

## Family Model training for the Community and Voluntary sector

Parental mental illness (PMI) and, or substance use problems, are major public health issues as they may negatively impact children while children's experiences and difficulties may have an impact on parents' mental health. Research has shown that 60,000–75,000 children in NI could be living with a parent who has a mental illness (Hansson, O'Shaughnessy and Monteith, 2013). It has also been shown that 25 to 50% of children who have a parent with a mental illness will experience some psychological disorder during childhood or adolescence and 10-14% of these children will be diagnosed with a psychotic disorder at some point in their lives (Beardslee et al., 2012)

Since 2009 'Think Family' was established as a priority for the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB). From 2012, Think Family NI has been developed and implemented within a regional action plan under the structure of the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership (CYPSP). Improving outcomes for parents, their children and families by establishing a whole family approach to the planning and delivery of services is the ultimate aim of the Think Family Initiative.



**The Family Model (TFM)** provides clinicians and managers with a brief, accessible and practical approach that supports collaborative ways of working with individuals and their families in which one or more members experience mental illness including parents with substance use problems.

Direct award funding from HSCB was allocated to CiNI for implementation of Falkov's (2012) Family Model for the Community and Voluntary sector. This was for an eight month period from August 2018 to March 2019. The aim was to promote The Family Model (TFM), which can be applied by staff of varying experience and professional backgrounds, through training across the sector and to cascade training within organisations.

The CiNI initiative was started with the planning of a **Training of Trainers** programme which culminated in an event over two days on the **3/4 September 2018** in Belfast. The training of training course involved 25 participants representing 13 organisations plus 7 CiNI associate

trainers. The two days were recorded, and a video produced which has proved very useful in promoting TFM and CiNI. The HSCB was also represented on the programme in addition to the very valuable participation and input of a service user N.

Not alone has N has been involved with this initiative from the beginning she regularly attends CiNI's Think Family trainers/ champions Group meetings, has participated in the review of the training materials and the trainers manual developed by CiNI. She has also co delivered training on two occasions bringing to life the value of family focused practice.

N is a great advocate for the Think Family Model and is also featured in the promotional video:

*"The Think Family Model - personally I think would be a benefit to anybody and everybody that is working with families. Be it parents on their own, children on their own or the family as a whole unit. It gives you a chance to sit down and have a proper conversation with the family and find out what exactly is going on, and it gives ownership back to the family itself because they not only have to come up with what the issues are on the day, they have to come up with the solutions"*

During the eight-month period of funding CiNI has engaged with and trained a range of staff from right across the community and voluntary sector with training being delivered to **152 participants**. The Training of Trainers / Champions group has met 4 times using the meetings to develop and finalise training materials while outlining examples of family focused practice from within their organisations and the sharing of resources. CiNI used a co training model matching the trainers to ensure that participants got maximum value from the events in addition to building capacity and confidence within the trainers group.

**Feedback** from the training events has been very positive. Some examples are:

**“Really interesting and relevant topic and helps practitioners have courage to raise awareness and approach such a sensitive topic”**

**“Very beneficial and simple model to use”**

**A new way of looking at an existing issue and new ideas”**

Participants have strongly embraced the core values of the model which are

- Family Focused
- Vulnerability **and** resilience of families,
- working **with** and not **to**,
- no judgement or blame attached.

## What CiNI has learned:

- ✓ There is a real hunger and demand for training in family focused practice
- ✓ Support for trainers / champions has been key to implementation of The Family Model
- ✓ Service user involvement is very significant – it adds value to development of materials and to the training itself
- ✓ A common language and framework between VCS and Statutory sector is very important
- ✓ It is important to communicate the message via media, twitter, leaflets, attendance at conferences, promotional video and integration to existing training.

**Several needs are emerging** but further funding will be required to address these issues within the community and voluntary sector:

- ✓ Different levels of training are needed - awareness training, foundation, supervisory/advanced
- ✓ Introduction to Mental Health training is required for some staff where mental health is not the core business of their group
- ✓ Further Integration to and support from within organisations is required
- ✓ There is also a need to measure the impact on practice

Dr Anne Grant of Queens University Belfast is currently undertaking an evaluation of CiNI's work in implementing TFM training in the community and voluntary sector and is due to report in September 2019.

CiNI was very honoured and excited to have been asked to participate, as part of a team, in an international conference (It Takes a Village) in Oslo in May 2019 to present on its journey in implementing The Family Model in the Community and Voluntary sector. The presentation focused on the work undertaken to date on Think Family in NI and the team comprised of Mary Donaghy HSCB, Kerry Mc Veigh BHSCT, Jennifer Hamilton Action for Children, Dr Anne Grant QUB, Nicola Keegan service user and Dr Joan Broder CiNI. Very positive feedback was received from the international audience on all the work that has been undertaken at both a strategic and operational level across NI.

