** **

Example Cognitive Testing Interview Protocol

# Interviewer Guidance

## Asking the questions:

* Any time you need to share your screen, for example for a show card, the instructions will be highlighted blue.
* Notes to interviewers in the protocol will be highlighted yellow.
* Questions which are for routing only and will not be probed on are highlighted green.
* Throughout the protocol the questions will be **READ ALOUD** to participants. This includes reading out the response options to the question. There will be instructions to **READ ALOUD** next to questions.
* Throughout the questionnaire you will see ‘**PAUSE TO PROBE**’ – you should stop here and ask participants the probes listed for each previous question.
* Please remember to follow routing instructions (these appear next to the question name and are highlighted yellow) to ensure participants are asked the right questions.

## Interpreting participants answers:

* ‘Don’t know’ and ‘refused’ responses are permissible at almost every question, but in most cases would not be read out by the interviewer or appear as an option on showcards.
* The instruction CODE ALL THAT APPLY indicates a multi-coded question. If this is not stated, then a single code only should apply.

# Introducing the interview

|  |
| --- |
| **Aim**: The aim of this section is to introduce the interview to the participant and gain their informed consent to take part. You should use the prompts below as a guide as well as answering any questions the participant has. |

## Introduce the study

**READ ALOUD:** Hello my name is **[name]**. I work for the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), which is an independent, not-for-profit research organisation.

**READ ALOUD:** Before we begin, I’d like to tell you more about the research. NatCen, in collaboration with **[collaborators]**,has been commissioned to carry out **[study]**. The **[study]** aims to **[study aims]**.

**READ ALOUD:** We want to make sure that the questions in the survey are clear and easy to understand.

## Format of the interview

**READ ALOUD:** In a moment I’ll ask you several questions that are part of the larger survey. I will ask you to talk aloud as you answer each question, while I take some notes. It’s important that you walk me through your thinking whilst working through the survey, so please do give as much detail as you can. After you have answered the questions, I will then ask you some questions about *how* you found answering them.

**READ ALOUD:** Please be aware that as we won’t be asking all the questions from the survey the topics may jump around a bit, so please don’t be concerned if the topics seem slightly disconnected.

**READ ALOUD:** The whole session will last **[interview length]**. You will receive **[incentive]** at the end of the interview to thank you for your input.

## How information will be used and stored

* **READ ALOUD:** Everything you say is confidential and will only be used to improve the format and user-friendliness of the questions. We will not name you in any reporting about the survey.
* **READ ALOUD:** All information you provide will remain **confidential** and **anonymous**. NatCen will not share any identifiable information with **[collaborators]** at any point.
* **READ ALOUD:** Taking part in today’s session is voluntary. You can skip any question you would prefer not to answer without giving me a reason.
* **READ ALOUD:** There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions. We just want your honest feedback on how you find filling out the survey. I didn’t design the survey questions, so I’m happy for you to be critical and to suggest improvements.
* **READ ALOUD:** Please also remember that we are mainly interested in your experience with answering the questions.
* **READ ALOUD:** I’ll be recording the interview, which will include recording you completing the questions on your screen, so I don’t have to make lots of notes.
* Check they are happy with this
* Check if they have any questions
* Check that they still want to take part
* **READ ALOUD:** I will now select record.
* Select ‘Record’ on **[recording platform/software]**, ask for confirmation they are happy to take part and state serial number.

# Recruitment Validation

**ASK ALL QUESTIONS AS SHOWN BELOW**

1. What is your gender?

Male [ ]

Female [ ]

Other [ ]

1. To which age group do you belong?

18-34 [ ]

35-49 [ ]

50+ [ ]

1. Which region of the UK do you live in?

England [ ]

N. Ireland [ ]

Scotland [ ]

Wales [ ]

**[Insert other screening questions here]**

# Think aloud

|  |
| --- |
| Aim: The aim of this section is to encourage the participant to think aloud whilst completing the questions. Demonstrate the method and then ask the participant to practice the method using an example.  |

* **READ ALOUD:** Let me explain a little bit more about how the interview will work. I am going to ask you to tell me what you are thinking while you are reading/ listening to and answering the questions. I want you to tell me whatever comes into your mind as you are working out how to do this: if the question is what you expect or not, if you like it or not, if there are any changes that you think should be made and so on. This is called ‘thinking out loud’.
* **READ ALOUD:** We have found that it helps to have some practice at doing this. So, let me give you an example.
	+ Let us say I was asked a question about “how many windows are there in my house.” Instead of just simply saying how many there were, If I were thinking aloud, I would say “ ...well, there’s one window in the kitchen…and then in the main room, there are two windows ... (etc.)” and I would add them up and describe it as I was giving my answer.
	+ Now, let me ask you the same question. Think about how many windows there are in your house. As you count up the windows, tell me what you are seeing and thinking about. Please say, aloud, what you are thinking.
* **IF NECESSARY, PROMPT:**
* Tell me what you are thinking.
* What is going through your mind?
* **PRAISE SUCCESSFUL THINK ALOUD:**
	+ **READ ALOUD:** Well done! Remember to tell me what you are thinking as you complete each of the survey questions. I might interrupt you to ask for more details about what you are thinking or doing.

# Main survey

Observations INTERVIEWER PLEASE NOTE DURING SURVEY COMPLETION:

* Did the respondent appear to read all of the response options?
* Did the respondent hesitate at any questions?
* Did the respondent change their response at any questions?

**READ ALOUD:** We will now start going through some of the survey questions. After every few questions we will pause and I will ask you a few things about how you found using the questions. Please remember to think aloud as much as you can whilst answering the questions.

## Example1 [ASK ALL]

**READ ALOUD:** Thinking about the current school term, has (child) regularly participated in any of these activities outside core school hours, even if organised by the school?

**READ ALOUD:** ‘Regular’ means at least once a week. Please also exclude academic classes to improve English, maths or other key school subjects. School clubs taking place before or after the normal school day or during lunch breaks should be included.

**CODE ALL THAT APPLY**

1. Team sport (e.g. football, cricket or netball)
2. Individual sport, coached or lessons (e.g. swimming, tennis, karate or gymnastics)
3. Art, music, performance lessons (e.g. piano, dance, choir or drama)
4. Classes and clubs relating to an academic subject (e.g. learning another language, coding club, maths club)
5. Hobby and interest clubs (e.g. gardening club, Lego club)
6. Uniform groups (e.g. Rainbows, Beavers)
7. Community groups, youth club, religious groups
8. Other (please specify)
9. None of these

**PAUSE TO PROBE**

**General probes [ASK ALL]**

* How easy or difficult did you find understanding this question? Probe why?
* How easy or difficult did you find it to select an answer for this question? Probe why?

**Example1 probes [ASK ALL]**

* [If yes to any] In your own words can you tell me what activities your child does outside of school hours?’
* What did you understand by the term ‘please exclude academic classes’ in this question? Probe for examples.
* What did you understand by the term ‘outside school hours’ at this question? Probe for examples (i.e. weekends, evenings, after-school). NOTE: Any evidence of people including lunchtime clubs at school?
* Do you think there are any further response options that should be added to this list?
* Do you think there are any responses that possibly overlap or should be removed?
* Do you believe the response options presented are age appropriate for your child?

## Example2 [ASK ALL]

**READ ALOUD:** Let’s talk about the new survey. In real life participants who are invited to take part in the new survey will receive a letter in the post asking them to take part. I’m now going to show you a draft letter for you to comment on.

INTERVIEWER: SHARE SCREEN WITH FIRST LETTER

**READ ALOUD:** Please spend a few minutes having a look and read through the letter.

**PAUSE TO PROBE**

**Letter 1 probes [ASK ALL]:**

* What would you do if you received a letter like this in the post?
* Would you take part? If not, why not?
* Would this letter encourage or discourage you to take part in the survey?
* Did you see anything off-putting?
* What did you think of the proposed name for the survey?
* What did you think about the logos and the visual design (colours/ pictures etc)?

**READ ALOUD:** I am now going to show you a second letter. Please note the words on this letter are exactly the same as the first letter, but the survey has a different name, logo and branding.

INTERVIEWER: SHARE SCREEN WITH SECOND LETTER

**READ ALOUD:** Please spend a few minutes having a look and read through the letter.

**PAUSE TO PROBE**

**Letter 2 probes [ASK ALL]**

* Is this letter better or worse than the first one, or about the same? If better or worse- why?
* What did you think of the alternative proposed name? Which name, if any, do you prefer, why?
* What did you think about the alternative logos and visual design? Which letter did you prefer in terms of colours and pictures?

## Example3 [ASK ALL]

Here are some aspects of a job that people say are important. Please indicate which, if any, you think is important in a job?

**Check all that apply**

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Good pay
 |
| 1. Opportunity for career promotion
 |
| 1. Flexible working hours
 |
| 1. An opportunity to use initiative
 |
| 1. Opportunities for personal growth
 |
| 1. Make a positive impact on society
 |
| 1. *I don’t know*
 |
| 1. *I prefer not to answer*
 |
| **PAUSE TO PROBE** |

|  |
| --- |
| Thank you. I’m now going to talk to you about how you found this question. **Example3 probes [ASK ALL]*** How easy or difficult did you find this question? *INTERVIEWER: explore reasons for ease/difficulty, e.g.* ‘How clear or unclear was the question wording?’
* Why did you choose the response(s) you did?
* What are the main things you considered when selecting the response options as important aspects of a job? Please just refer to the things you thought about when answering the question.
* In your own words, what does the term “opportunity for career promotion” mean to you at this question?
* And what about “opportunities for personal growth”? In your own words what does this term mean to you at this question?
* Can you tell me what you think “flexible working hours” at this question is referring to?
* What about, “make a positive impact on society”, what does this term mean to you at this question?
* What do you understand the term ‘an opportunity to use initiative’ to mean at this question?
* *If the respondent answered ‘Don’t know’ or refused to answer – explore the reason for this. Did they find the question easy or difficult to understand?*

*INTERVIEWER PLEASE NOTE DURING SURVEY COMPLETION:**Is there any evidence of skim reading questions/answer responses?**Did the respondent:** *hesitate or appear stuck at any point?*
* *ask for the question to be repeated? If yes, at which point?*
* *change their answer at any point?*
 |

# Close and General probes

|  |
| --- |
| Aims: * To get participants general views on the survey questions and how they found completing the survey on their devices.
* These questions are asked after participants have completed the questionnaire.
 |

## General

* **READ ALOUD:** How did you find that? Overall, were the questions easy or difficult to answer?

## Interview close

* **READ ALOUD:** Do you have any other comments on the questions?
* **READ ALOUD:** Do you have any other questions before we finish the interview?
	+ Thank the participant.
	+ Stop the recording
	+ Ask the participants if they have any further questions.
	+ Tell the participant you will e-mail them their voucher and confirm their e-mail address is correct.