

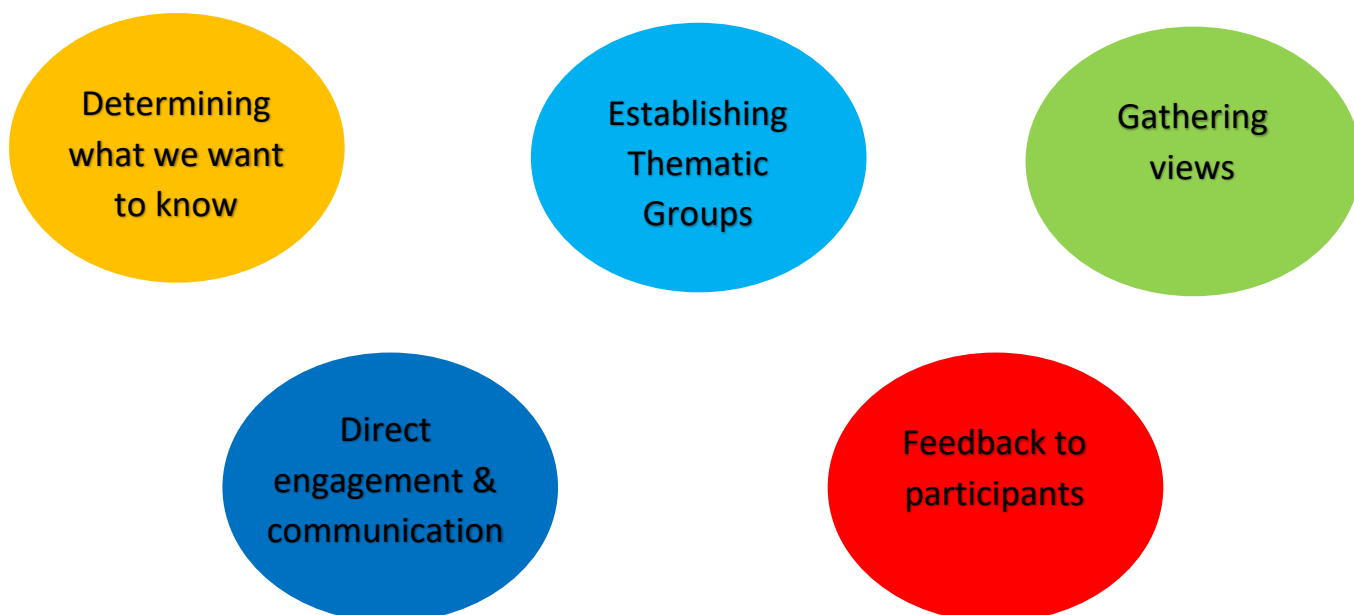
Engaging parents and carers in the work of the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care Services in Northern Ireland.

Children in Northern Ireland

Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) is the umbrella body for the children’s sector in Northern Ireland and represents the interests of its 150 member organisations providing policy, information, training, participation and support services directly to children, young people and their parents/carers.

Parental / carer engagement model

The process of engaging parents and carers will have five key elements or stages.



DETERMINING WHAT WE WANT TO KNOW

Parents and carers offer a critically important perspective in relation to the remit of the Review. Alongside children, they are experts by experience, and it is essential to have a clear focus in tapping into that experience.

Suggested questions may include:

What has been your experience with Children’s Social Services?

What support have you received and who from?

What do you feel has worked well?

What do you feel has not worked well?

How many professionals / agencies are involved in supporting your family?

Do you think they work together well?

What support do you feel would be most useful for your family?

What changes do you feel would make things better for your children and family?

Do you feel you have been involved in decisions affecting your children's lives?
Would you like more of a say in those decisions?
Do you feel you are respected / listened to / understood by the professionals and agencies who support you and your family?
Would you like to have a say in how services are planned and delivered?
What would get in the way of you doing this? – what supports would you need to participate?

ESTABLISHING THEMATIC GROUPS

It is anticipated that a broad range of views and experiences will be captured. In order to ensure that the Review hears of relatively recent experience, all Thematic Groups will involve individuals who have been in contact with Social Services within the past five years.

Examples of relevant Thematic Groups:

- Parents/ carers who are prisoners
- Parents/ carers who have children with intellectual, physical, and sensory disabilities
- Parents / carers subjected to violence in the home
- Parents/ carers involved in fostering / adoption
- Parents / carers involved in Child Protection / Safeguarding
- Parents/ carers who are involved in kinship caring

GATHERING VIEWS

A wide range of methodologies will be deployed. Quantitative instruments such as surveys can be useful in ascertaining broad measures e.g. levels of satisfaction with various aspects of service. Qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, workshops, discussions and focus groups will illicit more in-depth information and provide detailed illustrative data relating to the participant's lived experience.

Given that, for some participants, recounting their experience may be difficult, embarrassing, or upsetting CiNI will provide one-to-one as well as group opportunities for input.

Due to the evolving situation in relation to Covid 19 and the changing nature of public health protection measures, it may be necessary to conduct interviews by telephone and groups may have to take place on-line.

DIRECT ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION OF VIEWS

Parents and carers involved in Children's Social Services include some of the most marginalised and vulnerable in our society.

In CiNI's experience, the most powerful and impactful engagement takes place when it is possible to bring parents and carers into direct contact with decision makers i.e. Chair and Independent Panel. CiNI will facilitate such direct engagement through supporting two members of each Thematic Group, on a rotational basis, to participate in meetings with the Chair and the Advisory Group.

The careful preparation of parents and carers before directly presenting their views or participating in meetings, while resource intensive, will also be key to achieving successful outcomes.

FEEDBACK TO PARTICIPANTS

It is important that parents and carers are informed, at the outset, of how their input will be considered and how they will learn what has happened as a result of their engagement with the Review.

CiNI will facilitate a meeting between those parents and carers who have directly engaged with the Chair and Advisory Group, to discuss the Review recommendations. CiNI will also facilitate a further meeting involving the Minister / Departmental representatives so that parents and carers hear their response to the Review recommendations.

SCHEDULE

PERIOD	ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY
March – May 2022	Liaison between Lead consultant and Chair to agree questions / areas for discussion Desk research / collation of relevant material on parental / carer views. Commencement of establishing Thematic Groups. Supporting two parents/carers to attend Advisory group meeting.
June – August 2022	Meetings of Thematic Groups Individual interviews Liaison between Lead Consultant and Chair Supporting two parents/carers to attend Advisory group meetings
September – December 2022	Meetings of Thematic Groups Individual interviews Liaison between Lead Consultant and Chair Supporting two parents/carers to attend Advisory group meetings
January 2023 – March	Meetings of Thematic Groups Individual interviews Liaison between Lead Consultant and Chair Supporting two parents/carers to attend Advisory group meetings
April – May 2023	Facilitating feedback sessions with parents/carers