Client Interview Topic Guide – Advice Clients (40 Minutes)

A topic guide is a structured list of open-ended questions or prompts used during interviews or focus groups to explore people's experiences in a consistent but flexible way. It keeps discussions focused around key themes while allowing participants to express themselves freely and in their own words. This advice topic guide is designed to gather evidence about how short-term advice has made a difference to clients' practical situations, confidence, knowledge, financial stability, and well-being, helping to link individual experiences back to the outcomes the service aims to achieve.

Introduction (2–3 minutes)

This section helps set the tone for the interview. It ensures that the client feels at ease, understands the purpose of the discussion, and knows they can share their experience freely and honestly. At this stage:

- Thank the client for agreeing to take part.
- Explain that the interview is confidential and voluntary.
- Remind them that there are no right or wrong answers – the aim is to learn from their experiences.

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

This section encourages the client to start thinking about their experience. The questions aim to build rapport and provide context for the rest of the interview. At this stage, ask:

- Could you tell me a little about what you needed help with when you first contacted us?
- How did you first hear about our service?

Main Sections (30 mins)

This part of the interview explores the main areas we are interested in: whether the advice helped resolve the client's issue, improved their financial security, increased their knowledge and confidence, and supported their wellbeing. The questions are grouped by outcome area to build a clear picture of impact.

Cont...

Main Sections (30 mins)

In each section, there is a Main Question, which focuses on drawing out the client's overall experience of change, followed by a Prompt, which can be used to encourage further detail if needed.

Problem Resolution and Practical Help

- *Main Question: Thinking back to the problem you needed help with, what's different for you now?*
- *Prompt: What still feels unresolved, if anything?*

Financial Security and Managing Daily Life

- *Main Question: Did anything change in how you manage your money or your day-to-day situation after getting advice?*
- *Prompt: If benefits, debts, or housing were part of your advice, what difference has that made for you?*

Confidence and Knowledge

- *Main Question: Since getting advice, how confident do you feel dealing with services or sorting things out?*
- *Prompt: Has the advice changed what you know about your rights, or what options you have?*

Health and Well-Being

- *Main Question: Has the advice made any difference to how stressed or anxious you feel?*
- *Prompt: Has anything changed in your day-to-day wellbeing as a result?*

Overall Reflections

- *Main Question: Overall, what would you say the advice helped you with most?*
- *Prompt: Is there anything you wish had been different, or anything you still needed help with?*

Closing (2–3 minutes)

The closing gives the client a final opportunity to add anything important and ensures the interview ends on a positive, appreciative note.

- Ask if there is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience?
- Thank them warmly for their time and for sharing their experiences.