf of FIS and often represents the Manager at key events.

Customers are asked if they are satisfied with the service, and satisfaction rates from both customers and professionals are at 100% - they are very satisfied!
7 Specialist Support for Families with Children and Young People with Disability and Additional Needs

This service supports families with children and young people with additional needs, including SEN and disability and contributes to the offer of Information, Advice and Support as detailed in the SEND Code of Practice (2015). The Development Worker works 21 hours per week, and has a flexible offer to support families. Families receive support face to face, by telephone and via email both individually and in group situations.

The service has supported 97 families and professionals in this period.

Topics of enquiry have covered a wide range relating to support and information for families with children and young people with additional needs - those that have been requested more often are:

- Details of, and sign posting to, inclusive positive activities eg play schemes, clubs, groups
- Brokerage to find inclusive childcare – linking with providers to ensure that the family’s needs can be met
- Information about, and signposting to, financial assistance /benefits/ grants
- Information for families new to the area
- From 19 + year olds: housing, employment and independent living
- Information about, and signposting to, organisations and services that can support ASD /Challenging behaviour/referrals to CAMHS

7.1 Targeted outreach to a range of providers supporting parents and carers and children and young people

- Step by Step Sessions at Children’s Centres: Radstock x 1, Chew Valley x1
- Carers Centre: Parent Carers Aiming High group meetings x3
- Family Carers sub regional group (Care Forum : Bristol) x 2
- ADHD Support Group, Bath Academy x1
- Healthwatch B&NES young healthwatch officer x1
- Three Ways Parent group x1
- Bath Opportunity Pre-School parents group x1
- Margaret Coates Centre Saturday club x1
- NAS Club x1
- KIDS Bath Saturday Club x1
- Transitions Event: Fosse Way, Midsomer Norton
- Inclusive Sports Club : Bath University x1
7.2 Rainbow Resource Scheme: Bath & North East Somerset

The Local Authority is required to collect information about its children and young people with disability and additional needs. The Rainbow Resource Scheme database holds basic information about children and young people including name, contact details, age and diagnosis. This information is held securely by Bath & North East Somerset Council and can only be accessed by authorised staff and complies with data protection. Inclusion on the list is voluntary. We collect this information to inform service delivery and commissioning intentions and to enable families to receive information about services directly.

Children and young people aged between 0-19 years (upper age currently under review) who are disabled or have any additional needs and who are resident in Bath & North East Somerset are eligible for a card which may entitle them to reduced, or free admission, to some leisure venues and attractions. In addition the family currently receives a newsletter from this service three times a year.

There are 203 children and young people registered on the Scheme.

Design and production of the Rainbow Resource Newsletter which is mailed out to over 250 families and professionals three times per year (postal and email)

On going task to research and update the list of providers / attractions that recognise the card and the concessions they operate.

2015 New Rainbow Resource bookmark design and distribution detailing searchable Local Offer and RR Scheme.

7.3 Service development for 2015

In discussion with professionals and parents the service undertook a review of available support for families to see if a more structured approach to community drop ins by the service would help families navigate their way through organisations, activities and provision.

It was evident from the views of parents and professionals that community based sessions and drop ins would be of value and as a result discussions are taking place with two voluntary organisations Bath Opportunity Pre-school and First Steps Children’s Centres to provide regular parent sessions in situ.
Development, population and maintenance of the searchable Local Offer have required time and resources from both the Development Worker and the dedicated part-time Information Officer. It has become apparent that information about services and organisations to support the Preparing for Adulthood agenda and Transition between Children’s services and Adult services requires on going research and development.

8 Communication with Service Users, Stakeholders and Professionals Working with Families

FIS is supported by the People and Communities Communications Coordinator who works to raise awareness of, and promote, the breadth of services and initiatives across People & Communities, including the Family Information Service, SEND Partnership Service, safeguarding adults and children, services for older people, carers, mental health, adults with LD, adults with physical and sensory impairments, adults living with alcohol/drug misuse, using various media outlets and working with partners from health, social care, voluntary sector and the community

Main responsibilities:

- To ensure the accuracy of the People & Communities council web pages and related intranet content.
- Production of a range of directories and resources for People and Communities including information for families in the widest context
- Liaison with colleagues in the Council (e.g. the library home service, mobile meals service, One Stop Shops) and our partners (e.g. Sirona, Occupational Therapists, Health Visitors, Schools, Colleges) to ensure appropriate information reaches as many service users as possible
- Production of a range of fact sheets, social care information, including a Care Guide. Links to useful external websites are also provided (including Well Aware, 1 Big Database), to signpost people to where they can access further information and support.
- Joint working with the Health, commissioners, stakeholders, the voluntary sector and statutory services
- Project work to deliver council and legislative initiatives – eg setting up the communication strategy for SEND Reform, developing the Facebook page, web content, logo consultation, design of leaflets and publicity
- Raising awareness about key issues including safeguarding, change of service name and remit – Parent Partnership, 2 year funding, healthy school meals etc
- Management of, and quality assurance for, the FIS Information Officers
8.1 Getting the message out there

The following publications and ebulletins/newsletters are used to raise awareness on a regular basis. A local media company support planned promotion of services and initiatives:

- Council Connect magazine (published quarterly)
- Council internal communications – Staff Matters, One Council, intranet
- Council and partner’s websites
- Bespoke family magazines
- Local press and community publications
- Facebook
- Connect TV
- Twitter messages
- Health, social care and partner newsletters
- Council’s interagency newsletter
- Voluntary Sector newsletters

8.2 Impact of the Service

Raising awareness of all services enables service users and potential service users to make informed choices.

The provision of accurate, clear, jargon-free, timely and accessible information and signposting people to services can help prevent them needing more acute or complex (and thus expensive) services.

By utilising a range of publications, consulting with service users and listening to feedback we reach a wide range of people in Bath & North East Somerset.
9 Conclusion

The last year has been a busy year for FIS, and a year when experienced personnel were replaced by new team members. But still the ethos of the small team is to network, support and deliver so that families are provided with the information they need, in the right format, at the right time, by the sources they trust. New, smarter ways of working have enabled the team to absorb new tasks and responsibilities and developments to 1 Big Database and Rainbow Resource have enhanced the customer experience.

The challenges for the service are:

- keeping the vast range of resources up to date and accurate
- keeping up to date with how customers find information, knowing what information they want and where they want to find it
- keeping up to date with the changing landscape of legislation and partner service delivery
- ensuring that information is consistent, of good quality and timely
- ensuring that universal and accessible information is available for those who can self-serve, leaving FIS to target its available resources to the families that need extra support

The key to meeting the challenges is all about service delivery, knowing the service user and maintaining quality. We will continue to utilise specialists in the community, have a varied programme of promotion and marketing linked to life events, a good range of access channels and make the most of exploiting all available opportunities to get the FIS message heard by as many people in Bath and North east Somerset as possible.

Jackie Fielder
Family information and SEND Partnership Services Manager
10 Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1 - FIS Organisation Chart

ORGANISATION CHART
Family Information & SEND Partnership Service 1 September 2014

Manager
Family Information and SEND Partnership Services
Post.no. 30189

People & Communities
Information Officer

Information Officer (2 fte)

Information and Advice Officer
Economic Wellbeing

Development Worker for Families with Disabled Children

Information Officer (0.54 fte)