

# **Solihull Family Information Service**

## **Statement of Service 2009**

### **1. Introduction**

The Family Information Service (FIS) provides comprehensive, accurate, up to date information on childcare and other local services and support for parents of children and young people up to the age of 20.

The Family Information Service is part of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and sits within the Children and Young People's Trust Team. It is mainly funded through the General Sure Start Grant.

The FIS fulfils the local authority duty in the Childcare Act 2006 (Section 12) to provide information, advice and assistance to parents of children aged 0-19 years.

The service was launched as the Children's Information Service in 1999.

### **2. Information available**

#### **2.1 Childcare**

The FIS provides information, advice and assistance on all early years and childcare provision in the Solihull Borough. This includes:

- Childminders
- Pre-school playgroups
- Day nurseries
- Out of school clubs
- Holiday playschemes
- Crèches
- Wraparound sessions
- Nanny/au pair agencies
- Babysitting agencies

The FIS provides a brokerage service offering further advice and assistance for those parents who are not able to find childcare that meets their needs. A brokerage policy is available on request. The FIS can also support parents of children with additional needs and/or disabilities to find childcare to meet their child's needs.

We also provide advice on:

- Childcare options
- How to choose childcare; things to look for and questions to ask
- How to complain about childcare services
- Free early education places for three and four year olds

- Free early education for 2 year olds
- Sponsored Daycare placements

## **2.2 Things to do and places to go**

Information on things to do and places to go for children, young people and families including:

- Parent and toddler groups
- Children/young people's clubs
- Family leisure activities
- Under 5s activities
- Sporting, play and recreational activities
- Out of school and holiday activities
- Specialist activities for children and young people with a disability.

## **2.3 Signposting to services that support children, young people and families**

There are a wide range of support services available, but sometimes it is difficult to know who can help. The FIS signposts parents to both local and national services for specialist advice on:

- Work/life balance information for parents including information about maternity/paternity/adoption leave and pay, flexible working and other parental rights issues
- Financial assistance for parents, including tax credits, childcare vouchers and benefits for parents of children with additional needs.
- Education, training and careers
- Health services including mental health, sexual health, sex and relationships and drug and alcohol misuse.
- Parenting support including relationships, bullying and bereavement.
- Support services for children and young people with a disability.

## **3. How we deliver information**

### **3.1 Telephone helpline**

Information is available via a freephone telephone helpline Monday-Thursday 8.45am-5.20pm Friday 8.45am-4.30pm, with an answer phone facility to leave messages out of hours.

Team meetings and training events are very important to the quality of the service provided. It may be necessary at certain times to offer an answer machine service only, during normal opening hours.

### **3.2 Face to face**

Family Information Service staff visit a range of venues across the borough to deliver information and advice 'face to face'. This can be on a group or a one-one basis. Venues include Children's Centres, school parents' evenings, ante-natal classes and other places where parents already meet. Visits can be arranged by contacting the helpline.

### **3.3 Website**

Information on childcare, things to do, places to go and support services are available online through our Family Services Directory. There is also the facility to enquire online and download a range of leaflets.

Enquiries can also be received on-line and information sent via email.

### **3.4 Written information**

A range of written information is available including;

- a leaflet and poster advertising the service
- a leaflet and poster outlining free early education places for 3 and 4 year olds
- a leaflet outlining free early education places for 2 year olds
- a leaflet offering information about the childcare options available.
- other leaflets on a range of topics
- support for parents of children with additional needs

## **4. What customers can expect from us**

### **4.1 Level of Service**

The FIS will make a commitment to respond to all telephone and email enquiries the same working day. Enquiries taken at outreach will be responded to the following working day if they are not able to be dealt with immediately. Where this is not possible, the customer will be informed and an estimated response time given. Enquiries left on the answer machine will be responded to the following working day.

### **4.2 FIS Staff**

All staff will maintain a friendly, helpful and courteous manner at all times. Staff are trained to understand and adhere to FIS policies including confidentiality, impartiality and complaints. All Family Information Officers have, or are working towards an NVQ Level 4 in Information, Advice and Guidance and undergo other relevant training.

### **4.3 Impartiality**

Respect and support to the range of services in Solihull is important. The FIS is not biased towards certain types of provision and does not make recommendations. It allows parents to make their own choices on the basis of the information they are given. When looking for childcare, parents are advised to visit a range of settings so that they are able to make an informed choice.

### **4.4 Confidentiality**

We ask permission from all enquirers to record their details for monitoring purposes only. Customers' details will not be shared except where a child is perceived to be at risk or provision fails to meet legal requirements. A procedure is in place to ensure that any such enquiries are dealt with confidentially and appropriately.

The local authority complies with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the FIS ensures that all information stored complies with the Act.

#### **4.5 Equality of Access**

The FIS abides by the local authority's equal opportunities policy which states that 'services must be provided in a responsive, fair and appropriate manner to meet the needs of the community.' Every step is taken to ensure that, with the resources available, all potential customers in the borough have access to the service. This is achieved through a range of delivery methods and reaching out to people who might otherwise have difficulty in taking advantage of the service.

#### **4.6 Monitoring and Evaluation**

FIS staff monitor the usage of the service regularly. All customers are offered the opportunity to provide feedback, which is to continually improve and develop the service.

Information is also gathered from non-users of the service through outreach work, and feedback is sought from providers and other relevant professionals (for example Health Visitors).

Complaints are taken seriously and are used to make improvements to the service where appropriate. A full complaints procedure is in place and available on request.

### **5. Limitations of the FIS**

Solihull FIS offers information about childcare provision and other local services within the borough of Solihull only. Parents are signposted to other Family Information Services in the country as appropriate.

The FIS makes every effort to keep the information it holds up to date. However, accuracy depends, to a large extent, on providers informing us of any changes to the service they offer. Whilst we try our best, we cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided.

The FIS only provides information about childcare provision and services to parents/carers or those acting on behalf of individual parents/carers. Information will not be made available for business or commercial use and such enquirers will be directed to the website.

### **Solihull Family Information Service**

**Keepers Lodge, Chelmsley Road, Chelmsley Wood, Solihull, B37 7RS**

**Telephone: 0800 389 8667**

**Email: [familyinfo@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:familyinfo@solihull.gov.uk)**

**Website: [www.solihull.gov.uk/familyinfo](http://www.solihull.gov.uk/familyinfo)**

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