Guide for experts, parents and carer discussions

1. Introduction (2 minutes)

Thank the participant for taking part and introduce self/ Ipsos/ NCB/ RiP.

Explain research and purpose of interview:

- Ipsos and NCB / RiP have been commissioned by the Department of Education, to conduct a study about the feasibility of conducting a national survey about experiences of children's social care.
- We are carrying out research with children and young people, those working in the field of children's social care and local authorities to gain in-depth insights into current knowledge, behaviours and experiences of how views of children and young people accessing children's social care are captured.

Confidentiality: Before recruiting participants for these interviews, we agreed with DfE who we would invite to participate, so DfE know that your organisation has been invited to take part. Participants will not be named in any reporting, however there is a small risk that if a participant or their organisation is well known to DfE it may be possible for DfE to guess where the views expressed have come from. Interview transcripts/ notes will only be used for analysis purposes, and not be shared with DfE or anyone outside of Ipsos/ NCB.

Refer participant to privacy notice for more information about confidentiality and how their data will be used.

Interview length: Up to 60 minutes, depending on what they have to say and the time they have available.

Permission to audio-record: for analysis and transcription. Confirm consent to participate once audio recording.

Any questions before we start?

2. Participant role/ context (2 mins)

To begin, could you tell me a little bit about your role in your organisation?

- *Confirm job title/ role /responsibilities*
- *Understand whether they have been involved in conducting research with CYP previously.*

3. Testing a survey model

DfE want to explore methods to gather data on children and young people's experiences of social care, to build a national picture and enable local authorities to compare, contrast and learn from one another.

I would like to start by exploring your views on running a large scale national survey with children and young people who have experienced children's social care.

What are your initial views on using a survey approach to capture the views of children and young people?

PROBE:

- Mode
- Length of survey
- Whether views are already captured
- Incentives
- Approach to capturing assent/consent
- Approach to safeguarding
- Age range of survey e.g. youngest age? oldest?

One example, is a model similar to the Adult Social Care Survey, which is an annual, national survey completed by local authorities in England to understand the quality of life and experiences of adults receiving long-term, council-funded social care. Each authority draws a random sample of eligible service users from its records and sends them a paper self-completion questionnaire, with the option for support from family, friends or staff and the use of proxies where needed. Local authorities analyse their own data for service improvement, while anonymised returns are combined nationally to produce comparable indicators and benchmark performance across areas.

What are your views of using a similar survey approach to capture the views of children and young people?

PROBE:

- Whether children will understand their contact with children's social care
- How to encourage completion – including how to reach children that are hard to reach/ don't take part in research (e.g. those in secure/residential housing, accessibility considerations)
- The difference between the service provided and survey commissioner may be unclear to children and young people does this cause a problem when securing consent?
- Whether a survey is the most suitable mode for this audience

4. Experience in running surveys with CYP (5 mins)

I'd now like to understand your experience in collecting data about children and young people.

In your experience, what have been the biggest enablers of encouraging children and young people to take part in surveys or other data collection methods?

PROBE: Explore mode, survey length, support available, accessible formats,

incentives, use of trusted adults

- How have you adapted the surveys (or other modes) to meet needs?
- Is there enough support in place? What is missing?

What challenges have you/your organisation faced when collecting data from these groups?

PROBE THE FOLLOWING:

- Mode / question formats
- Support from trusted adults
- Incentives
- Safeguarding concerns
- Ethical concerns e.g. pastoral support, use of a trusted adult, consent/assent
- Response rates – whether this differed by different cohorts

Are there any groups you think are currently missed or under-represented in your feedback work?

PROBE:

- Younger children / Early or targeted help
- Children not in school
- Children placed out of area
- Care leavers
- Children with SEND / neurodivergent / non-verbal
- First language not English
- Children who are seeking asylum or who have uncertain citizenship
- Black and global majority children
- Children at risk of exploitation and harm outside of the home
- Children where proceedings are in process / escalation in concerns
- Children in secure placements

5. Sampling (5 mins)

I'd like to move on to discuss your views on how children and young people could be sampled.

From what you know, what do you see as the most practical sampling frames for this population for the following groups:

- Children in need
- Children looked after (Section 20 and Section 31)

- Children receiving targeted early help interventions
- Care leavers (18 – 25 years)
- Children who remain with their birth families
- Children with a disability
- Informal kinship care
- Child Protection Plans
- Open to early help

- PROBE: LA social care records; school enrolment data
- Are there any gaps in those frames, where CYP may be missed? (e.g. children not in education)? How might these be mitigated?
- If we wanted to include early targeted families or care leavers (up to 25) – would they be captured?

6. When surveys are (and are not) appropriate (10 mins)

The survey aims to capture the views of children and young people at different ages, developmental stages, and communication needs.

What adaptations would be necessary to run a survey with:

- younger children
- children with SEND
- children with communication needs
- children with limited literacy or English?

7. Trusted adults, consent and safeguarding (10 mins)

<u>Trusted adults</u>

Have you supported children and young people to participate in research using their trusted adults? How have you found this?

- IF YES: Are there any groups that have worked well or less well, as a trusted adult?
- PROBE: teachers, participation workers, social workers, personal advisors for care leavers, foster carers, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), parents
- which professionals could realistically act as trusted adults to support survey completion (e.g. teachers, mentors, youth/participation workers, advocates)?
- Are there any roles you would want to exclude (e.g. social workers, foster carers, key workers)?
- Did you provide any training or guidance when using a trusted adult model?

<u>Consent & safeguarding</u>

What would an age-appropriate, consent/assent process look like in a national survey?

- How should children give assent?
- Who should be asked to provide consent for children under 16? (Probe: Section 20 where LA has no Parental Rights and Section 31 where there are Care Orders and LA does have Parental Rights)
- How would you suggest we gain consent from carers/guardians? (Probe: opt in and opt out)
- What should happen if a child provides their assent, but their parent/carer does not provide consent?

Do you have any suggestions to ensure that participant is a safe and positive experience for young people?

How do you currently identify and respond to safeguarding concerns in survey responses, given anonymity or limited identifiers?

Probes:

- What aspects of that approach have worked well?
- What has been difficult?
- What disclosure approaches have you used? To what extend were they effective?

8. Motivation, incentives and feedback loops (5 mins)

In what ways, should children and young people be involved in the design of a national survey?

PROBE:

- Design of method
- Question and material design

What would support you in your local authority participating in a national survey like the one we've described?

PROBE:

- Timing in the year
- Length of fieldwork window
- Alignment with other returns
- Resourcing support
- Motivations for local authorities to support a survey/ what the benefits would be to local authorities

What would be the barriers for your local authority participating in a national survey like the one we've described?

PROBE:

- Timing in the year
- Length of fieldwork window
- Resourcing support

In your experience, what motivates children and young people to take part in your research/feedback exercises?

PROBE:

- Incentives
- Support to take part
- Length of survey (if used)
- Mode
- Ongoing feedback loops

What have you tried in terms of incentives (e.g. vouchers, prize draws, non-financial rewards)?

- What was worked well/ less well? Why?
- Are you aware of any examples of when providing an incentive would be inappropriate? If so, why? What should be offered instead?

Integration with existing data and outputs (5 mins)

From your perspective, what types of outputs from a national survey would be most useful to you?

PROBE:

- Demographic information e.g. age, gender, ethnicity
- Benchmarking against national data
- Dashboard/ management information systems

Why would these outputs be useful to you?

How could a national survey of this kind add value to existing data collections (e.g. Ofsted surveys, Bright Spots) without duplicating them?

In your view, would it be possible to add a small number of questions to any feedback exercises (e.g. local surveys) you run with children and young people who access children's social care? Why/ why not?

Can you share examples where your survey findings clearly led to changes in services or practice? How did you feed this back to children and young **people?**

Can you think of a time when children's feedback has clearly led to changes in your local authority's practice or services? What made that possible?

9. Close (2 minutes)

If you were designing a new national survey to capture the experience of children and young people accessing social care, what 3–4 things do you think it's important we consider?

If you were designing the survey, what are the top three questions you would ask?

Is there anything else you would like to add before we finish?

THANK AND CLOSE

Discussion guide: interviews with parents and carers

1. Introduction (5-10 minutes)

Thank the participant for taking part and introduce self/ Ipsos/ NCB/ RiP.

Explain research and purpose of interview:

- Ipsos and NCB / RiP have been commissioned by the Department of Education, to conduct a study about the feasibility of conducting a national survey about experiences of children's social care.
- As well as speaking to parents and carers, we have also carried out research with children and young people, those working in the field of children's social care and local authorities to gain in-depth insights into how the views of children and young people accessing children's social care are captured.

Confidentiality: Taking part is completely voluntary. You can choose not to answer any question and can stop the interview at any time. We will not use your name in any reports. No-one outside of Ipsos and NCB/RiP will know that you have taken part.

Refer participant to privacy notice for more information about confidentiality and how their data will be used – go through this together and check if the parent has any questions.

Interview length: Up to 60 minutes, depending on what they have to say and the time they have available.

Incentive: As a thank you for taking part, we will provide you with a £50 gift voucher.

Permission to audio-record: for analysis and transcription. Notes and audio recordings will only used by the research team for analysis and will not be shared

with DfE or anyone outside Ipsos/NCB/RiP. Confirm consent to participate once audio recording.

Consent needs to be recorded as no written consent:

Read the statements below and check parent agrees:

1. I understand the information provided in the research information.
2. I know that I can choose to take part in this study or not.
3. I know my voice will be recorded, or if I do not want to be recorded the interviewer will take notes.
4. I know I can choose to take part and then change my mind without saying why.
5. I know that I can take my information out of the study up to two weeks after taking part.
6. I know that you will not share information which identifies me or another person without my permission, unless a) you think there is a risk of harm to me or someone else b) information shared suggests that a criminal or corrupt act, or serious professional misconduct has occurred. If this happened, you would need to tell someone who could help and we would discuss this with me first, unless it might put me or someone else at further risk of harm.
7. I know that I can ask what information IPSOS has about me.
8. I know that my information will be kept safe as it is protected by the law.
9. I understand that my data will be deleted three months after the final report.
10. I agree to take part in this research and for my data to be used in this way.

Any questions before we start?

2. **Participant role/ context (5 mins)**

To begin, could you tell me a little bit about yourself and how long you have been part of the experts by experience parents' group?

- How many children do you have and how old they are?

As we covered in the introduction, you are not expected to tell your own personal story or details about past experiences. Instead, we are asking you about how a survey to gather information on children and young people's experiences of social care might work in practice. But it would be helpful to have an outline of your contact with children's social care services, although we don't need the details of why this was the case:

- Types of social care services you have/had contact with? For example, a social worker because your child has SEND, or Early Help services, or child protection social work, child removed from your care.
- How recent was your contact with social care services? And how long was that for?

Have you or the children in your care ever been asked for feedback before about their experiences with children's social care?

- If yes: What kind of feedback was it
- PROBE IN FULL: survey, interview, meeting, review forms, complaints, compliments, etc.?
- How did that feel for you and for the child/children?

3. Views on a survey (10 mins)

DfE are thinking about a national survey that would ask children and young people about their experiences of children's social care. It would be a short survey to ask children or young people about their wellbeing and their experiences of contact with social care services.

It would cover children whose families had received support from social care teams for a broad range of reasons from early help through to child protection concerns, children who are in foster or residential care, and children with SEND and have a social worker.

- What do you think about a survey like this?
- What do you think are the main benefits of a survey like this?
- What do you think are the main challenges of a survey like this?
- What do you think could be the main benefits for children and young people?
- What do you think could be the main challenges for children and young people?
- Are there any worries or concerns that come to mind for you as a parent/carer? e.g. upsetting memories, worries about confidentiality, fear of consequences.

Remind the respondent: we will come on to talk through all these points in the interview.

Are there particular groups of children who might find it confusing or difficult to be asked to complete a survey like this? e.g. age, level of understanding, type of social care involvement.

How do you think the children/young people you care for would feel about being asked to complete a survey like this?

Do you think they would understand that it was about their experiences with social care?

Do you think the children/young people in your care would complete a survey?

What would be the best way for them to complete it? Online on a phone or computer? On paper?

Would they need someone they trust to help them?

How would you feel about being asked to complete a survey alongside the children/young people in your care?

- What do you expect to be asked?
- What would be the best way for you to complete it? Online on a phone or computer? On paper?
- Do you have any worries or concerns about this? e.g. worries about confidentiality, fear of consequences.

4. Your experiences of children/young people giving feedback (10 mins)

We'd like to understand your experience of supporting the children in your care to take part in feedback.

From your experience, what helps children and young people to share their views or take part in things like surveys, forms, or meetings?

- Type of activity: easier if it's short? fun? visual? online/in-person?
- Support: having someone they trust sitting with them, explaining questions?
- Timing and setting: at home, at school, during/after a meeting with a social worker?
- Language and accessibility: simple words, pictures, signing, translated materials, large print, etc.
- Rewards or incentives for children/young people: vouchers, certificates, snacks/activities – what feels appropriate?

What have you seen that makes it harder for children and young people to share their views?

PROBE: Explore mode, survey length, complex wording, support available, accessible formats, incentives

What support should be put in place to help them share their views?

5. When surveys are (and are not) appropriate (5 mins)

The survey would need to work for children and young people with very different ages, needs and communication styles.

Are there certain topics or questions that you think should be treated with extra care, or perhaps avoided in a survey about children's experiences of social care?

6. Trusted adults, consent and safeguarding (15 mins)

<u>Trusted adults</u>

Sometimes children and young people are supported to take part in research or surveys by a trusted adult – someone they know and feel safe with who can help

them understand questions and write down their answers if needed.

Have you ever supported a child or young person to take part in research, surveys, or feedback activities? If yes: What was that like for you? What worked well? What was difficult?

If a survey used trusted adults to help children and young people complete it, in your view, who could be a suitable trusted adult?

Parents, foster carers, kinship carers, social workers, personal advisers, advocates, teachers, youth workers, participation workers, residential workers, others?

Are there any roles you think might not be suitable to support a child with a survey? Why?

What support, information or training would trusted adults need so they don't influence answers and can keep children safe and comfortable?

<u>Consent & safeguarding</u>

We also want to understand the process of gaining children and young people's consent to take part in a survey.

In your view, how do you think we should ask children and young people for their permission to take part in a national survey like this, in a way that is fair and easy for them to understand at their age?

- How should the survey be explained to children and young people in different age groups?
- How should children show they agree to take part (assent) - e.g. ticking a box, saying yes to someone, having information read aloud.

For children under 16:

Who do you think should be asked to give consent for them to take part?

- How would you prefer to be asked for your consent as a parent/carer? E.g. Written forms, emails/texts, phone calls, opt-in vs opt-out?

As a parent what information would you want to see before deciding about whether to let your child take part in a survey?

- About what the survey involves
- About what children will be asked to do
- About choice and support
- About what happens with the results
- About information collected and held about children, and how it will be kept

confidential

What should happen if a child or young person wants to take part, but their parent or carer does not agree?

- How should their wishes be respected, while keeping them safe and respecting legal responsibilities?

Do you have any suggestions to ensure that participation is a safe and positive experience for children and young people?

7. Motivation, incentives and feedback loops (5 mins)

I'd like to end by thinking about how to encourage children and young people to take part in a survey.

What do you think would encourage or motivate children and young people to want to take part in a survey that asks about their experiences of social care?

We are thinking about whether to offer any kind of "thank you" for taking part, such as vouchers.

- What do you think about using incentives with children and young people in this context?
- What kinds of incentives, if any, do you think are appropriate e.g. small voucher, certificate, extra activity, contribution to a group fund / charity.
- Are there any situations where you think incentives would be inappropriate or unfair?

If a national survey like this went ahead, how do you think children and families should be told about the findings?

What would be a good way to show children that their views have led to changes (locally or nationally)

PROBE: child-friendly reports, videos, school/LA newsletters, meetings with participation groups

8. Close (5 minutes)
Finally, thinking about everything we've discussed today, Do you think a national survey of children's experiences is a good idea? Yes /No if you were designing a new national survey, what are the top three questions you would ask? Is there anything else you would like to add before we finish? THANK AND CLOSE