**Interview topic guide**

# Interview strategy

Given the exploratory nature of the study, the interview will be flexible and sensitive to the cues of the participant. It is important to establish a good rapport with the respondent and to develop a common language to explore their experiences rather than imposing too rigid a framework. The interview will use the participant’s cues to move the conversation forward and will only introduce certain topics if appropriate.

**Introduction Time: 5 min**

# Interviewer ID: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date (including day): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time started \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Time finished \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I just want to be sure that you are happy with what this interview involves? I will ask you a few questions about your experience of using social media and the social groups you have reached through the use of digital networking platform/s.

I don’t want the session to be too formal and I really just want to hear what you have to say so we can learn from your experiences.

You are free with to withdraw at any time.

Everything you say will be treated confidentially.

Some of the things I might ask you to talk about are quite personal so bear in mind that you don’t have to answer any questions you are not comfortable with. Let me know if there are any questions that you don’t want to answer or if you feel tired or upset in any way then we can stop.

Can I just check that you are happy to go ahead and for me to record the interview? Do you have any questions you would like to ask?

# Section 1 (past and present). 15 min

I would like to ask you some questions about your life and use of the Internet in the past few years. We are interested in anything you would like to share about yourself.

* Can you introduce yourself?
* How come you started using the platform (Twitter or Facebook)?
* Is your experience of using the social media platform to connect with your social circles different from using other technology (such as autism support websites or using WhatsApp with friends)? If so, how?
* If you use both Twitter and Facebook, do you use these platforms for different activities/purposes?

# Section 2 Everyday use of online networking and the environment. Time 20 min

* How do you use Facebook/Twitter and where? Prompts: do you usually use it in home setting out a specific time for browsing/posting or are you a more ‘on the go’ person, accessing the site periodically throughout the day, via a smartphone, for example?
* How would you describe the role of online networking in your life? Prompts: e.g. some people find that social media helps them to present themselves in a particular way professionally or with friends
* Do you participate in Facebook groups or hashtag-driven discussions on Twitter? Or do you mostly read and observe the content without posting?
* How do you decide when and where to post (e.g. to post a status update or a comment in a Facebook Group? Could you give examples?
* Do you feel the use of the Internet and Facebook/Twitter has been a positive experience or have there been any experiences you are not happy about? Can you elaborate?
* What would you describe as the main benefits or disadvantages of using online social networking by autistic adults? Are there any reasons for or against longterm use?
* [if the participant is a long term user] Do you think the way you use (and feel about) online networking has changed since you first registered on the site?

How?

# Section 3 Using specific platform features Time 15-20 min

I’d like to talk a bit more about your ways of using the Facebook/Twitter platform. You can share your screen if you wanted to show me which pages/groups/features you usually access/contribute to, or talk me through any other relevant content. I also have copies of some of your posts (downloaded during the observation phase of the study) which I had shared with you before the interview. I would like to use some of these posts now to facilitate our discussion.

* Can you tell me a bit more about your experiences of using Facebook/Twitter specific feature such as posting in specific pages/groups, and/or using hashtags to contribute to specific discussions?
* Facebook/Twitter is said to be about ‘social networking’. How would you describe your ‘network’? Prompt: what are the main components or who are the main actors? (You can show me these on the site if you wish).
* In social media it is often difficult to understand or foresee who will read and engage with your message. Have you experienced this?
* Do you have a particular audience in mind when you write a post? Prompt: do you imagine particular people will read your post?
* [If the participant uses platform specific means of address] How do you decide when to use tagging, mentioning name, using @) ?
* [If the participant uses retweets] Why do you retweet and/or use ‘Quote Tweets’ [and/or ‘share’ on Facebook]?
* When looking at your online activity I could see that you use language as well as images or videos in your posts: in this example [looking at example shared on screen], why did you decide to use this image/this combination of language and image? [Or: why did you decide to add this emoticon/emoji/punctuation – what does it help you to convey?]
* If you could change anything about the site’s features or about online networking in general, what would it be?

**Many thanks for your time and your participation! Do you have any questions?**