

Family Advice & Information Service (FAInS)

The Family Advice & Information Service (FAInS) is an initiative to help children and families overcome their problems. This leaflet provides an overview of the project, what the project is about, how it may affect you and how you can become involved.

legal services

COMMISSION

What is the Family Advice & Information Service?

Lord Irvine, as Lord Chancellor, introduced the Family Advice & Information Service (FAInS) project in March 2001. It is a pilot project that builds on existing best practice and existing services, and enables people to access a range of services through a single point of reference. Its aims are to:

- Facilitate the dissolution of broken relationships in ways that minimise distress to parents and children, and which promote ongoing family relationships and co-operative parenting
- Provide tailored information and access to services that may assist in resolving disputes, or may assist those who are trying to save their relationship

The Children and Family Services Division at the Legal Services Commission is responsible for the management and development of the pilot project.



where?

Where is
the pilot
operating?

After the introduction of FAInS in 2001, an initial 6 month pre-pilot began in 2002. A first phase of full pilot operation began in 2003 and has since been expanded into a number of areas in England and Wales.

The pilot is currently operating in:

Basingstoke

Cardiff

Eastbourne

Exeter

Hartlepool

Hastings

Leeds

Lincoln

London (*Boroughs of Camden, Harrow and Tower Hamlets*)

Mansfield

Merseyside (*Sefton, Knowsley, St Helens*)

Nottingham

Oldham

Suffolk (*Babergh, mid- coastal Suffolk, Ipswich*)

Stockton on Tees

Telford

Further expansion is planned.

How does it work?

Currently the Family Advice & Information Service is being supplied by family solicitors who have undertaken a programme of Professional Development for this role. These family solicitors are able to spend time exploring, with the client, the issues to be addressed.

The solicitor is able to provide the client with legal advice and, if necessary, legal representation, whilst also helping to identify other specialist services that may benefit the client. This could be helping a client to access the services of a trained counsellor or a debt advisor, or referring a client to mediation, for example. This is part of an ongoing process, with the family solicitor acting as the client's 'case manager', whilst the client addresses his or her issues. The Law Society and the Solicitors Family Law Association (SFLA) have given their full support to this project, in recognition of the importance of a holistic approach in resolving family and

relationship breakdown.

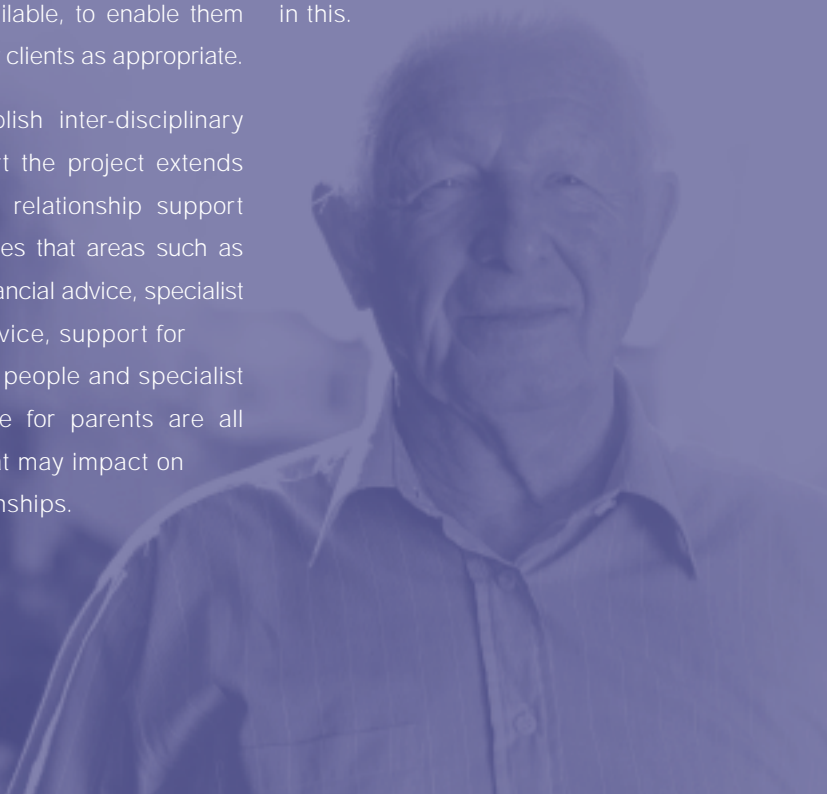
A number of family mediation services are also piloting models of FAInS across the country, and the project is planning to introduce other models and access points for supplying FAInS, for example, with the advice sector. The project is engaging with lead bodies at a national level, and with local services, to implement these plans.

Developing Networks

Interdisciplinary working and local partnerships between the legal and advice sector is key to the effectiveness of FAInS. Participants need to have an understanding and a good local knowledge of specialist advice services available, to enable them to signpost and refer clients as appropriate.

The need to establish inter-disciplinary networks to support the project extends beyond family and relationship support services. It recognises that areas such as debt counselling, financial advice, specialist welfare benefits advice, support for children and young people and specialist support and advice for parents are all pertinent issues that may impact on families and relationships.

One of the purposes of the Family Advice & Information Service pilot is to identify the type of agencies that need to be in the network, how they can best be funded, and the role that central government plays in this.



getting involved

Getting involved

If you are interested in becoming involved in the project please get in touch.

You can contact the project team by email at:

family@legalservices.gov.uk

or by writing to us at the address shown below:

Legal Services Commission

Children and Family Services Division

85 Gray's Inn Road

London WC1X 8TX

If you would like to speak to someone about FAInS, please phone the project team on **020 7759 0315**.

involved

What kind of family services can be involved?

This gives an example of the kind of organisations and services that have a role to play in the Family Advice & Information Service.





Working in Partnership

Working in consultation with the legal sector, advice sector and mediation sector respectively is an important part of the Family Advice & Information Service. This includes working with representatives from lead bodies as well as those people who are working as FAInS suppliers, by means of a Practitioner Forum. This communication is invaluable in developing the pilot with those who are working within it.

research⁹

Research

A significant research programme supports the project. The key aim of the research is to be able to identify what difference the introduction of the pilot makes. It will also identify where funding in family services needs to be targeted, in order to deliver the services that are needed to help families in crisis.



where?

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Where can you get more information?

You can get more information about the Family Advice & Information Service pilot and the Children and Family Services Division on the Legal Services Commission website at:

www.legalservices.gov.uk/civil/fains/fains.asp