

## Online supplement

### Flexible topic guide for interviews

#### (1) Background

We contacted you to take part in the study because a little while back you harmed yourself – is that right? Can you tell me a bit about what was going on at that time?

Can you tell me a bit about what's been happening with you lately? Do you have any thoughts about why this has happened to you? Have you been feeling distressed/stressed? Have you told anyone about that?

Have you ever suffered from distress/depression in the past? Have you ever harmed yourself before? Why do you think you did that? What made you think of doing that? How did you learn to cope in that way?

What made you choose (method) in the first place/thereafter? Why not another method?

Have the attempts you've made changed at all over time? E.g. been planned differently, become more serious?

#### (2) The act

Could we focus now on when you recently harmed yourself?

First, can you tell me what you did?

Where were you when this happened? Were you alone? Was anyone else around? Could they see/hear you?

Did you especially choose to do it here? Why? Public *v.* private? Did you think who might find you? Did this have any bearing on the method you used?

Did you do anything to stop people finding/reaching you? Were you expected to be anywhere else at the time? Did you do anything to stop people being suspicious?

What was the chain of events leading up to the self-harm/attempt?

Did you communicate your feelings/plans to anyone?

Why did you decide to do it when you did?

What do you remember about when you were actually harming yourself?

What happened next?

#### (3) Preparation

When did you decide to harm yourself?

How much preparation was involved?

Did you make any arrangements in anticipation of your death, e.g. writing a will or leaving instructions for a funeral? Did you think of doing this?

Did you think of writing a note?

#### (4) Intentions and expectations

What do you think your intentions were?

How sure were you about what you were doing?

What would you say was your reason for what you did? To get away from it all? To escape your feelings/problems?

Were you trying to convey any message to others?

What did you think would be the outcome?

Were any of these thoughts important to your choice about what to do?

*I'd like to ask you a little more now about some of these things and about the ways people harm themselves*

#### (a) Stereotypes/images of suicide

- Who/why/what methods
- Social attitudes (linked to method)
- Compare to self

#### (b) Choice of method

- What ideas about methods?
- Where from (media, friends, experience, earlier thoughts)?
- Deliberate choice?
- Decision-making
- Research?
- Compare to past choices

#### Knowledge, planning, doing

- Knowledge about how to do
- Implementation/ease
- Hindsight

#### Images of attempt

- Did they imagine own attempt?
- How did they hope it would be
- Being found (who? how?)
- Impact on others
- Outcomes of success/failure
- Important to choice?

#### (c) Factors important to choice

- Lethality/certainty
- Process (pain, speed, awareness, control, peaceful)
- Messy *v.* clean (dignity, violence, effect on body/self, effect on others)
- Access/opportunity
- Acceptability: ease/norm
- Amount of preparation
- Barriers and bravery (opportunity to change mind, fear)
- Place (public/private)
- Consequences of failed attempt
- Intention/communication

#### (d) Other methods

- Commonly used methods
- 'Best'/'worst'/'brave'/'ideal'
- Images of each (mess, ease, etc.)

- How do they/others know of these
- Compare to own method

#### Own consideration

- Which? To what extent?
- Reasons for not using/discounting

#### (e) Hanging

- Images (who? when? popular? why?)
- Process
- Clean or messy
- Appearance/being found
- Accessibility
- Ease
- Bravery
- Message conveyed
- Knowledge of others (including media)
- Where on own list?

#### (f) Sources of knowledge/beliefs

- Friends/family
- Media portrayals/fiction
- Internet (websites and terms)
- Discussion with others
- Past attempts (impact)

#### (g) Help

- Help-seeking before/during
- Communication of intent
- Family/friends
- Samaritans
- Hospital treatment

#### (h) Prevention/survival

- Anything that might have prevented act/method
- Feelings about survival