

Parent Information Needs Survey Family Information Service (FIS)

April 2025



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1 Background

Shropshire Council used a survey in early 2025 to gather feedback and views from parents and carers in relation to how they access information from Shropshire Council. The Family Information Service (FIS) provides free information, advice and support to families of children and young people aged 0-19 years old. It has been running in Shropshire for 24 years. The FIS aims to ensure the information it provides, and the way in which it is provided, meets the ever-changing needs of families in Shropshire. Regular surveys and engagement are undertaken to understand the types of information families need now and in the future.

The online survey was promoted widely as a method of gathering views. It was advertised through the FIS communications channels and social media, Shropshire Council's newsroom, through the survey email alerts, and was hosted on Shropshire Council's Get Involved consultation and survey pages.

The survey ran from 27th January to 14th March 2025. Alternative options were offered to encourage as many people as possible to share their feedback. Those unable to complete the online survey were offered email and postal feedback options and alternative versions of the survey were also offered (e.g. large text or easy read).

Despite being promoted very widely, using a range of methods, the survey resulted in only 48 responses. This may be due to the nature of the survey and fact that Shropshire Council had large public consultations running at the same time, some linked to budget and service changes. Despite the smaller numbers completing the survey the feedback is very helpful.

The results of the survey are set out within the report under the following sections:

- **Section 1: Background** (this section) provides an overview of the survey and how it was promoted.
- **Section 2: Respondents** presents the number and types of responses to the online survey.
- **Section 3: Information Needs** explores themes around respondents' need for information now and in the future and how they prefer to access information and any suggestions for useful information.
- **Section 4: Use of the Family Information Service** analyses survey results for questions exploring respondents' views on the draft SEND and AP Strategy.
- **Section 5: Overall Satisfaction and Feedback** covers an overview of satisfaction and the open questions used to gather views.
- **Section 6: Summary and Conclusion** provides a brief summary and conclusion based on the overall analysis of the feedback received.

2 Respondents

In total 48 parents and carers completed the online survey to give their feedback on their family information needs. A significant number did not select an option and complete the question. Of those who did respond, 63% use FIS as parents or carers, 8% as a grandparent, 2% as a family member and 21% as a practitioner.

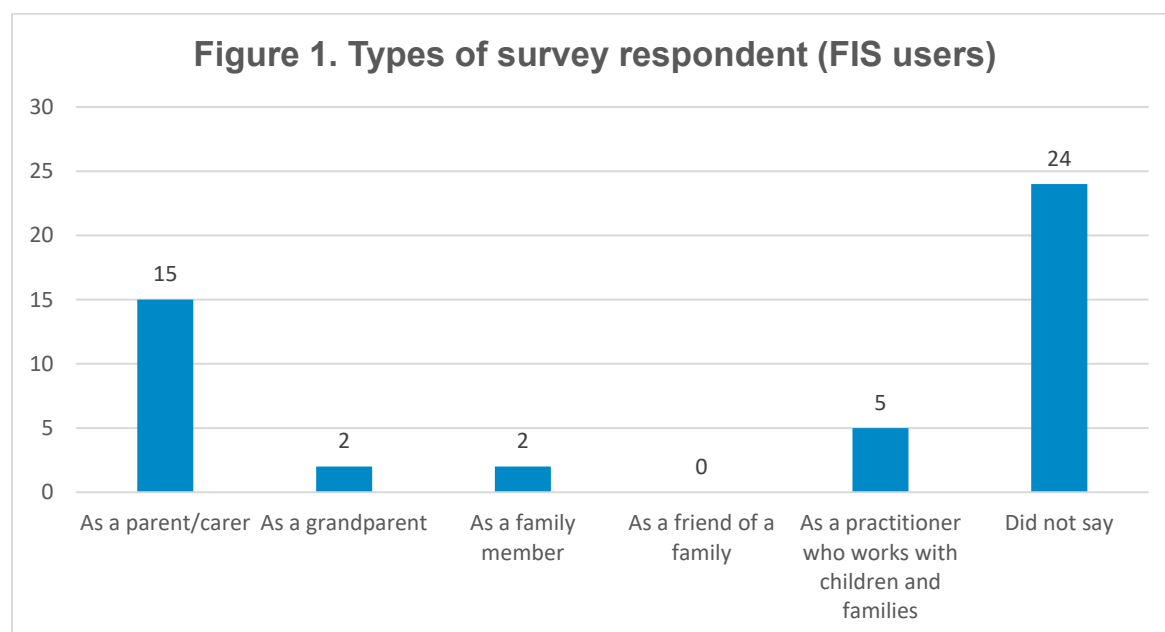


Figure 2 below shows that 44 of the 48 survey respondents have children in their families aged 0-19 (94%) and Figure 3 displays the proportion of those with special educational needs.

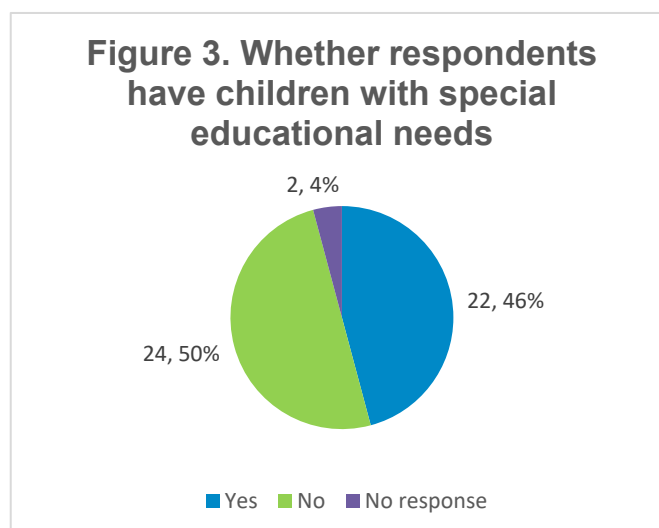
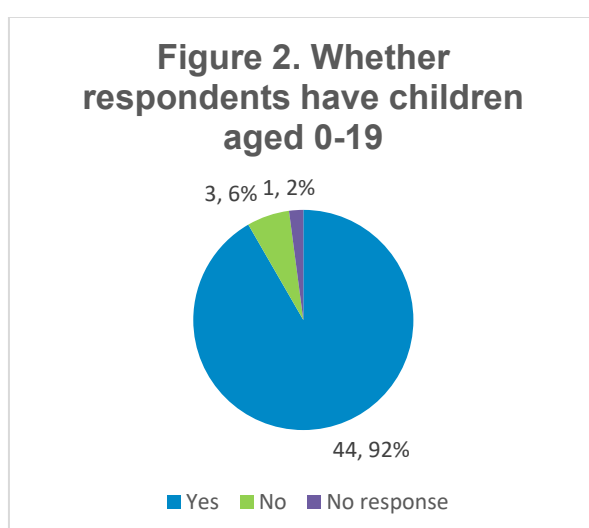
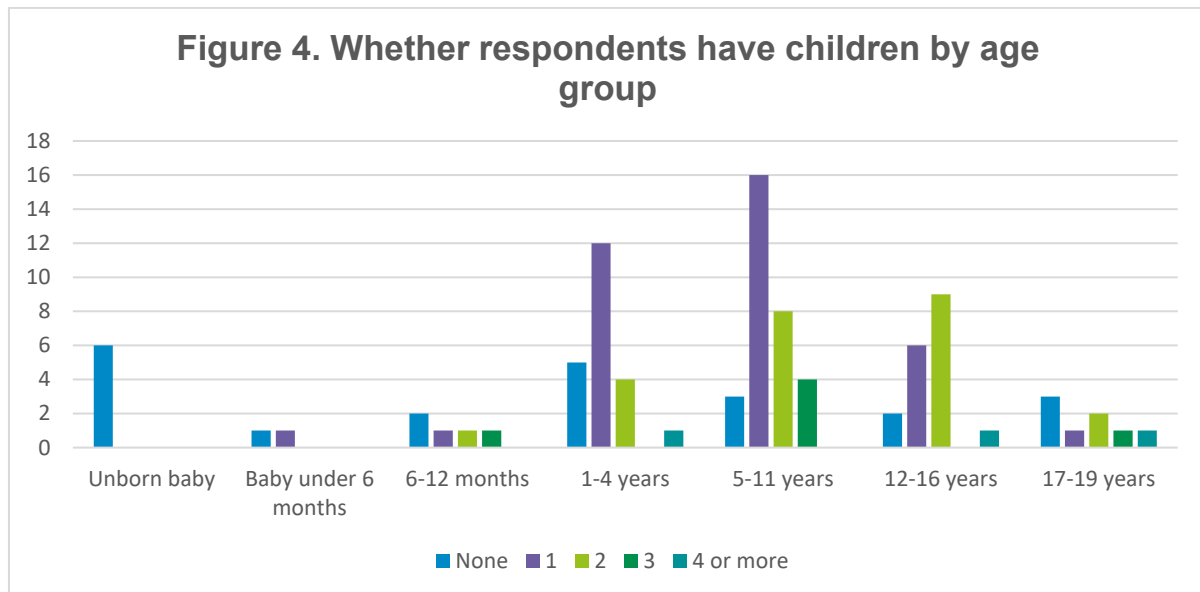


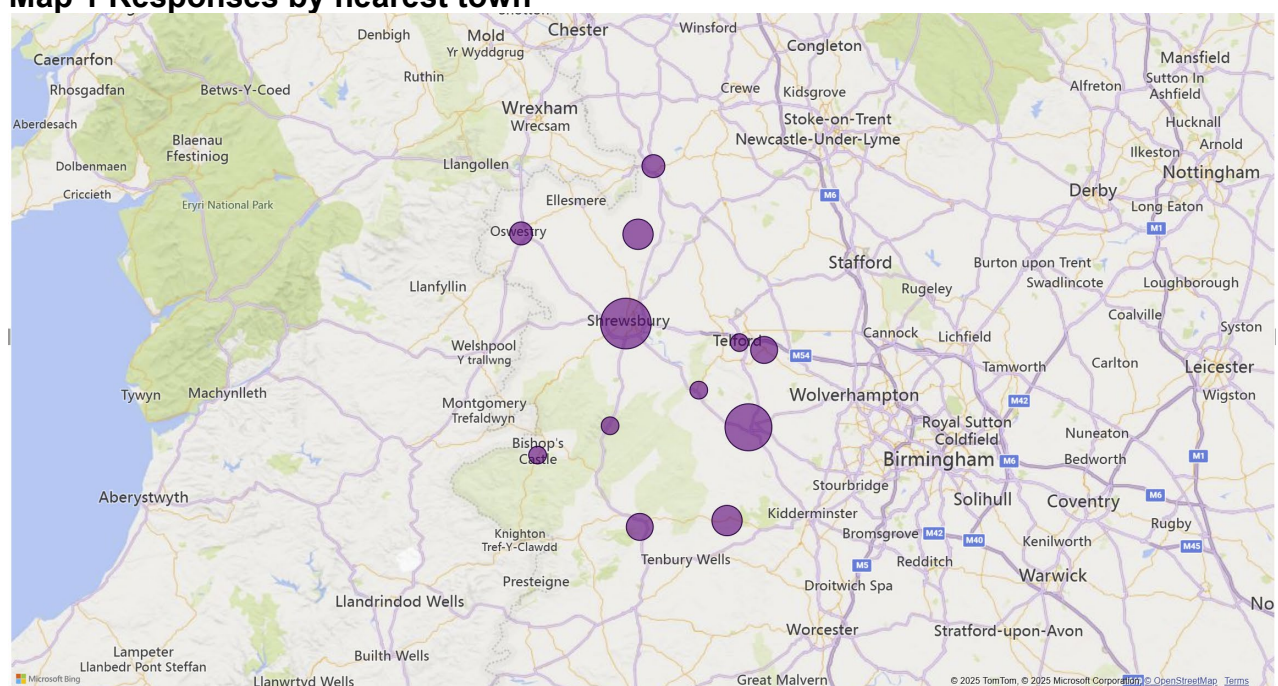
Figure 3 shows that exactly half of the respondents with children aged 0-19 have children with special educational needs (22 of the 44). To find out more an additional question was asked about the age groups of children survey respondents were using FIS in relation to. Figure 4 shows that the survey respondents have more children in the 5-11-year age group than in any other group followed by 12-16-year olds and 1-4-year olds. Calculating the total numbers of children (approximately using 4 children for 4 or more),

the 44 survey respondents with children in the family represent 44 5-11 year olds, 28 12-16 year olds, 24 1-4 year olds, 12 17-19 year olds, 6 6-12 month year olds and a baby under 6 months.



The last piece of information about respondents collected within the survey was their nearest town. The survey was informal and not designed to be used other than to inform information provided through FIS so detailed demographic data was not required. It is interesting to see whether respondents represent communities across the county. Map 1 below shows the nearest town. There were responses from most of the county with some exceptions. Parents and carers living near Clun, Craven Arms, Ellesmere, Broseley and Market Drayton were not represented. This is unfortunate, but due to the online nature of the service (allowing parents to access information wherever they live as long as internet access is available) this is not too much of a concern. The next section explores feedback relating to information needs.

Map 1 Responses by nearest town

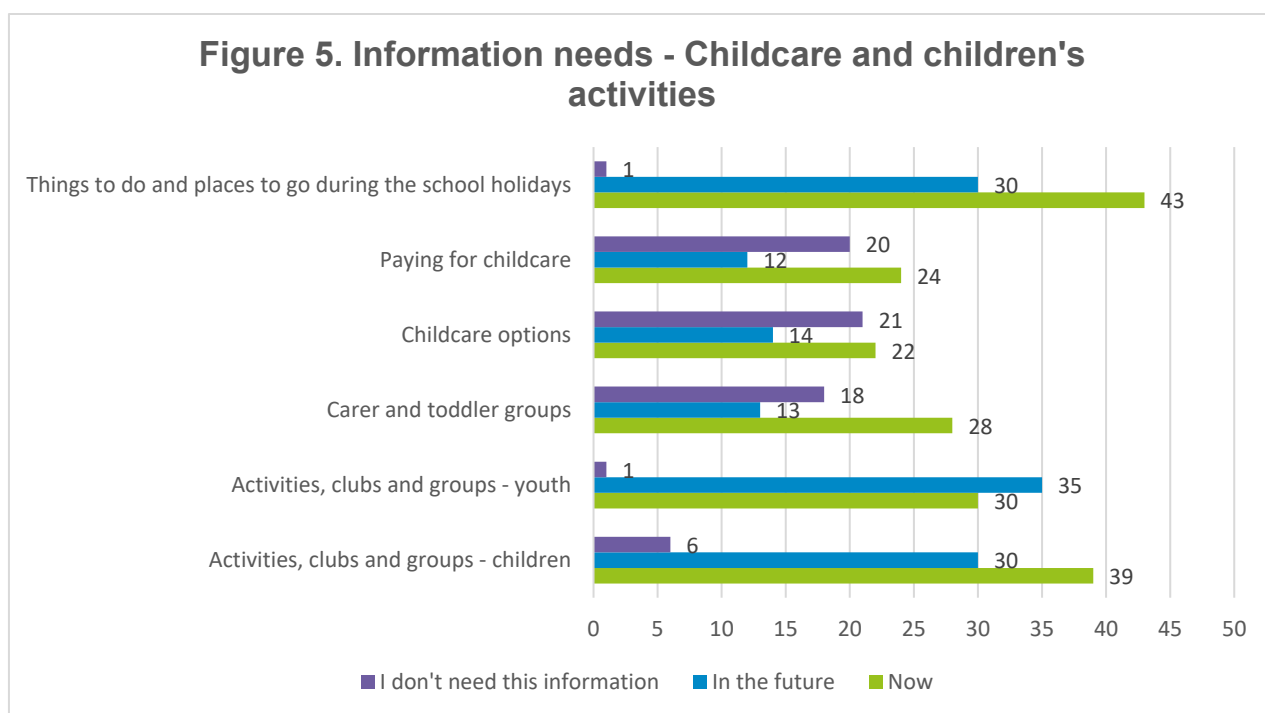


3 Information Needs

The survey was used to ask parents and carers about their information on 6 main topics shown below. For each theme types of information were listed, and survey respondents asked if they would need that information now, in future or not at all.

- Childcare and children's activities
- Family relationships
- Health and wellbeing
- Support needs
- Safety
- Family finances and homes

Figure 5 displays the results for childcare and children's activities. The type of information most respondents need now is on activities, clubs and groups for children (43 of the 48 respondents) and things to do and places to go in the school holidays (39). The information many parents and carers feel they do not need is information on childcare options and paying for childcare (although similar numbers do require this information now, and more think that information will be helpful in the future so opinions are more divided).



The theme of family relationships did not attract the same high numbers of parents needing information now, but 29 of the 48 survey respondents do need information on parenting support and 23 believe they will need that information in future. Smaller numbers need information on issues related to family relationship challenges such as divorce and separation, supporting children through divorce and separation and mediation. Some of the themes within this section are issues that may not be anticipated as a future need and so high proportions of respondents selected that they do not need that information.

Figure 6. Information needs - Family relationships

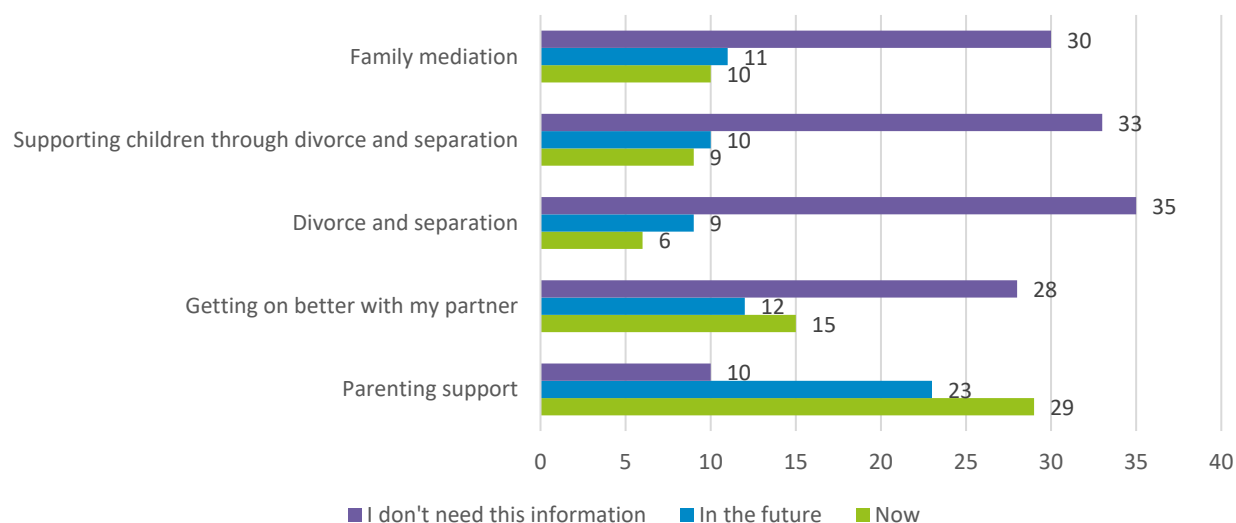
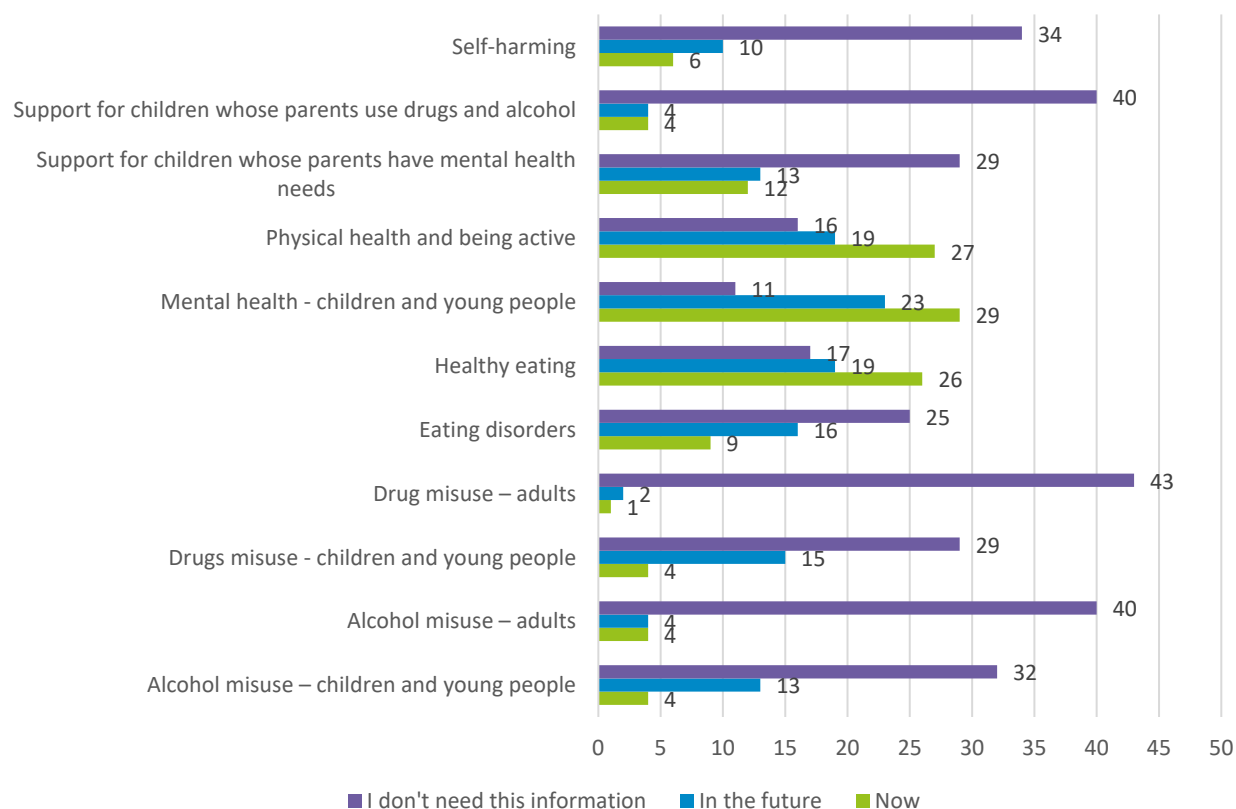


Figure 7 displays the results relating to health and wellbeing information needs. There were a lot of topics in this section. The types of information more parents and carers need now include mental health for children and young people, physical health and being active and healthy eating. There is less interest in some topics including drug misuse- adults, alcohol misuse- adults, support for children whose parents use drugs and alcohol and self-harming. Despite the lower numbers needing these topics now and in the future the information could be of great need to those who do have to face such challenges.

Figure 7. Information needs - Health and wellbeing



Information needs in relation to support are shown in Figure 8. This section covered topics such as SEND, sleep, gender identity, bullying, bereavement and neurodiversity. The topics more survey respondents feel they need now are SEND, Autism/ADHD/ Neurodiversity and sleep problems. Some of the other topics may also be topics that parents and carers don't know they need until they find themselves needing them, for example bullying can be an issue that can appear as an unexpected problem to address.

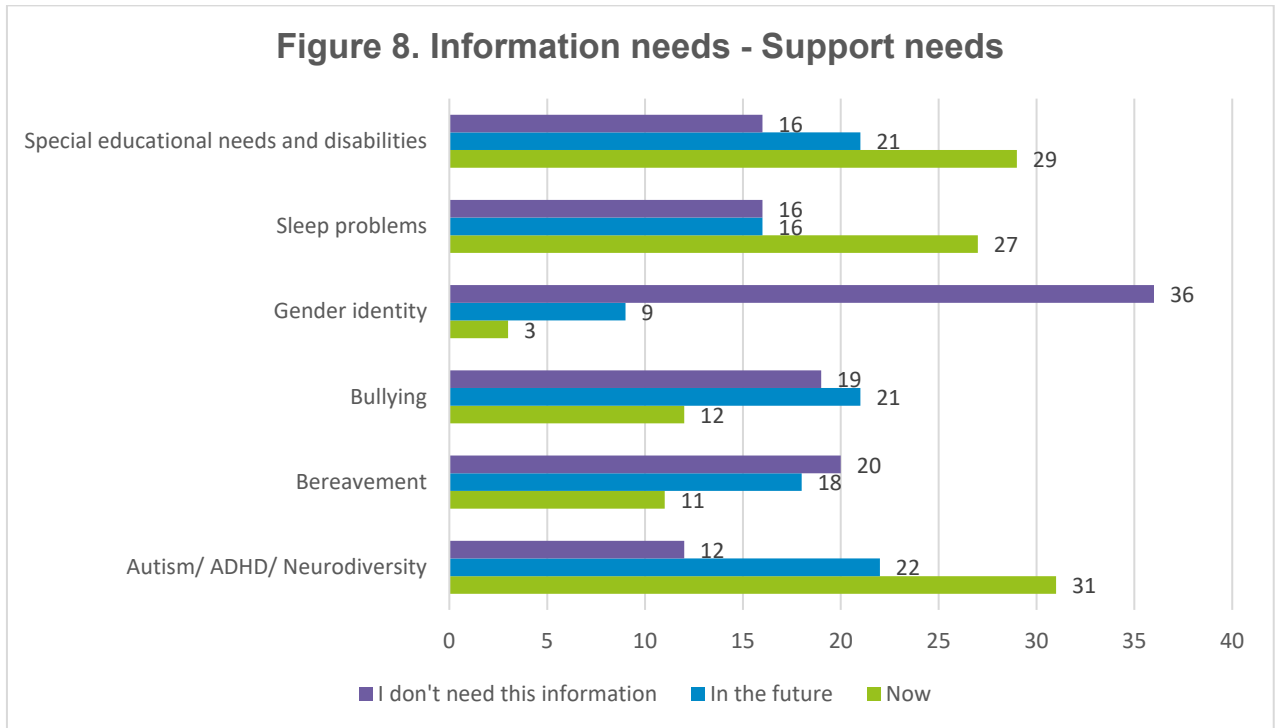
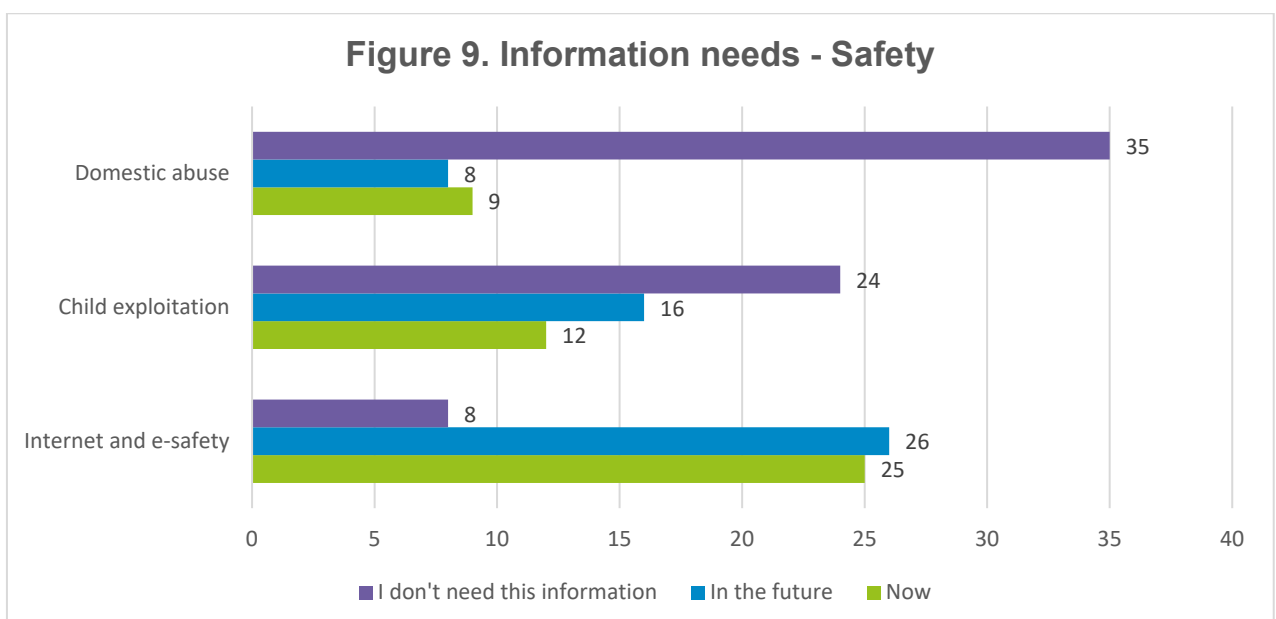
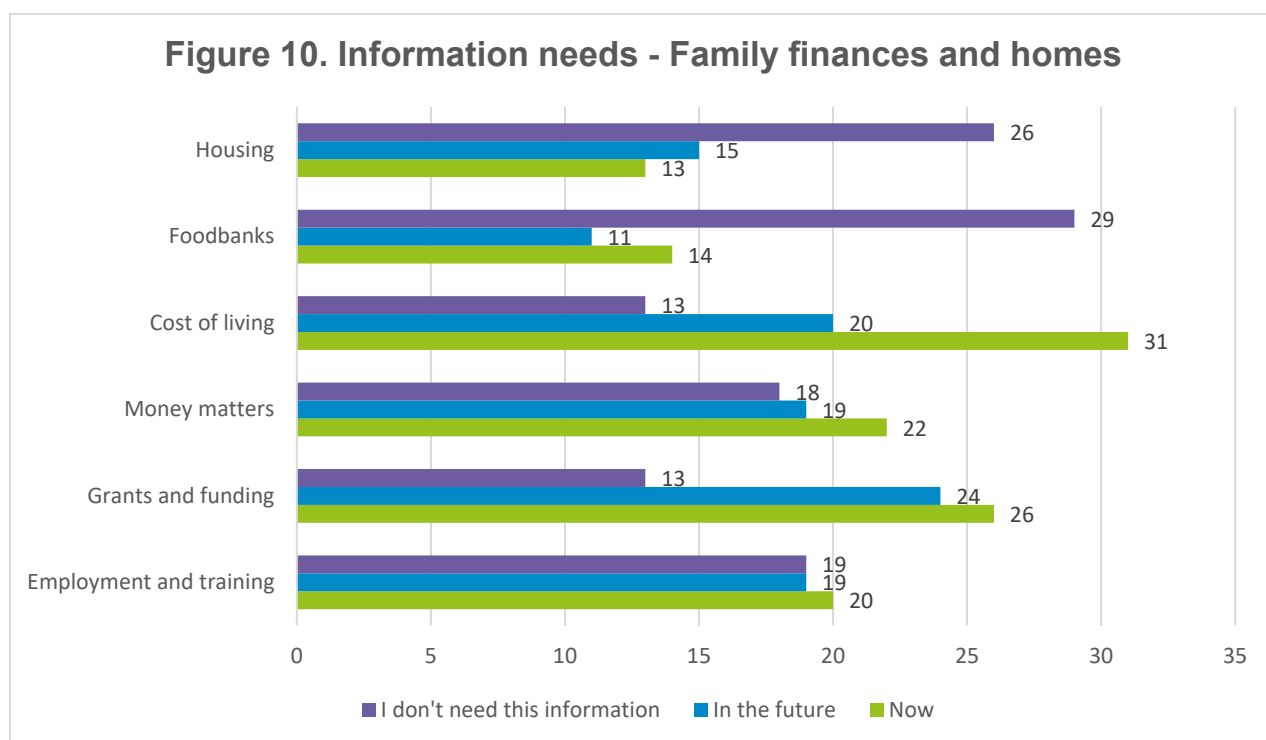


Figure 9 displays the results for the topic on safety. There were only three areas listed in this theme: domestic abuse, child exploitation and internet and e-safety. Internet and e-safety is the area more parents and carers feel they need either now or may need in the future. About a third of the survey respondents feel they could benefit from information about child exploitation now or in the future.



Information needs related to family finances and homes is covered in Figure 10. Cost of living information is a popular choice for information needed now (69% of all respondents need this now). Grants and funding, money matters, and employment and training are also popular topics for now or in the future.



This information helps to highlight the more popular topics and information needed by a majority of parents and carers. The next question included in the online survey asked if any other types of information would be helpful. There were 19 comments, and these have been grouped into themes below:

Babies and young children

- *“Breastfeeding and other forms of nutrition.”*
- *“What’s available for young children any of the activities advertised are for children 4+.”*

Childcare and activities

- *“More childcare in Church Stretton.”*
- *“Getting support from professionals and short breaks.”*

SEND and other care needs

- *“Toolkits, guidance sheets, advice line, information about sexual health for SEND, information about PFA and SEND finances, information about parent carer help and support for caring for elderly parents and disabled child, access to housing adaptations support, continence care.”*
- *“Local support groups, such as Oswestry SEN parents.”*
- *“Support for young carers, siblings of a disabled child.”*
- *“Information and guidance on how to navigate the system from initial concerns to access support in the first place, through to formal diagnosis pathways, benefits and School support such as Education Psychologist and EHCNA/EHCP Processes... and everything in between! There is not enough awareness around the complicated*

stages before a Child reaches Crisis point and ends up with such Trauma from their experiences of Needs not being recognised or met and I believe groups such as PACC should be a standard part of the School transition stages in both Primary and Secondary so that Parents know where to go to be signposted for help if they feel they need it... Also Bullying is a huge problem and often Schools don't deal well with it, at times Victim blaming due to unrecognised and misunderstood behaviours, so informing Parents on their Rights to challenge School Leadership to ensure that every Child does actually matter and that Parents are listened to with a clear understanding of the Procedures that should be in place to protect our Children."

- *"To have information signposted more easily. How can you look for specialist help when you don't know it exists? Example: my 16-year-old son is in Mental health crisis. I've been waiting for GP appointment since 3rd Feb. Not got one until 30th March. I called BEEU then GP today, only to find that there is a 'panic line' and that I could phone the BEEU number out of hours for crisis support. He was seen in November 2024 after a 2-year wait, now waiting again. I needed this info 2 years ago. Now I can't leave him on his own. He doesn't leave his room or even smile anymore. All In services helped when he was younger, especially Tickwood and sessions at Shrewsbury Town FC. He's too old now and I'm struggling more than ever to help him. Also, information on bereavement support. And more PFA follow up from schools after young people leave. My child's old SEMH school thinks he's at college. He only made it as far as the gate once and not been since. Money management advice would be good and more groups for neurodiverse young people of different ages as well as those aimed at young parents."*

Finances and homes

- *"Help in gaining a 3-bedroom house in Ditton Priors."*
- *"Benefits available."*
- *"Benefit information, support in communicating with DWP or UC."*

Education and Post 16

- *"Post 16 options EOTAS."*
- *"Choices on different school types e.g. those relating more to social skills than academic."*
- *"Schools Public transport including discounts for children and young people."*

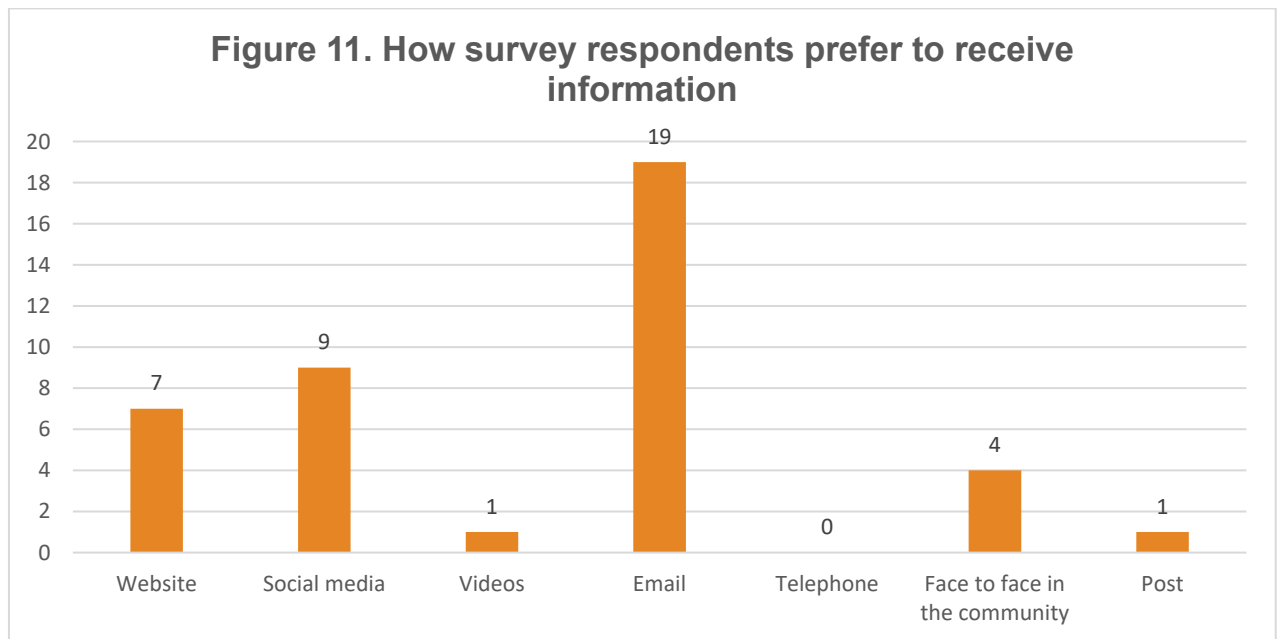
Other comments

- *"Where to access support."*
- *"Support for parents of teenagers, getting them to talk!"*
- *"Bereavement support for my children and myself."*
- *"All the above sound very useful. A lot of info is out there already, and I feel quite competent to find a lot of it, but I can see that it will be useful to others and may be useful to me on the future. I've said email below, but I think if the info can be distributed via existing community mechanisms that people are already accessing then that is important because it comes with trust and wider relational support."*

As the comments above highlight, the most commonly mentioned area of concern relates to SEND and other care needs, followed by education/post 16 options and finances and homes.

There was a last question in the survey designed to check information needs. It asked the preferred methods of receiving information. Survey respondents were asked to only

select their top choice to determine the more popular options. Figure 11 displays the results. 41 of the 48 survey respondents answered the question. 46% of the question respondents selected email as a top choice, 22% selected social media, 17% websites and 10% face to face in the community. 1 respondent selected videos and 1 respondent prefers information to be provided by post. None of the survey respondents selected telephone as a top choice.



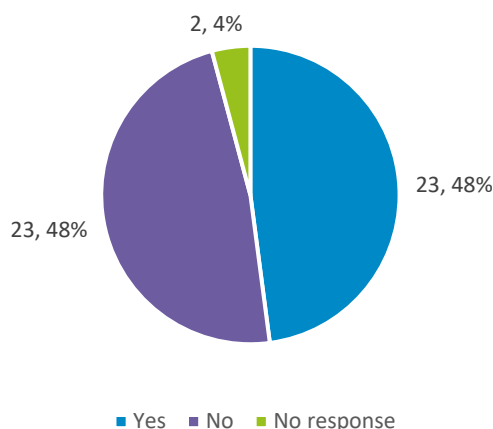
The next section of the report focuses more on the Family Information Service in general, it covers knowledge of the service and use.



4 Use of the Family Information Service

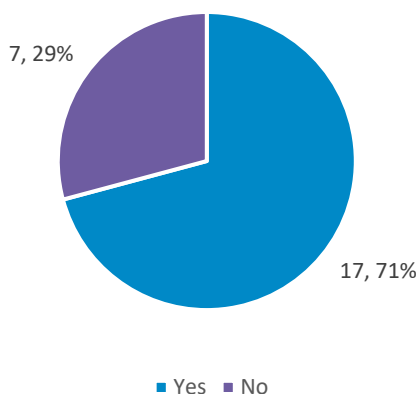
The survey was used to check public awareness of the Family Information Service (FIS). Although there is a good online and social media presence Shropshire Council lacks the budgets needed to spend money on significant marketing and relies on council communications and local networks to spread the word and ensure parents and carers are aware of this important resource. For this reason, understanding more about awareness is important and Figure 12 displays the result that 23 of the 48 survey respondents had known about FIS (48%) and 23 had not (48%); 4% skipped the question. This is quite encouraging; it means that awareness has grown through the work to deliver the survey and those 23 new to FIS are now aware.

Figure 12. Whether survey respondents had heard of the Family Information Service before the survey

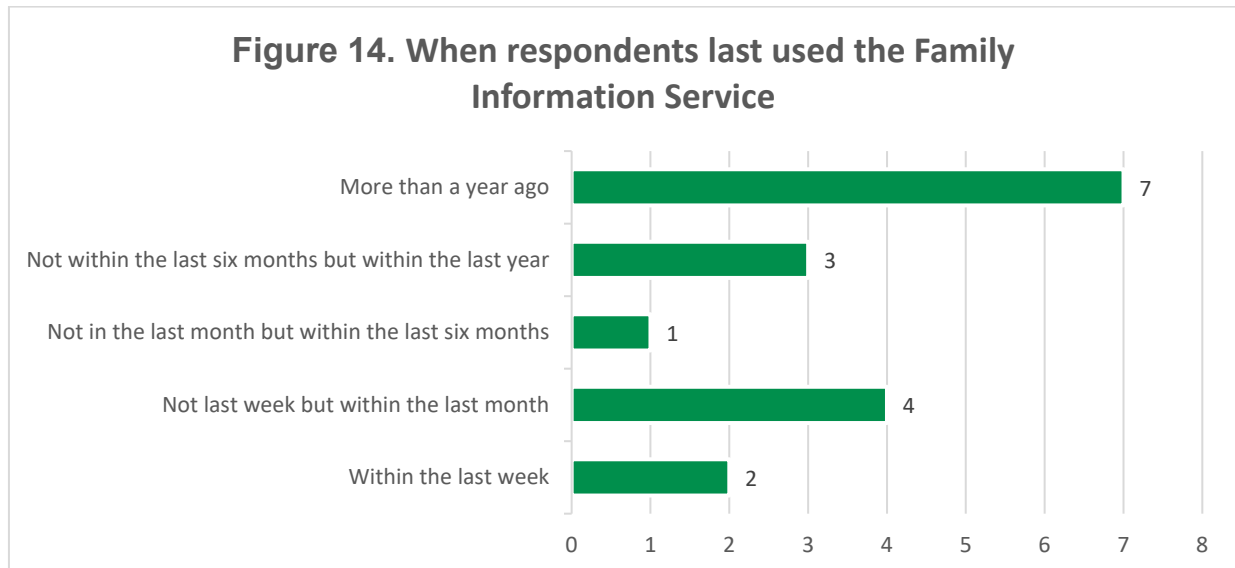


Of those who had been aware of FIS before the survey (24 rather than 23 responded to the question) 71% have used the Family Information Service before (not simply been aware but never used).

Figure 13. Whether respondents used the Family Information Service before the survey



In order to find out more and check for regular or one-off use, respondents who were aware, and had used FIS, were asked when they last used the service. The results are presented below in Figure 14. 41% (7 respondents) had used the service more than a year ago. Of those more recent users, 12% (2) had used FIS in the last week and 24% (4) in the last month.



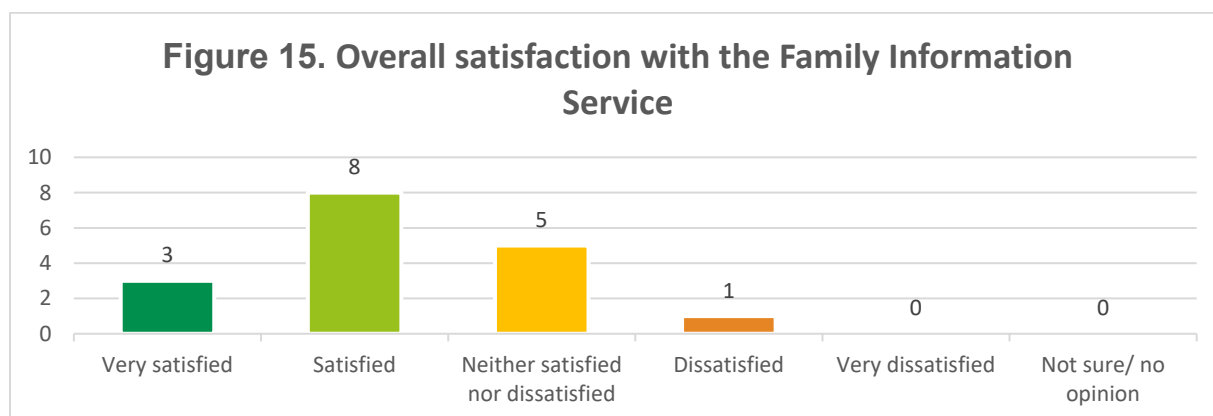
The results show quite a wide range of responses suggesting that the respondents to the survey were not those parents and carers who are more regular users of FIS and follow the service on social media. The feedback overall suggests that the survey has reached a slightly different audience and attracted participation from those who have not known about FIS or have used the service some time ago. This information is very important background and context for the feedback on the information presented in the previous question and for the next section of the report which looks at overall feedback on the service. It is possible that some of the survey respondents will not have had the knowledge necessary to provide detailed feedback.



5 Overall Satisfaction and Feedback

The online survey was designed to check overall feedback on the Family Information Service and gain any suggestions for improvements to the information available for families living in Shropshire. However, as explained in the previous section, the survey reached a new audience and half of respondents had not known about the Family Information Service previously (half had). This meant that half of respondents gained important new knowledge of the service and its offer but could not easily provide more detailed feedback. There were also others aware of the service that had not used the information available more recently. Although limited in numbers completing this section of the survey, the feedback is still very valuable.

Figure 15 displays results when survey respondents were asked ‘Overall, how satisfied are you with the FIS?’. 65% of the respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the Family Information Service, 29% had a neutral view and 6% were dissatisfied (one person only).



Survey respondents were asked ‘Is there anything you particularly like?’. There were 4 comments, and all are shown below:

What people like about FIS

- “Wide range of information.”
- “Your social media posts with things to do during the holidays.”
- “Historically they had guidance sheets or toolkits for locality area or needs based support available.”
- “Great social media – providing all the latest up to date information for parents”.

There were also four comments highlighting dissatisfaction or areas for improvement.

What could be improved

- “Information needs laying out in more user-friendly manner.”
- “Lack of clarity on their role in all in, and the role of Actio seems confusing.”
- “A better directory, it is hard to use on a mobile.”
- “It’s all talk...and the things I asked for no-one knew anything about. It’s just signposting.”

The last section of the report summarizes all of the feedback and next steps.

6 Summary and Conclusion

This document presents the findings from the Parent Information Needs Survey conducted by Shropshire Council's Family Information Service (FIS) from 27th January to 14th March 2025. The survey aimed to gather insights from parents and carers about their information needs and how they access resources provided by the FIS.

Despite extensive promotion, only 48 survey responses were received. Of those 48 respondents, 63% were parents or carers and 21% were practitioners. The respondents were parents/carers or have children within their families. 94% indicated they had children aged 0-19. Half of these children had special educational needs suggesting a need for the information FIS provides for families with children with special educational needs and disabilities.

The survey explored various themes such as childcare, family relationships, health and wellbeing, support needs, safety, and family finances. The results highlighted the types of information parents and carers need now and in the future. Popular areas of information needed now and, in the future, include:

- **Childcare and Children's Activities:** Most respondents sought information on children's activities and holiday programs, while opinions on childcare options were mixed, indicating a divided need.
- **Family relationships:** Parenting support is the main area of interest under this theme.
- **Health and Wellbeing:** Parents showed a strong demand for information on mental health for children and young people, physical health, and healthy eating; while topics like drug and alcohol misuse received less interest.
- **Support needs:** SEND, Autism/ADHD/ Neurodiversity and sleep problems were the top areas of interest. Information elsewhere in the survey supported this and highlighted significant interest in obtaining information linked to SEND.
- **Safety:** Internet and e-safety was the main area of interest for the safety theme with child exploitation also attracting some interest.
- **Family Finances and Homes:** Cost of living information was the most requested topic, with many respondents seeking guidance on grants, funding, and employment support.

Awareness of the FIS was found to be equal among respondents, with half being aware of the service prior to the survey and the other half new to the service. The survey proved helpful in growing knowledge of the service within the area. Of those aware of the service satisfaction levels were high, with 65% expressing satisfaction with the FIS. As a result of high levels of satisfaction there were very few suggestions

for any improvement. Comments throughout the survey highlighted that SEND and other care needs, education/post 16 options, and finances and homes are areas of current interest within the respondent group.

Conclusion

The survey results provide valuable insights into the information needs of families in Shropshire. While the response rate was lower than expected, the feedback gathered is crucial for informing the ongoing maintenance and improvement of the FIS. The high satisfaction levels indicate that the service is well-regarded by those who are aware of it. However, there is a need to increase awareness and ensure that information is easily accessible and user-friendly. The feedback on specific information needs, particularly around SEND and other care needs, will help the FIS tailor its services to better meet the needs of families. Moving forward, it is essential to address the areas for improvement highlighted by respondents and continue to engage with families to ensure the FIS remains a valuable resource.

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Shropshire
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