**Initial Life Narrative**

**Q1. I’d really like it if, to start with, you could tell me about the story of your life, in as much detail as possible [jot down reminders of issues to return to at the end]. We have plenty of time, so please go into as much detail as you want to. I will help you along the way with a few questions, but mainly I want you to do the talking.**

Perhaps you could start by telling me about where you grew up: what was home like for you?

Who did you live with?

What was your relationship like with them?

What was it like being part of your family [or as relevant]?

* + Was it a stable, safe environment?

What did your parents do?

Can you tell me about the neighbourhood you grew up in?

Can you describe to me your experience of school and education?

* + How is your reading and writing?

What sort of things did you get up to outside of school? Tell me about the things you liked doing and who you did them with.

What sort of things and people were important for you in your childhood?

How did that change as you got older?

Who were the people you trusted?

Were there people who you cared about, and who cared about you?

Who had the greatest influence on your life growing up?

Did you generally feel safe and secure growing up? [probe: school, neighbourhood etc]

* + Did you experience violence of any kind as you were growing up?
  + How did you respond to this? Prompts: report it, retaliate, withdraw

Did you work, or earn money in some way?

Before coming to prison on this sentence, had you been diagnosed or had any experience of any serious physical illnesses?

* If so, what impact did this have on your day-to-day life, and how did you try to manage it?

And what about any psychological illnesses, for example, depression, or personality disorders?

* + And what impact did this have on your everyday life?
  + I hope you won’t mind me asking, but have you ever self-harmed, or had suicidal thoughts/attempts? [prior to the sentence/ during sentence]

Before coming to prison, did you use either alcohol or drugs?

* + How serious (i.e. under control or addiction)?
  + How did you feel about this use?
  + How have you managed this in terms of being in prison?

What contact have you had with agencies like social services, youth offending teams, mental health teams, or anything similar?

How did you view them?

Had you been involved with the police and the courts before receiving this sentence?

* + How old were you when you received your first conviction?
  + Had you been arrested or received warnings/cautions before that?
  + Had you tried to move away from offending between that time and when you came to prison on this sentence?

What view did you have of the police, prisons, and so on? [probe on attitudes to authority]

Have you been in prison before?

* How many times? How long were the sentences?
* What was that like, compared to now?

What did life look like for you before you came to prison on this sentence? [Where were you living?

* In what sort of accommodation?
* Who were you hanging around with/ what were you doing/ gangs etc.
  + Did you have a partner?
  + Child/ren? Can you tell me a bit about your relationship with them?
* How did you think in general about wider society and your place in the world?

What vision did you have of your future? [probe: what were your hopes/plans and what were your fears?]

Did you expect to end up in prison? [probe: an inevitability, given your lifestyle, or unexpected?]

What would you say has been the worst experience of your life so far?

And what has been the best?