

Distress protocol for interview participants: Version x (date)

Pre-conversation	• Greet participants, introduce yourself, explain your role in the project and plan for the session. • Gauge their mood - are they in an appropriate frame of mind? • Preface the conversation with the aims of the research. Introduce the broad topics which will be covered. • Explain that the information they share will be confidential and that no personal identifying details will be used unless they request to be named. • Explain data management processes – will you (or co-facilitator) be writing notes? Will the session be recorded? • Remind that participation is voluntary. They can stop at any time (and/or) take a break and resume at a later time if preferred • Confirm or obtain their verbal/written consent. • Confirm that they are happy to proceed with the conversation.
Distress	If interviewer becomes aware that a participant is distressed by their body language, tone of voice, breathing pattern, crying or not responding to questions:
Stage 1	• Offer the participant the opportunity to pause the conversation for a few moments • Ask if they would like to end their participation or take part in another conversation at different time (group or one:one) or with a different interviewer • Be aware of boundaries and responsibilities. No preaching, teaching or counselling • Suggest sources of support e.g. wellbeing staff in their organisation/line manager/peers/family
Review	If participant feels able to carry on, do so gently, checking that they are still ok a few minutes later If participant is unable to carry on, go to stage 2
Stage 2	• End the conversation after thanking them for their efforts and express understanding for their feelings, emphasising that it is entirely ok not to continue. • Ask if the information they shared so far may be kept as data, or if they would like it to be deleted (delete as required) • Provide support sheet or ask whether they would like you to contact a service on their behalf • Ask if you may contact them the next day to check in for support. Reconfirm their contact details
Follow up	• Interviewer to contact line manager/project lead immediately for de-brief • Email (or text if no email access) participant the next day to check in. Attach support sheet to this email or ask whether they would like you to contact a service on their behalf. • If appropriate, rearrange the interview with you or with another member of the team

Distress protocol for interviewers: Version X (date)	
Pre-conversation	• Ensure there are no anticipated distractions or interruptions during the scheduled conversation • Check-in with self and assess your mood/capacity • Familiarise yourself with the topic guide - consider rephrasing questions for your community members • If an interruption is anticipated (e.g. another booking for the room) find alternative location.
Distress	If the interviewer is aware that their mood/capacity is challenging, or if the conversation is underway and they notice distress within themselves e.g. change in breathing, welling up, unable to speak:
Stage 1	• If before the conversation has started, inform participant immediately. Reschedule, if possible. • If the conversation is underway and you (the interviewer) feel able to carry on, move to a different topic/question. Revisit the evocative topic later in the discussion, if appropriate
Review	If interviewer is unable to carry on, go to stage 2
Stage 2	If the interview is underway and you (interviewer) notice personal distress • Be honest with the participant and say that the interview will have to be terminated • Emphasise that this is not the participant's fault but something has resonated with you (the interviewer) • Terminate interview and advise participant that you (or another member of the team) will be in touch to reschedule their conversation • Ask their permission to be contacted by you or a team member. Reconfirm their contact details
Follow up	• Interviewer (you) to contact line manager/project lead immediately to debrief. • If appropriate, rearrange the interview with you or with another member of the team

Distress protocol for community conversation participants: Version X (date)

Pre-conversation	• Greet participants, introduce yourself, explain your role in the project and plan for the session. • Gauge their mood - are they in an appropriate frame of mind? • Preface the group conversation with the aims of the research. Introduce the broad topics which will be covered. • Explain that the information they share will be confidential and that no personal identifying details will be used unless they request to be named. • Explain data management processes – will you (or co-facilitator) be writing notes? Will the session be recorded? • Remind that participation is voluntary. They can stop at any time (and/or) take a break and resume at a later time if preferred • Confirm or obtain their verbal/written consent. • Confirm that they are happy to proceed with the group conversation.
Distress	If facilitator(s) become aware that a participant is distressed by body language, tone of voice, breathing pattern, crying or not responding to questions:
Stage 1	• Offer the participant the opportunity to pause the conversation for a few moments • Ask if they would like to end their participation or take part in another conversation at different time, alternative group or one:one • Be aware of boundaries and responsibilities. No preaching, teaching or counselling • Suggest sources of support e.g. wellbeing staff in their organisation/line manager/peers/family
Review	If participant feels able to carry on, do so gently, checking that they are still ok a few minutes later If participant is unable to carry on, go to stage 2
Stage 2	• Pause the conversation and encourage the whole group to take a break. • Discretely help the participant to leave the room/group. In private, thank them for their efforts and express understanding for their feelings, emphasising that it is entirely ok not to continue. • Ask if the information they shared so far may be kept as data, or if they would like it to be deleted (delete as required) • Ask if you may contact them the next day to check in for support. Reconfirm their contact details • Resume conversation with remaining members (if appropriate)
Follow up	• Facilitator(s) to liaise with line manager/project lead to update about concerns, as soon as possible. • Email (or text if no email access) participant the next day to check in. Attach support sheet or ask whether they would like you to contact a service on their behalf. • If appropriate, rearrange the interview with you or with another member of the team.

Distress protocol for community conversation facilitators: Version X (date)	
Pre-conversation	• Ensure there are no anticipated distractions or interruptions during the scheduled conversation • Check-in with self and assess your mood/capacity • Familiarise yourself with the topic guide - consider rephrasing questions for your community members • If an interruption is anticipated (e.g. another booking for the room) find alternative location.
Distress	If the facilitator(s) are aware that that their mood/capacity is challenging, or if the conversation is underway and they notice distress within themselves e.g. change in breathing, welling up, unable to speak:
Stage 1	• If before the conversation has started, inform participants immediately and reschedule • If the conversation is underway and the facilitator(s) feel able to carry on, move to a different topic/question. Revisit the evocative topic later in the discussion, if appropriate and possible
Review	If facilitator(s) are unable to carry on, go to stage 2
Stage 2	• Terminate the conversation and thank the group for their time/input. • Discretely leave the room/group and request co-facilitator (or another team member) to enter the room and check participants are okay • Facilitator to seek immediate support from line manager/project lead to debrief
Follow up	• Facilitator(s) to contact line manager/project lead immediately to debrief. • Where appropriate, rearrange the conversation for another day/time with alternative member of the team to facilitate the discussion.