**Focus group guide for parents of dependent children**

***Welcome to everyone and thanks*** *for joining the group – explain role of second person, introduce ourselves*

*Reminder of the purpose of the focus groups*

We will be discussing two main ways in which governments can use information that they hold on families

***POST IN CHAT***

The first way is joining information together. Records from different services, like health, education, social care and police, can be joined together so that information about all families living in an area is in one place. And the joined together information about a particular family can be pulled out and viewed.

The second way is trying to predict what will happen to families in the future. The information about all families living in an area that’s joined together is analysed by automated computer analysis that looks for patterns (known as algorithms) to flag up families who may be okay now but might have difficulties in the future. Sometimes the families who’ve been identified do go on to have problems, but sometimes they don’t.

We’ve posted these explanations in the chat in case you want to look at them during our discussion.

*Issues about consent/recording and focus group etiquette (respecting others views, trying not to talk over each other – using hand up facility/chat). Any questions?*

***RECORD SESSION***

**Icebreaker**

If you could be anywhere else in the world where would you be?

Let’s start with thinking about information held on families being joined together

**POLL 1 POST**

*(give instructions - these are anonymous so we won’t know who voted in which way)*

* How do you feel about records kept about people being joined together, so Government departments and public services like health, education, the police, social work can find out more information about individual families?

*Poll options: comfortable/not comfortable/not sure*

**Follow ups**: Are you surprised this joining up happens?

Could you say what think about the records being joined up?

**Probes if needed**: What do you think are the benefits?

Does anything worry you about it?

Are there any situations when it is more/less acceptable? ‘

**TRUST**

* One of the things we’re interested in finding out is whether there are some public service~~s~~ that you feel more okay about accessing joined up administrative records about individual families than others. We’ve posted some examples of services in the chat.

***POST***  *Examples: health services such as GPs, health visitors, hospitals / the police / social work / education such as teachers, nursery workers, parenting skills tutors*

Does anyone have any views on this?

* If Government departments and public serviceswant computer programmes that can merge information about families, they may ask private companies to do some of this work, which can involve them passing families’ records to these companies.

What do you think about this? Why?

**OTHER RECORDS**

* We did a survey of parents’ views about administrative records being joined with other information about families held by private companies, for example credit records, supermarket shopping records, internet searches, location data, social media posts, CCTV footage and biological information like fingerprints.

Some parents were more comfortable with CCTV and biological information being joined together with information held by Government agencies, than supermarket shopping records and social media posts for example.

What do you think about this? Why?

***POST***  *Examples: credit records, supermarket shopping records, internet searches, location data, social media posts, CCTV footage, biological information (e.g. fingerprints)*

* Some people may not worry about their information being joined together and analysed, whereas others may not be happy about it. What do you think about whether parents should be asked for permission for information about their families being used?

**POLL 2 POST**

Moving on now to think about using computer algorithms on joined up information about all families to identify which families might face difficulties later on.

* Government departments and public service~~s~~ might join together their records to predict which particular families they think may need support in the future. How do you feel about this?

*Poll options: comfortable/not comfortable/not sure*

**Follow ups:** Are you surprised this happens?

Could you say what you think about predicting which families might need future support?

**Probes if needed:** What do you think are the benefits?

Does anything worry you about it?

Are there any situations when it is more/less acceptable?

**EXAMPLES**

***POST EACH IN CHAT***

* Local councils have been told by Government to gather information together to identify families that have multiple problems, like they’ve been in trouble with the police, had anti-social behaviour, truancy, unemployment, mental health problems and domestic abuse. Once families are identified as having more than one problem, they are given a keyworker to work with them. Families may or may not want this support.

What do you think about this? Why?

**Follow ups:** What if families don’t want this help?

Councils are given additional Government funding for every family they identify and work with, do you think that this makes a difference?

* Jaz and Eric have two mixed-race sons and live on a deprived housing estate. They have previously had problems with Children’s services who did not provide the help they wanted for one of their teenage sons. They are contacted by Children’s services as they have been identified by an algorithm as possibly needing support. Jaz feels discriminated against.

What do you think about this?

**Probes:** Would it make a difference if they were living in a rural area?

Does it make any difference if they are claiming benefits or not?

What about if they had daughters instead of sons?

***USE IF TIME:***

* Chris is a single mum of three kids. She has been struggling and feeling depressed during lockdown. She has been thinking about going to Children’s Services for support, but she is worried as she knows any information she gives them will be recorded and joined up so that other services have access to it, and she does not want her children’s school to find out.

What advice would you give her?

**Probe:** Is this a worry that you think parents might have?

* Some councils are developing ways to try to predict which families may need support in the future so they can target support at those families now. The families may not have problems at the moment, but the council thinks they may do in the future so they are thinking to prevent that.

What do you think about this? Why?

**Probe if needed**: Would you feel that this is an invasion of privacy or an acceptable offer of support?

**CLOSING DOWN**

Has the discussion in this group made you think about how information about your own family might be joined up and used?

Is there anything you feel that we have not covered about identifying particular families for service intervention by joining up information from difference sources? Any questions or any more you want to add?

**Close and thank you**

End with a big thank you 😊

Reminder about use of follow-up chat board/emails if they have any further thoughts after the group.

Tell them when they can expect to receive vouchers for participation.

Remind them about the project website where we will post findings.