Researcher BN: Right. Lovely. So I'm really interested, to start off with, kind of, what goes on here, in a broader sense, and what your role is, within it.

SP4: OK, well, we're, we're a charity, erm, and we are here, we've been here, although I haven't been here all this time, we've been here since the mid 80s. Erm, the charity started when the, core mining industry declined, and basically ceased to exist. Erm, and it was formed to help ex miners to retrain, erm and to, you know, move into different, er, employment because obviously mining wasn't an option anymore. Er, from, from that day, we've continued to be an educational establishment, er, working with local people to upskill, train, erm, get people into work, erm, change, you know, their, mebbies their direction that they, they want to work in. Er, and that's what we do to this day. We get referrals from, er, various places. Er, we're part of the bridge project within the County Council, er, who work with, you know, people who are, are vulnerable and need help and support both. Er, both for, you know, with physical disability, mental, mental issues.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Erm, issues with drugs and alcohol, issues with financial problems. The CAB is part of that group and, and they, they major on the finance side of it. Erm, signets kind of help, that's another part of the group, help with the, with mental health.

Researcher BN: Ah right.

SP4: Erm we, we help with IT, erm, because there's a lot of things that people need to do with computers these days, erm, and there are many people who don't have the knowledge or the resource to be able to access the world like, like, you know, like a lot of people can..

Researcher BN: Yeah

SP4: ..they don't have that. Erm, they need help and they need support, they need resource. So we provide that. We provide computers for them to use. We have drop-ins to use the computers every morning. Er, we have support here to help them and teach them how to use the computers, erm, and we also run computer courses in the afternoons, for those who want to learn, basically to do it themselves. I mean, whatever we do, we try and teach people to, to be self-sufficient and to do it themselves.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Erm, there are people who need more support than others. Erm, so that's what we do. We also, er, realise that there are people who, er, need functional skills, English and maths, as well as IT. So we also offer, er, functional skills in English and maths. Quite often, er, a lot of people’s, erm, inability to use IT, quite often is also due to the fact that their literacy isn't, er, isn't particularly good.

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP4: So as part of our interactions we, we try and recognise that, because people quite often don't admit, and don't volunteer that information, that their literacy is not mebbies as good as it should be.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Erm, and, and a lot of people will hide that, you know, if people can't read very well, it's not something they want to admit. Erm, with our interactions on IT, I, I find out that their literacy might not be, might need, you know, some help. So, I'll refer them onto the English, I'll say, you know, how do you fancy improving your English? And, you know, when, when you build that relationship, erm, and they start to trust, trust you and, and they get a bit more confident in, in the environment, then, they will take that advice, and you softly put it to them, you know this would, I think this would really help. So we try, we try and look at things, you know, in a more holistic way, not just concentrate, well myself personally, I don't just concentrate on IT.

Researcher BN: Oh right.

SP4: Erm, I'm also the employability tutor, so, I help people, er, from anywhere. Erm, with applications for jobs, I'll help them with CVs, erm, I help with online applications and online assessments, I help them with interviews. Er, from my background, you know, working, er, in, in business for, you know, a lot of years (laughs). Erm, I've recruited, you know, recruited a lot of people, seen a lot of CVS,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..seen a lot of bad CVS (laughs),

Researcher BN: (laughs)

SP4: …interviewed a lot of people. Erm, and, you know, that experience, in my time of life now, I can bring to help others.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, so, that's in a nutshell what we do.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Erm, people do come here regularly. We have regular people that come in and there's one here now. (laughs) (talking to someone who entered the room) (name of person) could you use the next room? We're just busy there, thanks. Erm, and, they, they, they get to know us, they get to trust us. Erm, it, it also enables, it's, somewhere for people to go, erm, to have a little bit of social interaction that otherwise mebbies they wouldn't have.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm people, you know, people struggle in a lot of ways, erm, and we will always try and support them, er, in any way that we can. Erm, I mean, I've had one client here who, actually, he said to me that I saved his life. Because he was about to commit suicide.

Researcher BN: Oh wow.

SP4: Er, he'd actually attempted it, and he came in, er, and I've never seen anybody in such a state. And I called the crisis team, and I got, you know, I supported him and got them down here and, he got the help he needed. And then, er, I started working with him in the months, you know, and even years following. And finally we got him a job. He got into that specific situation because he lost his long term job.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: Erm, and he actually lost that unfairly, erm, you know, which happens.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And erm, and it hit him really hard. Because when people get tret unfairly, it, it's very difficult to overcome.

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP4: If you've ever been treated unfairly, and you think that's, you know, you'll know yourself that, it kind of gets to you.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, and it's very difficult to overcome. And that happens a lot. So yeah, we, we will always try and help people, er, in any way that we can.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Because, you know, the, the issues that people have in their lives, you know, is part of, it's part of them, and it's part of the help that, you need to give people.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: So we can direct people, and signpost people to different organisations

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: For example, the Citizens Advice Bureau who are part of our group, if there's a financial issue, or they’ve, or they want to apply for a benefit or pip or something like that, we can, we can refer them there.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: Uh, and help them in that way.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Erm. So, we can refer them to different courses. We, we refer people to things like SIA badge courses for security, which there is demand for at the moment because of the new British vault site, which, hopefully, is going to grow.

Researcher BN: Ah right.

SP4: There is CSCS card, which is construction skills. We will signpost people to providers who can do that, which we have ongoing at the moment. Er, we have ran, run, or facilitated customer service courses for people who want to go into retail.

Researcher BN: Oh great.

SP4: So, although we're known as, within the bridge project as the, the people who do the IT..

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Er, and, and employability, we do a lot more than that.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, so I hope that gives you a, a reasonable..

Researcher BN: Yeah, no, no definitely

SP4: ..overview of what we do.

Researcher BN: Yeah, So what motivated you, to start this role specifically?

SP4: Erm (long pause), it's a, that's a difficult question. Erm, I mean, I, I told you, I'm quite open. I'm, I'm, I'm coming up 67 years old. Erm, I've been retired, you know, quite a long time and, I feel like I've got quite a lot of knowledge..

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: ..and experience that, I would like to pass on, and help people.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, I've been lucky, in my life. There are people who haven't been so lucky, so, you know, I just, I just want to help. Erm, and, I think people kind of, get to trust me, I'm, I'm of a certain age that I've probably, er, I mean, we didn't have computers, when we were at school.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: We didn't have computers when, when I was at university, right? Erm, the first computer I came across is, was with my first job, and it was a computer with the size of a, the size of a room.

Researcher BN: (laughs)

SP4: And it probably did less than a mobile phone does now.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs)

SP4: So, I've had to learn it throughout my life,

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Erm, and I think people, er, a lot of people who come here who, are of a certain age, er, kind of think, well, if he can do it, then I can do it. And my philosophy is, when say, when somebody says to me I can't do that, I say, well yeah you can. I say you just can't do it yet.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know, you just haven't learned yet. Er when, when people have, er recognized they've got issues with literacy, and er, when I build a relationship, they'll open up about that, erm, I would say, you can do that. You know, I can't read very well and I would go yes you can, you just can't do it yet,

you just haven't learnt.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And we can, we can put that right. So, that's what we do. Erm, and, I get a, I mean, I've, I've been doing this, working for this charity for probably, I’m coming up to four years.

Researcher BN: Oh right.

SP4: Er, best thing I've ever done. I absolutely love working here, and I love doing what I do.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Er, I only do 18 hours a week, so I play golf quite a lot (laughs). Which keeps me fit.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs).

SP4: Erm, so yeah, erm, I think that's probably the best answer I can give about why I do what I do.

Researcher BN: So have you…

SP4: …you do get a lot out of it, it's very emotional.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Seriously.

Researcher BN: Yeah I bet. Uhumm.

SP4: So.

Researcher BN: So have you volunteered in any other, for any other organisations before this, or is this your first one?

SP4: Erm, I've never worked for a charity before this one. Erm, so it's quite a new experience for me. Erm, but, I, I do, I do kind of, erm, get a little bit, sort of, er, I’d say annoyed, about the way that the charitable sector has to, try and scrape funding together from wherever they can.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, you know, it, it, there’s a, there's a lot of competition for, for funding to help people. Erm, and sometimes you get a little bit annoyed 'cause, er, the governments and the local governments, and, you know, should be, should be probably doing a little bit more than they do. And the, the charitable sector does take, you know, do a lot..

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Erm, and they could do more. But, you know, we’re kind of restricted somewhat.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: I'm not going to get political on you, you know.

Researcher BN: (laughs) What do you, what would you say you enjoy the most about the role?

SP4: Ah, by FAR, is the interaction with the people. Is developing those relationship with, with people, er, helping them, erm, giving them knowledge, seeing them, seeing their confidence and self esteem grow.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, I hate the admin (laughs).

Researcher BN: (laughs)

SP4: Erm, but yeah, it has to be done. Erm, honestly, you know, when you see somebody, erm, you know, start to gain that confidence and, and they start to realise that, you know, they can do things, erm, because a lot of people, you know, they get knocked so much. Erm, and they think that the situation they're in is their fault, and somehow they are lacking. Erm, and you know, once you, you can convince them that look, you know, isn’t your fault.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..you know there is, you know there, we can, you can do this, er, and I'm going to help you. You know. They, you can see them just, start to get more and more confident.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Er, and it's great. It's great to.

Researcher BN: Rewarding.

SP4: Oh aye, yeah, definitely.

Researcher BN: Yeah, and what would you say is the biggest, is the most challenging thing, is it the admin? (laughs)

SP4: Well, yeah, I, I mean it's not challenging, I can do it. I just don't like doing it.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs)

SP4: (laughs) I’ve done enough of that in my life. Erm, (long pause), I certainly don't find the interaction with the people challenging. Erm, I mean I, I kind of, I, I ask, I mean, having done teaching qualifications, you learn to ask open questions, and listen to people.

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP4: And when you’re asking open questions and listen to people, you know, it, it's a lot, you, you know, you can, you've gotta persevere sometimes with the open questions. (laughs)

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs)

SP4: Yeah but, but you do, you, you can see people just start to communicate and, you find out a lot of things about them and they start opening up, sometimes they surprise you by the things they say, you know, the things they tell you.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, obviously you've got to, they've got to be comfortable and confident, and, and, and trust you to do that.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: But they do, and, you know, you know, I don't, I, I think they must think I'm not the sort of person that goes out telling every, telling the world about every, anything, which I don't do, because you can't do that. You've gotta, you've gotta respect people's privacy,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..and the fact that they tell you things in confidence.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Erm, but yeah, you know that, that part of the job is er, it's great.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Challenging, but, in a way it's challenging, but..

Researcher BN: But rewarding?

SP4: Ah absolutely.

Researcher BN: Yeah

SP4: Yeah yeah.

Researcher BN: Worth it.

SP4: You’ll find out on day mebbies. (laughs)

Researcher BN: (laughs) Yeah. So in terms of your day-to-day work

SP4: Yep.

Researcher BN: What kind of interactions are you having with people? What would, kind of, a normal day look like?

SP4: OK. Erm, a normal day would be, in the morning, er, it would be drop in. So, anybody could walk through the door. We would normally have a few of our regulars, who come in, er, they use the computers, erm. That is more of a social thing. They, they, you know, our regulars know they can go make themselves a cup of tea, you know. In fact, one of my regulars has just made a cup of tea for me.

Researcher BN: Yeah! (laughs)

SP4: So, there's that, that part of it, and that's just, that's just a, a, social interaction, and, you know, and helping, erm, and, and giving advice if, if they ask.

Researcher BN: OK.

SP4: And then there's people who will just come in, and we've never met them before, and they get referred, or they were recommended to them. And because we can just drop in with no appointments, they just come in. Er, and then we obviously, we, we chat to them and, you know, we ask them, obviously the questions and what kind of support and help they need, erm, and, and basically, on that first instance, you try and get people comfortable, comfortable and confident, so that they will continue to use and to come in. Quite often I'll have a, a session with someone and I'll chat to them, and I'll find out what they, what they need. Erm, and the, the, the thing that I hope the most is that they'll come back..

Researcher BN: OK.

SP4: ..because when they come back, I know that, that obviously, we have made a, er, an impression, and, and..

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..they, they, they think that we can help and support them. And that happens a lot. We very very rarely get people who come in once and then don't bother coming back.

Researcher BN: Ah OK that’s good, that’s really positive isn’t it?

SP4: Very rarely does that happen, yeah. Yeah, yeah, it is.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: It happens, but er, it's, it's, it's not, it's not something that, that, that I've, I mean looking at what we do, and ana-, analysing what we do, if that was an issue then I'd obviously, I would like to try and address that and say well look there's, there must be, there must be something that we can do different.

Researcher BN: Yeah

SP4: Erm, and mebbies we're not doing things, mebbies the way we should be. But, it doesn't happen so, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs). So you do tend to see the same people regularly?

SP4: We do have our regulars, erm, we, you know, we're, we're open and we're here for them, erm to, to, sometimes it, it's the only social interaction they have. Erm, sometimes we'll sit with regulars and put the world to rights, we'll talk about anything and everything. You know, I've got some very, very clever, well educated people who come in, erm, they, they love coming and, and we have discussions, and erm, you know. So it, it, it can be, it can be that, kind of, like drop-in clubs, like vibe going on.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, so yeah, we have our regulars. Erm, well, the people who come to the drop in, but we’ve also got, I've also got the people who have, I run the, IT courses for.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: So in the afternoons, I run, er, IT courses, couple of hours, er, they're not accredited. Nobody’s going to get a certificate. There isn't a curriculum to follow.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, I give people what they need. I assess them. I say, what areas do you need help? What would you like to be able to do? Why do you want to be able to do it? Er, quite often it's because the job center have told them they've got to go online and do a job search.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: Fine, we do that, we’ll l help them.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Erm, it could be that they want to learn how to use Microsoft Office, because they want to, go in that direction, erm, they want to be able to attach things to emails, they want to be able to copy and paste stuff. There's all sorts of things with computers. They want to be able to go online and do things, erm. Watch YouTube,

Researcher BN: (laughs)

SP4: …Facebook, it doesn't matter.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Whatever they want to do, you know, erm, that's important to them, therefore, that's what I'm, I'm going to help them to do.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, we've got big screens in both of our teaching rooms. Which are linked up to computers, and we can show people. Er, they've all got their own computer that they use. Erm, and yeah, it, it's, the courses, anybody can join at any time. Really only small, small, I mean, because of the pandemic we've, we kept everything small, 'cause it seems to work. So, maximum four people.

Researcher BN: OK.

SP4: Normally it's about 3, on average.

Researcher BN: Right. Yeah.

SP4: Erm, normally I try and keep people at a similar level. But, it doesn't really matter if they are, because, I get the people who have knowledge, of a certain area, help the others.

Researcher BN: Yeah

SP4: And, and it, it, it, it makes for a good interaction, you know, within that learning environment. Erm, and, and you would not believe how much people love helping other people.

Researcher BN: Yeah! (laughs)

SP4: Really, they do. Erm, you know, if you give someone responsibility and you say, I want you to help that person, you can see them just light up.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know, honestly.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: So, I do the er, the IT courses in the afternoons. It's only a couple of hours. It's only once a week, for each, for each person.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: So it's not like, you know, they don't have to come. They can stay for as long as they want.

Researcher BN: Oh right.

SP4: It's not, you know, the course doesn’t start on that day and finish on that day.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know, er, they can stay for as long as they want. As long, as they are, are learning and they, they want to come along, you know, they can come. Because it's not only about IT. It's about getting out, it's about learning, it's about interacting with other people. It's about having discussions about all sorts of different things.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: It's not only about IT, you know, it's, it's in the, the IT courses I learn that maybe someone's literacy could be better. You know, er, I, I teach people things that they probably will never use. Right, for example Excel.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs)

SP4: I teach people who know very little about IT. I teach them about Excel. Not because they're going to use Excel. But because, if there is a conversation that goes on, in the future, and somebody mentions an Excel spreadsheet, they're not excluded from that conversation.

Researcher BN: Yeah, good point.

SP4: They know what's going on, because they've seen it. So, it's, so it's not about the skill of using this, it's about, it's about having the ability, to, kind of, not be excluded.

Researcher BN: Yeah, it’s about inclusion as well.

SP4: And that's im-, and that's important.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Yeah, yeah. Because there's nothing worse than being in a conversation and you, you, you don't know what's going on. And you, and you, you're not going to go ‘I don't know what that is’, 'cause you don't, you don't want to look like an idiot.

Researcher BN: Yeah. Uhumm.

SP4: That's just the way, the way of the world. So yeah, that's, that's what. I do.

Researcher BN: Uhuhh. And do you find that the, erm, how, how do people come to access you? How do people hear about you?

SP4: Well, we, we work closely with the department of pensions in the job centers in, in Blyth, in Bedlington, and in Cramlington, because those are distances that they can travel. The job centers are really good in a lot of ways that they will refer people, erm, and Cramlington will pay for people’s bus fares to come here.

Researcher BN: Alright, great.

SP4: Yep. I go to the job centers and I, and I, I go to them regularly. They know me, and I drop off little bits of information about things that are happening, you know, erm,

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: ..new courses that we're doing and referring people to, like I said before, the CSCS cards on construction, erm, security badge, you know, mebbies some retail, maths and English, that sort of thing. Erm, it's been a bit disappointing lately because the Department of Working Pensions, for some reason, have contracted out their services to private companies. In this coun-, in this region it's been contracted out to reed.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: Reed who have the employment website? Erm, I think other parts of the company have been Ingeous, who, you know, erm, I'm not going to get political, but, you know, I don't see, I don't see how that is any good for anybody.

Researcher BN: No.

SP4: But, so, we, we've now got another organization, and strange enough, Reed have actually subcontracted their contract to Northumberland Skills, which is a Northumberland County Council organisation.

Researcher BN: Right!

SP4: Tell me about it, yeah, I know. Erm, so, it gets a bit complicated and I've, I've had to go, and they're running a, Reed are running their service, which is basically what the job center did, they, they, they've got advisers who are, you know, making sure that people are doing what they’re told to do, looking for a job etc. Then they’re in the Sports Center in Blythe. So I went up the sports centre, and I've introduced myself and said, look, you know, we're here to help and we support, we can support people, so you can refer people to us. And they have been.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: Erm, we work with a number of erm, large charitable trusts, like the Good Things Foundation, for example, an organization we work quite closely with, have done for years. Erm, they're big on IT and inclusion, and digital inclusion within the community. Er, and they, often, quite often, have, erm, devices that they give away, like laptops, or, or tablets. In fact, we're just in the process of giving away the last of a batch of tablets that we've had. And they provide these tablets, with data.

Researcher BN: Ah right.

SP4: So data through the, through G4. Erm, er, through the, the mobile network. Erm, so, so we're giving, we're giving people access to the Internet, er, access to IT, who, basically just don't have the resources. They can't afford broadband,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..you know, they can't do that.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Erm, especially with, you know, the problems that are forthcoming this winter, with fuel bills, it's going to be a nightmare.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4, Erm, so, you know, we, we do that, and we, we, you know, we give people, totally free, we give it to them, and it's theirs.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: It’s not like loaned, it's, it's yours.

Researcher BN: Ah great.

SP4: Erm, they get, they get a little, a little erm, mobile Wi-Fi router, so they can take it anywhere..

Researcher BN: Oh right.

SP4: We teach them how to use it, we teach them how to connect to different wi-fi's, in wherever they are, in the Library or in McDonald's, wherever they may be.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs)

SP4: Erm, so they can get access. Erm, and, you know, it, if you do that for someone, they tend to engage with the learning.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, and they'll tend to, they kind of have a feeling of gratitude and think, ‘well, I, I better go and say hello, and make sure..’

Researcher BN: (laughs) Yeah.

SP4: ..you know, make sure I use this 'cause I've been given it’.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Uhumm. And we do, you know, that, that’s, some people, they, they go away and they use their device, and mebbies they do, mebbies they don't, mebbies it goes into a drawer, but, you know, and we don't see much of them again but,

Researcher BN: But you’ve given them the opportunity.

SP4: Yeah, we, you know, we, we're trying to help. And we do, there is, obviously an assessment process to make sure we maximize, erm, the, the, the value of those devices..

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: ..to the people.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know, we don't always get it right. But more often than not we do.

Researcher BN: Uhumm. Great. So, you mentioned that you, you talk about anything and everything sometimes...

SP4: Oh yeah.

Researcher BN: Not just about the IT.

SP4: Yeah, yeah.

Researcher BN: So what kind of conversations are you having? Is there kind of themes in what you might be talking about?

SP4: Oh, God, you name it, we talk about it.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, the news obviously brings quite a lot of, I mean there are people who are interested in what goes on in the world. Erm, but I always try to get people interested in what goes on in the world. I try to broaden their horizons to, you know, to take an interest in, in what goes on in, in, in other parts of the world, in other countries like Ukraine at the moment. Like Ukraine is a big thing.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know. Because, you know people can be very, they can get into a little bit of, a position where they're very insular and, you know, and, and, and it's difficult sometimes you get, you get into a bit of a rut. Coming here, and doing IT, gives me an opportunity to broaden their horizons a little bit.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And say, what do you think of this, and, what do you think of that? And, you know, er, and especially now with the, the energy crisis upcoming, that's, that's going to be things that people are worried about. Er, and I've, I've started now to start gathering information and advice, you know, to, to, to see if I can, you know, help.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know, erm, I've been looking at different websites, and looking at all different recommendations for how you can save money and, what you can do and, make sure that everybody is getting the benefits that they're entitled to, which a lot of people don't.

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP4: Erm, so, yeah, we talk about anything, er, that's of interest at the, at the time, whether it's the weather, the heat wave, whether it's erm, you know, the, the political situation we’re in, whether it's Boris Johnson and his party’s, whatever.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know, because people, people do see the news, and they do see news be-, and they have a view.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: You know, quite often people have, you know, quite sort of erm, strong views in a certain direction. Erm, and sometimes I'll just get them to question that, and say well look at things from, look at things from both sides and, make an informed decision..

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..or choice about things,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..just to, you know, just to try and get people to consider, you know, different aspects. The one thing that I do find up here that there are, there are people who, who do not tolerate very well, people of different ethnic backgrounds.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Yep. Erm, the Brexit vote was a case in point. Where, you know, most of the people that I see, in this area, don't have a, a particularly, you know, fond view of people who they think comes and takes their jobs. Yeah?

Researcher BN: Right, yeah.

SP4: So, obviously, er, we have a debate.

Researcher BN: (laughs)

SP4: Er and I kind of put them right. Erm, you know, I actually, I, I said to one, one of my clients who was quite, you know, opinionated in that area. Erm, he wanted a job. He did want to work. Right.

Researcher BN: Uhuhh.

SP4: Right and I told him I would get him a one. I said I could get you a job and you can start Monday.

Researcher BN: Oh right.

SP4: Erm, and I did.

Researcher BN: Wow!

SP4: And he refused to take it. Because it was picking fruit and vegetables in Lincolnshire.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: Right? So ‘I'm not going to do that’, well, ‘why are you not going to do that?’, well ‘because I've got to go down and, you know, they would have given him accommodation. You know?

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP4: Not a problem. But he wouldn't do that. ‘I'm not going to leave my, my family, and my friends and everything to go down there’, I said ‘yeah, and I don't blame you, because, most people wouldn't’. There's not a great population in Lincolnshire available to do that work, so you know what, people come over from Bulgaria, and Romania.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: And they do that work, seasonal workers. It's just like the people of London used to go to Kent to pick the hops.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Right, I said they come over and they do that work, because when they go back to Bulgaria they get lots of lev to the pound. I've been to Bulgaria. Yeah, erm, I know that it, it's, it's quite a poor country. Erm, so, they do that for us, and that enables us, you know to, to harvest, you know, all the fruit and vegetables. Erm, and that's what they do. They don't come over and take your jobs.

Researcher BN: Yeah, so there's a, there's quite a lot of sociopolitical debate goes on?

SP4: Oh, god yeah.

Researcher BN: Interesting.

SP4: Yeah well people, you know, I mean, obviously I, I, I, I let people, you know, talk about what they want to talk about.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, and, and basically, you know, it could be on anything, I mean, you know, we, we’ll, we'll talk about everything to do with, I mean mental health is an area we’ll talk about. You know, erm I have quite a number of autistic people. Some people who, who are openly so. Some people who, are not.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know. Erm, and, and, you know, trying to make people feel that they're not different and excluded, is, kind of part of what I, I like to do.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Because I, I basically say, well, look, we're all a little bit like that. I mean, I'm a bit OCD, you know? My daughter is dyslexic, you know? Erm, we all have these things going on.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: So, you know, don't, you know, don't think you're different.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: You’re just different in a different way.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: It's just, you know, it’s the way it is. Erm, it’s, you know, it is what it is, and, you know, you, the, the important thing that I find in my life is, is, is I don't judge people.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: You know, a lot of people do. I will not judge people.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know, because I don't know the background and what they've been through to be where they are. All I know is that I've been lucky. In that, I had my parents, and I had the opportunities, erm, but, I have three cousins who were just the same as me when I was younger, who didn't.

Researcher BN: Yeah,

SP4: And they suffered, you know, and they've their life is totally different. So, and that wasn't their fault. So I've been lucky, so I can't judge people just 'cause I've been lucky.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And er, and I think, I think hopefully that comes across, and I, I always, you know, er respect everyone who comes in.

Researcher BN: Yeah, definitely. And have you noticed any changes before, during and after COVID in the types of interactions you've had, and what you might talk about, has that influenced anything?

SP4: Erm, (long pause), at the time, obviously, it was something that we talked about.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: But now that it's kind of, gone out of people heads, and people are a bit sick of it we don't talk about it.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: It very rarely is now a topic of conversation.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, it's as if everybody just wants to, move on from it.

Researcher BN: Uhumm (laughs)

SP4: And I think we do, to be fair.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs).

SP4: It's not something that I've had a discussion about for, quite a long time now.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Er, I mean, even though I, I avoided COVID, through the whole pandemic. Right.

Researcher BN: Wow, well done (laughs)

SP4: Until about four or five weeks ago, when I got, I got it.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Right. Because, you know, I, to, for me, I was, I felt a little bit flu-y for a day, and I had a cough for a couple of days, but I've had worse colds. So I think the, the old erm, vaccine’s helped, you know.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: I mean, at my age, they’re just pumping me full of stuff every other month, you know.

Researcher BN: (laughs)

SP4: Well, you know, so I had all of the vaccines and the boosters, there are, I mean we, we, we do have, we did have the anti-vaccine sort of debates or something at one point, but most of the people, you know, could see the benefit of that.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, and when we were, when we did discuss that at the time, erm, I was, I, I was obviously supporting of people getting the vaccine and protecting themselves and others. Erm, but I would never, I honestly would never push my opinions onto anybody, because sometimes you'll, you’ll just alienate people

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP4: You know? So, I never, I would never do that.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, you can just make suggestions, and, and ask people to investigate. And use it as a, a, a, something we can help them on the IT side, because I would say let's look it up.

Researcher BN: Yeah!

SP4: Let's Google it. And let's have a look.

Researcher BN: Weave that into the IT. Yeah. (laughs)

SP4: You know. So yeah, it's er, it, it, it quickly became a subject that we, we were sick of talking about and we're not going to talk about it anymore.

Researcher BN: Yeah. Fair enough. (laughs)

SP4: There was no conscious decision, it just happened.

Researcher BN: Yeah. So what about health, we'll focus for now on kind of, health and well-being directly,

SP4: Okay.

Researcher BN: …and then we'll bring in employment and finance a bit later,

SP4: Okay.

Researcher BN: So in terms of talking about conversations about health and wellbeing,

SP4: Yep.

Researcher BN: diet, smoking, alcohol, physical activity,

SP4: Yep.

Researcher BN: …things like that. Do those conversations tend to come up much with people that come in?

SP4: Yep, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Erm, we do have people who come in who are of not good physical health. Er, but they've been assessed by the department of working pensions, by whoever, that they are, in good health and can work.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: Which means that they have to, do their, do the necessary to keep, their benefits.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Erm, normally those are people who, don't have the resources, who are typical, sort of, clients of ours, erm, and need that help support. And they, and they, they, they'll quite often get directed to us, you know, from, from the, the job centers, er, and other parts, other organisations within the bridge project. Er, so we do talk about health. Although it's not something that I would ask them directly,

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4 …they would normally volunteer that information.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Erm, and like I would say, look, what do you want to do? You know, what kind of jobs do you think you can see yourself doing? Er, at which point they will tell me, well, I can't do this, and I can't do that, because of, of this issue or that issue. Erm, and then we, I mean, I'm quite honest and open with people who are ready to get to employment, and I think, and they think that they are ready to get into a job.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: If that's the case, I will go all out to get them a job. We will do what we need to do, we will tailor their CV, we'll do online applications, we'll do good covering letters, we’ll, we will do what we can, and we'll target the jobs that they want to try and get.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And quite often we were successful at doing that. When people have an issue with their health, erm, and they're not ready to get into work, then, I don't do that, because there's no point.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: What I do in those cases is, I just help them to keep the job center from putting more and more pressure on them.

Researcher BN: Right

SP4: Erm, and keep them off their back, and do what they need to do to keep their benefits.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: Because, and, and, when, and when they come in, and, and I ask them the question ‘do you really want a job, are you ready to get into work?’, because I don't mind if you're not, right, because, you know, I don't want to set people up to fail.

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP4: If you put somebody into a job and you force them into a job, and they're not ready for that for whatever reason,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..they're going to fail, again.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: So, by working with them, and, er, and building up their confidence and understanding why they don't want to work, because, sometimes it's physical, quite often it's mental, quite often it's a, a confidence, self esteem, you know, and fear.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Right, it's, it's a scary thing, if you haven't worked for a while, you know, you’re going into this routine in your life, you know, it's tough,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Scary.

Researcher BN: Definitely.

SP4: And you’ll come across it when you get your you know, you go for a job and you start a job, you know, it's, it's hard. You know, you, you're in your new environment with people you don't know. Your body’s got to get used to a routine of getting up in the morning and getting there.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know, and spending a full day doing a job, you know. Erm, you've got that, you've got to learn the job, it's stressful, you know, so yeah, it's scary.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: But it just gets easier. As you, as your body gets used to the routine, as you get to know the people who you're working with, as you get to know the job, and you can start to learn how to do it, it becomes easier and easier. So everything becomes easier and easier and easier until, until it becomes, you know, second nature.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And that's the way that it works. And you, you've got to work people through that, you've got to understand the fear that is there, in the, in the, you know, in trepidation of, of, of, going to work and, can I do it?

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..can I do that? Because people, sometimes they're on the floor, their self-esteem, confidence is just on the floor.

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP4: So you gotta, you’ve gotta get them up.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Before you can even think about getting them into a job, you've gotta get them up.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, and that's, that's what we do

Researcher BN: Yeah, so is it mainly mental health that you might talk about?

SP4: Both.

Researcher BN: Both?

SP4: Yeah.

Researcher BN: What kind of things might you talk about?

SP4: Well, people who have got various, anomalies, whether it's, you know, whether it's, I mean, (long pause), I mean, it's difficult to pick out certain, you know, there's so many different ailments that people have.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, people will use a physical ailment, quite often when really the problem is that, they're not, they don't want, they're not ready for that,

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: ..step into work, or for that change in, in their situation. Erm, there are people who are, physically, OK. But, you know, they, they, they just use that as, like I say, as, as an excuse. But, that's something that, you know, I can normally get to the bottom of, I can normally understand what they're going through, and, sometimes you'll see the relief in peoples faces when they, when, when you say look, you understand, erm, and you're not going to push me into a job that I don’t, at this moment in time, because I'm, I'm not, I can't do that.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Er, and then, and then when you say that, and you say, look, I'm, I'm going to help you to take the pressure off you, I'm going to help you to do that, and I'm going to help you through this, and then, you know, when you're ready, and it might be a month, it might be a week, it might be a year, it might be two years. When you're ready, then we'll see what we can do and get you a job.

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah.

SP4: So you, you're building, sometimes you're building from quite a low base, so, you've got to work quite hard with people. And you don't want to lose them, you want them to continue to come, to, to, to get that help and support.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, so yeah, it, does that make sense?

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah, definitely.

SP4: Ah right, okay.

Researcher BN: So it's, would you say you don't tend to talk as much about the kind of, preventative behaviors like exercise and healthy eating, is it more if somebody’s, suffering with their physical or mental health already, that might come up?

SP4: Yes. It's usually someone who's already, has, has issues.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: We do talk about, we do talk about nutrition. Erm, but it's not, it's not a kind of a, a preachy thing.

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah.

SP4: You know, you can be very preachy, about things if you, if you're not careful.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And people just, you know they, they just balk at that. Erm, so, er, using examples, you know, about, me for example.

Researcher BN: Uhumm..

SP4: Right. I'm a reason-, I mean, I, I'm, I'm nearly 67 now, I don't take any medication, OK, zero.

Researcher BN: Great.

SP4: Erm, because I, I exercise, I play 2 rounds of golf every week, which is 7 miles a time…

Researcher BN: Yeah!

SP4: So that's 14 miles I walk every week.

Researcher BN: Wow

SP4: …with a golf, after a little white ball.

Researcher BN: Yeah. (laughs)

SP4: Erm, which might seem stupid, but, you know, gives you the exercise, fresh air, rain or shine, or whatever, we're out there playing golf and erm, and, you know, I, I tell people that, I try, er, with (name), my wife being a teacher, I do all the cooking,

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: ..because teachers think that all they need to do all, all they do in their lives is teach, or prepare to teach. (laughs)

Researcher BN: (laughs)

SP4: I’ve done all the cooking in our house since we’ve been married, and that was our wedding anniversary two days ago, we’ve been maried 41 years.

Researcher BN: Aww!

SP4: Yeah, met at University. Erm, so, we do talk about it, but, it's not something that I would ever preach about, because that's counterproductive in my, in a lot of cases.

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah.

SP4: I, I will just simply use some examples, you know to,

Researcher BN: Right

SP4: …to, to hint that if you do this, if you do that, it's, ah it’s really good, you know?

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs). And how, how do those conversations come up, let's say about nutrition, how would they tend to happen?

SP4: Erm, it, there's no, you, you can't just, pick a, a moment when you know, you can't, you can't just start a conversation about nutrition. It's, it, mebbies we’ll have a cup of tea. We always, during the courses or during what we do, it'll be a cup of tea or a cup of coffee, you know, and we might have a debate about sugar, 'cause I use sweetener, I use er, I hate sweetener.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Hate sweetener! Right, I can, I can taste sweetener a mile away, but I've found, I’ve found xylitol, which is a sweetener, the only one I've ever discovered that I can't tell.

Researcher BN: I think it's erm, natural?

SP4: Yes, it's made out of tree bark.

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah.

SP4: Xylitol, right? Erm, so, I tell people about it and, you know, it's, it, it's always tricky because, it's not cheap.

Researcher BN: Oh right.

SP4: I mean, you, you buy a bag of sugar, the equivalent is about £8.00.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: Right. So it's not something, you know, you can just go ‘oh I'm gonna buy some Xylitol’. I buy it on Amazon. (laughs)

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Er, so, you know, you can bring up things like that, and, and, and quite often, the clients they bring things in for us, the people of (name of town) are so kind,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..honestly lovely people. Erm, even though they've got nowt, they’ll, they’ll bring something in to thank us, they’ll bring some biscuits in, you know?

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Or sometimes, I mean (name) there baked is a cake the other day, brought it here.

Researcher BN: Ohhh, lovely!

SP4: Right, yeah, so, you know, it, it, we can then, you can then mebbies turn the conversation towards, you know, don't eat, not eating too many biscuits, but, you know, their buying from the, the really cheap shops, you know there, there, there is an issue with, with eating well. Er, because, it costs more to eat well.

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP4: Erm, cooking it, is, uses, you know, er especially now where people are thinking every time they turn the cooker on bloody hell how much does it cost?

Researcher BN: Well, yeah, yeah.

SP4: Erm, so that's even going to become a worse issue.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Erm, and, and people, people get, into a state where, they can't be bothered.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: It's very easy to get into a very lethargic state, when you, you know, you, you haven't got a job and you've got no money, and you've got nout,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..and you can't do anything. You can't, it's easy for me to say, yeah, I play golf. Yeah, but how much the hell does it cost me to play golf?

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs).

SP4: They haven’t got the resources to do that.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: I’ve got a lady who comes in, mind you, and she walks. She's got walk-, she walks. (laughs)

Researcher BN: (laughs)

SP4: For miles.

Researcher BN: Awww.

SP4: Erm, and she realizes that it's doing her a lot of good, so, it's a difficult subject, to bring up because, it's easy to say, do this, do that, do the other, easy.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Doing it is a totally different thing.

Researcher BN: Yeah. So do you think that, would you say that's the most challenging part about talking about health, with people that come in?

SP4: Er, when you're talking about, things like, you know, eating well, and getting exercise, that’s a difficult subject.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Because, it, like I say, it's easy to say.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And you know, and it's easy for me.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: It's probably easy for you.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: But it ain’t easy for them,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..to eat well, and get exercise. What do they do? What do you do? You know.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs).

SP4: You tell me.

Researcher BN: Uhuhh.

SP4: You know, I, I can point people in directions, I can, I've helped people to go volunteering. There's the, there's the tall ships, erm and there's a workshop, people can go down there and I know they do, er, there's, there's, there's the bacon buttie club across the church hall across there,

Researcher BN: Uhuhh.

SP4: …every Thursday and people can, you know, it's a bacon butter club and, it's exclusively for men, but for some reason.

Researcher BN: Oh right.

SP4: There's a, there's a man shed, just up there. Were there’s like a workshop.

Researcher BN: Oh yeah, I've heard of that.

SP4: Yeah.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, so, there are things that we can, point people to,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..and help them to go. And sometimes you can actually, I mean there are people who I'm gonna, I will take, to, say, the tall ships, and in fact, there's a, there's a, a lad who's an autistic lad, who erm, I'm working with, and I've got him to agree, slowly but surely, because he's realised he wants to get out of his room,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..and away from the computer 'cause he's stuck in his room, and he’s on a screen,

Researcher BN: Right.

Sp4: ..and he realises he wants to, not to do that.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm,and I'll take him there. It won't be a question of pointing him in the direction,

Researcher BN: Oh so you will actually go with him.

SP4: I'll actually go and take him there.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: I've actually been, I actually go to the job centre, with people, when they’re going for their meetings with their advisors.

Researcher BN: Oh, great.

SP4: Yeah, because, they, er, they got some, they've got a problem, they've got a dispute, or something's happened, and they want some support. Er, especially recently when people have been referred to this other organisation that they've given this contract to so.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know, they, and they're pushing people, erm, and people are worried about it.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: So, yeah, we erm, yeah we do that.

Researcher BN: Yeah. And is there, so do you think there's anything that might help you to have these conversations, whether it be, resources, training, the setting you’re in, anything that would facilitate kind of, having these conversations about health?

SP4: OK. (sighs) (long pause) Most people, who, er, probably would benefit from a better diet, and more exercise, and more information about their health, and information and access, are in denial.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: OK, so, you can't just, say right, we're gonna talk about this, and we're gonna, and you're gonna, and it's good for you, it's going to be good for you to do this and this and this and this. Because they ain't gonna listen to you.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: They’re not going to listen to you.

Researcher BN: OK.

SP4: Because you're getting preachy with them, and you’re telling them how to live their lives.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And you can't do that because their lives are their lives, and they've got their problems, and they've got their issues, and they've got their problems with, with resource and money, and paying the bills, you know, and whatever other issues they've got going on in their lives. So you, you, you, you can't do that with people.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: So, that is a hard one, OK?

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: You know, there's no easy fix to this, and you can't just say, oh, we're going to have this forum, we’re going to invite people, and we’re going to tell them all about this stuff. 'Cause they're not gonna listen to you, and they’re not going to come.

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah.

SP4: You know, it's people, it's probably people like me, and people who do this sort of thing throughout the community, who can build those relationships, relationships with people. Who can nudge them, right?

Researcher BN: Right, yeah.

SP4: Subtly nudge people, and try to get their thinking, er, in a, you know, a better place. But, there's too much other stuff. If there's too much other stuff, that's going to be so, sort of insignificant, that they're not going to even listen to you.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: So, so you've gotta, you've gotta try and get them, er, to a place where, the other stuff is more manageable for them in their head, and then they can mebbies start thinking about, you know, improving other parts of their lives.

Researcher BN: Yeah, so your relationships definitely assist that, and being able to..

SP4: Oh, God, yeah.

Researcher BN: ..talk about.

SP4: Yeah, if you, if you've got a relationship with people and they trust you, erm, and, you know, you, you can assess that they're in a place where, they're going to, they're prepared to mebbies change, in, in, in subtle ways and small ways, 'cause you can't, you can't make people change just like that.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: So, so that relationship will help. People do that.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: The medical profession don't have the time. Unfortunately, doctors, erm, you know, GP's, and people, they don't have the time to spend assessing those people, understanding how they're thinking, where they are in their life, er, and when they can, er, use their, the subtle persuasions to, to get them to change their thinking.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: They don't have the time to do that. Much as we think that they, they should, they just don't.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: So, that ain't gonna work, until you put resource into a specific area where, where that can happen.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And you can, you can get people. But, you know, as we, as we speak, none of this will happen. Yeah, people think it does, but it doesn't.

Researcher BN: Yeah, so do you think that's where, the voluntary and community sector come in?

SP4: The voluntary community is, is so important in, er, in that we do and can spend time with individuals, understanding where they're at, nudging in the right directions in certain areas, helping them to improve their confidence and self-esteem, helping to overcome issues, and deal with issues in their lives, and when they get to that point, you can then say, oh, by the way, do you know, why don't you try this? And why don’t you try that? And wouldn't it be nice if you could do this? And then they'll start listening to you. And that takes time.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: It takes time, er, and it takes people who've got the skills and the training. Erm, and the opportunity to do that. And unfortunately we don't have that as much in the, in the voluntary sector as much as we should have.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, underresourced, erm, I mean I've, I've come from business. So I, I look at this from that kind of viewpoint, and I think, I mean I sometimes, I get, I get frustrated.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Because there's so much that can be done. And, the people who run things, who we think are clever, sometimes ain’t that clever.

Researcher BN: (laughs)

SP4: I'm sorry, they’re just not that smart.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, and, and there, there's no joined up thinking going on.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: I mean, it's crazy sometimes. I mean, I, I, I've got, I've got quite a lot of Afghan refugees that I, I'm, supporting

Researcher BN: Ah right.

SP4: …and trying to get them, trained and into work.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: Erm, and, typical example is, I've got, I've had a group of, I think about 5 Afghans who came in, because they, they wanted to, get an SIA badge, qualification so they could do security on the British War site.

Researcher BN: Oh right.

SP4: And the company that's got the contract to do security, I know them. They're actually ex, ex military. They know Afghanistan, they know the Afghanistanis, and they would give them a job.

Researcher BN: Great.

SP4: Wonderful!

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Right. So, you train them, you give them the SIA qualification, and then you give them a job. Easy. Except, I can't do it because I can't get any funding. I can't get the funding. I even wrote to (name) the MP, and I said look, I've got these Afghanistanis, if I could get them through this qualification, it costs about 5 or £600 to do, per person. Then, they will have a job.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Hey all, I mean, I can show you the emails, I can show you the responses, which took forever. Right, I can show you all that. And eventually, it was all slopey shouldered off to the job center, who ain't got any money to spend on it. And yet they're giving these people how much Universal Credit or whatever it is every month.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: That is just crazy.

Researcher BN: I could imagine that's, frustrating.

SP4: Frustrating.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: I mean, it is, er, you see, you can get SIA qualifications, right, and this is the way the training works and it, it really, really is frustrating. There are certain courses which are funded by the Skills Funding Agency. Accredited courses where you get a certificate, and the training provider, whether that's a college or a private training provider, erm, they get paid to do that training. Employability, customer service, retail course, something like that. You'll get paid to do that, but a useful thing like, an SIA badge or a CSCS card or a forklift truck license? No, you don't get funding for that, not through the Skills Funding Agency. So what the providers do, is they will, they will do an SIA qualification, bolted on to an accredited course. That they get paid for.

Researcher BN: Ah right.

SP4: Because at the end of the day the training provider’s out to make money. That's what they're in it for, to make money,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: They’re not there to help the world, to help these people, they’re here to make money, and that's just the way it is, unfortunately. Even the colleges are a bit like that these days. And universities. They want the money. So, erm, so we have a problem. In that, I could, if I could get the training for these, they, they could not do that bolt on thing 'cause they, their English isn't up to the standard where they could do an accredited course, and pass it.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know, and, and it would be useless for them anyway. And they’d be totally confused as to why they're being taught this stuff.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs).

SP4: Whereas, you know, you would, and, and I have to explain this, Oh I'm going on an SIA, I'm, I'm going on an SIA badge course, and then they'll come to you and say well why am I doing customer service?

Researcher BN: (laughs) Yeah.

SP4: And then I explain to them because (the company) hasn't explained them, ‘look, this is the way it works, mate. You know, you don't get any funding for this four, 500 cost of the SIA badge. So they're putting you through that course and that course so that they get funded for, and their bolting that one on.

Researcher BN: It’s so roundabout (laughs).

SP4: I mean, I mean, how crazy is that?

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah.

SP4: And that's the way it is.

Researcher BN: Yeah, uhuhh.

SP4: So, you know, I hope I'm opening your eyes on some things, you know.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs).

SP4: So, so you can understand how, someone like me who comes into this sector, erm, and gets somewhat frustrated.

Researcher BN: Uhumm. Yeah, definitely.

SP4: You know, and the other frustrating thing, the other thing that really, really annoys me, right, I get so angry because of this, is when people get advice on their CVs, Right.

Researcher BN: Uhuhh.

SP4: Er, I have seen more CVs in my life than I would care to remember, because I used to recruit, and people used to send me their CVs attached to an e-mail.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: And the amount of CVs that I have seen where the, the personal statement says ‘I am, a hard working, reliable person, good at working as a team, good at working with my initiative, and enthusiastic and trustworthy’.

Researcher BN: (laughs)

SP4: Really? Are you? Okay! Yeah, we do know that employers want people who are team workers, you know, enthusiastic, reliable, hardworking, you know, flexible. But you can't just say it.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs)

SP4: You can’t just say it, howay man. You’ve gotta demonstrate it, you’ve gotta, you know, you, so. Erm, so people get a CV written for them, by some career advisor somewhere. And they send that CV out, on one of the job sites, hundreds of times. And they get no responses. OK?

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: So. How does that make them feel?

Researcher BN: Frustrated, and, puts their self esteem down, I suppose.

SP4: Angry, depressed.

Researcher BN: Yeah. Mmm.

SP4: Nobody wants me. Why should I bother? Right. It's me. I'm rubbish. Nobody wants me. What does that do to their mental health? Right.

Researcher BN: Yeah

SP4: OK, and yet it's not their fault, it's because they've got bad advice and they’ve got a crap CV.

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP4: And nobody advises them, in the right way. Like Einstein's definition of insanity, which of course you know.

Researcher BN: (laughs)

SP4: Don’t you?

Researcher BN: Is it erm, expecting to do the same thing twice and come up with a different result or something like that? Yeah.

SP4: Yeah, close. Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: OK. So, I say it to people, OK, how many times have you sent your CV out? Bloody loads at times! And what responses have you got? None! So, according to Einstein your insane, what have you changed?

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: What have you changed? Nothing. Why? (laughs) If it ain't working, you know, at some point we continue to do it, so.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, I mean, CVs are, a difficult subject. Not very many people are good at presenting themselves in writing, you know, and it doesn't matter. You're probably not brilliant at presenting yourself in writing, even though you’re well educated. You might be, but I don't know.

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah, I might not be.

SP4: But I know that my daughters aren't,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..and they, they're clever, they're educated people. And I know a lot of people who are, but they, they're just not good at presenting themselves in writing. Because they don't know, and they don't know what, what an employer is looking for.

Researcher BN: Yeah, Uhumm.

SP4: Erm, I mean, it's a whole, it's a whole, it's a half-day session to teach you about that so I won’t go into that.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs)

SP4: Erm, but seriously, it's the effect that it has. You know, when people fail. Doing online assessments, the big retailers are very, very difficult.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Yeah, you know, you go online with Asda and you try and go through their assessment, and it takes you ages, you know, and, and you know, you think, why am I doing this, I, I'm, I just want a job in ASDA stacking shelves, you know.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, but they do it because there, there's a lot of people want to work for them, because they're a good employer. You know, erm, so they have a filtering system, so they've got this assessment system, and they know what answers they want, and erm, people can't get through that.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And once they've done it, they can't reapply for six months.

Researcher BN: Oh, wow.

SP4: Yeah, because they, they, because people could continually do them and you know,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..obviously they do that. Erm, they've even sussed out the, you know, people who are using a different e-mail address and, and, you know, all sorts of different criteria so they can multiply, you know, they can try again you know?

Researcher BN: Aww (laughs)

SP4: It’s a, I mean, I know how to get through those. I have a, I have a 100% record of getting people through those assessments, because I know what they're looking for. Erm, and people don't. You know, they asked, sometimes they ask these questions like, you've got two statements, which is news to you, which you know, you've probably seen them. Quite funny.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs).

SP4: Erm, they'll say, you know, I like to plan my working day. I like chatting to my colleagues at work.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs).

SP4: Right. And you go, oh, I like to plan my working day. That's, that's why I, you know, ‘I am a creative person’. Erm, ‘ I go out with my friends at weekends’. Oh, I’m a creative person. You know, think about what, what they want. I mean, they do not want people who plan, want to plan their working day, they’re, most working days are reactive, especially when you're working in retail, or you’re working in customer service, or whatever. You know, it's reactive, you, you can't plan your working day.

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP4: And for God's sake, they don't want creative people, don't get creative on me! This is the way, ‘I like to find new ways of doing things!’, but no! No, they don't want people who want to, this is the way we do it, and we've always done like this, and you're not going to come in and change everything, you know, we don't want ya. Seriously, I mean. You know, there are all sorts of things in those. I mean that's, I'm being quite flippant about it, but it is quite serious, and, people need to, need support and help to be able to do those sorts of things. Quite, quite a lot of the time people get through them through luck. Situational tests, you’ll have come across them.

Researcher BN: Yes, yeah.

SP4: ‘You are working on a till, somebody in the queue drops a bottle of wine’, right? ‘What do you do?’ These are four different things, there's four different things, right? Which is the best, which is the worst?

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Right? I can tell you, the best is never, ‘go and get your supervisor or your manager’.

Researcher BN: Yeah, they don't want that (laughs).

SP4: Don't want that. (laughs)

Researcher BN: Sort it out yourself.

SP4: Yeah, they don't, even, even if it might seem the most sensible thing to do, it's never the answer, because, you know, they want people who ain't going to go running to their supervisor or their manager every time something goes wrong.

Researcher BN: Which makes sense, yeah.

SP4: Yeah, yeah. Erm, so, you know, people, most people fail, when they do those things. Most people when they send this e-mail to apply for a job, fail. Which, in itself, and the people who have been unemployed for a reasonable amount of time, will fail a hell of a lot more often, if not all the time. Because, of the way, it's difficult to present them, you know, you've got to present people in a different way when they've had a, a gap.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: It's difficult, right? Er, so, you’re talking about mental health? You know, how does that make people feel?

Researcher BN: Yeah, so is that how a conversation might come up, through talking about employment?

SP4: Yep, yep. Talking about employment, erm, you know, and, they, a lot of people when they come to us are on the point of giving up.

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP4: You know, erm, and when people give up, er, they give up in a lot more ways than just give up looking for a job. Sometimes they can just give up, altogether. And it can, it can be devastating. So, erm, you know, you have to, you have to get through to them, it's not your fault. You've had bad advice. Right.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And I'm going to help ya.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: And they, and, you know, and they trust me. Totally.

Researcher BN: Yeah. Yeah, definitely. So, obviously like, it, conversations about employment are part of your role inherently I suppose, so what about kind of like finance and housing conversations, does that come, come in a lot?

SP4: Oh God, yeah, yeah.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Quite, quite often I’ll help people do budgets.

Researcher BN: Oh right.

SP4: I'll, I'll encourage, when I do my IT, er, when I show them excel, I always do budget.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: So, you know, I say I teach them excel just because, I want them to know about Excel and not being excluded if it comes up,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..but I, I can always use that, erm, as a, as a tool to help them with, you know, budgeting, and thinking about finance, and thinking about things. Erm, some people are quite private about their finances, and some people are quite open about their finances.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know, you can't, you can't bring up the conversation of finances if somebody doesn't wanna talk to you about it.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Er, but there are people, who erm, who will openly pipe, ask for your help. And then you can, you can start directing them to people who can help them with that. Like I say, the CAB.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, and, and if we can, if someone qualifies to, to, to be, to be on the bridge project, they can, they've got, they get a bridge worker who will actually go to the CAB and support them with that, the team.

Researcher BN: Ah right, great.

SP4: And they, they get an individual worker, erm, who will help them, it's their first point of contact. It's like 1 to one, er, and then they, and that person will get mentored in a way, to wherever they need to be.

Researcher BN: Right, yeah.

SP4: So if they need an erm, employment or IT, they'll, they'll come to us. If they need finance they’ll, they'll be taken to the CAB. If they want help with, with mental health issues, that, you know, Signet is part of the group, which is a mental health charity. There's, there's the Northern Learning Trust, County Council are the overseas, that, that project is actually coming to an end, er and, and it's probably going to be reborn under a different umbrella, but we don't know where the finance is coming from yet.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: That’s always the issue.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: We've got a great thing going on, and then, the project comes to an end, and then it dies, and we could die with it.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: As a charity, we could die with it. 'Cause we're hand to mouth. I mean, you know, we, we rely on, we don't get any funding from the government whatsoever.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: We rely on Charitable Trusts giving us money. Some of them do regularly. Even the, the Council didn't give us any money this year.

Researcher BN: Wow.

SP4: Yeah, I don't know why.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: They gave it, they they gave it to somebody else. (laughs)

Researcher BN: So it's always quite insecure as funding, yeah.

SP4: Oh God, yeah. I mean, we, everybody who, who works for, for, at (name of charity), the maximum contract they ever get is six months.

Researcher BN: Oh, wow.

SP4: That's about as much as..

Researcher BN: And they can guarantee.

SP4: That's as much as they can guarantee.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: So, you know, anytime, six months hence, we, we could cease to exist, which would be a shame.

Researcher BN: Yeah. Definitely.

SP4: You know, but, erm, so yeah. I mean, yeah, it's er, it's, it's difficult, but, you know, I mean like I've been doing this for nearly four years. I love coming to work and doing this.

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah.

SP4: I only do 18 hours, but, you know, I love doing it.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: You could probably tell.

Researcher BN: Yeah. It's great!

SP4: There you go.

Researcher BN: And, in terms of, kind of, the other conversations, other than IT, has, have you noticed a change before, during, after COVID, of what people have wanted to talk about? Finance, health, things like that?

SP4: Erm (sighs)

Researcher BN: 'Cause obviously you've been here throughout, so I just wonder if you've noticed a change.

SP4: I have been here throughout. (long pause) I'm just thinking about it, because, we were closed. Like a lot of places, quite a lot of the time. So we didn't have that interaction with people. Erm, so it wasn't, it wasn't something that, erm, we regularly would have conversations with people about because of the, the amount of time that we, we couldn't see people.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: When we eventually got opened up and got to see people, it was a conversation that people were just sick off.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: So, it, it didn't really happen. The conversations that we have now, and have had mebbies for the past, probably six months, if not more, COVID just doesn't happen anymore, just, just then it just doesn't come up.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, it might come up now and then because somebody says, oh, er, somebody got COVID or whatever, but it's now, it's just..

Researcher BN: Yeah, but it hasn't affected the other topics that come up?

SP4: No.

Researcher BN: No. Just the same?

SP4: Not really erm, it, it, it came and it went.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, everybody, I mean, everybody kind of thinks, yeah, it's there. But, it, it's finished.

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah.

SP4: I mean it, it isn't. But, in people’s minds,

Researcher BN: Yeah. (laughs) Just to be able to move on.

SP4: ..including mine. Including mine, I just want to, everybody just wants to move on.

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah, definitely.

SP4: Oh erm, hiya (name) (service user enters)

Service user: I know I’m early!

SP4: Oh my God, what? What are you doing? Right, (name) is coming here for the IT course, which starts at 1:00 o'clock.

Service user: Yes, I know, but I'm always early, aren’t I?

SP4: You are. If you want to go and log on, and do whatever you want to do, until 1:00 o'clock? Is that OK?

Service user: Well, I was going to go on your computer and play on games.

SP4: Well, if you go on mine, remember we set the bookmark up?

Service user: Yes.

SP4: Well there you go!

Service user: If I can get it on (laughs).

SP4: Yeah.

Service user: Have I got to put your…

SP4: No.

Service user: No.

SP4: It's still the same password. The only, the only difference with my computer in there is, that, to to get to the password you need to press control alt delete. It'll tell you on the screen, press control Alt delete.

Service user: Yeah.

SP4: If you have a problem, give us a shout.

Researcher BN: So yeah, not much of a change with COVID, it came and it went?

SP4: Correct. That’s, the best way I can put it.

Researcher BN: Yeah. So,

SP4: Does that surprise you?

Researcher BN: No (laughs)

SP4: Didn't think so. OK.

Researcher BN: So, in terms of kind of appropriateness of bringing in, health, lifestyle, employment, kind of conversation-, well, not so much employment, but do you think it's an appropriate environment to talk about those sort of things?

SP4: What, this environment here?

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah.

SP4: Oh yeah, absolutely.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: But, you can't, you can't just say it, ‘oh right, we're going to have a conversation about health’.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs)

SP4: You can't, you can't do that.

Researcher BN: Uhuhh.

SP4. It's something that, you evolve into as you get to know the person and, and what's going on with, with, with them.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, there, there are people who come in here who, who, who eat and live very healthily.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, er, so it, you know, it, it's an individual thing.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And it's something that, you have gotta, I've got to assess whether or not, that is going to be a useful conversation. And going to have the effect that I want it to have.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Because, if you're not careful it can have the opposite effect.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You, you know, you, you know, you could turn people away. ‘Oh, I'm not going to go there to get lectured at out about this or that or the other’.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You can't, you can't, you know, risk that.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: So you, you know, you've gota, you've gotta tread pretty carefully with some people. Other people you can, you can, you know, when you've got the relationship with people, erm, and it becomes a very easy going, you know, friendship if you like.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, you've got more opportunities to influence them in, in different ways.

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah.

SP4: Until that happens, you've gotta, you’ve just gotta play it by ear, really.

Researcher BN: Yeah. So in terms of like, as you say that kind of assessment you make, is that, has that come from any, kind of formal training in brief interventions, anything like that? Or is that more intuitive?

SP4: Erm, so, I mean I, I, I, I did my education in training level 4,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..which obviously is formalised ways of assessing, you know, and, and you know, teaching, you know. Erm, so mebbies I picked something up from that.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: But, I think more, it's more to do with, being a human being, to be fair.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: It's more to do with, understanding, er, people, it’s more to do with asking them questions. And, finding out information. Erm, and sometimes it's, you know, with some people you can be a little bit more, authora-, er, assertive if you like.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And you can say ‘alright, you know, you can do this!’ And that's, that's an assessment that you make of, of that person. You make mistakes. You know..

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..we all make mistakes, but, you know, making those mistakes you go ‘mm I’m not gonna do that again’. You know.

Researcher BN: (laughs) Yeah.

SP4: I'm gonna tread a bit more carefully next time. So, you know, you can't really learn without, without dipping your toe in the water and, and seeing what happens sometimes, so, you know. But I, I, I, I really think that, you know, the best way to learn to do what, what I do for example, is to do it.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And, and if, and if you survive, (laughs) you don't, you don't run out the door and say ‘I'm not coming back!’. Erm, you learn, and, and you become, you know, you become a little bit better at it. Erm, and, you know, it's just, I think it's, it's, it's just being, being a human being, like I said.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know. Erm, it's interesting though.

Service user: (enters) I’m having problems.

SP4: Sorry, give me..

Researcher BN: Yeah it’s alright (SP4 leaves room)

SP4: (enters) Sorry when I walked in I got er, (laughs)

Researcher BN: (laughs) It’s all right.

SP4: Everybody had a question for me. Erm, no, interestingly enough, (name), who's one of our regulars, erm, she said ‘oh, (SP4), I've just sent you an e-mail. It's about, it's about how to save electricity’ and I’m like, you know, 'cause, we've had a conversation, and I said to her, I said, I said, well, I want to try and get as much information I can, and help people over the winter, because it's gonna be, it's gonna be hard.

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah.

SP4: And bless her, she's, she's taken it on board, and she's done research, and she's been online and she’s, you know, and she's looked for things, and she's emailing me links.

Researcher BN: Oh amazing!

SP4: Yeah! You know, brilliant. So, yeah.

Researcher BN: Two-way (laughs). So have you, have you had any, kind of, formal training in brief interventions? Nothin here, nothing..

SP4: I wouldn't even know what that is.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Wouldn’t even know what that is.

Researcher BN: Yeah, no, that's fine.

SP4: Am I supposed to like?

Researcher BN: No, no. (laughs)

SP4: (laughs) OK.

Researcher BN: So nothing about, kind of, like as, as, as I asked, it is mostly experience, previous experience, and intuition in inititating kind of health and wellbeing..

SP4: I've had a lot of life experience if that helps. (laughs)

Researcher BN: Yeah. (laughs) Yeah.

SP4: I don't know. Erm, I just don't know.

Researcher BN: Yeah, no, that's, that's fine.

SP4: I do what I do, and, you know, it, it kind of works for a lot of the time.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: It doesn't work some of the time, but it works a lot of time.

Researcher BN: Yeah, Uhuhh.

SP4: So I do what I do.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: I just be me. (laughs)

Researcher BN: So in terms of what kind of, is that any training that you would like to receive, in brief interventions, initiating conversations, what to talk about, is, is there any gaps in your knowledge, would you say, that you would want to know more about, or, if not, that's absolutely fine as well.

SP4: I’ll tell you what I'd like to do. I'd like to train other people.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: ‘Cause there's a lot of people who, don't know what they're doing, erm, with regard to helping people with employment especially.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know, like I’ve said, it's, it's annoying, the way that people, they, they just churn out, churn out a CV with someone that's really not very good and, and without even considering what the consequences for that person are, of not getting responses, and like I said to you before about, you know, how, how would you feel?

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, I don't know. I just don't know. It's one of those things, and I can't remember the psychologist who did this about, you don't know what you don't know.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Is it, is it something like that?

Researcher BN: I don't know.

SP4: I think it's erm, is it, er, I am consciously incompetent, consciously competent, unconsciously incompetent. There was a there, there is a psychologist who come up with erm, er, when you are unconsciously competent, that means you, you, it's like muscle memory.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know what to do without even trying. You can be unconsciously incompetent, which means, you don't know what you don't know.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs)

SP4: Right. You can be consciously incompetent, which means, you know what you don't know. And if you're consciously incompetent, it means that you know what you need to work on, and what you need to train on.

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah.

SP4: So, so I don't know, I'm probably, I am probably unconsciously incompetent.

Researcher BN: (laughs)

SP4: In that I don't know what I don't know.

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah. So it's not that in kind of talking about, health and wellbeing you've thought like ‘oh I wish I, I knew more about how to do this, or what to do’, or is it, it is just quite natural, and…

SP4: I don’t know, I have no idea.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: I mean, you know, erm, people train to be counselors. I've never done that. I've got no idea what I'm supposed to do.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: 'Cause I’ve not trained as a counselor. Erm, so I might be doing everything wrong. (laughs) So I just, I just don’t know.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, but then again, if I trained, I might, it might change me in some way, which might make me more or less effective. I don't know.

Researcher BN: Yeah, you just don’t know.

SP4: I just don't know.

Researcher BN: Yeah, no that’s fair enough.

SP4: So, you know.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: I mean sometimes, sometimes training is not as beneficial as mebbies you think it might be. Sometimes training for training’s sake, happens.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know. You, I mean the amount of online training I've done, I've had to do, with regard to safeguarding, and,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: ..you know, health and safety, and all this stuff that you ultimately, you forget.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, how valuable is it? Could it be, could it be done in a different way? I think, I think erm, I don't know.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Some people might benefit from, from sitting at a computer and reading stuff, and going through scenarios. Erm,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: I find that, doing it, and making mistakes, and the consequences of those mistakes, is one hell of a better learning tool. (laughs)

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah.

SP4: That's just, that's just my thoughts on it.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: I mean, I understand the, I mean, I'm, I've, I've been educated myself, so I understand the need, erm, to, to train, and to educate people. Obviously.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm.

Researcher BN: But for this kind of topic specifically…

SP4: This kind of thing, it’s, who knows? I don't know who else you've spoken to and what they've said, you know, and I don't know where I come in the overall scheme of things.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: And I might be someone who, you know, could learn a hell of a lot, but just don't know what I need to learn. I just don't know.

Researcher BN: Yeah, so, 'cause it sounds like you've got a lot of resources in terms of signposting,

SP4: Yep.

Researcher BN: ..is there any more resources that you need, or do you think is quite, you've got that?

SP4: Well, no, we just need more of the resources that we've got, because they're scarce.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: So if you want to try and get an appointment er, at, at the erm, at the Citizens Advice, who knows how long you’re going to be waiting.

Researcher BN: Right.

Sp4: If you want to go to the Doctor, who knows, who knows how long you've got to wait. Erm, if I want to get, some, an intervention with a client who's got a health issue, erm, and I've done that, I've rung, I've rung their doctor for them, you know.

Researcher BN: Uhumm, ah right.

SP4: And helped to support them in that way.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Erm, I've helped people, erm, in all sorts of ways. Erm, I’ve, I’ve, I've emailed a power of attorney to an organization, for a lady who lost her, who got power of attorney because her husband basically became cam-, non compus mentus. Er, and her life was, was turned around, because her husband did everything to do with everything.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP4: All accounts, banks, you know, sky were charging her £117.00 a month, and they wouldn't talk to her 'cause she wasn't account holder.

Researcher BN: (sighs) Ah god.

SP4: She couldn't do a deal, because, you, you're not the account, ‘are you the account holder?’, ‘no, but I've got power of attorney, and my husband can't talk to you 'cause he's, he's in a home and he can't talk’. Erm, didn't care. Sent the power of attorney off, ‘ah that, that's not right. We want this, this and this’. Months and months and months later, eventually, got it resolved.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know, all sorts of things that help.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: You know, people come in, and they've got a problem. We help them with it. And it’s usually IT because we can always do things on the computers. (laughs).

Researcher BN: Yeah. (laughs) So would you say you, you kind of know who, you would know who to signpost to, but it's kind of things out of your control, as to..

SP4: Yeah, yeah, you know, it's all right for me saying ‘oh, go to citizens advice bearau’. So they go out the door and, and, ‘what do I do now? How do I get in touch with them?

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Do I go and knock on the door of the citizens advice bureau, which is only open certain times? Do I go online, and if I go online I can't go online because I haven’t got a computer. So what am I going to do?’ So we can't just say, oh go on, we’ve gotta say right, OK, you know, and we've got to help them through the process.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Even if it comes, even if it says right, sign up to the bridge project, you'll get a working ticket, do that. You know, we assess how much help they need and how much help they can do for themselves.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Er, and then, you know, we can, we can make it a successful sideposting. Otherwise, they’ll walk out the door and they’ll say ‘ah I'm not going to bother with that’, and then that's it, the interven-, the intervention is finished.

Researcher BN: Yeah, and that’s all you can do.

SP4: To the detriment of the client.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: So you don't want that happen. So yeah, we, it's difficult. So, rather than just signpoting a person, we, I, I think you'd probably call it referring.

Researcher BN: Yeah, uhuhh.

SP4: Rather than signposting. In other words, we would actively, assist with that intervention by another organisation.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Otherwise it probably wouldn't happen.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Yep.

Researcher BN: Uhumm. So, it might be another case of you don't know, which is fine. But do you think, if you did have training in brief interventions, would, do you think that would ultimately improve the health and well-being of people that come in, or is that another one you just, wouldn't know? Because you don't know what the training would be.

SP4: You just answered the question yourself.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: I, I can't answer that, I don't know. Erm, I don't know what the training involves, I don't even know the terminology you're using (laughs). Erm, 'cause I've not, I've not come from that sphere, I've not come from that area.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: I’ve not, you know, my background is not in health or, or it's not really in education.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: I, I became an educator when I was 58 year old.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: I've come from a totally different background.

Researcher BN: Uhuhh.

SP4: Maybe that helps. Who knows?

Researcher BN: Yeah. 'cause it yeah, it sounds like you, you use a lot of previous experience and intuition, rather than formal training.

SP4: Erm, since I left university, I've, I’ve managed people, virtually. So, er, you know, it's, it's something you just, you just do. Er, I mean, we're all managers. We're all managers. We manage things constantly.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: We, when we're children, we manage our parents (laughs), we manage our friends. When, you know, we, we, we manage the people around us all the time. We know how far we can push certain people, and, and we know how to interact with people all our lives. That's how we survive in the social environment, we manage people. Right, so, I've always taken the view, it's my responsibility to manage the people around me. It's not their responsibility to manage me.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Right, so, the most important person you can manage is your boss.

Researcher BN: (laughs) Yeah.

SP4: So I've always managed people in that way. Erm, I've, I've never, I've always been managed, management by erm, er, it, it, by consent, if you like, you know, they say policing by consent. It's managing by consent. Which means, I'm, I manage people, erm, and they do what I want them to do, because they want to do it, for me..

Researcher BN: Yeah, Uhuhh.

SP4: ..or, right, and, and that's just the way that I've always managed people.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: Consultative type of style. There are people who are, because they're managers, they think, well, I've got to tell people what to do and bully them. And there's too much of that, there’s a lot of that.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP4: Erm, and that's because they're bad managers and they don't know what to do. They don't know how to do it.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: So, whether that helps in what I do now, I don't know. Maybe it does.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP4: So, yeah.

Researcher BN: Yeah, perfect. Well, that was everything I had to ask ya. Was there anything else you wanted to add?

SP4: No, no. I hope it's been useful.

Researcher BN: Yeah. No, thank you very much. I'll turn this off.