The Family Information Service SEND Framework
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Helping to meet the needs of families with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

This national SEND Framework has been specifically developed for Family Information Services (FIS) in England. The aim of the framework is to help FIS prepare to meet the requirements of the Department for Education’s Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, 2014.

FIS are well placed to help their local authorities to develop the Local Offer and provide information about personal budgets for children and young people, thus strengthening their role in providing information, advice and assistance to families.

This practical guide will take you through the new statutory duties of the Children and Families Act 2014; gives an overview of the new landscape for disability and SEN provision for children and young people; offers numerous FIS case studies and a practical SEND standards framework.
i) Executive summary

The new 0-25 SEND Code of Practice brings new challenges to local authorities of how to provide effective and affordable services that meet the needs of local families. This document sets out how Family Information Services are providing a high quality platform on which to build solutions to meet these challenges.

Since the late 1990s, Children’s Information Services have played an important role in helping families to access childcare for their children. In 2006, the government placed a legal duty (Section 12 of the Childcare Act) on all local authorities to provide information, advice and assistance to parents of children and young people aged 0-25. This resulted in Children’s Information Services becoming Family Information Services with a wider remit and scope. While the emphasis on providing help to access childcare remained, it was enhanced by a requirement to provide information, advice and assistance about a range of other services for their children aged 0-25, and to provide more help to families who would otherwise struggle to access services known as “brokerage services”.

Over recent years the importance of Family Information Services and their contribution, has been brought into sharp focus by the increasingly specialist nature of information, advice and assistance provision to families. FIS across the country have responded to the changes in resources, society and technology in innovative and creative ways. This puts FIS in a strong position to help their local authorities respond to new challenges in an increasingly diverse and complex arena, including sharing their experience about using mobile and smartphone technologies, social networking and internet based information services.

There has never been a time when so much information is available; yet parents (especially those who have children with special educational needs and disabilities) can find themselves navigating a minefield of complex documents and web sites.

With this as a backdrop, the government has introduced a new Code of Practice to support the duties defined in the Children and Families Act 2014, for local authorities, health and other organisations in England, who work with and support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

This will result in the development of a Local Offer; a single place where families can access information about what services, advice and support is expected to be available, in and around their local area. The Local Offer together with the introduction of personal budgets for children and young people (which aim to give parents more control over the services they choose to access and pay for) mean that information provision and the expertise of information professionals as can be found in a Family Information Service will be crucial.

I hope this framework will help Family Information Services to enhance the support offered to families of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in the delivery of Section 12 Duty and the SEND Code of Practice. In particular, by working in collaboration with other services and partners to help families to access and understand personal budgets and navigate the Local Offer.

Niall McVicar
Chair of the National Association of Families Information Services
June 2014
ii) Acknowledgements

This document has been developed as part of an ongoing partnership, Making It Personal 2, led by the children’s charity, KIDS. The partnership is funded by the Department for Education to support families, service providers and Family Information Services to implement the reforms set out in the new SEND Code of Practice. Thank you to the partners in the Making It Personal 2 consortium for their contributions, guidance and advice in developing this document.

Thank you to the Family Information Service managers and staff who have provided us with case study material and other supporting documents. In particular, thank you to Sarah Butters from Trafford FIS and Viv Oliver from East Sussex Information for Families. Thank you also, to Debs Aspland for providing a parent’s perspective, to Dr Christopher Hart for his health perspective and to Family and Childcare Trust colleagues.

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1. Introduction

This framework is specifically written for Family Information Service managers and staff in England. It should cause them to reflect on their expertise and encourage them to willingly offer this, so that together we can help children and young people with SEND achieve the best possible outcomes. It is also a useful document for any colleagues responsible for delivering the Local Offer and personal budget requirements outlined in the SEND Code of Practice.

From September 2014, a new system to support children and young people aged 0 to 25 with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and disabilities will be in place in England. Every local authority in England is required to publish a Local Offer. The Local Offer should be one place where families can find information about the services that are available to their child or young person and how to access them.

All children and young people newly referred for a statutory SEN assessment will be assessed under the new arrangements and, if needed, provided with an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan. EHC plans will be a single plan replacing individual statements of special educational needs, social care and health plans.

Children and young people with existing statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments (LDAs) will begin to transfer to the new system (subject to national consultation); and personal budgets will be made available to some children and young people with EHC plans.

The vision of the new system is to make sure children with SEND have their needs met by joined up, appropriately selected for outcomes, organised, targeted, flexible, child and family friendly routes to services that are jointly commissioned. This approach will:

- enable easy access to appropriate services (by accessing universal services promoted through the Local Offer or, by exception, some children receiving EHC Plan based support);
- ensure providers deliver services appropriately (to clear individual outcomes within appropriate timescales);
- avoid expensive and impeding, conflict and confrontation (such as appeals and tribunals) where services listen and respond appropriately to pre-empt failure;
- ensure transparent services;
“Our vision for children and young people with special needs is the same as for all children and young people – that they achieve well in their early years, at school and in college; lead happy and fulfilled lives; and have choice and control.

The special needs reforms will implement a new approach which seeks to join up help across education, health and care, from birth to 25. Help will be offered at the earliest possible point, with children and young people with special needs and their parents or carers fully involved in decisions about their support and what they want to achieve. This will help lead to better outcomes and more efficient ways of working.”

Department for Education December 2013

- enable effective monitoring, adjustment, management and development of services (in particular those targeted at EHC Plan outcomes to avoid the risk of “drift” and failure); and
- improve the lives of children and young people with SEND so they develop resilience and the ability to cope (with the intention of helping them develop independent living skills where appropriate.)

This ambitious vision can only become a reality where there is a good dialogue, smart planning, outcomes based orientation of services exists between health and care commissioners, education or providers where the expectation and practical knowledge of children, young people and families have been listened to and incorporated.

FIS are well placed to play a crucial role in their local authority area to meet these new regulations and contribute to improving services for children and young people with SEND. They can, for example:

- enhance their existing Family Service Directory;
- share their expertise about developing and providing accessible information to families;
- help bridge the gap between education, health and social care;
- support families of children and young people with SEND;
- enhance their brokerage and outreach services; and
- work together with Parent Partnership Services and other stakeholders.
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<tr>
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<td>Sources of information, advice and support in the local authority’s area relating to SEND including information provided under clause 32 of the Children and Families Act, forums for parents and carers, and support groups.</td>
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2. Knowing the landscape

2.1 Understanding stakeholders/stakeholder mapping

There are different levels of involvement that any particular FIS will have in meeting the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice. Some FIS will be leading on specific elements such as the Local Offer; they may be working in partnership or jointly with their Parent Partnership Services (PPS) to look at providing information to families about how they can access a personal budget. In other cases, the FIS may know very little about the new regulations and have little or no involvement in deciding or implementing any resulting changes.

NAFIS recommends that every FIS familiarise themselves with the regulations and seek to have a voice as a key stakeholder (particularly those with little involvement in this agenda). While there may be other stakeholders and services leading the reforms locally, most FIS have a significant contribution to make, which could improve services for children and young people with SEND, avoid duplication of effort and ultimately save the local authority money.

As the SEND Code of Practice will impact on many services, both within and outside the local authority, it is important for Family Information Services to understand about the local landscape. This means knowing and understanding the local stakeholders, and which individuals and groups are leading on particular pieces of work, that will contribute to the overall aim of improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

In thinking about developing partnerships, specifically related to meeting the requirements of the Code of Practice, the following may be helpful:
• Map your stakeholders (who they are, where they work and what level of influence they may have).
• Review your stakeholders regularly.
• Spend time thinking about what drives and motivates your stakeholders (look for common ground).
• Anticipate your partners’ objections in advance (put yourself in their shoes) and prepare responses based on evidence and experience.
• Consider starting small, with informal working and move to developing formal operational links over time and as trust grows (see Table 2 on page 19).
• Make sure your objectives match and meet your legal duties and those of your wider organisation and/or directorate or commissioner.
• Define your goals together with your partner(s)
  • What can you jointly achieve?
  • Define your respective roles.
  • How will this improve outcomes for families?
  • How will you know that it has worked?
• Put systems in place to measure the impact of your partnership arrangements (qualitative and quantitative).
• Be prepared to listen to your partners and change your view where necessary.
• Think about what your dependencies are and what you will need to put in place to make your partnerships work effectively (training and workforce development, and management of influential stakeholders particularly when working at the strategic level).
• Share your achievements and what you learned through partnership working (with parents, senior management, managers, other stakeholders).

A FIS should build on existing productive relationships and seek to build new partnerships, in order to help meet the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice. Some of the key stakeholders are listed below:

• Adult social care
• Alternative education providers
• Children and young people
• Children’s centres
• Children’s hospices
• Children’s social care including disability and LAC (Looked After Children)
• Clinical Commissioning Groups
• Early years and childcare settings (including private, voluntary and independent)
• Frontline NHS services including GPs, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), health visitors, school nurses, therapists, community nurseries, special services (including equipment and wheelchair providers)
• Further education providers
• Housing
• Job Centre Plus
• Local and national voluntary and community sector (VCS)
• Local Healthwatch¹
  • Mainstream schools – maintained independent, academies and free schools
• Parent Partnership Services (PPS)
• Patient Advice and Liaison service (PALS)
• Pupil Referral Units
• Short break providers including the VCS
• Special schools
• Transition services 14-25 including youth support services
• Youth services
• Virtual schools²

¹ Healthwatch England leads and supports a national network, made up of community-focused local Healthwatch groups which help people influence the delivery and design of local services: www.healthwatch.co.uk
² Adapted from the SE7 pathfinder document, SEND Pathfinder Application: Section III Basic Information (2011)
2.2 More about understanding health stakeholders

Health services have undergone considerable changes in the past few years and it is essential that FIS understand the range of local and national health organisations influencing service provision either contained in the Local Offer or delivered through EHC Plans.

FIS can take a number of actions to understand the health provision in their local area:

- Identify the local Health and Well Being Board as they will be working with Public Health and others on developing local strategies (Joint Strategic Needs Assessments) and FIS may be able to maintain appropriate dialogue.
- Identify the local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs).
- Obtain the details of CCG commissioners with the responsibility for children and young people which may include maternity services (over 18s are likely to be treated within general adult services).
- Identify details of the commissioners responsible for Child, Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Identify the local Consultant in Public Health.
- Identify the lead officer for children and mental health issues (FIS may find they provide details of local initiatives, research and statistics and FIS may be able to get involved with relevant research to improve delivery).
- Identify local Joint NHS/local Authority Children and Young People’s Boards.
- Identify local Family Nurse Partnerships (who support teenage mothers), school nursing teams, health visiting teams, and child health advisors.
- Identify:
  - acute and chronic NHS paediatric teams for example Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) and physiotherapy;
  - acute and chronic adult services who will manage young people; and
  - paediatric palliative teams.
2.3 Partnership working with Local Parent Partnership Services (PPS)

Parent Partnership Services (PPS) offer information, advice and support for parents/carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN). There is a PPS in every local authority. Parent Partnership Services provide impartial advice, information and support to parents, in relation to special educational needs and provision. All are funded by the local authority but some are outsourced to voluntary, community or private sector organisations.3

The joint commission arrangements for local authorities and CCGs must include arrangements for considering and agreeing what information and advice about education, health and care provision is to be provided, by who and how it is to be provided. The Code of Practice states that “joint arrangement should consider the availability of other information services in their area (services such as youth services, local Health Watch, the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and the Family Information Service) and how these services will work together”.4

Providing information, advice and support is crucial to the SEND Code of Practice and NAFIS believes that this is a good opportunity for local authorities to explore innovative and creative ways of delivering information, advice and support services. This should include making best use of the existing network of FIS and the continuation of PPS run directly by the local authority (as is the case currently). In this respect, FIS have already established the necessary infrastructure and expertise that can support this responsibility.

Many FIS are already playing a key role in the development of the Local Offer and are able to combine this with their wider duties, to provide a holistic package of support to families, whatever the needs of their children. In addition, many FIS are already working closely with their PPS and in some cases provide a combined or linked service.

As statutory services (ones that have to be provided by law) PPS are funded by their local authority. However, they are all expected to be at arm’s length of the local authority and to provide impartial information, advice and support to parents. In a similar way the legislation and statutory guidance relating to Family Information Services (Childcare Act 2006 Duty 12) requires that parents are provided with impartial information, advice and assistance.

NAFIS has collected evidence of collaborative working between FIS and PPS. Darlington Family Information Service is an excellent example of how strong collaborative working between FIS and the PPS is an effective way of ensuring the:

- voices of local families are heard in the process of developing the Local Offer;
- skills and expertise of the individual teams are maximised; and
- families have one central point of information.

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3 Only 26% Parent Partnership Services are outsourced from the LA. Figures from the benchmarking from 2012 (published 2013) show that 70% of PPS are run effectively by the LA in house, 26% are outsourced and 4% are mixed. This figure has not really changed over the last 10 years. Although a small number of PPS have been outsourced during this time, there have also been some services brought back into LA.

4 Special educational needs and disabilities code of practice: 0 to 25 years Department for Education (June 2014)
Case Study: Darlington

Darlington is a Special Educational Needs Pathfinder and is testing a number of new approaches. Darlington’s People and Families Information and Support Team brings together all the staff providing information advice and support, on every aspect of childcare, activities for children and young people, early years support and information on education including children with special educational needs and disabilities. The team can also offer information for adults and older people.

Established in 2012, the team was developed from the Families Information Service, Adult Public Information Team, Schools Admissions Choice Advice and the Parent Partnership Service. It works as an information hub operating at arm’s length from Darlington County Council’s education service (to ensure independence), but with connections to the council’s education and SEND teams, children’s centres and health visitors that enable them to provide a comprehensive and trusted service to Darlington’s families. The amalgamated team enables them to provide a seamless service to families when and where they need it. In the past, families would have made separate enquiries about services such as schools, after school care and holiday and weekend clubs. Now only one enquiry is needed and staff with wide-ranging expertise (previously based in separate teams and locations), are situated within the same premises. There were initially some concerns about confidentiality and independence, but these have been overcome and staff teams and the public are benefiting from having expertise on supporting families in one place.

Strong relationships were developed with providers and SEND teams to overcome any reluctance to share information and to see the benefit of the Local Offer. And collaborative work with the Parent Partnership has enabled information about new and existing groups to be shared quickly and promoted through the Darlington People’s Information Point.
2.4 Collaborative working with parents, health, education and social care

Working with parents is a vital aspect of every Family Information Service; many have parents on their steering group, or work with them in other ways. A FIS can work with partners to think about the existing networks or links to parents, that may be approached to consult on aspects of the Local Offer and to help co-produce it. Within the new Code of Practice, local authorities have a duty to work collaboratively with parents and other stakeholders to co-produce the Local Offer.

Co-production means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change.\(^5\)

So it is important to capture the views of parents, especially when considering the way the Local Offer is developed. Not simply because it is a legal requirement with the SEND Code of Practice but because it makes services more effective and relevant. Families with children and young people with SEND have particular needs and their voices are paramount in making this new system work.

Health services have a considerable amount to offer but may not always have the breadth of knowledge that the FIS and other workers have of care, education, housing and other voluntary and community services. Therefore, FIS staff should have a clear understanding of the vision the new system offers including how:

- legislative changes in relation to the SEND Code of Practice will be implemented in their locality;
- commissioning operates in their local authority; and
- joint working and good communication enhances children’s future life chances.

The FIS can work collaboratively to develop effective services by acting as key worker (for example when delivering childcare brokerage) and as advocates for children, young people and their families.

Firstly consider if the FIS is the right service to lead any consultation exercise for the local authority. If the FIS is not the service/organisation leading on delivering the Local Offer or other aspects of the Code of Practice, consider how you might be involved or contribute to the process by:

- Providing some FIS or Family Service Directory questions to the service/organisation leading the consultation.
- Helping the service/organisation leading the consultation to identify parents that may be willing to take part.
- Use existing focus groups that exist within your area.
- Consult with informal and formal parent/carer networks where parents have children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities.
- Ask front line staff to identify families who may want to take part in consultation exercises.

- Use online survey software and social networking sites to collect parents’ views.
- Consult with existing volunteers (community parents, parent champions, young volunteers) who have direct experience of special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Look at any previous customer feedback which may be relevant.
- Review what other local authorities have already done in terms of consulting with parents (for example the SE7 local authority pathfinder).

There are different ways a FIS can facilitate partnership working and different levels of engagement, integration and collaboration that can be achieved, depending on the receptiveness of the partner service or organisation. (See Table2 on page 19)

Case Study: Suffolk – Involving young people and families in developing information

The Local Offer Task and Finish was established in in Suffolk to plan and deliver the Local Offer. Group members included: parents and colleagues from Parent Partnership Service, Inclusive Services, the FIS, Community Action Service (a countywide voluntary sector organisation), Adult and Community Services, the Youth Support Service, Early Years and Childcare Service and the Learning Improvement Service which supports schools.

Working in partnership, the group thought about the needs and concerns of families with children and young people with SEND. They considered how to build on the learning of Inclusive Services and the development of their award winning Activities Unlimited website for parents of children with SEND, and how to access short breaks, book and pay for these and a range of other local authority approved services.

The wide range of expertise resulted in the following:

- The acknowledgement that the existing Family Service Directory and other websites provided the basis for developing the Local Offer.
- The recognition that there was significant partnership work to do, in terms of integrating the existing websites (perhaps by using widgets or syndicated content to improve the sharing of content and integration between websites).
- That service providers would need to be engaged in developing the content of their own records on the directory.
- The importance of utilising the expertise and help of parents and the young Infolink volunteers; half of whom have SEND (these young people research services and add them to the directory).
- The recognition that key partners like health, still needed to be encouraged to engage with the development of the Local Offer.

The Children and Families Act 2014 incorporates support for 18-25 year olds, so some of those receiving support will be living independently of their families or the care of their local authority. They may also have come out of the care system, custody or moved into the area and need additional support.

6 Find out more on the SE7 Pathfinder website: www.se7pathfinder.co.uk
This may mean that existing communication routes are not as effective with this older age group and provides an opportunity for FIS to consider if they need to adapt to be more accessible for these young people. It may also provide the opportunity for closer working between FIS and services specifically aim at young people such as local authority youth support and youth offending services, and transition services acting as bridge between children and young people’s services and adult social care.

FIS should routinely review their strategic and operational partnerships with the intention of developing good working relations with adult health, probation, adult social care and further education.

**Case study: Redcar and Cleveland – strong working relationships with social work and care teams**

The Disabled Children’s Access Officer for Redcar and Cleveland Family Information Service manages the Disability Register. Good relationships with other professionals in the area have raised the profile of the Disability Register so that social workers, health visitors, portage\(^7\) workers, family support workers and others, all regularly add children on to the Register as they recognise that it is a good resource.

Good local partnerships with professionals and families have resulted in life changing support for some families. Crucial to this has been the development of strong partnerships with different social work teams, to ensure that The Disabled Children’s Access Officer reaches all children who might benefit from her work regardless of whether they are in mainstream school or specialist education. She attends social work, Early Support\(^8\) and Portage team meetings and will spend some of her working week within their offices. This has been hugely beneficial in building relationships, promoting the service and improving information flow.

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\(^7\) Portage is a home-visiting educational service for pre-school children with additional support needs and their families.

\(^8\) The Early Support Programme is for parents and carers of disabled children and young people from birth to adulthood. This includes coordinating support for health, education and social care. [www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/earlysupport](http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/earlysupport)
2.5 Understanding Commissioning

Commissioning sits within strategic frameworks within both health and local authorities and where joint work already exists (joint boards). The process controlling the overview, strategies, implementation, policies, budget setting and commissioning programmes is the “governance”.

This is dealt with at the most senior level in organisations and allows for careful consideration of any change. Developing and changing joint commissioning arrangements takes time and needs to allow sufficient scope for much hard work, negotiation and testing to arrive at the best solutions.

SEND strategies should clearly link to related initiatives to maintain efficiency and improved outcomes including strategies on Early Intervention; Parenting; Child Poverty; Health Promotion; Adolescent Mental Health; and the VCS all of which have an impact on child development and which FIS should contribute to as a front line service.

FIS should recognise that commissioning of services involves maintaining, development or review of current services or introducing new services through Commissioning cycles.

Contracts with providers may relate to a specific service or may incorporate multiple services and it could be difficult to change elements of a particular service without knock-on effects. For example, changing one element may alter the viability of the whole service.

So wherever FIS identify potential problems with service provision (for example through feedback from families) it is essential to raise it with commissioners at an early stage so that they are alert to changes which may take several months to implement.

Considerable financial resources are expended on commissioned services and there is a need to maintain confidentiality about sensitive financial and commercial information which may affect providers and authorities business relationships. Therefore, FIS need to be aware that they may share information with commissioners who may not always be able to discuss detail or outcomes due to constraints although they may appreciate the information.

Commissioning cycles are explained along with useful information and practical advice in the SE7 Pathfinder leaflet on Joint Commissioning.9

Where FIS are engaged in developing the Local Offer or other aspects of the Children and Families Act 2014 their project team should be fully engaged with health commissioners representing all Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) with responsibility in their area. Some CCGs cross local authority boundaries and where identified, cross boundary discourse and agreement is essential to maintain consistency and efficient use of resources.

Other CCGs may share commissioning support units which may have a single frontline representative for initial discussions. However, where joint commissioning or other strategic changes or “governance” decisions are necessary, Director level discussions may be required so FIS should ensure that the chain of command is understood and relationships developed early.

Joint Commissioning must always start with the child, young person and family, this means consultation and listening. Families indicate that there are some services they feel are appropriate and that others are not delivering. The latter can be so disappointing to the families who want the best outcomes for their children.

9 Joint Commissioning for children and young people with SEND, In Control, SE7 Special Educational Needs & Disability available from www.se7pathfinder.co.uk
Joint commissioning involves:

- Working more efficiently to target and coordinate “community” resources whilst maintaining legal duties.
- Share skills, data and expertise (good practice) including other partners when relevant;
- Understand each others priorities having regard to evidence based decisions tempered by intelligence gained from children, young people and families.
- Partners ensuring they understand what they deliver now and why (some services may continue for historic reasons and they need to be questioned).
- Understanding the content and time frame of “common” contracts; discussing renewal options and allowing time (for example 12-18 months) to review, consult and get it right for children and young people.
- Engaging children, young people and families in the Commissioning cycle.
- Understanding what contracts consist of and the minimum viability, particularly for services likely to be subjects of personal budgets.
- Partners identifying duplication of services and exploring funding and what to do when services are appropriate for personal budget options.
- Partners communicating with children, young people and families to identify which services are needed (the FIS may be able to contribute here).
- Partners discussing the governance arrangements to determine if there is scope for a common approach to commissioning (joint commissioning or merging some roles to develop integrated commissioning).

It is important for FIS to be aware of commissioning changes and when contracts are up for renewal to enable them to identify potential gaps, communicate needs which they become aware of when in the course of their work with families. Some of this information may come from Local Offer feedback or local service surveys, which FIS may want to participate in.

Families may appear upset with the old system and it will take time for them to develop trust with the new. Therefore early dialogue and actions which demonstrate they are listened to will reduce the potential for conflict.

FIS are well placed to advocate for parents / carers of children with SEND by building good relationships with families, service providers and with service commissioners. In this way FIS will contribute to developing smarter more flexible services that improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
### Table 2: The levels, risks and benefits of partnership working in a Family Information Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIS capacity</th>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Operational</th>
<th>Strategic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small to medium sized FIS – focused on operations and delivery with no specific role/remit to develop new partnerships.</td>
<td>Any sized FIS with the capacity and remit to develop its partnership offer, wanting to work with between one and three other partners.</td>
<td>Any sized FIS with the capacity and remit to develop its partnership offer to make a strategic impact. Those with a strategic manager, commissioner or lead person responsible for FIS development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links are made between different teams and services and families benefit from integration and signposting. Opportunities for skills transfer between different teams and partners. The arrangements are by mutual agreement and thus are non-threatening. Relatively quick and easy to implement. Responsive to families’ needs.</td>
<td>Arrangements are developed, trialled, reviewed and formalised by formal written agreements. Opportunities to make savings and reduce duplication. Opportunities to reduce the number of hand-offs for families of children and young people (so they do not have to keep repeating their story). Ability to define outcomes for families and to measure success and review this as part of the ongoing partnership arrangements.</td>
<td>Arrangements are formal and may result in system wide, changes, to commissioning agreements, contractual or organisational change management (restructures). Results in significant system, service and/or directorate/organisation change. Opportunities to rationalise (reduce the number of) and improve IT systems that support the Local Offer. Ability to drive out savings and to make significant strides towards improving referral pathways and information for families through the integration of one or more service/department/organisation or system.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangements by their informal nature can often be dependent on individuals and are often broken if key personnel leave the FIS or partner organisation. Difficult to sustain if processes and agreements remain within the brains of key personnel.</td>
<td>Partner service may have fears about being taken over. Dependent on the partners’ willingness to collaborate. Requires significant effort and commitment from FIS management and staff, along with the determination to provide the best outcomes for families.</td>
<td>Can result in job losses and the difficult process of change for staff in the FIS and other services. Even if the partners are willing, such changes necessitate the involvement of other stakeholders (for example business development teams, human resources departments, unions, commissioners, procurement departments, strategic IT, corporate customer service centres) and these stakeholders will often impose systemic and personnel changes that do not necessarily improve provision for families with children with SEND.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. The Family Information Service role

3.1 The Local Offer

By September 2014, the government’s Children and Families Act 2014 will require each local authority in England to publish a Local Offer. This will be one place where all information can be accessed about the provision a local authority expects to be available in their area for children and young people from 0 to 25, who have special educational needs and disabilities. (See section 4 of the SEND Code of Practice).

The purpose of the Local Offer is to provide information for parents, in a single place, to help them understand what services they and their family can expect locally, including cross-authority boundary and how to access them. These include: early years settings, schools (including academies and free schools), colleges, health, social care and social/leisure. The Local Offer will also include guidance for parents when they need to speak with practitioners and professionals. It will also include information on giving feedback, raising concerns and making complaints.

Due to the expectations of the previous government, most Family Information Services publish and maintain an online Family Service Directory. The Family Service Directory is one place where families can access information about a range of childcare and other services for children aged 0-25. Typical services include children’s centres, education, health, positive activities for young people, social care and other specialist services, as well as independent providers and those offered by the voluntary and community sector.

There is clearly synergy between a Family Service Directory and the provision of a Local Offer, and an FIS is in an ideal position to provide an important element of the required infrastructure to help deliver the requirement of “information published in one place”. However, the SEND Code of Practice clearly states that the “Local Offer should not simply be a directory of existing services”.

Parent Voice carried out research into the parental journey, by carrying out in-depth interviews with parents of children and young people with SEND. Following this work, conclusions were reached about what the Local Offer must be and what it must deliver; most importantly it concluded that it must not simply be a directory. They summarised what works well:

- Having a single point of contact or someone to talk to.
- Having information prior to appointments (knowing who is who, what they do and what they can expect).
- Effective signposting, particularly when they are not eligible for a service.
- Having options and choices (sharing decision making).
- Being listened to.

The process of developing the Local Offer should be in consultation with families and is intended to help local authorities and their health partners to improve provision. It should describe the range of provisions available for children and young people in their area, who have SEND, including those who do not have EHC (Education, Health and Care) plans. It is also crucial to have information from other areas that may be relevant to local families.

The Local Offer has two key purposes:

- To provide clear, comprehensive and accessible information about the provision expected to be available; and
- To make provision more responsive to local needs and aspirations, by directly involving children and young people with SEND, parents and carers, and service providers in its development and review.  


11 The Special Educational Needs (Local Offer) Regulations, Clause 30 as outlined in section 4 of the SEND Code of Practice.
Case study: Darlington – using the Family Service Directory as the technical platform for the directory element of the Local Offer

Darlington, a Special Educational Needs pathfinder has been developing the Local Offer. The Darlington People’s Information Point received nearly 60,000 hits between August and October, following the launch of their new online directory including the Local Offer in March 2013.

With the benefit of the pathfinder experience, they believe that the FIS is in a very strong position to develop the Local Offer because of its directory; the information it contains and the benefits it brings. During the process of developing the Local Offer and pathfinder activities, it has become evident that many other SEND teams were unaware of the Family Service Directory. With a few minor tweaks, the directory has formed the basis of their comprehensive Local Offer.

Another key learning point from the Darlington pathfinder project is the importance of working with teams and organisations to help them to develop their information for the Local Offer. Darlington schools have received this kind of support from a dedicated officer supporting SENCos (Special Educational Needs Coordinators) and other staff in schools, to ensure the information about their services on the Local Offer website is the best it can be.

In order to meet the Local Offer requirements, an existing Family Service Directory will need to be developed so that it is Local Offer compliant. The way in which an FSD can be enhanced to provide more than a directory, is the way in which information is managed and content (advice, guidance, signposting information) is developed.

It is important to meet a range of needs – from parents who have no knowledge at all, to the most informed parents who know exactly what they are looking for, as well as young people and professionals.12

Think about how parents might search for information or services and to develop the directory in a way that:

• anticipates families’ needs in advance (for example returns useful service records and additional information based on search terms);
• makes use of existing and trusted sources of information that are already available;
• provides clear guidance about the quality of a service (including any local or national accreditations);
• provides advice about referral pathways and eligibility; and
• signposts families onto other services where they may not meet the eligibility or access criteria (anticipating this in advance and providing similar alternatives).

You should also consider how you will assist families to access information from other local authority areas and the most effective means of sharing cross border information.

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Tips for Stakeholders/Decision makers

Think about the principle of storing information once and sharing multiple times:

✓ **Consider using widgets** – these are small computer applications that can be installed within a web page. A widget takes up a portion of a webpage and can fetch information from other websites and displays it in place.

✓ **Consider syndicated content** – Syndication allows you to pull content from a website via a feed. This means that any information you syndicate will remain up to date, regardless of any changes made on the source site.

✓ **NHS Choices** – provides some excellent examples of both widgets and syndicated content, using this type of information as part of your Local Offer will save money and ensure that you have the most up to date information from a reliable source. 13

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Case Study: Cambridgeshire – Working in collaboration with the Parent Partnership Service

The approach to developing the Local Offer (and information and services for families with children with SEND) in Cambridge has centred on the involvement of local families and has been driven by the distinct and complementary approaches of the Family Information Service (FIS) and Parent Partnership Services (PPS) teams charged with developing the Local Offer.

This is underpinned by a commitment to understanding and building on each other’s strengths. The FIS team has expertise in understanding information needs and experience in: providing effective information both online and in hard copy; has a solid background in marketing and market research; and a track record of managing large scale consultations and surveys. The PPS has a clear insight into the problems that parents of children with SEND face, as they are the team that parents turn to when things go wrong. They also have experience of effective parental consultations with these targeted parents; strong local contacts and networks; and a range of existing consultation opportunities to draw on.

In 2013, the PPS led a consultation to understand more about parental needs. Parents were involved in planning and delivering these consultation events. The involvement of parents in shaping these events led to a number of improvements, including improving the way that elements of the Local Offer plans and the process, were explained. It also gave a more realistic picture about what was possible with the time available.

These large scale consultations were supported by regular attendance at existing PPS events and at events run by Pinpoint, a local voluntary sector organisation which has a contract with Cambridgeshire Council to support parental participation. The FIS and the PPS work closely together but remain in different directorates. However, not being in the same directorates has not inhibited the close working between FIS and PPS on the Local Offer.

13 NHS Choices syndication: www.nhs.uk/aboutNHSChoices/professionals/syndication/Pages/Webservices.aspx
Tips for Stakeholders/Decision makers

✓ There are various ways that FIS can be involved in delivering the Local Offer within their area: from close collaborations with their local PPS to collocation and even through to the merging of the two services.

✓ Consider the content of your Family Service Directory and how this, along with website content, might be enhanced to meet the needs for families with children and young people with SEND.

✓ Consult existing Parent/Carer Forums and other parent networks about the existing Family Service Directory and how it could be improved to help meet the Local Offer requirements.

✓ Consider the existing technology that is available within your local authority and its functionality – how might these be configured or reconfigured to help meet the Local Offer requirement.

✓ Use SEND Standard 3 (page 48) to help you develop your Family Service Directory.
3.2 Understanding personal budgets

The first thing to say about personal budgets is that, while the concept is simple (to give families more choice and control over the services they pay for to meet their child’s needs) the ways in which different local authorities could approach this is diverse.

According to the evaluation for SEND pathfinder local authorities, what attracted families to the notion of direct payments (the precursor to personal budgets), was that they provided families with the:

- ability to look at alternatives, if they were dissatisfied with the child’s current care and education package;
- opportunity to voice concerns and exercise choice in what could be offered as support, and greater involvement in decision making about their child’s support needs; and
- flexibility to develop personalised support to better meet the needs of the child and the family.

Families placed particular value on the opportunities that were offered to them to discuss their child’s needs and develop a SEND support package. The extent to which the budget is managed by the family themselves (for example, received as an SEND direct payment) or by a third party appeared to matter much less.\textsuperscript{14}

While the SEND pathfinder authorities and various charities have produced plenty of guidance, this will not necessarily determine how personal budgets will operate in any particular local authority from September 2014. Therefore, it is advisable for each FIS to carry out some basic research in their own local authority, to understand the following key aspects relating to personal budgets for children and young people:

- Find out who is the lead member of staff responsible for personal budgets for children and young people.
- Seek to understand what is already in place within your local authority for families - individual budgets, direct payments, health budgets and/or personal budgets (if your authority is a SEND pathfinder).
- Seek to understand how families receive the budgets, what the criteria are and how these budgets are accessed by families.
- Look at your local authority web site to see what information is already provided on personal budgets.
- Seek to understand how your local authority is planning to meet the personal budget aspect of the new SEND Code of Practice from September 2014.
- Offer the expertise to any task and finish, or working groups related to developing personal budget information.
- Consider how your Family Service Directory and or web content might be configured to support the delivery of personal budgets.
- Consider opportunities for making the most of your Family Service Directory and Community Service Directory ( which covers all services including adult social care).
- Offer to take part in any strategic or operational groups set up in your area to implement personal budgets.
- Consider how the FIS will respond to enquiries about personal budgets for children and young people.

\textsuperscript{14} Evaluation of the SEND pathfinder programme Process and Implementation Research Report Department for Education (June 2013)
Many IT providers (including those providing Family Service Directory databases) offer solutions for online personal budget management. These can allow the LA to allocate a personal budget to a family and monitor or even moderate it. Different configurations allow for the family or their nominated representative and/or a professional to purchase services directly. In some cases this functionality can be directly linked to the services in the Family Service Directory. Financial transitions are usually dealt with by a third party provider (bank) so that no money is actually deposited in the families’ bank accounts and from the customer’s perspective this process should appear seamless. This approach allows for families to have choice and control whilst the LA ensures that public funds allocated for personal budgets are not misused.

There are considerable opportunities for the FIS (and/or those responsible for personal budgets in the LA) to work closely with the department responsible for adult social care as the basic functionality for personal budgets and personal assistants is similar to those required for children and young people.
3.3 Information, advice and assistance

Family Information Services (FIS) vary considerably across the country and the level of support and information they can provide, often depends on the resource and staffing that each local authority has allocated to them.

Born out of the original Children’s Information Service model, most local authorities still have a functioning FIS that both it and members of the public value. The Family Information Service has a good pedigree in terms of being a sustainable service, with staff that has the right skills and expertise to help their local authority by contributing significantly to the Local Offer.

Table 3, on page 30 outlines different levels of support that an FIS could provide depending on its configuration and capacity.

Parents often talk about feeling overwhelmed when trying to find information which can lead to additional stress. The sheer volume of information available from many sources is vast, and sometimes it is hard to know what is relevant or helpful. The local authority must also provide specific individual support for families, and FIS are in a strong position to provide this.

Good information management and the coordination of web content, is key to helping families navigate the maze. An aim of the Local Offer is that services will take the opportunity to look at information from a families’ perspective and anticipate their needs to ensure information is accurate and relevant.

**Tips for Stakeholders/Decision makers**

NAFIS heard from its members that many decision makers planning the Local Offer and personal budgets were initially unaware of the infrastructure provided by a Family Service Directory (FSD):

- ✓ Your FSD is an existing resource that can easily widen its breadth of focus to incorporate information for parents of disabled children; turning this mainstream resource into a fully inclusive one that meets the information needs of all parents, regardless of their child’s educational, social or physical needs.
- ✓ Consider how your FSD could be enhanced and adapted to meet some of the Local Offer requirements saving both local authority and tax payers’ money.
- ✓ Consider an area or branding on your FSD home page that specifically identifies itself to parents who have children and young people with SEND, incorporating a search criteria for services that can cater for SEND as well as statistical information relating to your authority’s Local Offer.
- ✓ Think about adding new functions to the technical platform of your FSD for example, to enable personal budget management; providing an online environment that is more social care focused with the ability for Personal Assistants to list themselves so that customers can search for them and including information from other neighbouring authorities.
Advice and guidance also need to be provided alongside the web based information, and many families prefer or need to speak to someone in person. The PPS and the FIS are both experienced in this field and the Local Offer needs to be supported by good back office delivery and customer service.

In terms of the specific assistance provided to families who have children or young people with SEND, childcare brokerage provides help to families who would otherwise struggle to find childcare, and parents and carers of children with SEND should be a high priority. The benefits of an effective childcare brokerage function within a FIS can have positive outcomes for children and families.

In some local authorities the FIS plays a particular role in supporting families of children with SEND to find early education and childcare. Sometimes specific funding is provided where a child is being looked after by foster carers or a guardian such as a relative. The ability to provide childcare brokerage, and the level of support, varies from local authority to local authority, but for families with children with SEND it can be invaluable.

**Case Study: Suffolk**

The Children’s social care team made the decision to remove a three-year-old child from his birth mother to keep the child from harm. The child has a rare genetic syndrome that means she has global developmental delay and special educational needs. She regularly attends Great Ormond Street Hospital and receives support from the local Community Nursing team.

A Families Information Service Outreach worker met with the grandmother to discuss childcare to support the placement (with the child’s grandmother). Her grandmother was nervous about using childcare because of the child’s health needs but agreed to visit a nursery based near a local hospital.

The nursery staff were very positive and supportive towards the little girl's needs and her grandmother liked the nursery’s proximity to the hospital (as she felt medical support could be readily accessed), and childcare meant she could continue to work and take care of her granddaughter.

A community nurse trained the nursery staff in how to meet the child’s medical needs. The child attends the nursery for 24 hours a week, 15 hours is paid for by the early education entitlement and an additional nine hours is funded by the local authority.

When the child first started the nursery in October 2013, she was bottom shuffling, had limited communication skills and did not like getting messy. By December 2013, she was walking unaided and able to say different words and was enjoying messy play. By January 2014, the little girl walked unaided and ran and manoeuvred around objects. She also used both hands, and could hold pencils, crayons and paintbrushes in a pincer grip and was trying to throw and kick balls during outside play. The grandmother reported that Great Ormond Street Hospital staff were really impressed with the progress she has made at nursery.
3.4 Working with early years and childcare settings

Family Information Services typically have a unique relationship with early years and childcare providers including childminders, day nurseries, and school nursery classes and out of school clubs.

Each local authority can consider building on the existing work FIS carry out in relation to early years and childcare providers, to meet the SEND Code of Practice, (as shown in Table 4 on page 32).

The FIS can build on its existing relationships with early years and childcare settings, to help them publish information relevant to families of children with SEND, or even to act as a conduit for referrals requesting additional support for children and young people with SEND.

Case Study: Suffolk FIS

Early years and childcare settings in Suffolk, can directly request support for individual children (about whom they have concerns that may indicate SEND), from the FIS. Initially settings are expected to work in partnership with parents/carers to meet the child’s needs; if this is not effective, parental permission is sought to ask the local authority for additional advice and support which is requested through the FIS. Health professionals can also make referrals directly to the FIS using a standard referral form. Both requests from settings and professionals are logged and allocated to the relevant professional in the Early Years and Childcare service, who will then provide support to the child, parent and the setting. In addition, when it is a new referral, the FIS open a file for the child in the Individual Child Directory. All subsequent support, guidance and written advice for that child, is saved in the file; this centralised record keeping has been a significant benefit as team managers can quickly find relevant and up to date information if required.

Prior to this system being established, there was no clear single referral pathway and many referrals were made to and between named individuals. Referrals were not logged centrally, so there was no way for managers to know the exact number of referrals their team members were receiving. Now referrals are recorded by the FIS and passed to the appropriate service manager, so that the setting can be supported to help individual children and families in the most effective way. This might mean:

- An Early Years’ Consultant or Outreach Officer works directly with the school or setting to develop staff skills, by modelling good practice or helping with planning to meet the child’s needs.
- The setting and its staff are offered training or workforce development opportunities (such as Makaton).
- The child is offered a home education service to help the parent/carer in their interactions with their child and subsequently support their transition into a school nursery or preschool setting.
- Parent and child access a Children’s Centre ‘Little Stars’ group which is for children with SEND, to learn some of the skills needed to join a setting – for example snack-time.
Table 3: Family Information Services supporting the delivery of the Local Offer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of support:</th>
<th>Information, advice and assistance that could be offered at this level:</th>
<th>Type of FIS that could deliver this:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. FIS signposting</td>
<td>Helpline and web support to all families, ability to identify and signpost families where a child or young person with SEND, needs further advice and support. Provide or contribute significantly to the online service directory where parents can find information about all local childcare and early years' services.</td>
<td>Small FIS with very few staff or a FIS hosted within a call centre environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. FIS triage</td>
<td>Helpline and referral process that involves recording and understanding a family’s needs, identifying and making an initial consideration about whether the enquiry needs to be referred on, or escalated to the next level (this could be a back office team within the FIS, the local PPS or another service). The information that is originally captured at the triage stage is passed to the receiving service or team.</td>
<td>Small to medium sized FIS, an FIS based in a call centre or Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub or similar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. FIS brokerage</td>
<td>Support for families who would otherwise struggle to access childcare and other services, including children with SEND. Face to face support, and help (for childcare providers and children’s centres), with form filling, with explaining financial information and with the cost of paying for childcare. Ability to accept referrals from other agencies (for example, health, children’s centres, Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs). Ability to contribute to the published Local Offer for families as the childcare brokerage experts.</td>
<td>A well-staffed FIS with a brokerage or outreach service in place, with effective working partnerships with the relevant local services that can support children with SEND (for example, Early Years and Childcare, SEN/Inclusive Services, portage and children’s social care, health visiting teams).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. FIS co-delivering or merged with other services (crossing over service thresholds)</td>
<td>Families experience a seamless service regardless of their needs with minimum hand-offs between front and back office functions. The family tell their story once and if other needs emerge during their transaction with the service, these are dealt with by a single referral. (Darlington case study)</td>
<td>FIS that have the opportunity to collocate (or are already collocating) with one or more other service(s) such as Adult Public Information, Schools Admissions, Choice Advice and the local PPS. FIS based in local authorities seeking to streamline customer service type functions to make efficiencies and savings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tips for Stakeholders/Decision makers

✓ Early education and childcare provides much needed respite for families with children with SEND giving them time to work, study or enjoy quality time with other family members.

✓ Check to see if your local authority offers a childcare brokerage service that provides extra help for families to access early education and childcare.

✓ Think about how your childcare brokerage service might benefit children and families and take pressure of higher tier services.

✓ Seek to understand your local childcare market and its ability to support children with SEND, and consider how this can be developed and strengthened.

✓ Consider how your local early years and childcare services (including out of school and holiday club provision) will deliver the Local Offer and meet the needs of families with children with SEND.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of support typically offered by an FIS</th>
<th>How to extend this to deliver the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide a Family Service Directory that early years services can update themselves. Ability for families to search for particular childcare providers to meet the specific needs of their child or young person with SEND.</td>
<td>Map the fields within the current FSD and see if they will capture all the information required (use SE7 Local Offer Framework and Guidance “specific service questions” as guide(^{15})). Encourage providers to provide additional information, for example what training their staff have had which specifically relates to meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND. Consult with colleagues from neighbouring authorities to include relevant information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a telephone helpline for parents and carers looking for childcare.</td>
<td>Provide/source training/briefings and continuous professional development for all FIS staff and outreach workers. Make sure all front line staff are up to date with the SEND Code of Practice and how this is to be implemented locally. Make sure staff answering the phone know what is within their remit and when to refer the parents to another service or organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer a childcare brokerage service and possibly employ specific outreach workers with a remit to support families who have children and young people with SEND.</td>
<td>Provide/source training and continuous professional development for outreach workers. Make sure all front line staff are up to date with the SEND Code of Practice and how this is to be implemented locally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide information, advice and assistance to early years and childcare settings. (Specific reference to Code of Practice section 5)</td>
<td>Consult with settings about the information, advice and assistance they would want from the FIS in relation to the SEN Code of Practice. Provide support directly or via their Early Years and Childcare Service/Childcare Support and Development Team/Early Years Inclusion Team. Provide workforce development and training to staff to inform them about the Code of Practice and how it affects them. Process referrals requesting additional support for children with SEND from settings, health and other partners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{15}\) [http://www.se7pathfinder.co.uk/home-1](http://www.se7pathfinder.co.uk/home-1)
3.5 Accessible information

The ability to develop accessible information for families is a skill that many Family Information Service staff have developed. A key feature of this is that many FIS have developed relationships with local families and have worked with them to improve the information, advice and assistance they provide.

The new SEND Code of Practice requires local authorities to work “with local partners, parents and young people to co-produce and publish a Local Offer of SEND services and provision to assist young people in finding employment, obtaining accommodation and participating in society.”

Utilising new technologies is vital in providing accessible information for families, enabling them to access the information at a time and place that is convenient to them. E-books, for example are an effective way of providing information to families that can be accessed via a smartphone, tablet or PC. However, when a local authority improves interactions with families of children and young people with SEND, the accessibility of digital information is only part of the picture. If we apply this principle to the public sector and in particular consider this approach when planning to meet the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice, each local authority should consider how it can make it as easy as possible for customers. It is fully acknowledged that for some families and some types of transaction, speaking to a real person either over the phone or face to face will be necessary and entirely appropriate.
3.5a Accessible information: FIS at the heart of the Local Offer development and delivery

**Case Study: Trafford**

Trafford is part of the North West Pathfinder Consortium together with Manchester, Wigan, Oldham and Rochdale. Trafford has sought to build its Local Offer onto a newly launched Family Services Directory using the existing infrastructure of this service.

An early decision was made that Trafford’s Family Information Service would support the pathfinder project. The pathfinder subsequently provided funding to its FIS to create and maintain the online Local Offer. The Local Offer has been published on Trafford’s Family Service Directory (FSD) which was going through a previously scheduled improvement project. The system used, allows Trafford’s Local Offer team to add services, web pages, and guidance in a user-friendly, accessible, and simple format. To support this work, a part time FSD officer was given a job in FIS to help with data collection and system development. Further to this, Trafford identified a number of key activities involved in developing their Local Offer (See Table 5 on page 39).

Key to the whole process of publishing the Local Offer online has been multi agency and stakeholder co-production. Parent, carers and professionals have been engaged in developing the Local Offer in a number of different ways. Beyond including diverse groups within Trafford’s Local Offer task and finish group, the pathfinder also held a number of stakeholder events to introduce the concept of the Local Offer to core groups and explore any gaps in service provision that the pathfinder could plug. Interactive sessions have been particularly successful, including a workshop held in January 2013, where attendees provided direct feedback on the online, published version of Trafford’s Local Offer.

Another example of an event held by Trafford was one aimed at the voluntary and community sector (VCS) providers which focused on introducing the Local Offer, demonstrating the Family Service Directory (FSD) and providing VCS providers with the opportunity to give feedback and suggest improvements. The Family Information Service then worked with these providers to get their services listed on the Family Services Directory.

Feedback from VCS providers was that they felt the Local Offer would be a useful tool for them to use when working with families, as they were often unaware of what services were available. They also requested that this type of event be held again so they can keep up to date with Pathfinder progress.

16 Trafford’s Local Offer can be found via the link: www.trafford.gov.uk/fsd
Case Study: Trafford continued...

Numerous communication methods have been used to ensure local families are kept up to date with the progress of the Local Offer. These include:

**Publications:** Countdown newsletter for Trafford SEND Pathfinder and progress reports by the different working groups distributed to heads of departments.

**Social Media:** FIS has made vital links with service providers, organisations and parents through Facebook and Twitter; the Parent’s Voice meeting has been held as a Webinar with live Twitter feed and updates on the Local Offer is communicated via social media.

**Face To Face:** The FIS continue to provide targeted outreach to families; drop in sessions facilitated by FIS; presentations provided on the Local Offer at local support groups and other local forums.
3.5b Accessible information: Key challenges

Managing a large information resource such as a Family Service Directory and ensuring this is kept up to date, is one of the ongoing challenges faced by Family Information Services. Service providers can be issued with their own registration details to enable them to manage their own records. Systems can be configured to automatically provide regular emails, to encourage services to check their own information which only requires minimal moderation from the FIS.

Providing information on the Local Offer, to families without internet access, continues to be a challenge but has been addressed by creating a short paper version with the key information. A short list function on the Family Service Directory is a good way of allowing family support and other professionals, to tailor the information depending on a family’s needs and create a report which can be printed off. The information can also be promoted through face to face channels and more widely to other professionals, who are working with families in health, social care, education and the voluntary and community sector.

Tips for Stakeholders / Decision makers

✓ A Family Information Service will be responsible for managing a Family Service Directory. This may provide a full range of services for families with children aged 0-19 (25 for those with SEND), will often include positive activities for young people and may even be combined with other directories such as the local authority adult and social care service directory.

✓ Consider how you might make best use of your local FIS and FSD when planning how you will meet the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice.

✓ Look for opportunities to root out duplications and encourage all staff to use a single strategic directory (like the FSD).

✓ Consider what training and development your front line staff would need, to make best use of the FSD (consider the core IT skills that all staff will need).
3.5c Accessible information: Parent Champions

Case Study: Sheffield Parent Champions – supporting parents to navigate the Local Offer

The Parent Champions model uses the knowledge that parents trust other parents for information about childcare, to reach out to those who do not access services and to ensure that information is received by all those who need it. The model is particularly useful for targeting communities in which participation in children’s early learning and the use of childcare is not the norm, to introduce the concept of childcare and early learning and how it can benefit children and families to parents in a non-intrusive way.

Sheffield City Council have set up a Parent Champions scheme to tell families about the Local Offer and the services available for children with disabilities and special educational needs. The scheme was set up in partnership with two schools in the North East of Sheffield. The schools told parents about the chance to volunteer and supported them to apply for the role.

The Parent Champions group consists of fifteen parents, with the majority from the Asian community and the Roma Slovak community. They explain the Local Offer to parents, telling them about the information it has for parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities. They will also help collect feedback from parents to improve the Local Offer. The volunteers are based at the two schools to talk to parents but also go out into the community to start conversations with parents who are not engaged with the school. They will be kept up to date about the Local Offer by the Parent Champions scheme coordinators from the local authority and will receive support from school outreach officers.

The volunteers have completed Parent Champions training run by Family and Childcare Trust and have been given information about the Local Offer plans in Sheffield. So far they have attended coffee mornings at community groups to talk to parents. They are planning to attend transition evenings for the parents of children moving from primary to secondary school and will also attend family activities in the local area to spread the word.

For further details about setting up a Parent Champion scheme, visit: www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/parentchampions
3.5d Accessible information: Social media

For parents with children with SEN and disabilities, social media can provide a vital network for peer support (from parents in similar circumstance to their own) and socialisation, where they may otherwise have little or no opportunity. It is also a very effective means of finding and passing on information.

Using social media provides Family Information Services with the following opportunities:

- Develop new ways of communicating with families and existing service users.
- Develop new ways to consult and engage with families.
- Build up networks with others supporting children, young people and families.
- Increase the number of enquiries received through social media.
- To help those parents who are able to access information online to do so more effectively.\(^{17}\)
- Raise the profile of the FIS within the local authority and nationally.
- Increase contact with families who are currently not using or are aware of the service.
- Share good practice and learn from others.
- Trail blaze the use of social media by a frontline service.
- Deliver information to a wider audience for less resource.

**Tips for Stakeholders/Decision makers**

Use the opportunities (afforded by the local authorities’ legal obligation to meet the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice), to enhance your digital strategy with a clear purpose and focus on families with children and young people with SEND:

- ✓ Consider evaluating different types of transactions and their costs. Seek to reduce cost-per-contact and increase opportunities for customers to do more online.
- ✓ Seek to understand why and how your customers are visiting you online - and what they want and need (anticipating this in advance wherever possible).
- ✓ Make each visitor’s digital experience personally relevant, driving channel shift.
- ✓ Involve parents, children and young people in the planning, development and review of digital information.
- ✓ Consider how you might release resources and the time of front line staff, by improving what is provided digitally (making it similar for families who have the ability to source information themselves and freeing up time for those families who require additional help).
- ✓ Families will always need practical hands on support, but consider how digital information can support professionals in their work with families (in particular avoiding duplication of information sources).

\(^{17}\text{Avoiding phone/face to face transactions that would have been unnecessary had the information been more accessible online in the first instance.}\)
### Table 5: Key Activities Families Information Services can undertake to help develop the Local Offer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Offer guiding values</th>
<th>Audit existing information</th>
<th>Develop a content plan and collate information</th>
<th>FIS development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>For example:</strong></td>
<td><strong>For example:</strong></td>
<td><strong>For example:</strong></td>
<td><strong>For example:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible information.</td>
<td>Look at what information already exists on the Family Service Directory (FSD) and other sources of information locally, to identify any gaps in information and service provision.</td>
<td>In consultation with parents and providers, develop a content plan identifying the key contacts and information requirements for each subject area. Initially focus data collection on health, social care and universal activities and opportunities in the community.</td>
<td>Develop functionality and design of the Family Service Directory to ensure it can hold all the information that is required and is easy to use. Link this in with existing parent groups and forums and utilise any outreach services to seek feedback from parents and providers, so you continually review and improve the Local Offer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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18 Based on the work of Trafford FIS (2012-14)
Case Study: Shropshire – embracing new technology and social media

E-books
In April 2013, the FIS published its first eBook – The Rainbow Pack, which is a 100 page handbook for parents of children with disabilities and additional needs. The Rainbow Pack provides information to a group of parents, who face additional barriers to accessing information to support them in their role as a parent and will form part of the Local Offer to parents.19

Social networking
Shropshire Council’s Family Information Service has been working to expand the ways that parents can gain access to the quality of information they need, to support them in their role as parents through the use of social media. They were the first service in Shropshire Council to use social networking, and the team worked hard to build up a Facebook following.

They also use Facebook to run many campaigns, linking in with colleagues in public health, which has generated some good discussions, and feedback for services – one around breastfeeding worked particularly well.

The FIS has also offered live question and answer sessions, which parents were keen on, after watching the TV and when the children were in bed. Parents engage with the images the FIS posts and these often get lots of “likes”. The FIS does not tend to post more than three times a day, and also ensures it covers evenings and weekends. The majority of the 750 “likes” are from parents, the FIS’ core target group.20

Blogs
In April 2012, Shropshire Family Information Service launched a blog21 to share information news and tips with parents. The aim was for the site to include blogs from:

The Family Information Service – to include national campaigns; responding to news or changes in legislation; and to provide a dynamic site highlighting the range of information available through the FIS.

Other childrens, young people and family services showcase the work of others within the wider public sector, but also voluntary and charitable organisations.

19 Contact the Shropshire FIS for more details shropshireFIS@shropshire.gov.uk
20 You can see the site here: www.facebook.com/shropshirefamilyinfo
21 The blog averages 600 views per month and is available at www.shropshirefamilyinfoblog.com
Case Study: Shropshire – embracing new technology and social media continued...

Parents, carers and family members – By far the most popular blogs in terms of views and shares, are those from parents. They have included:

- A mum blogging about her experience of postnatal depression and what the books did not tell her about becoming a mum.
- A dad blogging about five things dads should do before childbirth.
- A young parent sharing how she felt when she found out she was pregnant at 16, and the stigma she faced as a result of being a young mum. This blog was picked up by the Guardian and posted online.
- A mum of a child with autism shared a moving poem she wrote about being a parent to a child with a disability. This blog was posted at the start of Autism Awareness Month, and also picked up by the National Autism Society.
4. Families First SEND Framework for Family Information Services

The Families First SEND Standards for Family Information Services (FIS) is an outcome based framework, which will be familiar to many local authorities who have completed the Families First Framework for FIS. This framework has been developed in order to support local authorities to make use of the resources and infrastructure that exists within FIS in order to help meet the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice.

It should also be used to help improve quality of services and focus in particular, on the needs of families with children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The framework has been made available below to all FIS and local authorities to use. It is also possible for FIS to seek accreditation under the framework. This is where a Families First assessor will support the FIS through a quality improvement process and assess evidence that the FIS has submitted to show how it is meeting the Families First SEND standards.

Please contact the Family and Childcare Trust if you would like to be accredited under the SEND Families First Framework (ideally the FIS/organisation should already be accredited under the Families First Framework).
Tips for Stakeholders/Decision makers

✓ The Family First SEND Framework is designed for Family Information Services; however, the framework is helpful for any local authority wanting to consider how to develop its Local Offer.

✓ Check what your local FIS is doing already and how it might help meet the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice.

✓ Consider working with your FIS to develop its Family Service Directory to meet the Local Offer requirements (see SEND Standard 3 on page 48).

✓ Consider setting up a multi agency group to review and develop your Local Offer using the Family Service Directory as a basis for the directory element.
SEND Standard 1: Information Advice and Assistance (SEND Code of Practice section 2)

The FIS provides appropriate information, advice and assistance to parents/carers of children and young people with SEND

1.1 FIS staff provide information; advice and support that covers SEND, health and social care for young people (aged 0-25) and their parents, either directly or by signposting to the relevant service or organisation. (Code of practice section 2 - Impartial information, advice and support)

1.2 FIS provides impartial information, advice and assistance that is confidential, impartial and free at the point of delivery. (Code of practice section 2 and Duty 12 guidance)

1.3 FIS and its staff understand their responsibilities and remit (as defined locally) in helping to deliver the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice:

(a) FIS understands its role in improving provision for families with children and young people with SEND; and

(b) FIS is clear about what level of information, advice and assistance it can provide to families of children with SEND and when to refer the family to another service, department or organisation. (Ideally robust arrangements are in place to enable basic information about the family to be captured at the first point of enquiry and passed on with the referral).  

1.4 Service staff put measures in place to make sure information is easy for children, young people and their parents to understand and use plain English language and clear images, rather than professional jargon. (Code of practice section 2.6 - Involving families in decision making).

1.5 FIS involve young people with SEND in preparing and reviewing the Local Offer either directly, or via the responsible service or organisation. (For example, the FIS may work with or hold a formal agreement with its local Parent Partnership Service, SEND or Youth Service defining how the Local Offer will be reviewed and the various roles and responsibilities each service has and the contribution it can make).

1.6 FIS delivers information, advice and assistance in a manner that promotes independence, choice and control for families recognising that:

- in most cases, parents/carers will know their child or young person best;
- some 18-25 year olds receiving support will be living independently of their families or the care of their local authority;
- VCS services, volunteers and the wider community should be valued in supporting families; and
- helping families to make informed choices and define outcomes for their child or young person, is empowering and promotes independence from the local authority.
1.7 FIS provides families of children and young people, with platforms to feedback about services and their experiences, these may include:

- Ensuring that the feedback area of the Local Offer is clearly explained, easily accessible to families and they are aware of how their feedback will be responded to.
- Directly providing internet forums and social media sites where families can discuss issues and share information and where the FIS can publish useful information.
- Signposting to internet forums, social media sites provided by the relevant service or organisation (for example Parent Partnership Service, local charities supporting children and young people with SEND, and the local authority youth website).
- Providing relevant publications or links to publications that would assist families of children and young people with SEND.
- Inviting family members to be on virtual advisory groups or forums or to be part of a FIS parents’ forum. [see also FF standard 5.5]

1.8 The FIS helps families with children and young people with an Education, Health and Care plan, to express a preference for state academies, free schools and further education colleges – currently limited to maintained mainstream and special schools – either directly or by signposting to the relevant service. (Code of practice 9.78)
SEND Standard 2: Improving Provision (SEND Code of Practice section 5, 6 & 7)

The FIS contributes to increasing options and improving provision for families with children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND

2.1 FIS enables early years and childcare providers to improve their information in a manner that would assist families with children and young people with SEND, to make informed choices about early education, schools and childcare, for example:

- Proactively collecting and storing information about:
  - setting SENCos (Special Educational Needs Coordinators)
  - relevant training undertaken by staff and relevant experience of working with and including, children with SEND in the Enhanced Childcare Directory.
  - Supporting early years settings and schools to ensure their information is updated within the Local Offer.

2.2 FIS has arrangements in place to offer additional assistance for families with children and young people with SEND, who would otherwise have difficulty accessing an early years, childcare or out of school place –otherwise known as a brokerage service (see also FIS Families First Standard 9).

2.3 FIS has the ability to capture feedback from families and colleagues where early years and childcare providers are not meeting the needs of children with SEND, or have refused them entry so that the provider can be challenged either directly by the FIS and/or by the appropriate service or organisation.22

2.4 FIS ensures (through its policies and practice) that all families are treated with dignity and respect and that particular sensitivities around children and young people with SEND are considered and implemented.

2.5 FIS benefits from feedback and involvement of children, young people with SEND and their parents/carers (for example, by directly consulting with target groups, having robust arrangements in place to share the views collected by the responsible service or department, seeking their views via facilities made available on the internet or within the Family Service Directory itself). The FIS should:

(a) use this feedback to improve its services for this group (Code of practice section 2.6 Involving families in decision making);

(b) swiftly pass any feedback it receives from members of the public about another service so that compliments and complaints can be managed effectively;

(c) pass information about any potential gaps in service provision that are identified by members of the public, to the relevant service or department; and

22 Ofsted registered early years’ providers have a duty under the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to have and implement a policy, and procedures, to promote equality of opportunity for children in their care, including support for children with SEN or disabilities. All early years and educational settings also have duties under the Equality Act 2010. In particular, they must make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and young people to help alleviate any substantial disadvantage they experience because of their disability, and they must not discriminate against or harass them.
(d) know how to pass on feedback about any potential problems or gaps in service provision it has identified with relevant public health colleagues / commissioners and / or Clinical Commissioning Groups.

2.6 All FIS staff are trained and are knowledgeable about meeting the needs of families with children with SEND within the scope of their role23 (for example all staff will have a good awareness of the SEND Code of Practice and understand how to provide information, advice and assistance to families. There may be particular FIS staff members such as brokerage or outreach officers who take a specialist lead role in supporting families of children with SEND.)

2.7 FIS provides all parents, children and young people with clear and accurate impartial information, advice and guidance in relation to SEND (the level of information, advice and assistance will depend on the FIS local remit in delivering the requirements of the Code of Practice). It provides:

(a) General information, advice and guidance for families with children and young people with SEND.

(b) Specific information about the support that is available to individuals as part of the provision of a coordinated assessment and planning process.

(c) Specific information in relation to early years and childcare services, children’s centres and support for children with SEND that is within the FIS’ existing remit.

(d) Information about the statutory assessment process and Education Health and Care (EHC) plans. (Code of practice section 2 Impartial information, advice and support and section 9 education, health and care assessments).

23 This will be dependent on the how the FIS is configured and the level of responsibility it has within its own local authority in delivering the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice.
SEND Standard 3: The Local Offer (SEND Code of Practice Section 4)

The FIS Family Service Directory contributes to the range of information that makes up the Local Offer

3.1 The Family Service Directory database contributes significantly to the “information published in one place” that makes up the Local Offer for families.

3.2 The Family Service Directory includes information about the services and support available for families with children from birth to age 25.

3.3 The Family Service Directory and its functionality in respect of the Local Offer has been developed in consultation with families who have children/young people with SEND.

3.4 The Family Service Directory is organised in a manner that helps all families to navigate the range of services available, with a particular emphasis on the information that would be pertinent to a family of a child or young person with SEND:

(a) There are clear details for each service, about its access and transport arrangements.

(b) Any symbols used are clearly explained and these explanations are easy to view (for example by one click on a symbol).

(c) The cost (where applicable) and eligibility requirements are clearly defined on each service record.

(d) Any organisations that are accredited by another body, are clearly defined and explained in plain English (for example services that receive mandatory national accreditation by bodies such as Ofsted; those that belong to national federations or membership organisations and those that are accredited by the local authority, for example to offer short breaks for families with SEND).

(e) There is an opportunity for children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers to provide feedback about the services on the directory, for example by providing the ability to feedback (for example, via a web link, online survey or via the directory itself) (see also 1.8).

(f) There is provision for members of the public to feedback whenever they cannot find a suitable service to access in their area (this information is captured and used to improve the service directory and to identify any potential gaps in service provision). (see also 1.8 c & 5.5)

(g) Information provided by members of the public about services listed on the directory, is appropriately moderated so that potentially libellous accusations are referred to the appropriate organisations and are not published.

(h) Where categories, topics or themes are used to help customers navigate the Family Service Directory, these are clearly explained.
There is information, advice and guidance (either in the directory itself or via a linked website) which helps families make informed decisions when choosing services (for example, check lists, information explaining accreditations, ‘how to’ guides, quality, and tips about what to ask service providers).

Serious allegations received by the FIS in relation to services published on the directory, are dealt with effectively and where appropriate, are referred to the relevant Safeguarding authority or Local Area Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Information is included about how to report a serious concern about a service provider and when/how (and to whom) to make a safeguarding referral, when a member of the public is concerned about the safety of a vulnerable child, young person or adult.

There are arrangements in place to provide information and signposting, for families who want to access services across local authority boundaries, and there are links to national information, advice and support (some FIS may choose to work together, or use a single Family Service Directory covering two or more local authority areas).

Wherewer practical, the principle of “store and maintain data once published via multiple channels” is employed, for example, where other organisations are already providing national directories of national services for children with SEND these should be signposted or harvested into the local Family Service Directory or provided via an embedded widget (for example, NHS Direct widget).

The Family Service Directory has been developed in a way that reduces duplication and encourages providers and families (members of the public) to contribute to the richness of the information, for example, with the ability:

- for service providers to update own records;
- for service providers to feedback on customers’ comments and star ratings;
- to federate content, and/or provide widgets for use by other websites; and
- to publish federated content, and/or add widgets from other websites, for example NHS Choices.

The quality of the information in the Family Service Directory (including information which specifically helps and supports families of children and young people with SEND) is regularly reviewed and monitored (see also Families First Standard 8):

- Information about universal services (incorporating information about their ability to include and provide for families with SEND within their statutory and legal obligations, for example children’s centres, schools, early education, universal health services such as Healthy Child Programme HCP, heath visiting and school nursing teams, and childcare providers and colleges).

- Information about specific/targeted services for children and young people with SEND and their families (including positive activities, access to information about short breaks/short break providers, respite care, social services, education and health, parenting programmes, private or VCS organisations, portage home education, Parent Partnership Services, and their eligibility criteria).

- Information for young people to help them prepare for adulthood (particular attention is given to those young people with SEND). (Code of practice section 2.12/2.14)
(d) Information specifically relating to acute and chronic health services (including NHS speech and language therapy (SALT) and physiotherapy, acute and chronic adult service supporting young people, and paediatric Palliative teams).

(e) Information that families and service users have provided about individual services or the Local Offer in general.

(f) The ability for service providers to respond to feedback from service users’ compliments and complaints.

3.9 The Family Service Directory includes or has links to, information and guidance about the use of services that would benefit families of children with SEND, such as general information, referral pathways, paying for services, advice and support:

(a) Information accessible via web pages and/or appears in search results triggered by relevant search terms being inputted.

(b) Information that is quick and easy for families to find what they need

- by linking information; or
- filtering out information that is not relevant.24

3.10 The Family Service Directory is accessible for members of the public with additional needs or disabilities (for example, with consideration to those with visual or hearing impairment who may access the site either directly or by a screen reader).

http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/SE7SENDHPCLocalOfferNotADirectorydocument.pdf
SEND Standard 4: Personal Budgets
(SEND Code of Practice section 9.95-9.124)

The FIS contributes to helping families with children and young people with SEND to have more choice and control by understanding and promoting personal budgets in their area.25

4.1 FIS managers and staff understand how personal budgets operate within their own local area and are able to share information with parents/carers of children and young people with SEND (this includes eligibility criteria and access).

4.2 FIS staff help to alleviate apprehension about managing funding and service provision, by providing information about setting up bank accounts, employing and managing staff (personal assistants), and reclaiming expenses either directly or by signposting to the relevant service.

4.3 FIS staff help families with children with SEND, to understand the range of options available, so that they can make informed choices about their child or young person’s education, health and care.

4.4 FIS staff help raise awareness of the important role that parents/carers play in contributing to their child’s education, health and care and in contributing to their child’s Education, Health and Care plan.

4.5 FIS seeks to simplify the information it provides so that parents/carers of children and young people with SEND can clearly understand their options and make informed choices about services and support.

4.6 FIS contributes to raising the level of understanding and awareness among parents with regard to direct payments and personal budgets.

4.7 FIS staff understand and have clarity around, how the money provided as direct payments/personal budgets can be spent, so that they can explain this to parents/carers and young people.

4.8 FIS understand the local procedures for appealing against a decision about an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan and/or the allocation of a personal budget so they can explain this to parents, carers and young people. (See also Code of Practice Section 11 – resolving disagreements)

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25 This standard draws on the findings of the evaluation of SEND pathfinder authorities.
**SEND Standard 5: Collaborative Working**  
* (SEND Code of Practice section 3)

The FIS contributes to the collaborative working with parents, health, education and social care and others in supporting families with children with SEND (See also FF FIS standard 11)

5.1 FIS proactively seeks to develop positive working relationships with key partners and stakeholders, in order that it can provide a high quality service to families with children and young people with SEND (for example, health, social care, early years and childcare services, children’s centres, schools, SEN/inclusive services, youth services).

5.2 FIS works collaboratively with its local Parent Partnership Service (this may include information arrangements for signposting, support provided by a collocated or merged service, triage and referral).

5.3 FIS makes sure that partners are aware of the support provided to families around accessing early education and childcare (in particular specific or specialist support/brokerage for families with children and young people with SEND including any financial assistance available to help pay for childcare).

5.4 The FIS makes it easy for partner websites (such as schools, council, health, VCS) to redirect to their LA’s Local Offer to help promote to families the perception of joined up services (for example, the FIS provides guidance to go out with service provider update forms and by providing a short URL and / or a logo / symbol, by providing some standardised text and / or via the provision of a widget). (see also 3.6 & 3.7)

5.5 FIS seeks to work with partners in the VCS and with any local volunteering programmes that support families (for example, parent champions, parent support volunteers, peer support groups, independent supporters who help parents navigate the SEND process).

5.6 FIS seeks to work in collaboration with families, giving particular regard to those families who have children and young people with SEND (for example, consulting with families, using feedback to improve the services offered directly by the FIS and other partners/organisations, asking parents to be on an advisory group or FIS parents’ forum, consulting with existing parent forums). (See also FF FIS standard 1.7)

5.7 FIS seeks to encourage local families to be involved in the on-going review and sustainability of the Local Offer (for example via consultation, forums and / or involving them in FIS Steering Groups where they exist).

5.8 FIS seeks to act as an advocate for parents, carers and young people by building good relationships with families and commissioners and contribute to smarter and flexible services aimed at improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Other sources of information

Special educational needs and disability (SEND) Code of Practice: for 0 to 25 years. Statutory guidance for organisations who work with and support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (June 2014)

Guidance for implementation

Personal outcomes and evaluation tool (POET)

Examples from pathfinder authorities are available from the Mott MacDonald pathfinder support team
www.sendpathfinder.co.uk

Information for parents and commissioners on personal budgets
http://kids.rtdns.com/mip2

Support and aspiration: introducing personal budgets

Information for parents on Early Support
www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/earlysupport

A full table of the Local Offer regulations and statutory guidance in the SEND Code of Practice mapped to relevant sections of the Childcare Act (2006) Section 12 statutory guidance: www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/nafis

The NHS Mandate
http://www.sendpathfinder.co.uk/dfeanddh/nhsmandateandehcplan/
Appendix 2: Key milestones for meeting the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice

**Local offer:** from 1 September 2014 local authorities will be required to consult with families and providers of services and publish a local offer of provision for children and young people who are disabled or have SEND, so that parents, carers and young people understand the range of provision available. A significant change is a 0-25 focus. Partners, including health, colleges, schools and early years, need to co-produce the local offer.

**Education, Health and Care plans:** from 1 September 2014 local authorities will be required to consider new requests for an assessment of special educational needs under the new legislation, and co-ordinate services around a child or young person. No new assessments for statements of SEN or Learning Difficulty Assessments (LDAs) will be offered from 1 September 2014. Children and young people should be transferred to the new system in a phased way, prioritised at key transition points. LDAs should be phased out by September 2016, and statements should be phased out by April 2018 – although this can happen more quickly if desired. For children and young people assessed as needing an EHC plan, they will have the right to request a personal budget so they can choose the services which are best for their family.

**Joint commissioning:** from September 2014, local commissioners will be required to work together in the interests of children and young people with SEND. These arrangements must be robust enough to reach a decision in every case, and regularly reviewed. In the SEND Code of Practice, we will encourage local authorities and CCGs to agree shared outcomes, using a joint analysis of intelligence and data about the area – drawing, for example, on registers of disabled children in their area, including children with impaired hearing and sight.

*DfE (2014)*