

Vale Family Information Service

Annual Report

April 2025 - March 2026



Family Information Service

Highlights 2025-26



What We Achieved

- Transitioned to the Vale Family Compass (VFC), new single point of access for families.
- **16,600** views to the new website
- Successful rebrand of VFC Facebook, with **4,883** followers.
- Childcare providers are promoting the Childcare Offer to parents, displaying gate banners and information packs



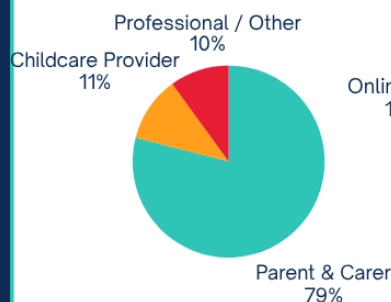
- Supported **40** parents at Barry Job Centre Plus, discussing childcare options to help them back into work
- Hosted 2 family Christmas parties, welcoming **715** individuals and securing funding through Warm Spaces to provide healthy snacks.
- **132** new children registered on The Index. **923** now on The Index and accessing support and information.
- Achieved Carer Friendly accreditation and became Dementia Friends



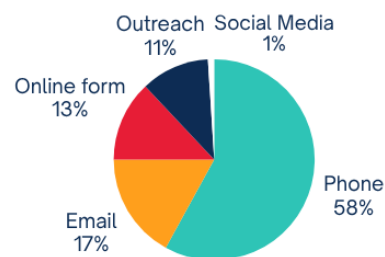
What the data shows us

1,034 enquiries received, 20% decrease and 184 transferred

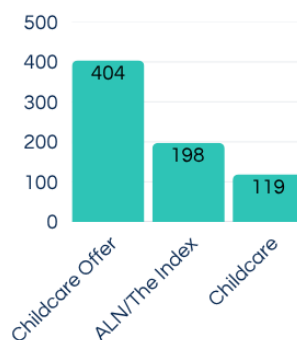
Who contacted FIS



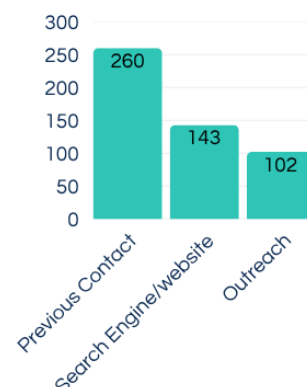
Enquiry Channel



Top 3 Reasons for Enquiry



Top 3 Sources of Enquiry



What Families Tell Us

- ✓ Families feel supported and informed
- ✓ Information is clear and helpful
- ✓ Parents value one-to-one support
- ✓ Families feel more confident accessing services
- ✓ Service is described as "helpful", "supportive" and "excellent"



What We Will Do Next

Improve Visibility of Vale Family Compass Website

Expand Outreach to Families with Children age 0-3yrs

Increase Awareness of the Compass as the Main Access Point

Improve Data Collection and Reporting

Strengthen Referrals to The Index

Improving Childcare Offer Awareness

Supporting Childcare Planning

Create a Birth Folder for New Parents

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1. ABOUT THE TEAM

1.1 Team Structure

The Family Information Service sits within the wider Social Care Information Team, alongside the Dewis Cymru Regional Team. They are based in the Resource Management and Safeguarding department, in Social Services.

Team members during 2025-26:

- Becky Wickett – Social Care Information Team Manager
- Kelly Fenton – FIS Outreach and Information Officer
- Dawn Jenkins – Social Care Information Assistant
- Lyndsey Richards – Index and FIS Support Officer (*Families First funded*)
- Kath King – Childcare Offer Engagement Officer (*Childcare Offer Admin Grant*)
- Eva Dixon – Childcare Offer Support Assistant (*Childcare Offer Admin Grant*)
- Social Care Information Assistant (currently vacant)

1.2 Purpose and Remit

The Vale of Glamorgan Family Information Service (FIS) is a universal, one-stop information service for parents and carers of children and young people aged 0–20, as well as professionals and childcare providers across the Vale.

FIS now forms part of the new **Vale Family Compass**, a single point of access for families in the Vale. Working alongside the Early Help Advice Line and Children's Services Intake Team.

The service delivers the Council's statutory Information duty as part of the **Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA)** service under the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014*. The service also supports compliance with Section 27 of the Childcare Act 2006 and the Childcare Statutory Guidance (2016) by providing prescribed information on childcare and related services.



FIS provides free, impartial information and guidance on a wide range of family related topics, including childcare and help with costs, inclusive activities for children and young people, family support services, groups for new parents, and other matters important to families.

The team maintains local service information on **Dewis Cymru**, which also feeds into the **Childcare Information Wales website**. They work closely with many partners including: Childcare and Early Years, Flying Start, Early Help Advice Line, Children and Young People Services, Learning and Skills and more, to ensure a seamless service to families.

FIS also supports the sustainability and development of the local childcare sector.

2. OBJECTIVES AND KEY AREAS OF WORK (25-26)

2.1 Alignment with Corporate Objectives

The team's priorities align with the following corporate objectives:

- 1 Develop an Integrated Front Door across Early Help and Statutory Children's Services (Social Services Directorate Plan 2025-26)
- 2 Use digital technology more innovatively to improve services whilst ensuring that services are accessible to everyone (Vale 2030)
- 3 Focus on families of children living in poverty and help them to increase their income, access food and housing and escape poverty through wraparound support and advice services (Vale 2030)
- 4 Improve access to good quality and timely advice, support and services to families (Vale 2030)

2.2 FIS Objectives Last Year 2025-26

- 1 Support the transition of the FIS to an **Integrated Front Door** for Children, young people and family services
- 2 Promote the **Childcare Offer** to parents via childcare providers, using **information packs, posters and outdoor banners**.
- 3 Develop and implement a **targeted communication and outreach plan** to raise awareness of the full range of Family Information Service (FIS) support.

- 4 Establish **referral pathways to The Index** through Education professionals, the Neurodevelopmental Service and Flying Start.
- 5 Enhance **accessibility of information and engagement** through new and existing **technology solutions**, including social media and the Dewis Cymru to host the holiday activity programmes.
- 6 Promote the **Welsh language** throughout all FIS and contribute to delivering actions within the **Mwy Na Geiriau Plan**.
- 7 Review and improve information on childcare provision, services and activities for children and young people listed on the **Dewis Cymru directory**.

3. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

3.1 Transitioned FIS to the Vale Family Compass

A key achievement this year was the **launch of Vale Family Compass (VFC)** in November 2025. Creating a single point of access to a range of family support services, including the Family Information Service (FIS), Early Help provision and the Intake Team. This integrated approach ensures families receive the right support at the right time.



The FIS team played a central role in the development and delivery of the Compass, contributing to project governance, leading on website content, and supporting the full rebrand, including new contact arrangements and a dedicated website.

Early engagement has been strong, with the website attracting over **16,600** views in its first five months. Social media promotion focusing on the launch also achieved over **4,500** views.

Further work will focus on joined-up outreach delivery with the Early Help Advice Line and transitioning FIS content fully onto the Vale Family Compass platform. Plus enhancing promotion of the VFC through the distribution of publications and information packs to key partners and community settings. In addition, ongoing development of digital access, improved visibility of online services, and strengthened search optimisation will ensure that parents and carers can access information easily and effectively.

3.2 Childcare Providers Promoting the Childcare Offer

Childcare providers played a key role in promoting the Childcare Offer by sharing information packs with parents. These packs included details on the Childcare Offer and Nursery Education, as well as guidance on help with childcare costs and information about FIS and The Index.



In 2025–26, **17 providers distributed over 300 information packs** to parents. Feedback from providers was positive, with many reporting that parents found the information helpful and were previously unaware of available support. Providers also highlighted the value of having clear, accessible materials to explain funding options.

“Very handy to have something concrete to give to our parents, as the funding can be quite difficult to explain.”

To further enhance awareness, **50 Childcare Offer posters** were requested by 23 providers, and **gate banners were displayed at 18 settings**.



Example of a banner at a school, where there is childcare provision on site.

This approach has contributed to an increase in enquiries from parents who learned about the Offer through their childcare provider.

3.3 Supported Children with Additional Needs through the Additional Support Grant

The Additional Support Grant has been used to fund additional staffing for **17 children** from April 2025-26. This has meant that these children’s needs could be met in their childcare provision, they could access the Childcare Offer, and their parents could continue to work.

A further **18 children** with additional needs have been supported with advice for staff from ALN colleagues, funded by the Additional Support Grant.

3.4 Provided a Targeted Outreach Service, Increasing Visibility in Areas of Deprivation

The Family Information Service (FIS) continued to deliver targeted outreach activity to support families in areas of deprivation and those facing barriers to employment and access to services.

Monthly outreach sessions were held at Barry Jobcentre, providing one-to-one support for parents seeking childcare solutions to enable them to enter or return to work. During the year, **40 individuals received tailored support**. To increase reach, a **pilot group session** was introduced in March, offering accessible information to up to 10 parents per session, ensuring key messages could be delivered more efficiently.

In addition, the Team maintained a strong presence at community-based initiatives, including **monthly drop-in sessions at CF61 in Llantwit Major**, alongside the free café, food bank and clothes hub. They worked collaboratively with Citizens Advice, Vale Employability and other partner services. The team also attended a range of free summer outreach events, ensuring families experiencing financial hardship could access information and support.

In December 2025, the team hosted **two family Christmas parties at Barry Memo Arts Centre**, welcoming **715** people and 22 organisations. Funding from the Welsh Government Warm Spaces programme allowed free snacks and drinks to be provided, helping remove cost barriers and making families feel welcome.



Feedback was extremely positive, with parents giving **4.8 stars** and providers giving **4.9 stars**. **100%** would attend a similar event again.

"We enjoyed everything on offer especially having the snacks this year which was a great idea and it being free means you can go without worrying about hidden costs." Parent of 3-year-old.

These activities helped raise awareness of the service and improved engagement with families who need support the most.

3.5 New Platform to Host the Holiday Activity Programme

The Summer Holiday Activity Programme was moved to the Dewis Cymru website, making it easier for families to search for holiday schemes, activities and events online. In total, **204** activities were promoted.



The new digital approach improved efficiency, reduced administration time and increased engagement, with website views rising by **139%** and social media posts reaching **over 4,500** views. Improved accessibility features, including hashtags for inclusive activities, also helped families identify support for children and young people with additional needs.

Following its success, the same approach was used for the October half-term programme.

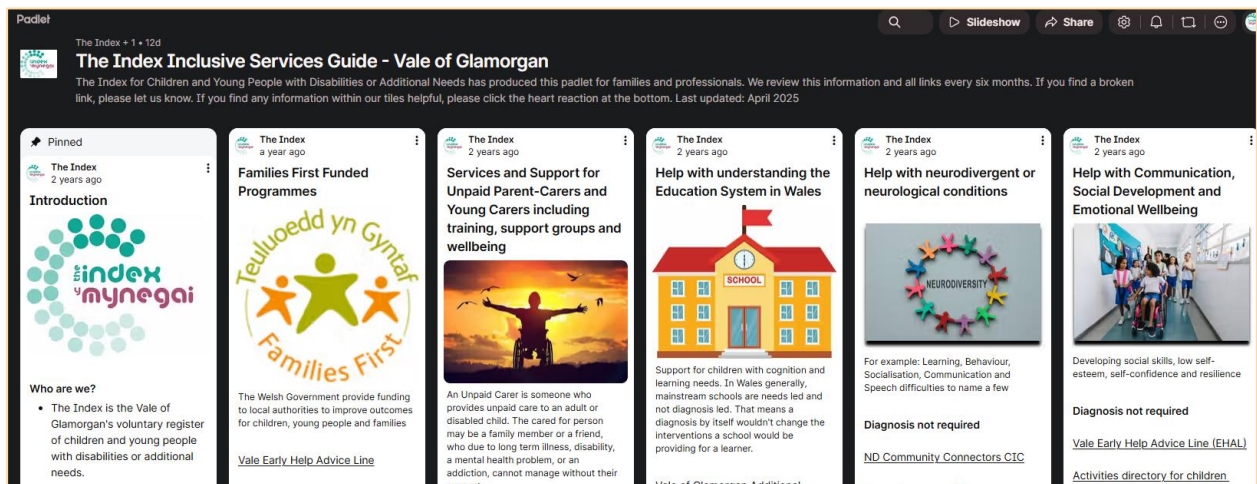
3.6 Improved Partnership Working to Raise the Profile of The Index

Partnership working has continued to strengthen awareness and access to The Index for families and professionals across the Vale. During the year, **131** new children and young people registered with The Index, bringing the total to **923** accessing support and information services.

The Index Officer worked closely with partners to review and improve the **The Index Education Guide**, including updated information on transport and education support for children with visual impairments and hearing loss. Regular partnership meetings with health and other services also helped improve links between organisations and ensure information remained relevant and accessible for families.



The Index Officer also produced an online Guide to Inclusive Services 'Padlet', which is regularly reviewed:



Community engagement remained an important focus, with the team attending schools and local events. A range of communications activity also helped raise awareness, including **33** e-bulletins featuring **165** articles, **2 Newsletters** and the promotion of inclusive holiday activities. In addition, a new referral pathway with the Flying Start Childcare Team was introduced, resulting in **39** referrals to The Index to date.

3.7 Team achieved Carer Friendly Accreditation and became Dementia Friends

The Team achieved **Carer Friendly accreditation**, awarded by TuVida, recognising the service's commitment to improving support, accessibility, and information for unpaid carers across the Vale of Glamorgan.



In addition, the team became **Dementia Friends** in May 2025, further strengthening awareness and understanding of dementia and promoting small but meaningful actions to support those affected.

3.8 FIS Retains Families First Quality Award Accreditation

The Team successfully maintained accreditation for the **Families First Quality Award** for the third year running. This award recognises excellence in delivering information, advice, and assistance to local families. The assessment process involves evidencing performance against **16 standards**, including how the team supports families of children with disabilities.



4. PERFORMANCE AND ENQUIRIES

4.1 Summary

The Family Information Service (FIS) receives enquiries from parents and carers, professionals and partners working with children and young people, as well as childcare providers. This section analyses enquiry data to understand patterns of need and changes over time, including the impact of the transition to the Vale Family Compass in November 2025.

Overall, the number of enquiries has decreased. However, this does not necessarily reflect a reduction in demand. Instead, the findings suggest a shift in how families access information and support. Increased digital access, alongside the introduction of the Vale Family Compass as a single point of access, has enabled more families to find information independently or be directed to the most appropriate service more quickly.

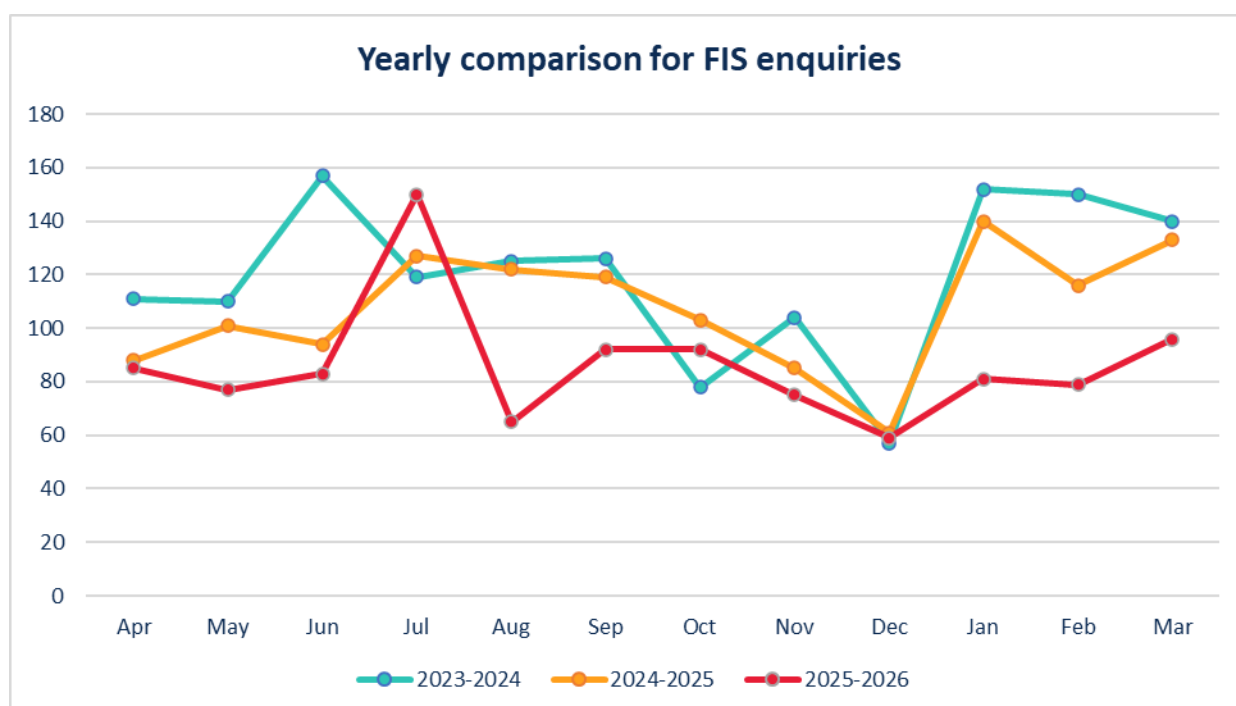
This is supported by the number of enquiries redirected to other services, indicating that demand continues across the wider system even if it is not always recorded by FIS.

The data also shows that while overall volumes have reduced, the profile of enquiries, contact channels and key topics of demand have remained largely consistent. This suggests that user behaviour is relatively stable, but access routes are evolving.

In response, the FIS team will focus on increasing awareness of the Vale Family Compass, improving visibility of key website pages, and strengthening search optimisation to ensure families can easily access information and support.

4.2 Overall Trend in Enquiries

The total number of enquiries received by the Family Information Service (FIS) in 2025–26 was **1,034**. Over the past three years, total enquiries have decreased year-on-year, from 1,430 in 2023–24 to 1,034 in 2025–26, representing an overall reduction of **28%**.



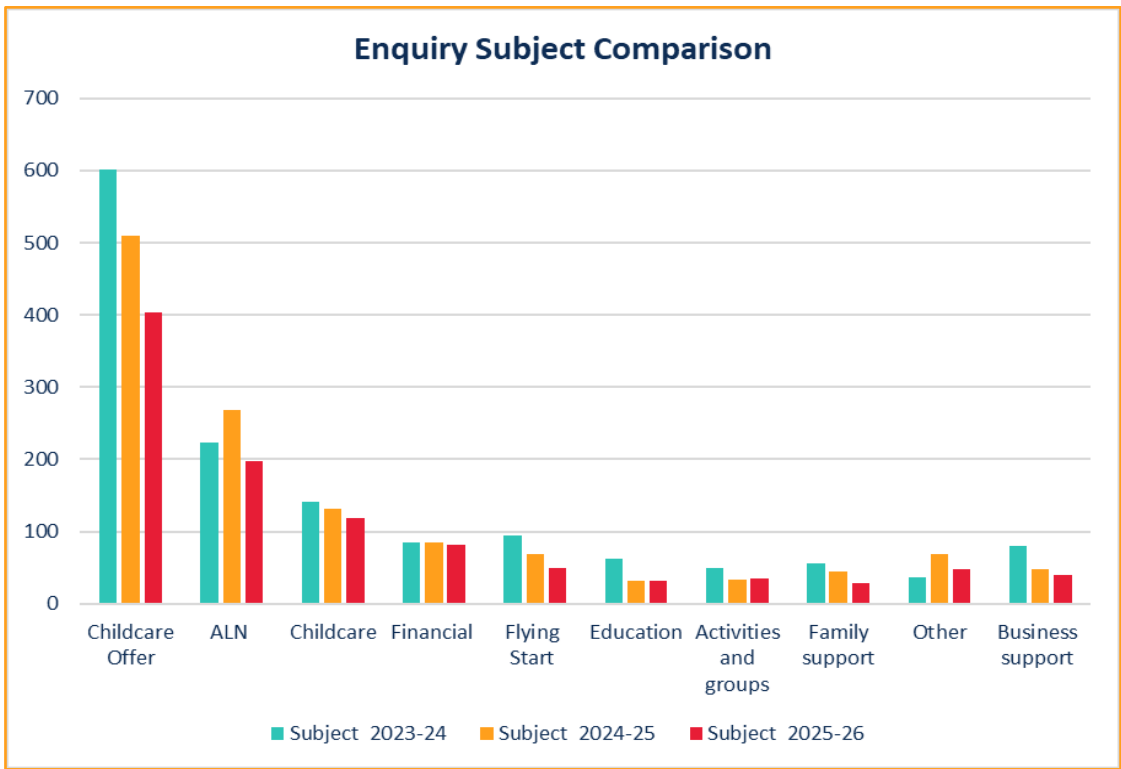
To assess the specific impact of the Vale Family Compass and the introduction of the new telephone system, enquiry volumes between November and March were compared across the three years. Between November 2025 and March 2026, FIS received **390** enquiries, compared to **535** in 2024–25 and **603** in 2023–24, representing a notable reduction over the same period in previous years.

While this suggests a significant decline in demand during the implementation period, it should be considered within the context of the overall downward trend in enquiries across the full year.

It is also important to note that during the initial implementation period, FIS was configured as option 1 on the new telephone system. As a result, the service experienced a high volume of misdirected calls (184), which required onward transfer to either the Early Help Advice Line or Children’s Services Intake Team.

This indicates that while recorded enquiries to FIS decreased, actual demand across the wider system may not have reduced to the same extent but instead reflects changes in routing and access arrangements associated with the rollout of the Vale Family Compass.

4.3 Subject Comparison



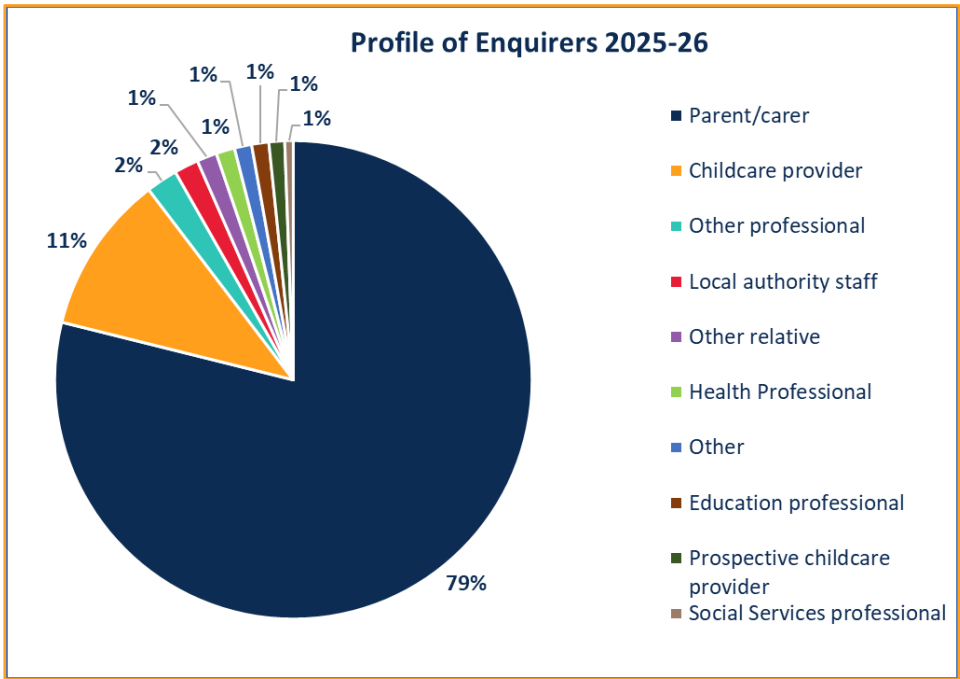
Despite the overall reduction in enquiries, demand continues to centre on key statutory information areas, particularly **Childcare Offer for Wales, childcare provision and support for children with additional needs**. This reinforces the importance of maintaining accessible, high-quality information, advice and assistance services, while continuing to adapt delivery models to meet changing patterns of demand.

There has been a **reduction in enquiries for the Childcare Offer** over the past three years. This may reflect increased awareness and familiarity with the scheme, which has been established in the Vale for over six years. Many parents are now already familiar with the application process

through previous experiences with older children. In addition, the launch of the national digital application system in 2023 generated higher enquiry levels. Plus, the Childcare Offer web pages have received an increase in views, suggesting that people are accessing the information digitally.

While most categories have declined, some areas such as **financial support enquiries** have remained relatively stable, suggesting continued demand linked to the cost of living and affordability of childcare.

4.4 Profile of Enquirers



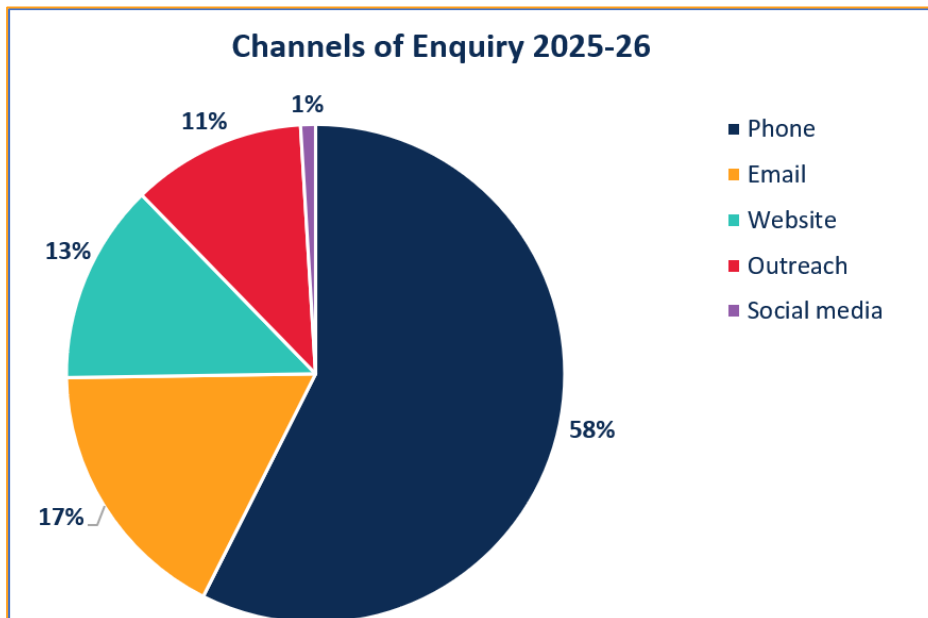
The majority of people contacting the service continue to be parents and carers, accounting for **79%** of all enquiries in 2025–26. This is broadly consistent with previous years, with parents and carers representing **77%** of enquiries in 2024–25 and **76%** in 2023–24. Childcare providers accounted for **11%** of enquiries, while significantly smaller proportions came from other professionals, local authority staff, health professionals, relatives and partner agencies.

4.5 Channels of Enquiry

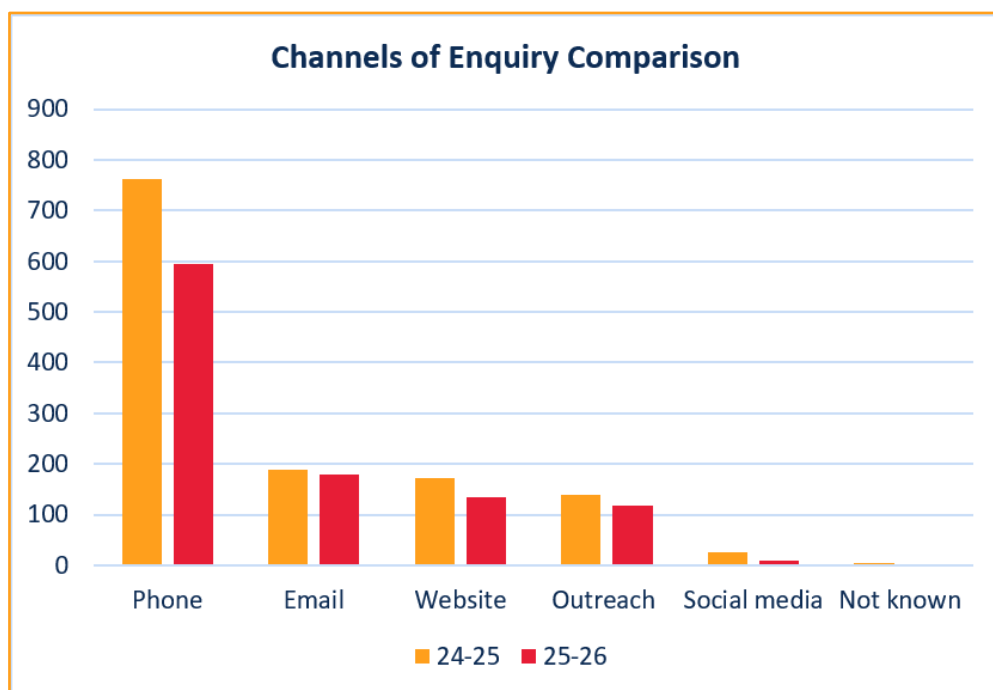
Despite the overall reduction in enquiry volumes outlined in Section 4.1, the distribution of enquiries across contact channels has remained largely consistent.

Telephone enquiries continued to account for the majority of contacts, representing **57.4%** of all enquiries in 2025–26 compared with **59.1%** in the previous year.

Email enquiries increased slightly as a proportion of overall contacts (**17.3%** compared with **14.7%**), while enquiries received via outreach activities and website remained relatively stable in proportional terms.



When comparing absolute volumes over the last two years, there has been a notable decrease in both telephone enquiries (a reduction of **168 enquiries**) and website enquiries (a reduction of **38 enquiries**). The decrease in website enquiries may be partly attributed to the introduction of the Vale Family Compass website, where the enquiry form is currently less prominent. This presents an opportunity to improve visibility and encourage usage of this channel.



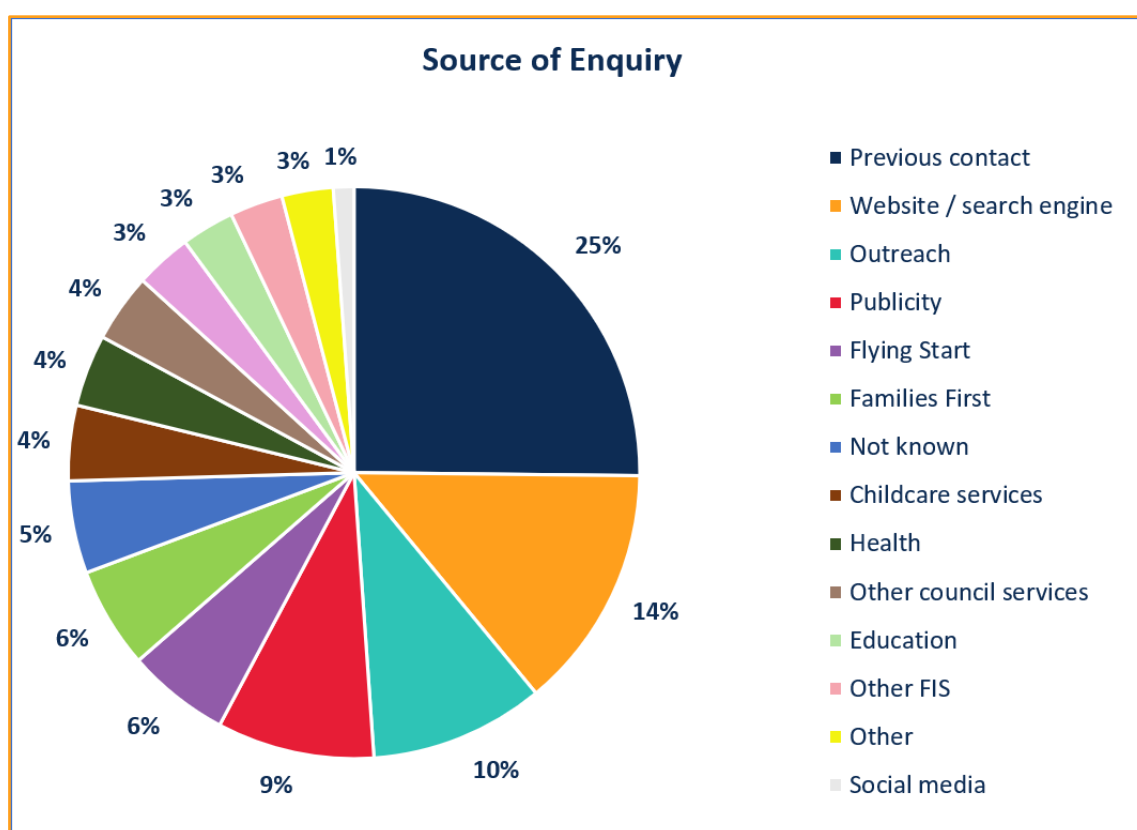
Overall, the introduction of the Vale Family Compass does not appear to have significantly altered the way families access information and support, as the relative distribution of enquiries across channels remains broadly unchanged. However, the reduction in overall enquiry volumes, alongside stable channel proportions, may indicate that more families are accessing information independently through online resources before making direct contact with the service.

It should also be noted that telephone enquiry figures include calls relating to the Childcare Offer received via the **national helpline** and subsequently recorded by the FIS. These enquiries contribute to the consistently high proportion of contacts received via telephone each year.

4.6 Source of Enquiries

The distribution of enquiry sources in 2025–26 shows that the majority of contacts continue to come from a small number of key routes. The largest source of enquiries was **previous contact with the service**, accounting for **260 enquiries**, followed by **website/search engine routes (143 enquiries)** and **outreach activity (102 enquiries)**.

This indicates that a significant proportion of families are either **returning users** or accessing the service through established routes rather than new referral pathways.



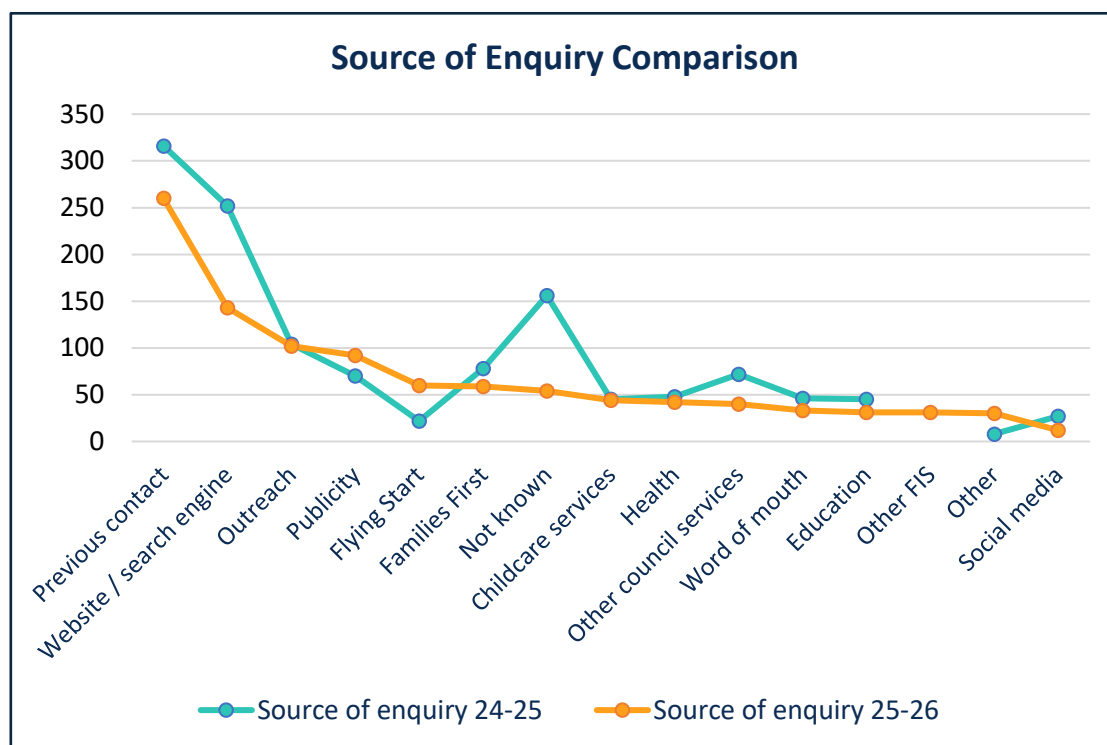
When compared with 2024–25, several notable shifts can be seen:

- **Decreases in key sources: Website/search engine; Previous Contact; Not known.**

The reduction in website/search enquiries aligns with earlier findings in Section 4.4 and may reflect: improved access to information without needing to submit an enquiry; changes to visibility of enquiry routes on the new Vale Family Compass; Transition to the new Vale Family Compass website. As a newly established platform, it may not yet have the same level of visibility in search engine results as previous webpages, particularly for common search terms such as childcare and family support.

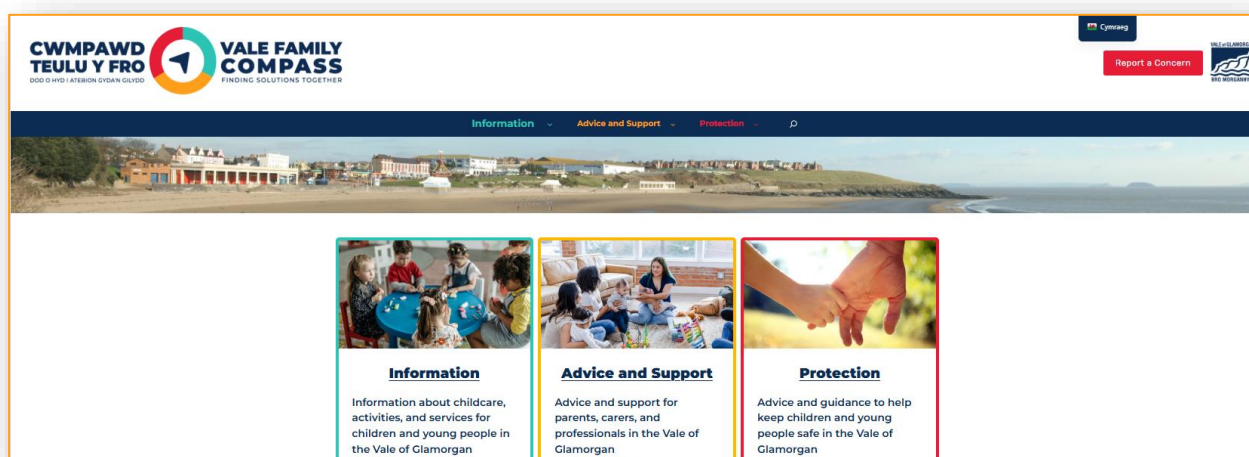
Actions for the coming year will focus on improving search engine optimisation (SEO), increasing awareness of the Vale Family Compass through targeted communications, and enhancing the visibility of enquiry forms within the site.

- **Increases in targeted / partnership work: Publicity; Flying Start; Other FIS and Other.**



4.7 Digital Performance

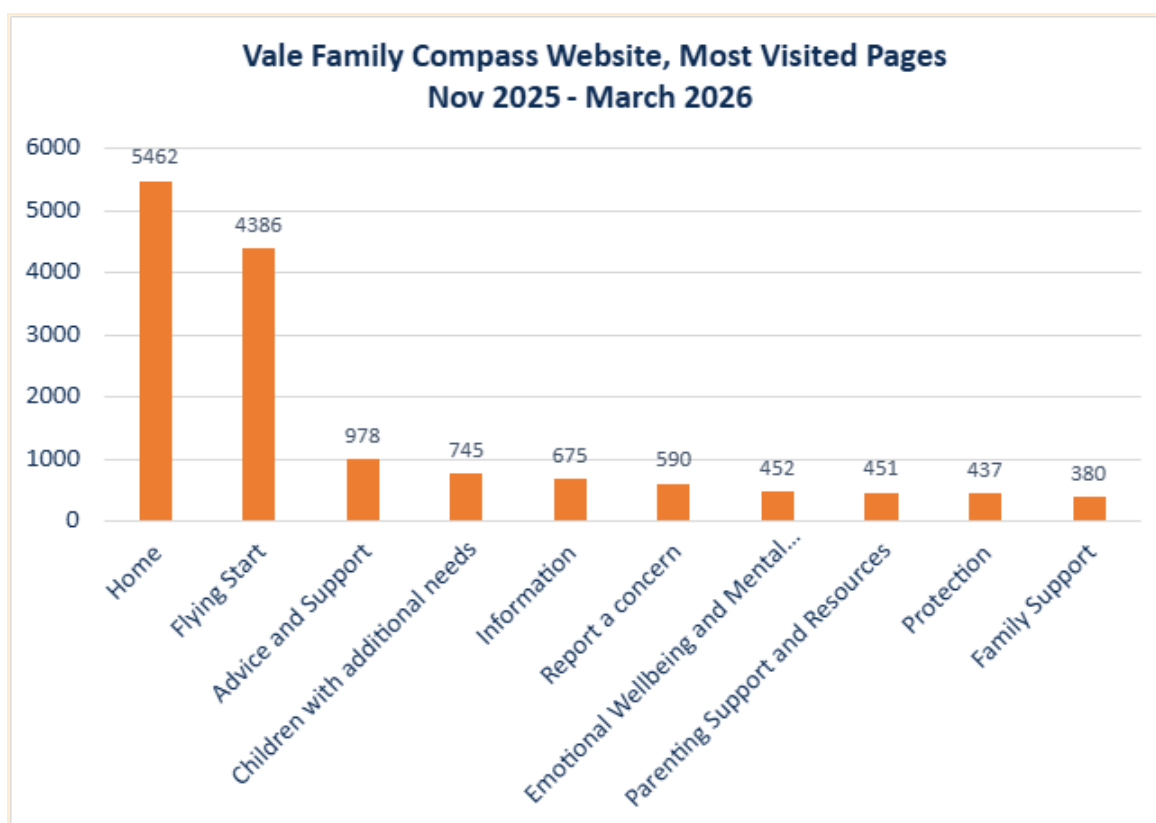
Website



FIS web pages on the Vale Council website received almost **29,000 views** over the year. In November 2025, the Vale Family Compass website was launched as a central hub for information and advice for families in the Vale. As part of this development, most information previously held on FIS webpages was transferred to the new platform, alongside additional content relating to keeping children safe.

Since its launch, the Vale Family Compass website has received over **16,500 views** within its first five months, demonstrating strong initial engagement. The top ten most visited pages are shown below.

When reviewing performance across both platforms, it is evident that several high-traffic FIS webpages on the Vale Council website, including '*Choosing Childcare*' and '*Help with Childcare Costs*', have seen a reduction in views following the transfer of content to the Vale Family Compass site. This suggests that, although users are engaging with the new platform, key pages may not yet be as visible or easily accessible—particularly through search engines or direct navigation. This highlights an opportunity to improve visibility, strengthen search engine optimisation and ensure clear signposting to enquiry routes.



The **Childcare Offer webpages** remain hosted on the Vale Council website and continue to perform strongly. These pages received almost **8,000 views** over the last year, representing an increase of approximately **500 views** compared to the previous year.

Social Media Engagement



The [FIS Facebook page](#) was rebranded alongside the introduction of the Vale Family Compass. This was communicated gradually, allowing followers to anticipate and engage with the change. Launch-related posts achieved a combined reach of over **4,500 views**.

The page currently has **4,883** followers, representing a **4%** increase over the year. Notably, **48** followers were gained following posts promoting the FIS Christmas Party, demonstrating the impact of targeted, event-based content.

Overall, the page received a total of **395,143** views during the year, indicating consistently high levels of engagement. The most viewed posts included announcements of the FIS Christmas Party, promotion of February half-term outreach activity, information on free school meals during holidays, and free swimming at Vale leisure centres.



The FIS Outreach and Information Officer has established a working group with representatives from the Early Help Team and Children's Services Intake Team. The aim of this group is to coordinate communication across services and ensure that information about the full range of support available through the Vale Family Compass is shared in a consistent and accessible way.

5. CHALLENGES AND LEARNING

1. Increasing demand for additional needs support

Demand for support for children with additional needs continues to grow. Families face challenges accessing suitable childcare, particularly where additional staffing is required. Funding for school-age childcare remains limited, and providers may experience workforce capacity issues even where funding is available.



2. Financial barriers for families accessing childcare

Families claiming Universal Credit continue to face difficulties with upfront childcare costs and delays in reimbursement. This can create financial pressure and act as a barrier to taking up employment opportunities.

3. System implementation challenges

The introduction of new systems presented initial operational challenges, including formatting issues with the e-bulletin system and early "teething issues" with the new phone system. Through collaboration with ICT and partners, systems have since improved and are now operating effectively.



4. Developing referral pathways

While engagement with the Neurodevelopment Team has continued, a formal referral pathway to The Index has not yet been established. However, partnership working has ensured that information about the Vale Family Compass and The Index is shared with families awaiting assessment.

5. Staffing pressures during transition

The team experienced staffing pressures during the transition to the Vale Family Compass, including periods of absence. Despite this, priorities were managed effectively and services were maintained for families.

6. Learning from the single front door transition

The transition to the integrated “single front door” initially increased enquiry volumes and introduced a wider range of queries. Through strong partnership working, processes were refined, staff knowledge increased, and call handling improved. This has strengthened efficiency and ensured families are directed to the most appropriate support more effectively.



6. ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK

6.1 Case Study

Case Study



Background

A childcare setting contacted the Childcare Offer team as they were unable to meet a child's additional needs within the standard staffing ratio.

Working alongside Additional Learning Needs colleagues, funding for an additional support worker was approved through the Additional Support Grant (ASG). This enabled the child to remain in the setting with appropriate support until transition to full-time education.

Challenges

The child was due to start at a specialist school in September 2025, but building delays meant the placement was not ready until later in the year. As there was no suitable alternative school place available, the family requested an extension to the Childcare Offer so the child could stay in their current setting with the support they needed.

Action

The team applied to Welsh Government for an exceptional funding request and collected supporting information from the parents, childcare setting, specialist staff, and educational psychologists, to clearly show the child's needs and why continued support was required.



Outcome

The extension of both the Childcare Offer and ASG funding was approved by Welsh Government

As a result:

- The child remained in a familiar setting until specialist provision was available
- Additional staffing support continued
- Transition to the new setting was less disruptive
- Parents were able to remain in employment

Parent Feedback

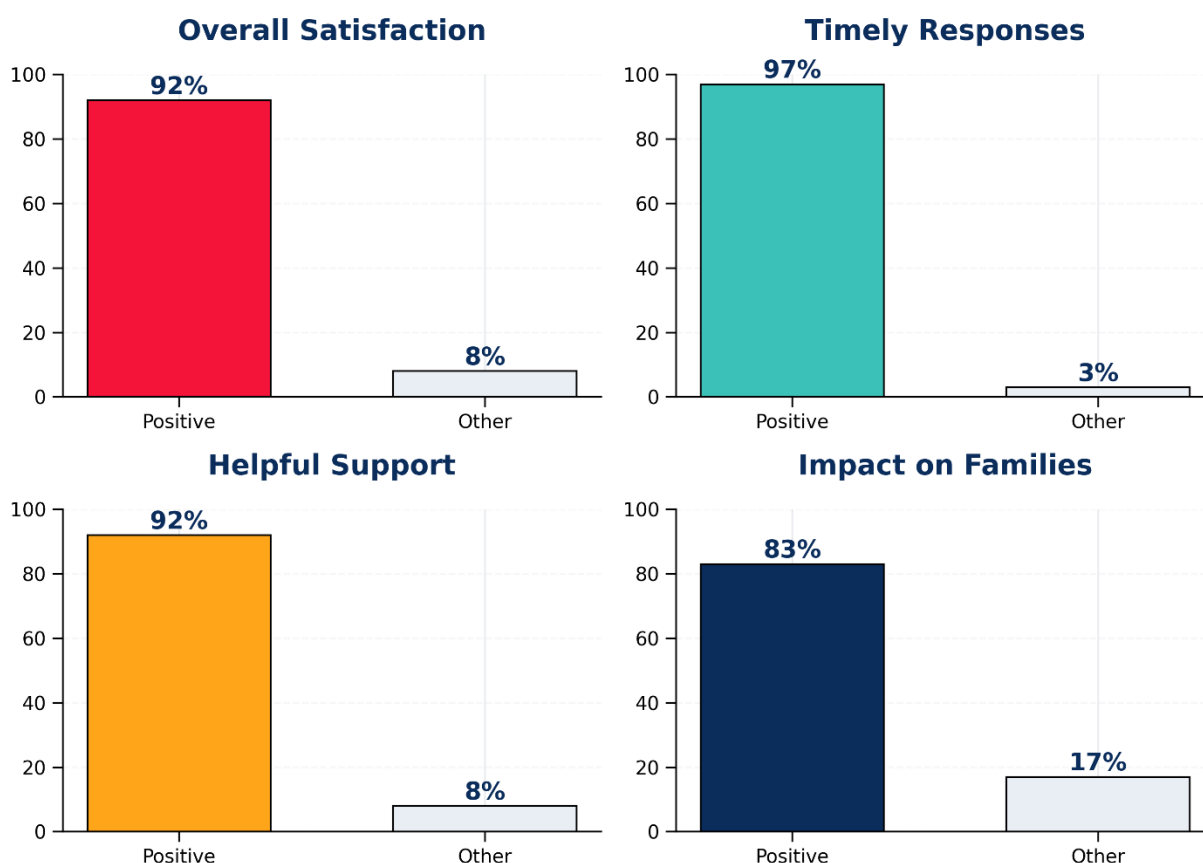
"Thank you so much for all of your help and support it has been crucial for A to keep getting that continuity when she needed it and for that I'm really grateful."

6.2 What Customers Tell Us

Feedback from families and professionals has been overwhelmingly positive. A total of **38** people completed feedback forms, with **35** reporting they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service. Almost all respondents' said enquiries were answered within a reasonable time, and **35** people rated the support, advice and information provided as highly helpful.

All respondents said they were able to communicate in their preferred language, and everyone who answered the question said they would recommend the service to others. Most parents said the service had made a positive difference to them and their family, particularly by helping them access services, understand available support and feel more confident about the future.

Service Feedback Results



Written feedback highlighted the value of the information, advice and one-to-one support provided. Parents described the service as **“helpful”**, **“supportive”** and **“excellent”**, with many commenting that no improvements were needed. Several parents also noted how useful the service had been while awaiting assessments or navigating childcare and additional needs support.

What People Have Said



7. PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS FOR 2026-27

1. Review **Vale Family Compass website** and search optimisation, so information is easy to find, up to date and accessible
2. Increase partner engagement to **raise awareness of Vale Family Compass**, and improve joined up support
3. **Increase outreach to families with children aged 0–3** to promote childcare, help with childcare costs and full range of FIS services
4. Trial new approaches to **data capture and reporting for The Index**, to improve understanding of demand
5. Establish a **referral pathway to The Index** for school ALNCos and increase engagement and Index registrations
6. Work with partners to create a **'Birth Registrar'** folder for new parents in the Vale
7. Support the Childcare and Early Years Team to carry out the **Childcare Sufficiency Assessment** to meet local needs
8. **Review and improve Childcare Offer information**, by consulting with providers and parents, to increase understanding and uptake

8. CONTACT DETAILS

Vale Family Compass

0808 281 6727 option 2 for **Family Information Service**

familycompass@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

valefamilycompass.co.uk



[@ValeFamilyCompass](https://www.facebook.com/ValeFamilyCompass)



www.Dewis.Cymru
Cael dewis a chymryd rheolaeth



www.Dewis.Wales
Have choice and take control