

Appendix C - COVID-19 Support Study

Interview Topic Guide

Introduction

Explain who we are

ScotCen Social Research is an independent social research agency, and is an integral part of NatCen Social Research, Britain's leading centre for independent social research.

Go over purpose of interview

- ScotCen has been commissioned by the Scottish Government to carry out interviews with those who have been asked to self-isolate as part of Scotland's Test and Protect Strategy to explore and understand people's experiences when asked to self-isolate by Test and Protect.
- Although ScotCen is carrying out this research on behalf of the Scottish Government we are completely independent. We have no particular agenda in doing this research other than finding out **your views**; we're here to listen to what you have to say.

Explain voluntary nature of participation

- Taking part is completely voluntary and you can choose which questions you wish to answer.
- You can end the discussion at any time without consequence.

Explain interview format

- Timing of interview (about 45-60 minutes). Mostly open questions.
- There are no right or wrong answers – we're just interested in your perspective.

Confidentiality and disclosure

- Any details we have about you will be confidential. Information you share will not be passed onto anyone - unless you disclose that you or anyone else are at risk of harm.
- Report, use of quotations, anonymisation - we will not use your name or any information that could identify you.
- After the end of the research the transcript and recordings will be securely deleted.

Recording of Interview

- Audio recording of interview – check they are happy with this. Just to save taking notes and make sure we have an accurate record of what they've told us.
- If there's anything they don't want included or quoted that's fine – they can just let us know.
- Check if participants have any questions? Check if happy to proceed?

DIGITAL RECORDER ON

- Record your introduction (although this can be done later)
- Record verbal consent on the digital recorder. Confirm that we've explained to them
 - What the interview is for
 - That taking part is voluntary
 - That we would like to record it, and
 - That we won't use any names in reports
- Ask them to confirm they're happy to proceed.

1. Background (5 mins)

Aim: to explore personal background, COVID-19 vaccination status and reasons for being asked to self-isolate.

(please note, we are going to cover the self-isolation experience in detail later, though current living arrangements etc may be addressed now)

- I would like to start by asking you to tell me a little bit about yourself.
 - *Living arrangements: Where do you live? How long have you lived there?*
 - *Family: Who do you live with? Do you have any children (what ages)?*
 - *What is a typical day like for you? (Un)employed, studying, retired? Type of employment etc.*
- Have you been offered a COVID-19 vaccine?
 - *If yes, have you had it yet? One or two doses?*
 - *If you have not had one/both doses, do you intend to take up the offer of vaccination or not? Why is this?*
- Briefly, why were you asked to self-isolate? (Probe to find if interviewee is: index case, household contact, other contact, international traveller)
 - *When was this?*
 - *We will ask about this experience in more detail later.*

2. COVID-19 beliefs (max 10 mins)

Aim: to explore personal/familial experience of COVID-19, general impact of the pandemic, personal views of COVID-19 restrictions / guidelines.

- Generally, how have things been for you during the COVID-19 pandemic (ignoring the self-isolation experience for the time being)?
 - *What impact, if any, has the pandemic had on your day-to-day life?*
 - *If had COVID-19, what has the impact been? (mild, moderate, severe symptoms) Was the impact what you expected? How are you now?*
- Have you, or anyone you know, been affected directly by COVID-19? If so, in what way?
 - *Explore any perceived impact on self, family, wider circle (have they had COVID-19?)*
 - *Explore any perceived impact on e.g. physical health, mental health, relationships, finances*
 - *Explore perception of 'at risk of becoming infected' versus 'risk/potential seriousness of COVID-related illness'.*
- What, if any, wider impacts has COVID-19 had?
 - *Explore any perceived impact on health of population (or groups), health care system, societal and economy impacts etc*

- What are your thoughts on the COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines imposed by the Scottish Government?
 - *How do you feel about being asked to follow the restrictions / guidelines?*
 - *How do you feel about: mask wearing / the social distancing rules / restrictions in moving between local authority areas?*
 - *How do you feel about the way people across Scotland (and your own country) have responded to COVID-19?*
- How easy or difficult has it been for you to follow or stick to the restrictions and guidelines?
 - *What kind of things made it easy or difficult? (NB: if necessary, check which advice/guidance participant is referring to)*
- Do you think the COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines imposed by the Scottish Government have differed from the UK government/(your own governmental) restrictions? If so, in what way?

3. Experiences of self-isolation (20-30 mins)

Aim: to explore experience of being asked to self-isolate, including: the process of being contacted by Test and Protect, what information and support they were given, any challenges they experienced with self-isolating, anything that helped them to self-isolate, the extent to which they complied with self-isolation guidelines (and reasons for this).

You said earlier why you had been asked to self-isolate, and when. We now want to ask about this experience in more detail.

3.1. Experience of Test and Protect

Firstly, we would like to ask about your experience of being contacted by Test and Protect:

- Please talk me through what happened. What was the nature of your contact?
 - *How were you contacted? What did you think about this contact?*
 - *What were you told / what information were you given? Was the information clear or unclear?*
 - *Did you understand what was expected of you for the whole self-isolation period? If not, what if anything was unclear?*
 - *Were you able to ask questions?*
 - *Were you offered further advice and/or support? If so, what was offered? What did you think of this advice and/or support?*
 - *Were there further contacts from Test and Protect? If so, what was the nature of these contacts?*
 - *How did these further contacts compare with the original one?*
 - *Were you tested for COVID-19? If 'yes', how was this process? If 'no', why not?*
- Overall, how helpful did you find Test and Protect's contact tracing service to be?
 - *Why do you say that?*

3.2. Compliance with request to self-isolate

We know from survey results that individuals vary in how easy or difficult they found the self-isolation period to be. Many said that they found it very challenging and they did not always manage to follow the request to self-isolate. For example, people's experiences differed in terms of when they managed to start isolating, how many days they were able to isolate for and whether they managed to follow the advice not to leave their accommodation or meet with other people during their self-isolation period.

- Can you please talk me through your experience of self-isolation, including the extent to which you were able to self-isolate for the required period.

Ask all respondents:

- *How long were you asked to self-isolate for?*
- *How did you find the self-isolation period?*
- *How easy/difficult was it to self-isolate? Why?*
- *Which elements of self-isolation were easiest to follow and which are most difficult?*

NB interviewer: The elements of self-isolation include:

- *Self-isolate straight away & for 10 days*
- *Don't leave house (e.g. take child to school, go to the shops)*
- *Don't meet others outside house*
- *Only permitted activity allowed during self-isolation is testing*

- *What were the greatest challenges you faced?*
 - *Were you tempted at any point to stop self-isolating? If so, why was this? (e.g. some people have said they had to because of childcare, or to go to the shops. Any other reasons?)*
 - *What factors, if any, helped you to self-isolate?*
 - *Which factors, if any, made self-isolation more difficult to follow?*
 - *What do you think the main impacts (positive and/or negative) have been for you as a result of following self-isolation measures?*
 - *What do you think the main impacts (positive and/or negative) have been for your family/friends as a result of following self-isolation measures?*
 - *Was the self-isolation period what you expected? If not, what was different?*
 - *Is there anything that could have made it easier?*
- **Ask only those who did not comply (emphasising that all responses will be treated confidentially):**
 - *What self-isolation measure(s), if any, did you not manage to completely follow?*
 - *What were the factors behind this? (Why did you not follow these measures?)*
 - *What do you think the main impacts (positive and/or negative) have been for you as a result of NOT being able to completely follow self-isolation measures?*

3.3. Experience of support

Info for interviewer: To receive support from their LA individuals asked to self-isolate were required to consent to their details being passed by Test and Protect to their LA who would contact them initially to check your needs, and then up to twice more over the 10 day period.

We are interested in finding out more about the support, advice and guidance you may have received during the self-isolation period.

For those living in Scotland:

We understand that everyone living in Scotland who is asked to self-isolate is/should be offered support from their Local Authority.

- Did you know about the support offered by local authorities?
 - If so, how did you find out about it?
 - What were you told about the support offered by LAs?
- Were you told what support your LA could offer before you decided whether or not to accept support?
- Did you take up the offer of LA support?

If they did accept LA support:

- What was your reason for taking up the offer of support?
- What support were you offered? *(NB: this will vary by LA)*
- What support did you accept? Why?
- How was this support/information received? *(e.g. phone calls, leaflets, online sources, etc)?*
- What impact, if any, did the support you received have?

- Did you take up the offer of the **self-isolation support grant**? Why / why not?
 - How did you find the process of accessing the grant? *(easy/difficult)*
 - What, if anything, could improve the process of accessing the grant?
 - To what extent, if at all, did the grant help you: relieve financial worries; self-isolate?
 - What impact, if any, did the self-isolation support grant have on you/your family?

- What additional support and information, if any, did you receive during your self-isolation period?
 - Where did you receive the support and guidance from?
 - How was this support/information received? *(e.g. phone calls, leaflets, online sources, etc)?*
Official sources: Test and Protect, Scottish Govt/other government, NHS, from those conducting COVID-19 tests
Other sources: TV, radio, online, newspaper; family, friends, etc

- What additional support, if any, would have helped you: during self-isolation?
- If there was any support you did not take up, what was your reason for this?

If they didn't accept LA support:

- What was your reason for not taking up the offer of support?
- Where you aware of the kind of support your LA could offer?
 - If yes: what support was on offer?
 - If no: In general, LA's could offer support with: accessing or paying for food; applying for the Self-Isolation Support Grant, wider financial issues; dealing with the isolation itself (e.g. befriending); isolation accommodation if you cannot safely self-isolate at home; deliveries of medicines, etc.
- What, if anything, would have encouraged you to take up the offer of support from your LA?
- What additional support and information, if any, did you receive during your self-isolation period?
 - How was this support/information received? (e.g. *phone calls, leaflets, online sources, etc*)?
 - Where did you receive the support and guidance from?
Official sources: Test and Protect, Scottish Govt/other government, NHS, from those conducting COVID-19 tests
Other sources: TV, radio, online, newspaper; family, friends, etc
- What additional support, if any, would have helped you: during self-isolation?

For those who live outside Scotland:

- What support and advice, if any, were you offered?
- Did you accept any of this support or information? If yes, what did you accept and why?
- How was this support/information received? (e.g. *phone calls, leaflets, online sources, etc*)?
- Where did you receive the support and guidance from?
 - *Official sources: Test and Protect, Scottish Govt/other government, NHS, from those conducting COVID-19 tests*
 - *Other sources: TV, radio, online, newspaper; family, friends, etc*
- What impact, if any, did the support or information you received have?
- What additional support, if any, would have helped you: during self-isolation?

Ask all respondents

- Overall, what did you think of the amount of support and advice you received during self-isolation?
 - *Was it more than sufficient, about right or less than sufficient? Why do you say that?*
- Overall, what did you think of the quality of support and advice you received during self-isolation?
 - *Was it of good, mixed or not very good quality? Why do you say that?*
 - *Did you understand what was expected of you during the whole period of self-isolation or not? If not, what if anything was unclear?*
- If you were advised to self-isolate again in the future, what if anything would you do differently?
 - *NB: if participant mentions it won't be necessary after the vaccination, probe why respondent thinks that.*

4. Barriers and facilitators (5 mins)

Aim: As barriers and facilitators have been raised in section 3 above, this section aims to check for any additional factors.

We have already discussed some of the factors that may have made following self-isolation measures easier or more difficult. If you think about these factors again:

- Which factors were most important in helping you follow self-isolation measures and assisting you throughout the whole period of self-isolation?
- On the other hand, which factors made it more difficult to follow self-isolation measures, and caused you problems throughout the whole self-isolation period?
- Are there any other factors or issues that we have not discussed as yet that caused you a) difficulties during the self-isolation period and b) helped you during the self-isolation period?

5. Future changes (5 mins)

Aim: To explore participants views on what should remain the same or be changed if the same programme was to be run again in the future.

Considering the whole self-isolation period, as well as your contact with Test and Protect and other sources of support and advice:

- What, if anything, do you think is important to retain/stay the same if such a programme is to run again in the future? (Prompt: role of Test and Protect, Scottish Government, Local Authorities, NHS, etc)
- What, if anything, would you change if such a programme is to run again in the future? (Prompt: role of Test and Protect, Scottish Government, Local Authorities, NHS, etc)
- Do you think the changes you have suggested would make self-isolating fully more likely in future? Why do you say that? What, if anything, else could improve people's ability to self-isolate fully in the future?
- What kinds of communications would be most useful to you to help you understand what isolation support is available?

Finally, is there anything else you think we have not covered as yet about your experience of self-isolation and dealing with Test and Protect that you would like to raise now?