Researcher BN: Well there we go, recording in progress.

SP8: So just tell me to shut up. We'll just go like that or something and say that's enough, you know (laughs).

Researcher BN: (laughs) So if we first talk about (name of youth club) specifically, so how did you get involved, as a volunteer for them?

SP8: Right well, originally, it was run by the (name of organisation) which was the, er, you know the sports centre in (name of location)? Er, was it (name) Tyne sports

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: ..centre? Er, they had a little youth club running there, that (name) who I mentioned before, was one of the trustees, for the (name), erm, (name), argh I can’t remember his name even those he’s my next-door neighbour, (name) and others in the local community, ran on a totally voluntary basis, the only person with any professional qualification was, was, was (name). He had been a teacher, he’d done Duke of Edinburgh award training, erm, worked with youth for, for many years. And, I was talking to (name) and he said you know why don’t you come and help out, I said ah I used to do it, and then (name) got hold of me, and so I said Yes. And I have never missed a Tuesday since.

Researcher BN: Oh, wow, amazing.

SP8: And, we found it difficult to get the volunteers, er, the (name of organisation) were not the easiest to work with, before, because it was all done on a very voluntary basis, accounting systems were bad and, we needed professional leadership. (name) couldn't do it, he'd set up the (name of brewery) brewery here in (name of location) behind the pub, and he was really having trouble with time, and obviously he's got a family, he needs an income, and, er, and things.

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP8: His wife incidentally set up the (name) Union bar in erm, at (name of location) University

Researcher BN: Ah really?

SP8: She, she set that up, yeah,

Researcher BN: Oh wow.

SP8: With another friend of mine, yeah. That’s (name), his wife’s called (name) but she’s known as (name). And erm, so we decided we’d employ a, youth worker. And we advertised it as best as we could, and we got (name), who lives down at (name of location) to, to come and work for us. She was a delight, worked bloody hard, hardest worker I've ever met. Nothing was too much trouble. No child's problem was ever too much, and she was very inventive in how, she kept us all amused organizing trips. And I became like the, the, the helper who was basically always there.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: And then, we knew that (name) wasn't totally happy in certain ways, and we decided we'd separate, or (name) just had the idea that we would separate (name of youth club) from the auspices of the (name of organisation). And set it up as an independent charity, which we did, in 2000 and, god when was it, 1920 basically. And just, literally within the day that we decided we would do this, and also having found out that (name) had been, they used to miss her payroll at the (name of organisation), her expenses didn't get paid. It was also, they never gave her a pay rise. They didn't really accommodate the extra hours she was doing. There was no governance over her role as the, professional youth worker.

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP8: And she got fed up. And the day I rang her up to say, look I’ll sort it out, if you want to pay rise, you've got it. If you want this, we want you to stay. Oh, I've just taken a, I’ve just had an interview yesterday, and accepted a job at (name of location).

Researcher BN: Awww!

SP8: And I can understand why, it was also a much bigger role, which would give her a better income and more professional development, I think, was very much part of it.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: And she went on to do that. So we thought ah, bugger, we’re going to have to find somebody else. So we went through the interview, and we got (name) to, to, to run things. Different sort of personality, different talents, and, you know, it went on, and it became a full-blown charity. (name) was the chairman. Erm, a guy called (name) who lives in (name of location), myself, I talked to my son (name) and his partner, (name), into doing the accounts, because they both came from the finance industry, under much protest, they’re both still doing it. He's now a full-time youth, worker, you know, he said

Researcher BN: Awww.

SP8: ..well I can manage on twenty-two, twenty-four hours a week sub pay, you know, and erm, anyway, and erm, we've accumulated a couple of other erm, trustees, in the time, (name) stood down to take a sabbatical as a redevelopment of his business and an expansion. Erm, and, (name), (name) somebody, doesn’t matter it’s not relevant at the moment, erm, took over as a chair and she had a background, you know in, she had a background in sort of education system providing projects, sports, support, things in schools I, I believe you know. And so it's, it's still running, and I'm still volunteering

Researcher BN: Uhuhh. So-

SP8: And that's how I got into it. But it started thirty five years ago when my son was twelve, thirteen, and I was talked, well, talked into helping then.

Researcher BN: So is every Tuesday usually, typically?

SP8: Yeah well every Tuesday, I turn up, it’s not quite, I’m now talked into driving to Newcastle back on a Tuesday afternoon, to collect my granddaughter and my grandson, so that they can come as well.

Researcher BN: Awww, that's quite a way! (laughs).

SP8: So I go to the seniors, but I don’t stay for, I’m not usually there for the juniors, other than a few minutes at the end. Which is a pity, because it's, I, I like both, but the Juniors are much easier to deal with, and, I never thought I’d say this when I was your age, argh kids are a pain in the backside, especially when you got married at twenty-two and you have two step kids who were only ten years younger than you, you know. Erm, and I was not the patient person I am now. I dunno how that developed, sometime in my forties I think. But I’ve also got another son who’s twenty six,

Researcher BN: Ah okay

SP8: And he’s mildly, Asperger-y, autistic sort of type, very bright. But had his problems, I think that's another reason I'm empathetic towards….

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: ..Hooligans.

Researcher BN: (laughs) So what's your kind of, when you go along there, do you just kind of fit in whatever, or what is your role there?

SP8: Well, over the years I obviously did a lot of the hands on stuff, organising, whether, whether it be board games, teaching them to use a camera, music nights, sports outside, erm, weekends away at (name of location) or, erm, god what’s the place down in (name of location) erm,

Researcher BN: (name of location)? (name of location)?

SP8: Yeah, that's it. Well, I used to go there when my headmaster owned that house, and it was his own private house, and we used to go there and play, and do biology weekends and things, erm, it was a guy called (name). Er, so yeah, I, I enjoyed all the hands on physical stuff. I am now sixty-seven, nearly sixty-seven. I have chronic back problems, and I don't do the hands on stuff. I tend to be there in the team of trustees now. But I go every Tuesday, and basically just be the, non-qualified, old guy who

sits there, talks to kids if they wanna have a chat and they do, erm, helps tidy up, I’m the extra body now, because we’ve got like, fully professional trainees, and we’ve actually just hired another three part time, erm staff.

Researcher BN: Oh, great.

SP8: ..to assist in the running. Erm, I’m for that in some ways and not in others, we’ll not get into the politics of this one (laughs)

Researcher BN: (laughs) Right.

SP8: ..you know. And I, I get, you know I get a lot of satisfaction from it, because it helps keep the place going, because volunteers, we can't just keep paying people. We haven't got, our budgets gone to nearly seventy thousand now, a year, you know.

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP8: Over half of which, well more than that, two-thirds of it, goes to staff payroll now.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: Because we've got (name), we've got (name), and we've got three part time sessional workers as well, and will be honest, I'll tell you, I get upset about it, because the delivery hours are identical, and yet the payrolls doubled.

Researcher BN: Ah right.

SP8: Do not, that it, that is between, that is confidential between you and I.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: So, my role is not just the, the delivery, I don't get involved in that, because we've got the younger professional people who are, who understand the full, safeguarding implications, which I am aware of because I’m the school governor and things as well. Er but, you know, at my age, I go for the fun.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: Watch the kids, talk to the kids, pick up the sweet papers (laughs), you know, erm, yeah, see them, quite lot of them just come and have a chat.

Researcher BN: Yeah, so what’s your-

SP8: And, and-

Researcher BN: Go on.

SP8: I’m, you know, like the grandad in the corner I suppose, who everybody knows me from the school because of the governor thing but they also know, because I’ve probably taken 60% of our kids who are there, I’ve take them to school at some stage.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: So, I'm, I'm like somebody they can actually talk to, and one of the roles we've got is giving children a space, perhaps to talk to somebody, an adult who isn’t a parent, and in my case, because I'm not one of the youth leaders and I know them all, they do talk to is, and obviously if there was ever anything that came to issue I know what to do with it. I would refer it back onto my professionally qualified staff if it was a safeguarding issue, or perhaps the school, my involvement with the school often ties things together.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: Er, some kids often have a bad reputation at school. But I can say, I mean you're not here, they’re delightful. We’ve taken them out for a day in Newcastle, and they’ve been fine. Are they always disruptive?

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: I like kids to be given a chance. (laughs)

Researcher BN: So when-

SP8: So, and that’s really the whole reason I do it, and what I do, is the reward to come, yeah.

Researcher BN: Yeah. So what do you talk about? Like when you say you have a lot of conversations with them, is there a theme in, what tends to come up?

SP8: Ah god it, do we talk about as adults? What did we talk about as children? They don't talk about politics. We don't talk about the financial constraints of society and things like that, but they do talk about, well their friend fell off his bike, or, erm, I'm going to see my grandma next week, or I’m going to see, stay with my stepbrother's family, or my stepsister's family, or, ahh I’m fed up with school, ah the teachers are always nagging me, er, I had a fight with somebody, and that, that can be verbal or, on occasion have been physical, little, you know. Boys do fight, girls tend not to, they tend to be a little bit more, verbal and, presenting critiques of their so-called best friends (laughs). Boys tend to have a scuffle in the toilets and they, you know. Actually, it’s very weird, sometimes it’s about, you know, where they’ve been, what they’ve been doing. I was riding a bike down the middle of the main (name of road) wondering where you were going to the a ten year old last week. ‘Oh, well, I was all right’, I said no, you weren’t, you could have been flattened. You didn't even look. So, I didn't know all sorts of things. Music, erm, where we live. Some of them live out of the ranges, their dads are all farmers, and their mums are farmers well they work locally. And then, well do you like living on the farm? Well I get fed up, cant see my friends. Well, that's why we have the youth group, you know, talk to your friends, er.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: It, anything you could think it, of, you could talk about it to children, and they talk about, it’s amazing what they come up with sometimes. I’m also telling them not to drop their sweet papers all over the place on a regular basis.

Researcher BN: Oh no.

SP8: My, my pet hate that, or,

Researcher BN: Yeah, littering.

SP8: Occasionally you get, I've, I've never really had a kid come up and say, you know, that they suffered some sort of physical abuse from a parent, or a sibling, or anything sort of sexually orientated that you might, you know, we’re so guarded against these days.

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP8: I'm old fashioned enough to believe that it happens no more now than it did when I was a kid, it just, nobody ever knew when I was a kid,

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP8: When we were a kid and we got battered by our parents, I can assure you me and my twin sister got battered. You know, despite our middle-class background, my mother had a personality disorder unfortunately. And er, it was just part of life, we never looked at it, now I know it's wrong, you know it's wrong, but at the time we didn't, so I tend to be a little bit more in the middle on that. I'm not quite as, ooo god well isn’t it terrible! I tend to be more like a calm voice on that side of things. But yes, I take it seriously, but I’ve never actually had a child come up to me and say anything like that. And it, to my knowledge and whilst it is obviously confidential and it goes to our youth team, erm, or worse which has on one occasion, erm, it's never really come across my field. It has at the school, as a governor.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP8: I've had to deal with, a couple of things, over the years, where, it's being a pupil or a staff member in fact, er that might have got themselves into trouble for various reasons. Most kids just talk about, ah I was on my bike last week, and I fell off, ended up in a ditch. That's why I've got my arm in plaster, do you want to sign it? (laughs). You know, er, they girls tend to, they, some of the girls talk to you, some of them don't,

Researcher BN: Right>

SP8: When they’re in groups they won’t talk to you. When they’re individual, they’ll rattle away for ages. If you get a week where there's only two or three, you know not many have turned up for some reason, and one doesn't get on with the two or something.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP8: They’ll just come up and tell you what's going on, you know. Er, it's, it's, it's as wide as the spectrum of life we all enjoy or, this life or suffer, however we like to put it, you know.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: You don’t, it's, it's not gonna be scripted. I don't go out looking for conversations, I only talk to them if they come to talk to me, and then I’m very sociable, anyway, so I always tend to say hello to them whether they’re in the street or the at the Youth Club,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: You know in the village where I live or, you know I could, I could be down in, I think you live in (name of location) is it, or is it (name of location), I never know, I know a couple of people there, and obviously (name) and (name) and that lot

Researcher BN: Uhuhh.

SP8: are in (name of location). So, so I tend to know people. And they’ll say, what you doing up here? I've gone to see the my auntie or something, you know. So I'm, I’m sociable.

Researcher BN: Yeah. So does it tend to be, when you speak to them are they in groups, or do you sometimes speak to them one to one?

SP8: Yeah, it, it depends on the circumstances how, if, you get some weeks when they all want to be involved with all the activities. And we obviously try to make the activities wide, last week we had a bit of a disco. But they chose their own playlist. They could start and stop the, the, the music. Er, we've had, use your phone, improve your use of your camera on your phone weeks. We've had a safeguarding talk to them. And it, sometimes they talk to you as individuals, they just siddle up to you. Ah, saw you in such and such, are you still driving the school bus? I saw you at school for the younger ones. When I went to school to interview the new heads last week, and I had about five kids come up and give us a cuddle, which is not the,

Researcher BN: Awww!

SP8: Which is, which is lovely on the one hand, but I had to have a safeguarding meeting about two kids who turned up at my house a couple of, a couple of months ago. You know, who are troubled, you know, but they lovely kids. Erm, and they just, they just talk to you about, oh, my, my brother's a little beep beep beep, and, you know, the other day, or he pushed me off my bike, you know. And then you get the boys who, uh my sister’s a pain in the arse. And I thought well I might aswell have the chat to them, ah well that’s your sister, you should be looking after her. She will always be your sister. You will be the closest thing you have to a, a wife or a girlfriend in the future. My twin and I are very close. I said you should look after your sister, and if she's being a bit silly, just take it on the chin sunshine, you know, that sort of chat, you know.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: Teenagers, they don't understand the world fully. They don't know how to behave. And in some families, I'm sorry to say they don't get that guidance. Erm,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: You know, you, you, you will know all these things, I'm quite sure. You know, that erm, some of us are lucky in that, I mean I didn't have the easiest of parents, well mother, but it didn't necessarily mean that we weren't brought up with a good moral code, and a standard of behavior towards other people, you know. Just, had a few problems like, like any family. And, but some kids don't get any of that. I know of, I know of parents round here who take their kids to sit in the car while they’re in the pub,

Researcher BN: Ah, wow.

SP8: For one point, and when they’re sixteen they take them. And their dad’s in the pub every night, and when the family broke up, and that I talked to, still talk to him regularly, and he used to kick the wall at the bus stop, he was in fights all the time. So I used to make like a special point to talk to him. So he, he had a conversation, not about me, just so he could talk, you know, he’d come out with all sorts of rubbish, but you-

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: You or I being… it sounds awful but, that’s probably a little better educated or, I’m not formally educated, but I'm, I'm well read.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: You know erm, I've educated myself er, mostly my friends are professionally educated, and they were in engineering, or medicine, or, psychiatry or things like that, so it’s rubbed off on me a little bit, and, and that's, and I’ll tell you what else I can say, that that kids now seventeen. He's still wild, but he's a nice lad, he’s got a cracking sense of humour, and he is getting better.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP8: But I still, and I know two or three others like that, a girl used to have panic attacks, and, her parents, I know her grandparents, and I know the circumstances of her family life, which I think, you know, which seems to be, to me is the, the major determining factor, that is, is the, is the status of the family as a group, whether it’s homogeneous fractures, alcoholism, drug problems, er unemployment, poverty, standards of wages which is endemic around here, I mean the agricultural community, they have nothing, you know, so they earn a living wage,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: …and this rubs off on the children. They can't have the iphone that the girl up the street who's in the Pony Club, who’s mum and Dad have a tenancy of a farm, or they own a farm, or they own a contracting business or a forestry business, and it, it's very much more apparent perhaps, here than in the city areas.

Researcher BN: Yeah. Uhumm.

SP8: You know so, she's actually okay. Relatively, you know, works bloody hard, got herself to college. Got a really good friend, who's a really steady influence on her. Er, her little brother used to be a little horror. He's at work now.

Researcher BN: Aww.

SP8: You know, talks to people, there's people around here like who you would probably know, who've taken him under their wing, and you would think god almighty if he's looking after him, heaven help him, you know. But, you know, it doesn’t mean some of the rough and tough ones aren’t nice people and caring as well, and I think my biggest attitude to all this is erm, most people are good.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: The day I lose that, I will throw in the towel. I'm never going to turn into some old age cynic, and ‘when I was your age’ you know (laughs), I was in trouble my whole teenage life. You’re not serious. I got bound over for a year, for protecting another kid at school from some skinnheads, but because I got involved in a flight I got bound over,

Researcher BN: Ah, no.

SP8: And then erm, I did silly things by making homemade explosives.

Researcher BN: Oh, wow!

SP8: I had a friend whose father was a director of (name of company) so we could get our hands on anything, you know. And I was good at making things. So yeah, I understand kids are adventurous. They are, intrigued by things that are exciting and different. So, these days a lot of it is status driven so, having the best iphone, those, sadly for girls, they're so concerned with their damn looks these days. They forget what nice people they are underneath that.

Researcher BN: Mmmmm.

SP8: All those sort of things and boys is the same, they get worried, see, they talk to you about their girlfriends. The boys who are, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, ah I do like this girl. Well go and ask her out! No, I said well I was the same as you, I was terrified of asking any girl I fancied at school, you know. Late, late starter on that one.

Researcher BN: So how long do you, like, your conversations tend to last at the youth club, with people?

SP8: Largely minutes, because you've got a very active community around you most of the time, you can't, you know, it's like hurding cats that controlling children of the Youth Club. You know, as much as it is a tribe, there’s always one who breaks away from the group, happens on the roman wall and all sorts, you know. When it's the outdoor stuff, my role is to be at the back, to make sure that the escapes (laughs).

Researcher BN: yeah (laughs)

SP8: You know it’s usually, I would say five to ten minutes, ten minutes would be long, five would be about average,

Researcher BN: Yeah

SP8: ..because children at that age, don't have a, an ability to talk for hours on, a given subject, they’d run out of ideas in seconds wouldn’t they, so I would, I’d tailor my conversations to what they want to talk about, and I wouldn't push them for things. I might if I felt, well the girl I mentioned, and erm, the boy that was a bit wild, you know there’s been others but they’re just two examples. I would have probably made sure over the following months, in fact, over a couple of years with these two, ‘Hi, there, you okay, how's things going this week? How's your mum, your brother any better?’ you know..

Researcher BN: Uhuhh.

SP8: The elder brother sort of care? I dunno erm, interest, no, try to be interested in their lives, and if you're interested in their lives rather than you telling them what to do,

Researcher BN: yeah.

SP8: you, you gain an entry point that may be seconds, it may be five minutes. It may be that just, when we go on a trip, they stay with you rather than one of the other people.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: It's, from, from a, from the perspective nowadays of a male youth worker, if you've got young girls who are following you, you think my God, I can't do this. And I have, I have a friend who is forty-four, and her father and I used to run this youth group down in (name of location), and I've stayed friends with her, her entire life

Researcher BN: Awww!

SP8: And she used to be glued to me, with her little friend when she was twelve, thirteen, fourteen, erm, and I mean she was friendly with my son as well, and I couldn't get rid of them! Now at that time, I never even worried about it, didn't even cross my mind it could be taken the wrong way, because I had a stepdaughter who was only ten years younger than me, you know. Now, I’m terrified if I get, erm, and I always tell (name) or the, or (name), look X Y Z have attached themselves to me for whatever reason, I, I've got a friend's daughter who come’s up and sees us who, I cannot get rid of her, and she’s about ten.

Researcher BN: Awww (laughs).

SP8: So, it is, it is difficult. But I, I think when I go back to the stuff, I said, Peter Pan has always been my hero, I never wanted to grow up,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: I think, because I've maintained, despite my years, a relatively young attitude about silliness, fun, let's do something stupid. Please don’t, actually can you delete that bit (laughs), I think I’ve, managed to keep a relationship with people younger than myself.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: And when I was young, all my friends were three or four years older, even when I was fourteen.

Researcher BN: Uhumm

SP8: And since I've been older, I find most of my friends are twenty years younger than me.

Researcher BN: It’s flipped (laughs)

SP8: Yeah, I mean that literally, you know. Er, er, I don't know why, I find people my age bloody boring, cynical (laughs), I don't want to go for lunch on Fridays at Auntie Mary's or, you know, go to the shops in (name of location) on a Thursday afternoon. Or (name of garden centre) on Saturday afternoon for a cake and a cup of coffee or, you know, I, I’d rather be out in the woods with a, with a shovel digging something up, or I don't know, making a catapult, or…

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: ..riding your bike down a piece of grass or something, I can’t do that now, I’m too old.

Researcher BN: (laughs) So what is your favourite thing about, volunteering, being a trustee, at the Youth club?

SP8: Being in a position to help facilitate children enjoying themselves, more than anything else. It's about seeing them, when you see kids, actually you’ll see me now, I feel emotional about it just talking,

Researcher BN: Aw!

SP8: ..when you see kids smile. It's just like..

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: gives you a warm glow. I’m, I’ve lived on my own for like twenty years since we got divorced, and I’ve got my grandkids who I like obviously, friends, children and things like that. Erm, I'm gonna, probably have a five year old in the house for a year. Well, I’ve sponsored a Ukrainian family

Researcher BN: Aw!

SP8: ..and er, which, you know, on the one hand I'm worried to death about because we might not get on, we might not get on,

Researcher BN: Mmmm. You just don't know.

SP8: The, you know, I, I shall enjoy having a child in the house again in some ways,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: well, one sixteen year old girl, one mum, and a five year old.

Researcher BN: Aw.

SP8: That’s not going very well at the moment, I’m having problems with the home office.

Researcher BN: Ah (sighs). Of course (laughs)

SP8: You know most of it, to put it in a nutshell, it's about seeing children happy.

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP8: The, more modern attitude of them being self-assured, confident, reliable, don't really, they're part of that equation, but seeing them happy, I don't care whether they're in, I don't mean criminal trouble, but if they play a prank, they get up to a bit of mischief, and they’re happy,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: ..they have a stable home life, that that's it. And as I said, you know, a lot of it's probably personal, because I did not have the most happy childhood. And my sister didn’t either. Erm, we've, we've worked to make sure our kids have a, we've made mistakes, we’ve both handled things badly with our own children at times. Not the whole, not on the whole too badly, but you know, I was gonna just, there’s two kids that have moved into our village recently, who have got behavioural problems, both on Sanko registers at the local school, and the, the, the, the parental background is the archetypal several children by several different fathers, moved up here because you can get housing in this area on the points system,

Researcher BN: Ah right.

SP8: For people who need housing, because there’s less, there's more housing available here, In (name of location), in (name of location), I don’t know about (name of location) to be honest, probably not in (name of location), but there is up here because no one wants to live up here because its so bloody far out,

Researcher BN: (laughs) Because its so rural.

SP8: They come up here, and these kids are wild. The whole neighborhood has been ‘ah they’re bloody terrible, they’re running round on the walls, they’re doing this, and I thought, theyre nice kids, They just need help

Researcher BN: Yeah

SP8: And their mum’s great. She’s got a degree and she’s doing her masters. She’s just not very good at, staying right at home with three kids.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: And, people's lives are a mess, but it doesn't make them wrong. Doesn’t make them right. Look, it's the same with kids, the thing is with kids, their lives could be terrible, and that, that's, that's it, that, I can't really say anything more clearly than that. It is an emotional thing with me, seeing them happy.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: Erm, I'd never be the sort of type who, if something happens to kids, I'll do the right thing and go through the right professional thing, I wouldn’t go and take it out on the parents or, probably even mention it to them because it's not my role to do that.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: That’s the professional’s role. But seeing the kids happy above all else, and I'm sure (name) would tell you the same, (name) would tell you the same, I'm sure my son (name) would, that's why we do it.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: I don’t know why other people won't do it, the only thing, they’ll only help out in youth work or help out with voluntary organisations when their child is involved, and as soon as their child drops out, they drop out.

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP8: It’s the minority who stay on with it, and anybody who works in that area, they do it, I don't think they do it for the professional fee that you receive in form of a salary, terrible,

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP8: There’s, compared with, certainly compared with what I used to ern, is negligible, and I mean negligible, you know (laughs)

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: ..but I mean, it is about the kids, you know.

Researcher BN: Yeah, which is great.

SP8: So you know, contact, what was your little group? Contact is? First no, what was it?

Researcher BN: Making Every Contact Count?

SP8: Yeah, every contact helps?

Researcher BN: Making Every Contact Count.

SP8: Count yes, well that, that basically sums it up doesn’t it, every contact one human being has with another human being, and particularly more so with children, because they are so susceptible to, the shaping and the formation of their lives when they're young years.

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP8: It's that contact that counts,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: ..but I just think the kids, ninety-eight percent of the kids who go through our hands at the various things I’ve been doing, whether it was (name of location), sailing club where I used to teach kids to sail, my, my main hobby’s sailing incidentally, (laughs) I go sailing at, I’ve got a boat at (name of location). And,

Researcher BN: Ah right.

SP8: And, and sa-, sailing, you know could teach kids to sail. And some wanted it, some of their parents forced them into doing it. They would shout out at them like the football fathers in, you know, and things like that off the side-lines. Erm, and you see kids develop from being nervous, ah I don’t ant to do this don’t want-, and then you suddenly they love something, or you see that moment of enjoyment flashes through them

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP8: It could be sailing it could be, I don’t know, hundreds of different things, you know, you’re a country born lass I presume, ey?

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs)

SP8: Well, I don’t know was it riding, erm, or I don’t know, hunting, erm, shooting, erm, nature?

Researcher BN: Yeah. Being out and about, yeah.

SP8: Just getting up and seeing the sunshine, yeah, the sunset, the frost on the field, the trees, the, you know, we all have different things. It might be a nightclub when you're eighteen or nineteen with your friends, it might be going to the Louvre in Paris, and you see the sunflowers for the first time or something, you know, or, standing in Venice as an adult and you know, you see the gondolas brand the bridge and, plasta Marco and, works of art. Or, the horrors of Ukrainian war that I’m knee deep in at the moment, all of these things can effect, so contact, you know what you’re thinking, so you know, it’s a brilliant little name that actually, I couldn’t get it quite, probably because of the, the sound. But, it, it is the contact, yeah it’s the contact, that, that's another way of summing up what I’be been thinking about, it’s related to contact, it’s not quite like that, you're not looking for, in our role we're not looking for a relationship with children, or with, or even with our peers to some extent, because we all have our own lives. But it's the contacting, people having contact is important.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP8: Because otherwise they’re isolated.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: And a lot of teenagers do feel isolated. I don’t think I was, I was never a great, great socialiser, didn't go to school for the, didn’t go to school for the academic performance, I went because it was the best social club I’ve ever been in (laughs)

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs)

SP8: But a lot of kids don't, they’re the ones who sit quietly at the sides, and they look angry and they’re frustrated. And you know, you just hope that, whether it’s (name) and myself, and others involved in our group, that we might just be able to, build a little bridge with a child who needs some ability to learn to overcome their fears or develop a relationship with somebody else. Sometimes you have an effect, seventy percent of the time you’re just there, picking up the sweet papers, picking up the, the, the plastic cups they’ve left under a table or, shoved down the back of settee or something, because they can't be bothered to walk to the bin.

Researcher BN: (laughs) Yeah, yeah. So what, on the flip side, what do you find the most challenging thing, about volunteering there?

SP8: Weirdly, behaving myself, and not acting like a child. Well, from the trustees point of view it's the finances, and being able to sustain it for a long period of time.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: Erm, and I do have some problems with the more modern idioms of what youth work might be or should be, who it shouldn't include. And I wouldn't say any particular political biases about anybody, I had a coloured adopted brother and things like, so I've no biases in that which I, I've got gay relations and things, so I don't worry about that. Er, but I do find some of the, the bureaucracy, the paper work, and the, the, the depth that this goes to, difficult, erm, despite being a Socialist by nature and probably conservative in my personal life, in terms of societal behavior. Rather than, political behaviour,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: And I find some of the modern concepts a little bit difficult to deal with. Erm, we, we set up a drop-in group for anybody who might fall under the LGBTQ sub community,

Researcher BN: Okay.

SP8: And, I, I wasn't against it, but I didn't think it was right,

Researcher BN: Okay.

SP8: And I mean that because, it wasn't, it was done in a way that it just happened, without any warning. And, I hadn’t really got involved with it. But the background was that a lot of people thought it was wrong because it wasn't introduced in the correct way. You know, we live in a very conservative community up here in (name of location). You know,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: Yes, you know, I mean how many coloured people do you see around here?

Researcher BN: Zero.

SP8: Do you ever see a labour party poster in the front window of a house? Come to (name of location) (laughs) Erm, you know, the, the er foreigners, LGBT things have to be handled with immense care, and so we, I think we dropped a plod with that one, and I didn’t get involved with that one because I’m only a trustee, the managing team run it, and this, I hope this is confidential between the two of us, so, you know, I do find some difficulties in the way things are run. Erm, you know we, we run a hell of a lot of staff with the relative amounts because the prescribed figure for safeguarding is X or Y. Well, you know, we didn't manage to kill any in the nineteen seventies or the eighties, we never we lost any, and there's several thousand that have gone through our hands. Why the hell would we need all this? So, being a little bit older, and, you know, being a bit more conservative in my attitudes over the way we did things in the past, I do find a little bit difficult in the modern age.

Researcher BN: Right.

SP8: And I, I still think that I can contribute something, you know (laughs). A little bit of stability. Erm, with the children its, you know I physically can’t do the things, I don't find any of them irritating no matter how rude they are, there are, things that have been said to me, that I could not repeat to other people, because I would be embarrassed to do so, and I can't believe that children come out with things, you know, in the way that they do. Particularly when it’s about sex, (name) is still waiting for five years for me to tell her what one lad said to me (laughs). And I just, I just can't, you know. I haven’t even told my son, you know.

Researcher BN: (laughs) Aww

SP8: So there are certain, you know, cultural changes that I do find difficult, attitudes, oh god, there’s going to be a knock on my door in a moment.

Researcher BN: Ah it’s alright you can go and get it! It’s fine.

SP8: Yeah, there’s a lad turned up to deliver a tonne of wood chips for my central heating system, he normally turns up about five to six o'clock, but I think he's just turned up now.

Researcher BN: Well you can ring me back if you want.

SP8: Yeah, well, we'll see. I think it's for me. We'll wait till he rings the doorbell.

Researcher BN: Okay, Wait till it’s final.

SP8: That’s why it’s gone dark in here all of a sudden cos, he’s driven in front of the house, because I live on (name of location),

Researcher BN: Uhuhh.

(pauses to speak to someone at the door)

SP8: Sorry, yes, I normally get an email or a text, saying when they’re delivering them, nothing.

Researcher BN: (laughs) It's all right. Erm, so have you noticed any differences like pre, post Covid in what the young people have wanted to talk about with you?

SP8: Well there was a lot of talk about children being anxious. They were trapped in their homes, they didn't have the social congregations that they were used to in the schools or with their friends. And, I personally, haven't noticed a lot of that in my interaction with children, whether it be through the school, or through the, erm, Youth group or the bus service that I used to help (name) and (name) run.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: They were a little bit nervous, perhaps, going back to school. And, they were certainly bored,

Researcher BN: (laughs) Yeah.

SP8: ..and frustrated that they couldn't see their friends, I don’t think they necessarily missed school in particular, you know. So, so yeah, they missed school for social reasons, they didn't miss it for academicness.

Researcher BN: (laughs) yeah.

SP8: And that was, that was the biggest thing, they’d go ‘oh, I haven’t seen my friends for ages, we cant go to this, we can’t do that’, erm, their Netflix quota had gone up dramatically, and I've got a couple of who said ah my mum and dad found me watching sex education the other week, they weren’t very chuffed about that. My attitude is, you watch it Sunshine. You might learn some things from it (laughs), I didn’t mean that from a sex point of view, I meant that from an educational point of view, you know, erm, I wouldn’t say, the, the idea of children being very anxious and upset and introverted and depressed, I personally haven't seen any evidence of that. A little bit anxious about going back to school those first few days, the fifteen, sixteen year olds, a couple that I knew were doing A levels were having their education interrupted at a, critical stage one might say,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: ..and that was a worry to some of the older ones. But, they all comprehended that they'd been given dispensation by the way that their exams will be marked, and how they'd be adjudicated by the examining board, so that I think relieved a lot of the pressure. The next, of course this last year, some of the older ones all got upset by the fact that bloody hell they’re sticking the standards back up! (laughs) We’re going to have to do a little bit better, you know. But I wouldn't say anything, I did, I personally haven't met anybody who were, having, er, severe mental health issues over those facts.

Researcher BN: Oh Okay.

SP8: Not, not massively so, not to any measurable. Might, they might have all gone to (name) to talk about it. She does erm, the sessions within (name of location) school,

Researcher BN: Ah yeah.

SP8: …and a little one at (name of location) has been developed over the last year. Ah sorry not (name of location), at (name of lactation), and my son does one at (name of location) high school and things like that. And, from the interaction I’ve had with them, obviously none have come back and said, ther might be some, er, confidentiality about those things, the general gist of things, the ones they do talk about is mostly not problems at home.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: ..being unhappy in their home lives, parents who don't understand them, and, because (god barks), oh god now the bloody dog’s going (laughs)

Researcher BN: Aww! (laughs)

SP8: Because, because he’s banging away with a pallet trick and unloading stuff, the dogs have decided to start barking there.

Researcher BN: (laughs) They’ve been very quiet up until now!

SP8: No they’re pretty good. Well I’ve got two fluffy little, when my mother dies I inherited a (name of dog breed) would you believe it,

Researcher BN: (laughs) Aww.

SP8: I’ve sort of been foisted one off that she wanted to get rid of a few years ago. So I've got two of the damn things.

Researcher BN: Very cute (laughs) aww!

SP8: This one's super friendly, say hello to bethany, the one is much more, protective of the, of the house.

Researcher BN: Aw, very cute.

SP8: They’ve been up, all around the fields and up the woods, and everything today, and through the, they were standing up to here in the, in the river this morning.

Researcher BN: Oh so they’re little walkers, and they’re fine with going out and about.

SP8: You think they’re little lap jobs for actresses, you know, and Barbra Cartland you know, but they’re not. They take on my next door neighbour’s flat haired retrievers that weigh forty kilograms, and one of them clinged to one of their throats one day. Because she got fed up of him sniffing her bum, you know.

Researcher BN: (laughs) Aw, look! So cute. Aw lush. So does, do conversations about health and wellbeing ever come up, so like diet, exercise, healthy living, mental health, do conversations like that come up?

SP8: Yeah, the, the, it depends it’s like, you’ve got, say ten kids, five likes sport, five don't. Of the five that don’t, two of them are veering that they’re never going to do anything but eat, whatever they should, whatever they shouldn't, you know. So there’s the normal diverse sort of, you know, in those things. Erm, occasionally you get, girls more than boys, well somebody called me fat. One, one of the lasses that I know came up to me and said ah, such and such called me fat the other day. And she’s a little, Rubenesque, you know, she’s a well built lass, she’s pretty. A bit gobby to use the local vernacular about it, er, quite forthright for her age, but she was considerably upset about that, and girls are more sensitive I think to their health, their appearance, and their wellbeing, and perhaps boys aren’t in that, you know that's a generalisation I appreciate, you don't get many boys coming up to you and saying oh god me skin’s bloody bad this week or, erm, you know, my friend says I should do this, I should wear that, I don’t dress properly. You do get the girls, the teenage ones who are like thirteen, fourteen, they will talk to you about, you know, whether that comes under wellbeing, I suppose it does because it is a mental assessment of their own selves,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: ..when they don’t see themself as being, quite homogeneous within the group they’re in. Or, they're being, they're running a self-critique amongst themselves but that, seems to be, is it worse because of social media? Yes, it probably is.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: But I, I don’t go on the social media accounts, I do photography a little bit and my sailing activities, but you do see it, and I've got friends who are, you know, more your age, and they'll talk about things that, you see, they’re all dressed up and I think god almighty. Yeah, I mean, and some of the lads are, well lads just don't care, generally speaking, about what their appearance is, not round here anyway.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: They’ve not got a pair of jeans, they’ve got their wellies in, well I was gonna say the pub but that’s when they’re older, (laughs), they’re not quite as, there's, I think if everyone was back in (name of location) or something like that, there would be different sort of erm, social demography, perhaps,

Researcher BN: Okay.

SP8: ..about what people talked about what, certainly friends I have got down there their kids are much more, er, oriented, but they’re also much better off, er, about the car, have they got, I don't know what the current fashion brand is, for shirts and trousers these days, in my days it was Levi jeans and a good van houssen shirt, you know.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs)

SP8: Erm, er, I, I, they are, they, they go to dinner dances where they wear black tie, up here I’ve never seen hardly anybody wear a black tie, the kids coming, coming to the youth group wouldn’t even know what black tie was,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: …but they are still aware of, being different,

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP8: Being not quite within the cool group, erm, more so with girls, and girls do discuss that, from that conversation from last week, when I was taking , there’s one of my kids who comes to youth group but I was taking her home. But I also know her parents, and also know she's a teenager, and her mum says oh god she’s angry permanently lately. Well, just one second, god there’s a guy pointing at me through a window

Researcher BN: Aw it’s alright (pause)

SP8: Right we're back.

Researcher BN: We’re back.

SP8: Yeah, what are you, what you doing later, I've got a ton of wood chips and fifteen kilogram bags that need moved from outside to the inside

Researcher BN: Oh, God!

SP8: I could get the kids round from the youth club, bag each.

Researcher BN: Yes, bit of teamwork (laughs)

SP8: Bit of teamwork yeah. Yeah, yeah there will be, some of them do talk to you about things but I’ve never come across one that I personally, but I think, as a group, we tend to direct those things through (name).

Researcher BN: Right.

SP8: If there was something that came up, or, and again, with me being male, (name) being female, we tend, I personally, tend to push things in her direction.

Researcher BN: (laughs) Right.

SP8: Erm, it’s not that, I wouldn’t talk about them, but there’s a question of sort of, social suitability these days. You never know, some parents would be fine, but some parents wouldn't. Some kids talk to you, some kids don't. You never, never really know but, yeah, they do have their problems, yeah the girls get worried about how they look, whether they’ve got the right clothes the, the one I talked to you know she was quite upset about it the other day, this lass you know about, oh, well they said I was fat, and, but she is well built, but it was a cutting comment, made by two boys, who I then spoke to later on, because I know them I said, that’s not very nice, what if it was your sister, what would you, well I would stand up for her I said exactly, you know, so you, there's ways of dealing with things, and well, I, I think there is I mean I'm probably totally wrong my assumptions but (laughs). Erm, (pause) then, they did, they have their little moans and their groans about school, parents, each other. But most of the time they're a pretty happy bunch up here. And I think they do value friendship, and they value their social contacts up here, because they all live in such, relatively remote areas. You know,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: When I was, when I was their age I lived in (name of location), I could hop on the bus, or cycle into the middle of Newcastle in five minutes. You’d get lost in the anonymity of it. I shouldn't say this really should I, there was a pub life in Newcastle when I fifteen, you know. Because I was six foot two when I was fifteen, so I could go anywhere I wanted, and I had the right accent (laughs). Erm, up here there's not much for them to do. You want to go and see your friend? Erm, you might live in the middle of the (name of location) on the farm there, or in (name of location), or, you know, like, you know, you know all the farms round here and what the geographics are, you can’t, you can't just go on your bike to see your friend when you're at school. Because, you aren’t, I don't know whether you went to (school: name of location) or whether you went to (school: name of location). But it's irrelevant really.

Researcher BN: Hexham, yeah.

SP8: You know, if you were at (name of school) say in (name of location), and you had a friend who lived upon (name of location), or something,

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP8: ..you couldn't just go and see her after school. You had to, ah mum can you take me, sorry I can’t take you today, so you had a denial of social interaction, by terms of the geographic area you live in, and that's very prominent here. And I think that's why our youth club has been relatively successful, in, (name of location) and in (name of location). We had sixty kids there last week,

Researcher BN: Wow!

SP8: There was about, I think there was 28 in the juniors and 32 in the seniors, in (name of location).

Researcher BN: Wow.

SP8: I think I might have messed up the count. But there was roughly 30 in both groups.

Researcher BN: Wow.

SP8: Some of them had come from (name of location), there was a couple from (name of location), there's was two from the middle of (name of location), do you know (name of location)? No you won’t know the individual farm,

Researcher BN: No.

SP8: ..well, erm, you know they’re (name of location)

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP8: And their parents bring them, and that has, you know, do you go anywhere else? Well if mum and Dad aren’t too busy we get out at the weekend, but the Youth Club has become something they all come to.

Researcher BN: Yeah, which is great.

SP8: Going back to COVID, when the youth club stopped we did online sessions which you, (name) may have told you about,

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP8: which word spread about, in fact one of the people I interviewed for the head Mistress’s job at the school the other day, she, she, you know we were having a cup of coffee and just a bit of a chat, that’s the informal part of it, she says, Oh, how come you're a governor or whatever, I said I’m involved in the youth club, oh which is that, is that the (name of location)? I said yeah how do you know? She said oh, because I was working at the library at the time, temporary after having a daughter, and I saw all the online things being advertised.

Researcher BN: Oh, great!

SP8: Things had got out further, as far, further than we thought on that. And then when we came back, it took really all last spring and the summer to re-establish itself,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: ..as a physical entity. Er, and then suddenly this autumn, bang, we’ve been inundated. You know.

Researcher BN: Uhumm. Yeah.

SP8: We lost a few sessions but I won’t go into that because I mustn’t repeat that sort of thing, we lost a few sessions because people didn't do what I personally would have expected them to do it a month, and, they are definitely more bouncy, more punching the air, running around like little idiots and maniacs now, than they were in February, and the early summertime,

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP8: ..and that might confirm, the fact that yeah children were a little bit subdued, after the long period of time where they were, you know, imprisoned in their houses or their own minds. But I don't know any of them who weren’t all talking to their friends constantly on social media. They've all got mobiles, I mean they, the, the, the, the cartoons, the social jokes you see on Twitter or whatever about, you know, kids like, you know, they’ll just have a phone embedded in their forehead or something at some point. They won't go anywhere, they’ll just be fed with tubes and everything be conducted in a cyberworld, you know. I, that is true to some extent, my, my granddaughter, is never off her phone, mind I’m not much better to be honest, you know, I’m always looking for emails from the home office you know, actually erm, because the interaction, as long as it doesn't become all, all consuming, doesn't seem to be too bad for kids, especially in this area.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: Erm, or certainly, my, my nieces grew up on a farm, but they grew up in (name of location) and (name of location) sort of area. Er, it was, they had a car when they were ten, to drive down to the road end.

Researcher BN: Wow (laughs), ah god.

SP8: Because, we used to buy them an older banger, make sure it was reasonable, you know. And then all the three kids, (name) who was like, say twelve at the time, the girls were ten, they all drove themselves down to meet school bus then drove back up, it was just huge straights with trees, it got stuck on the grass a few times, never fell off it. But they never saw anybody at weekends unless their parents took them,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: ..they couldn't go anywhere. There was no bus service, they were totally reliant on their parents.

Researcher BN: So do you ever talk about, health behaviors, or like mental health? Or is it more about body image, and things like that?

SP8: Well, I personally haven’t dealt with any who, they've, they've said they're fed up. Nobody sad ah I feel really depressed and sat and cried, or looked really anxious, or suffered from anxiety attacks in my presence. (name) may have found that more with the girls because she would be their, er, their go to. You know, I am, you know, as you can see by the image in front of you, you know, probably not the most approachable with a teenage girl’s point of view, you know, or even a teenage lads they’ll think God it’s like going to talk to me grandad, you know, but they do talk to is, you know.

Researcher BN: Aw, yeah.

SP8: Erm, and I haven't personally had any interaction, but I do know of it. I mean I know what my, my granddaughter's friends she, she also changed schools from being at, er, middle school to go to (name of school) she got a scholarship to go there, and she hasn’t found it easy, because she lost her friends she'd been at primary with from five,

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP8: ..to go, and, that’s one of the reasons I bring her to the youth club here, so she has more social interaction, because despite the fact that she lives in the city, her friends, because she changed schools outside the normal geographic, demographic area she lives in (name of location) with her mum. Fifty percent of the time she’s in (name of location), fifty percent of the time she’s there, but when she comes to (name of location) she can’t see her school friends,

Researcher BN: Uhumm

SP8: Because they’re in Newcastle. So that’s why she come to the youth club here, to have more social interaction.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: Erm, and she was considerably, ooh, yes, I'm not looking forward to going back, and I said why, she said I’ve lost me, I couldn't differentiate easily between it being a new environment, the return to school post COVID, or just the fact it all coincided when she changed schools anyway.

Researcher BN: Mmm. Yeah.

SP8: And kids do worry about, my grandson is having problems, and he’s the most, if you met him, god you’d think he was the most bouncy, talkative, outdoors, running around, free spirited kid, but he gets really panicked about going to school, since he change schools. You know, and I have seen that with a few kids, you know sort of not, more my driving them to school, than I, than I have through the youth group, because they come to the youth group by choice, they want to go to the youth club, their parents don't force them to go, when they go to school, that's a pressure where they have no control over.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: They tend to be like, some of the younger ones have been more emotional on the bus, especially when they first changed. Well, soft sort of, easy going normal parents talk to their kids anyway, buy them sweets on Friday

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs). So do you think it would be an appropriate environment to talk about health and wellbeing? Kind of the health behaviors, mental health?

SP8: It has to be, within the youth group, it has to be in a controlled area, and if anybody does want to do that, then we do have the facilities just to take them to a quiet area, er, we’ve designated areas at the (name of organisation). It's not quite easy at (name of location) and I don’t expect it will be easy at (name of location) which starts in a couple of weeks. Erm, we’re expanding into there aswell.

Researcher BN: Ah great.

SP8: Erm, yeah, and erm, but we try to, we wouldn't deal with things like that there and then, there would be, a separation of, try and do in a physical sense. Go to a quite corner, go for a quiet walk outside or something. Done that with a couple of lads when they’ve got, when they’ve been in a fight or something, you know (laughs).

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs)

SP8: Ah come on we're going out for a walk, and some of the girls have got upset, you’d take them out, I know (name) had taken them for a walk, and certainly (name) my eldest son has.

Researcher BN: Ah okay.

SP8: So, so, it's, it's not something, I think it's something you could take notes on the surface of the problem, and then pass on to the according, things but you have to follow your safeguarding regulations on that one.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: But at the end of the day we are not, we are not psychologists. We are not professional, safeguarding officers within an organization, although we all have a level of training. Erm, and you, you’d have to go to the professionals meeting to know that. Well, there, that is another problem, because there’s a total lack of support and services, than there is within the wider community. Hang on, just get my soap, I’ll get my soap box now and stand on it (laughs).

Researcher BN: No, definitely (laughs).

SP8: Yeah. And it is a problem, that is a problem when you pass them over. You can’t always do it, and you can't always access those services. Not that we've had to at this, to my knowledge, again (name) would give you probably more information on if she's had to deal with things like that,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: Which I know, she set up these drop in sense things, er, there was the LBGT one, and that was, I've got nothing against that, and I'm really pro for it in fact, but it was, the way it was handled in a rural area by somebody who wasn’t used to the environment they were working in, I mean there was, some of them, you, you’ll know people in (name of location) who I know, you know, what a, what are they doing, with the four letter word to describe them, you know, bloody hen’s teeth what an amby famby nonsense this is, it could have been handled better.

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP8: Er, I don’t know, the drop-in at the school is an opportunity for kids to talk. But (name) runs that because she is the professional,

Researcher BN: Yeah, okay.

SP8: And (name) runs the one at (name of location) with (name), and erm, I think (name) does the one at erm, (name of location) now as well. And this is like an hour a week, lunchtime drop-in session, they have had, I don’t think there’s been a massive take up, so there has been one or two little things where people have come to talk.

Researcher BN: Ah right, yeah.

SP8: The one I, the one I know because of my son outside (name of organisation), er has been a substantial one you know, it’s actually needed a lot of follow-up and things,

Researcher BN: Uhumm, right.

SP8: He came over in tears, he rang is up in tears one night, and he's like forty-five, you know, was a business type at one stage in his life. He said ah I just can't believe people are like that. You know, have, have that that many problems, you know.

ResearcherBN: Mmm.

SP8: But that’s, that there goes exactly back to the start, why you do it. You just don’t want to see kids unhappy.

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: Er, but a youth, youth group is a, I think it's a firewall, to catch things, potentially to catch them in their early stages, and then, possibly give advice to children, or to parents of children, that these services are available, if these problems exist,

ResearcherBN: Uhumm.

SP8: But it’s not our job to deal with them. We’re not constituted to do that, we’re not structured to be able to deliver, erm, resources, and reconcile, er, to be able to reconcile those problems those individuals have, because we're not the right group. It would come under mental health support services for children, or, the er, safety team at Northumberland County Council, and things like that. So it, we, we, we can be a firewall, if we see something that's caught in the net, of our observations of, oh this child’s got a, you know, kind of cut on his head, or, permanently bruised arms or, there's a girl who's constantly crying, or a young lad who’s hiding away from the rest of the, the group. You know, all the signs you would, you would associate with some sort of distress.

ResearcherBN: Uhumm.

SP8: It's for us to see that, and possibly pass it on, my, my worry about that was that they actually get the help they need in the first place, and that's to some extent why (name) set up the drop-in centers for children, and I say this, excuse me, in inverted commas, to have somewhere they can talk.

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: Once that bits done, that's it. You know, we can't do any more than that.

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: And hopefully we, we, to my knowledge we've never had any questions of serious physical or social, or sexual abuse laid at our, er doorsteps to, to, to carry on. I know other youth workers in, say, (name of location), and things like that who have considerably more problems, drugs, violence, God knows what.

ResearcherBN: Uhumm.

SP8: Erm, but our community is a nice community, generally speaking to live in. I love, I moved up here ten years ago. My accent is my sister was a, as I said before I had a problem in (date) but my sister said why don’t you come up here, and my twin sister's always looked after me,

ResearcherBN: Aww.

SP8: And I love it up here. Probably seen as being totally barking by the, the local agricultural community (laughs). I don’t really care. But it is friendly.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: And, erm, just, just people you, you, once you've met one person, it's a bit like me saying, ah I work for (name) and (name), you knw who they are!

ResearcherBN: Yeah (laughs)

SP8: You know (name) and (name). So, if you go to (name of location) and you see, you know(name), his family run the (name of organisation) and all the rest of it and the (name of service).

ResearcherBN: Ah right, yeah.

SP8: Well you go up there to see (name), so you’re talking up there, going to (name of school) school one day just to help (name) and (name) out, ah, send my regards to (name) and tell him he’s a, you know, and I though ah right yeah, because, the community is so small, and that is one of the really lovely things about it.

ResearcherBN: Uhumm.

SP8: People do tend to care for each other up here.

ResearcherBN: Yeah, definitely.

SP8: I just wish they’d volunteered for more things.

ResearcherBN: So is that…

SP8: And it’s not..

ResearcherBN: Sorry go on.

SP8: No go on..

ResearcherBN: So is there, I was going to say, is there anything that would stop you from talking about health and wellbeing with the young people?

SP8: If I felt it was outside my capability to deal with the problem, I’d just move it on to my, as fast as possible. If it's about the general, ah I’m fed up of my homework or my teachers picking on me, or I feel a bit sad because the dog died, you know there's a big difference between being sad because the dog’s died, or the pet pony has, or, that, one of the girls came in one day and said, oh, two of the sheep died in the field and we had to put them on the back of the quad this morning before I came to school, now that was sad, but that wasn't about depression. It wasn't about a mental health problem. So yes, you can deal with those things, but if it became something where somebody felt they were, you felt they had a serious mental health issue about, I've had major, I've had some quite bad problems with depression twice in my life. And I know what it's like, to be, struggling to go out, I had a problem with anxiety, I used to travel all around Europe but I’d throw up whenever I got onto an airplane. And I love flying, it had nothing to do with the flying it was anxiety, but I always did my job. I never gave into it, but I was lucky. I could do that.

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: I had long, prolonged periods when I was taking antidepressants, and every now and then, even now, and one of the reasons, probably the reason I do all this social stuff, is because it gives me something to focus on outside of me.

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: And if I see that in a child, that's frenetic, being frenetic can be as bad as being, erm, solitary, or withdrawn, or inclusive, or something. But there is a limit, I can't do more than observe it and pass it on. Because I’m not professionally trained, and I would never deem to. My word of advice is don't buy the six pence bar of chocolate, buy the one for a pound. We’ve been (laughs), that’s my advice for a child, you know. Or, yeah, should we try and get over a six foot wall, well, rather than a four foot wall, for a bit of fun, but it wouldn’t be about mental health, it would be to, to push them in the right areas and directions because it's not the youth worker’s, or the, the, you know, the trustees jobs totally separate and it has nothing to do with youth work, and, it's all about governance.

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: So, political property I suppose is the other way of looking at it, you know, in that nobody’s cheating the system, but, when we, when the, the youth club service has existed in a powerful form in the seventies and eighties, and you had professionally paid council employed youth workers, they were trained to do that.

ResearcherBN: Mmm.

SP8: The bulk of youth work now I would think eighty ninety percent of it outside, especially outside city areas, is all volunteer led charitable organizations, doing it.

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: So there is restrictions on what service you can offer. And I, you know, (Name) and I had some conversations about this, well can’t I, well you can't do that anymore, you know, we’ll will be open to god knows what sort of thing. Well we used to do that, yes, well you know, you can't take twenty kids to Alton Towers anymore in a minibus without five people doing it, and if you lose one it's reprehensible, you know, we used to have a ten percent rule, as long as you got back, you know, 95, 97% back it was fine, you know (laughs). I, I mean I say that in jest obviously. But things, things have changed, and it has to be more professional, but there’s limit’s on what the professional, er, we, we can't give professional advice. We can only guide people in the right direction, and, I think above all else and the thing I try to do is, to offer, whether it's an adult, or child for that matter, is just a support to them, and that they know that somebody’s there who will listen.

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: Erm, and that's the role I think that we have.

Researcher BN: Uhhum

SP8: But, with the added one of saying yeah, we can help you escalate things, or we can have it escalated for you if you think it’s bad enough, you know. I have no, if something happened and I saw a child coming in battered and bleeding sort of thing, er, and wouldn't talk about, I would just ring the police like that, wouldn’t even refer them to child services or something or Northumberland County Council if it’s not working hours, although they are actually open twenty four now.

ResearcherBN: Ah that’s good.

SP8: They used to be, they used to be shut. They now have an on call line operates twenty four seven.

ResearcherBN: That’s good.

SP8: So, you know, where do you start and stop on these things?

ResearcherBN: Yeah. So is there anything that would help you talk about health and wellbeing with the young people?

SP8: I think sort of professional training would. Erm, you know, if people were willing to undertake it, erm, did a minor one years ago, because that was just, I've looked into sort of not adoption, but looking after children at one stage, and I had a lot of training on that. So that’s the sort of thing about ten years ago. Erm, and that has stood me in good stead because it's taught me the boundaries.

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: And I think anything that I’ve been saying to you is all about the boundaries. Yes, we can recognise it, we might be able to spot it, better is how to spot problems which again, training on sort of psychological, and sort of understanding or analysis, perhaps of people's behavior, in a, in a small way, in a, you know, surface topical way, perhaps might be helpful. But these things aren’t generally available, you know.

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: Because somebody has to pay for them, and if you want to, wanted to as a as a youth group or as an individual, you'd be talking about spending probably a thousand pounds for a course,

ResearcherBN: Wow.

SP8: ..you know, two hundred and fifty pounds for a session or something,

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: ..with twenty other people in a conference room somewhere, with no specific validity on what advice you would give them, or the criteria as to how that force is orchestrated,

ResearcherBN: Mmm.

SP8: ..because they aren’t centrally run or organised. You know, you haven't, have you ever worked in any sort of businesses or anything, or family businesses, where you have an office, and you have to have all your pat tests, do you know what pat testing is?

ResearcherBN: No?

SP8: It’s alright, PAT test is portable appliance testing. So you, in an office you have a, I was gonna say a typewriter, jesus christ (laughs). You have a, a phone. You've got a computer, a printer, a kettle, a coffee maker, and a toaster, right, now years ago you just had them, now to meet your insurance regulations, you've got to have them electrically tested to see they’re safe to use. Right. Now there is a standard applied to that that says it must conform to within certain electrical resistance values when you test all the wires. If you were to apply that same principle of testing to, teaching youth workers to have, or volun-, let’s be more specific, volunteer youth workers as to how they should be trained to pick up on psychological or social, diff-, difficulties children are undergoing. What's the qualifying framework that we would use to do that? Now, to my knowledge, there isn't one.

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: So you could go for this training, if you go, it’s a bit like, I was trying to think what, you can go for your simple first aid training. Yep, have you done that? Do you do firs-?

ResearcherBN: Yes.

SP8: Right. You've done one. I've done various ones, they all differ depending... I’ve done ones at the sailing club right, which obviously predominantly revolve around cold water shock, because you can get, if you fall off your yacht and you're ten mile off the shore, the first, you're bugging basically (laughs) just, just breathe out and give in is probably my advice (laughs) on that one, but, they give you one set of training and it all differs.

ResearcherBN: Uhumm.

SP8: If you go to the red, er, the St. John's ambulance, they'll give you a slightly different training to the Red Cross. And what we would want is the guren-, I would want as a, as a youth worker is to get involved in safeguarding to more than just, other than just ah I think there’s something wrong let’s report it. We’d need professional training.

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: You can’t do that off the back of a fag packet to put it bluntly, you’ve got to have more, and that takes resource, resource means more finance, and finances are not easy. You know, when you were in your guise at the coop, yeah, it was brilliant, you know. We, little bits and pieces helping, erm, you know, whether it's been (name of funders) or, various other sort of things we, we received, you’ve got no guarantee it’s going to be there next year, in fact (name of funder), they’ve shut down their, their fund haven’t they, at the end of this year I think it is?

ResearcherBN: Oh right.

SP8: They had major, I think they had losses in the, wherever they have their money invested. They didn't do so well for a couple of years. They’re having, you know, to pay out the dividends, which is basically the form of their charitable donations. So, you've got to be able to finances these things, and then you end up with a structure that doesn’t become an local youth group, it becomes a government run organisation if you're not careful, will that meet, meet the needs? As, again being old, urgh (laughs), I don’t, I can assure you Beth I feel no older than you are, probably five years, probably five years younger, apart from the aches and pains, you know. I was sat here listening to my dance music earlier on, and I’ve slipped back into a bit of Eminem before, you know.

ResearcherBN: Oh nice!

SP8: And erm, I just, I just don't know how you’d do it to be honest, the structure would be different,

ResearcherBN: Okay.

SP8: ..and our, we're there to provide a local service for local children, to provide a bit of fun, a bit of entertainment, and then the last ten, fifteen years, that has now developed into being like a, a free, non-governmental wellbeing, erm, a place where people's wellbeing, well let me get this wording right. A place where people with wellbeing problems can come and talk. That's not what youth clubs were set up for, that’s social services, that’s psychological support, mental health team work. So I don't see the role of youth clubs as being one to carry on with that, other than, that, as I said right at the beginning, if something falls into the net, you think Hmm, why has that stopped, why, why have we flagged this up? Why is that child in the corner all the time. Erm, and it can be boys just as much as girls, they can be five year olds, they can be eighteen year olds, because they're just humans like the rest of us. We're not set, we're not qualified to deal with them. Alll we can offer is, yes, somewhere to report it, and then pass it on.

ResearcherBN: Okay.

SP8: People might differ from me on that, but I think that's, that's being fairly hard headed on it.

Researcher BN: Yeah. So in terms of the kind of training you would want to recieve about having health behaviour conversations, like you said training would be good, what kind of training?

SP8: I was going to crack a very bad joke there (laughs). But, a week at the lunatic asylum (laughs). I used to go to (name of hospital) when I was at school, we used to go and talk to the inpatients, and take them for walks as a kid at school.

ResearcherBN: Ah right.

SP8: If you think a normal mental health establishment is bad, but (name of hospital) was horrific, it had people with terrible mental and physical disabilities, it was really, it was eye opening. Erm, if you wanted, what training would you want, well I think it would have to be qualified training, it would have to be tested that you had understood what you are doing rather than just going to a lecture and getting a certificate at the end of it, like your first aid certificate,

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: ..you would have to have some professional validation or any qualification to allow you to work, not only because it's the right thing to do, but also you’d have to protect yourself against any litigious problems it might result for you becoming involved in something. So it's not just, oh, let's teach (SP8) to spot a child who maybe suffering from depression, or, a child that’s, you know, like the. I don’t know, anxious, they’re the two obvious ones that we would come across. Or how to talk to them, you know, you’re never going to ask them questions, it’s always going to be open ended and let them talk is always the general one we have. But if you’re going to take it any further, you’ve got be professionally qualified. You, you, it would be, and it goes against the grain, because my generation we just, come on, we’ll sort you out, you know. Let's see what the problem is. And now, if you do that, oomf, you could be standing on all sorts of, toes, in terms of what's the correct and responsible way to deal with things. Erm, and, and the individuals rights,

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: Erm, you know, passing on of information, confidentiality, parental rights, legal obligations. You know, it's a bit of a minefield. So, whatever, whatever training you did get to assess people's well-being, would have to be documented, validated, and come under a, a governmentally supervised framework in my opinion,

ResearcherBN: Okay.

SP8: Or the framework of somebody like the NSPCC, ah have I got the right one there I am talking about children with the NSPCC (laughs). The RSPCA or whatever (laughs). The RSPB will do it won’t they, Royal Society of Protection of Brats, you know, that’s how politically incorrect this is at times but erm, I think you get the gist of what I’m saying,

ResearcherBN: Yeah, definitely.

SP8: We are, most of us in our field, and I’m sure with the work you’ve come across visiting different youth workers, you have a, you want to help, and that's basically it.

ResearcherBN: yeah.

SP8: But there are limits as to what you can do, and I think it's, it's certainly as a, a trustee, we have placed limits on the, in terms of governance, as to what (name of youth club) can offer as services. (name) has been, because she's, you know, degree level trained, she’s got, erm, experience within the field. Not in all areas obviously because she's worked in a specific field, She’s, she's also laid down laws about what you can do and what you can’t do, so to take it further, but, generally, we have generalised training to help, what we try to do now which is to stop children who may be developing social or psychological problems, you know, whether that be mental health, or social interaction, er, the ability to communicate and things like that, but they’re all, let’s be honest, you know, you're doing a Phd in a specific, niche area of, sorry I don’t know what you did your original degree in,

ResearcherBN: Er, I did psychology then health psychology.

SP8: You did psychology, right, so this is allied to that, yeah? And the, in terms of wellbeing and mental health from a psychologist point of view.

ResearcherBN: Yeah.

SP8: So that is a very, very niche, area, and that's the problem. Whatever you were trained for, is usually a niche subject you know, if you're looking after children who you have criminal behavioral tendencies you'll have one sort of psychologist who will specialise, I don’t know, ADHD problems, erm, autism, Aperger’s, erm, general maniacal behavior. You know what I don't know, but it’s so diverse you can’t expect a youth group, an amateur. No, no, I, I withdraw that. We were amateur. We have become professional over the last few years, and we take the necessary guidance where we can in terms of like, er, using professional trained staff. I find it difficult thinking about my son's professionally trained but. I’m still having problems with him now and he’s forty four. You know. He was driving round the bloody roundabout at (name of location) at alarming speeds in the Mini he just got at the weekend and he posted it all over social media, I said do you think this is wise? With you, with your eleven year old strapped into the front seat going come on dad! Anyway, er, whatever, you know.

Researcher BN: Yeah. So do you, have you ever heard of brief interventions or making every contact count, have you had training in initiating health conversations before?

SP8: No, no, nothing at all.

ResearcherBN: No.

SP8: I mean, I know about brief interventions because I have a member of my, village has worked in social care, social services, child protection for many years, twenty years ago he was an advisor to Tony Blair in that area, he's quite well known up here, so he will remain nameless, and he talked about this because, we had a problem that came up with some children about six months ago, he said well, you could always go to I forget, it was one of those intervention teams, erm, was it first help or something like that. Or, I don’t know.

ResearcherBN: Oh right.

SP8: There’s one that's running now that it's like, it’s like a direct help group The The, the family can ask for help, or first, ah, first for help, or something like that, and they can go into, but the problem is, getting those people to ask in the first place.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: Er, so, I dunno really, I just think we can do better. It would be great to get professional training,

perhaps more so for the younger members of our team than me

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: I’m probably, probably past help, if I get too much information I’ll probably get about, if I hear about suicidal problems I'll probably get suicidal myself, you know. I thought oh my god that’s me to tee, you know. But you’d have, you can't do it, you, you’d have to be professionally qualified to make a, a judgment about somebody else's clinical position, or behavioral problems. Otherwise it's just like, my, what I said about me, a few times that my generation, we just did things with the best of intentions, and we, you thought or you might think you know best, but it's often proved that people professional, they might mean well, but they can cause more damage than problems they resolve, there's a way of intervening,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8 ..and that has to be very structured and carefully analysed, well, before you've interviewed on a child's welfare, or a family welfare, on behalf of one or all of those constituent parts within the social setting, because they're all different. And I, I don’t fully understand… I'm very good with earth moving machineries, I'm good with that. If you’ve got a bulldozer I’m good with them. And welding (laughs).

Researcher BN: (laughs) So do you think if you ultimately, if you did receive training in how to have health and wellbeing conversations with the young people, do you think will ultimately help…

SP8: Well, (name) obviously has had er, and (name) have had training in those areas, at a modest level I would suggest, without being, you know, degrading in what they're trying to do or anything, but it’s, it's not going to be to the same level you, you obviously have in terms of professional competency and understanding now. They will have gone on a week's course, if, if that,

Researcher BN: Uhuhh.

SP8: ..to learn about the basic pointers or indicators you might want to look out for in the setting we are working at. But it would be helpful if all that was available, to all youth workers,

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: ..and at the moment the only one, the only two that youth workers, certainly in our organisation and wider ones that I'm aware of is, first aid, and safeguarding. And safeguarding basically emulates everything that I've told you about. See, yes, if I spot it I’ll report it, and that’s safeguarding.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: And that's as far as it goes really. In my role at school, it goes a little further, because as a, as a (name of position) at a school I have more legal responsibilities than I do as a trustee of a youth group, erm you know, I’m responsible to ensure that these things do happen. Not that, the youth group doesn’t have that same legal responsibility.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: As a charity, the school does. At the moment we, we picked the wrong bloody headmistress this last week, we're the ones who have trouble, not the education ones, but we're responsible for it.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: But erm, but a wider, I mean I've always said education is the key to everything.

Researcher BN: Mmmm.

SP8: Erm, without education it’s assumption, and if we were educated to better understand, er, or be aware of different psychological mental health conditions that may manifest themselves with certain symptoms, and we were given the tools to recognise them, that would be helpful, but it still wouldn't make any difference, we still wouldn't really be in a position to possibly take it much further than that, other than to recognise it and pass on to professionals.

Researcher BN: Okay.

SP8: And that's why I did also say at the beginning of this, it’s all very well talking about the children, who, oh I had a row with me brother last week, and I’m feeling a bit fed up about it, or the, the girl who’s best friend has gone off with her boyfriend or, the boy who fancy the girl at school and she's turned him down and he's a bit upset, that isn't a mental health problem, that's life, you know, and we can deal with that level.

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP8: We can't do with it that it ramps up into something that's in your psychological area, in my opinion, and that, I might be being ultra cautious, and in some ways, whilst I am conservative in my social views about behavior and things like that, I'm probably relatively modern in my views about how things should be dealt with.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: They important. They’re not something to just be dismissed, ah we've never done it that way, or the LBGT thing, I'm, one of the reasons I made that example is that, I am totally behind the idea of us having a space. I know two children who fall into that category in this area,

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP8: One of which, I probably knew about before, I’ll get me pronouns right here, they did, and as a consequence, when I see them, I've been very careful about this, how I say things. We have a, a trans person in the village, and I still use he rather than she. And it’s like ah crap, I’ve done it again.

Researcher BN: It’s just something you’ve got to keep reminding yourself of, isn’t it?

SP8: But it shouldn’t matter, I bet, what people want to do and what they want to be doesn't really matter to me at all. I understand Jk. Rowling and her, her views. I understand other people's views, but it's not something to have an argument about, It's something to have a discussion about, and come to a common ground on,

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP8: To all the people important, those things don’t matter, but the way it's handled, and that's the other thing that's important, if youth people, you know, became involved in the delivery of, wider social support services rather than just giving the kids somewhere to come and play on a Thursday after-, Thursday evening or Tuesday evening.

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP8: They have to be able to deliver that to the communities they work in, with an understanding that we work in both directions, the community understanding the service that’s going to be delivered, and the individuals delivering that service understanding the needs of the society, and being tolerant of the

Idiosyncrasies of that society because, we could be in the west end of Newcastle, where we have a lot of Muslims. We could be erm in Guthford, where they’re all, well a lot of them are reformed Jews, or Saltford park where there are Civic Jews. And, our delivery would be totally different in any one of those circumstances, because of the cultural values of that particular community, and, and that's why I think it's so dangerous to allow, well, or would be potentially so to, to just say oh we’ll give you all a training course in something, off you go!

Researcher BN: Right.

SP8: Without a wider knowledge of cultural interaction, er and the personal psychology and mental health treatments, ah that’s not quite right, the, certainly the cultural implications, the ability to psychoanalyse somebody, without being from a psychiatry point of view, just to spot the clinical symptoms that may present themselves when somebody's having a problem, is totally different to the treatment,

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP8: ..and giving the tools to recognise one, with fifty percent clarity, or certainly, is totally different to, to taking that service anywhere else.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: We would all want to help. Well, I hope to help, but anyhow, very few people who are actually in the position, hence the crisis in mental health services. Hence the crisis in, all sorts of our social services. You know, I don't know.

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP8: I hope some of that makes sense.

Researcher BN: Yeah no definitely, so in terms of whether you think that training would ultimately impact on the health and wellbeing of the young people, are you kind of saying that it wouldn't?

SP8: It would impel, I would be against it becoming a, a semi-professional service, an observational service where the symptoms could be recognised Yes, but it has to be passed on to professionally qualified, you know erm, social care, social workers, psychiatric care at your local psychiatric day centre, or whatever it is, you know. CPNs, that sort of thing.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP8: You can't go further than that I don't think, you would leave yourself open not only to professional incompetence, but you also possibly leave yourself open to, criminal liability if not legal liability.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: But it would be good to be able to spot it, and pass it on, and any improvement in our ability to do that, because at the end of the day the children are our, you know, we, well it doesn’t matter to me to be honest whether they are children or adults, you know, to be able to help is the key

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: Erm, and to be able to spot it, if you could spot it, that other people might not spot, and be able to pass it on to a service, and it was dealt with accordingly inappropriately, yes, it would be a benefit. But at the moment, quite frankly, who the hell are you gonna pass these things on to? The Northumbrian youth service, which has about ten employees now, out of one hundred a couple of years ago, or ten years ago,

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP8: The length of the psychiatric, if you or I had the misfortune and I had a relapse or something, or you know, you, somebody found yourself on the edge, for whatever reason, you went to see a GP, and at a point which you got to them in three or four weeks. Yes, we'll put you on the, the list to see the CPN.

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP8: In the meantime, have some, Prozac for want of a better word, or the triple, you know, drugs or something to calm you down a bit, which takes a month to work. Which can give you a bad effect in the first place. You know, and of these things they’re lovely, when they’re theoretical. But the practical delivery is the problem.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: But I don't think we shouldn't do it, you know, because it, even a kind word from a friend or a youth worker, is better than nothing.

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP8: But I'd be very heavy on some of the pitfalls of it. But there are some positive I, I'm sure, I'm sure in your life so far you've gone to help a friend or somebody you might not know that well, and you’ve just had a chat to them. And sometimes that can be the difference between something getting better, a spark of optimism is ignited, a realisation they're not on their own. Erm, that the world's not, you know, as bad as it, the fact that you're interested in doing something like this is inspiring to someone like me, because they, other people are interested in this, they want to help, they want to see a, a kinder, more helpful caring society. And that's the reason you're..

Researcher BN: No definitely, yeah.

SP8: You might be doing it from a totally academic, you know, point, you know, you don't care about the people, it's only about the paperwork at the end.

Researcher BN: Yeah (laughs), just the salary and..

SP8: I had a salary at eighty thousand for a year instead of sixty-five, you know (laughs), but I don’t, I don't think so, and I don't think that's the case for me.

Researcher BN: Yeah, yeah, definitely

SP8: I've said it a couple of times, any training is better than no training. But the ability to improve wellbeing in ums, comes in, difficult area to, how you would prescribe, or describe the area in which you could work

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: ..with, with competence, safety for yourself, and for the, the individual that maybe the, the reason of concern, and the wider community itself. And there's a lot to deal with, there’s so many facets that you could feed into that

Researcher BN: Yeah, no, definitely.

SP8: It’s, it’s no longer acceptable in society just to say you want to help. The, you know, the bit I mentioned about the kids coming in the house, ah I got dragged over the coals over that. They, they're not bad, we’ve just come to see you, can we come in, ah well, schoom, schoom, runs in, one of them was straight upstairs, one of them was in the bloody bar before I could stop him. Both of them have ADHD problems allright. There’s one that is mildly autistic. So he doesn’t understand stop.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: Now, twenty-five thirty years ago, people would have put that, oh, well, kids are kids. Erm, it's nice that you're kind to them. or, bloody hell I wouldn't have had them in my house the little tykes, you know. I end up getting a lecture on safeguarding to protect myself, not about what I did, not about having the children here, but how to protect myself against potential, not prosecution exactly, but er, potential allegations being made against me, and that is the reason I never went ahead with doing, erm, not adoption, erm

Researcher BN: Fostering?

SP8: Fostering, yeah. My, my, my youngest son and I we did all the courses for three months, and every weekend for three months we ‘did all the course on it, and I was really keen to doing it. And that was one reason I went back to the youth side, because we didn’t do that. And we didn’t do it because of the potential for allegations, you couldn't have had those children like a member of your family. They had to be almost segregated into a safety box, and you into another box, to prevent them making allegations against you, or you making allegations against them situation. You can, as a youth worker, if I was to, you were a twelve year old little boy or little girl, and your dad’s been in an accident, your mum's gone to the hospital, how do you take him home to Auntie Susans, or her, you know, they can’t be in the front of the car, they have to be in the back. In case there is an allegation of me, putting my hand on their knee, come on, you know, for one you'd be okay, that could be an allegation of sexual assault. So you have all these things have to be built in, you know, and those things have gone, and this is why I'm so reticent to say, yes, I would love to be involved in delivering more wellbeing services for youngsters within youth organisations,

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP8: ..but yes, if theoretically, but no, because of the society we live in. And yes again, if you're professionally competent, qualified, and you can prove it, and it's been assessed by a third party who qualifies your ability to do it.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: You know. I, I worked in an, engineering my whole life, but I did, did law originally, I’m better qualified in law than I was in engineering. I have no qualifications. I didn't even get a maths O level.

Researcher BN: (laughs) Ah really.

SP8: Yesh. I, I have designed structures that weigh one hundred tons. Erm, sub-seek crawler systems that were two thousand meters below the sea.

Researcher BN: Wow!

SP8: And done the calculations for forces, ground pressures, and things like that. But I'm not qualified, so I always got somebody else to sign it off to have a professional endemnecy. But my key to skills was that I knew what my limitations were, and if you, most people don't, managers do not like asking for help in general. My view is, if I can't do it, I will buy the help in to do it so I can do it,

Researcher BN: Uhumm.

SP8: ..and that's the same rule I'm really applying now. I will never be qualified to make a psychological, psychiatric assessment of a person’s wellbeing. In a professional man-, in a clarified manor, that removes, and even when a profession does it, they're only ever going to get it right I would think, seventy-five percent of the time.

Researcher BN: Mmm.

SP8: Psychological, and clinical psychiatry is a highly, erm, subjective decision making process, because we all know it, it does go wrong, you know, for all you know I might be psychopath, completely telling you exactly what I think you want to hear, to please you in this interview.

Researcher BN: (laughs) Yeah.

SP8: Or my, my properted, you know, liking for youth work is just a sociopathic tendency of mine to get what I want, and the pleasures I deserve from it, you know, and I chose the word I deserve from it very deliberately, so, you know it’s, that, that's why my reservations are there.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: Yes, all of us, I don't know anybody who is not involved in, in (name of youth club) and, erm, was (name of other youth club), I think that was run by Wouctershire county council in the days where you just rang them up, can we go to alton towers please and hire a bus, of course you can, we’ll send a couple of workers to go with you. That doesn’t exist anymore.

Researcher BN: Yeah.

SP8: We, we do it because we, we want to help.

Researcher BN: Yeah. Oh well you definitely do.

SP8: Whether it's, youth service, I, run a project called (Name of location) projects in the community, which we try and spread a little bit of money around where it’s needed, or, I’ve been paying for three Ukrainians since the seventeenth of April.

Researcher BN: Ah really?

SP8: And supporting them, Argh, well, that would have me, I nearly in tears over that today,

Researcher BN: Ah god.

SP8: It’s been going on for six months now.

Researcher BN: Dear me.

SP8: And you can't, you ring the Home Office, and someone says did someone look into this, I’ve had it escalated before. Why do you want to escalated? I said it’s because, I've been told in the past you can do it for certain reasons like the other members of the family have passports, well permission to travel. This one hasn't, she had originally, but we had to cancel it, because I made, I personally made a spelling mistake on the Russian sub, sub name. And it put a YA on the end because it was my bank account name, but the mother had got divorced, so it had been dropped on the passports. And I didn't know this.

Researcher BN: Ah god.

SP8: So she got it, then we had to cancel it, now we’ve waited thirteen weeks for it to be re-issued,

Researcher BN: What a nightmare.

SP8: And you can't talk to them, they won't talk to you. And today they turned round and said, ah we're not going to escalate it any more. It's pointless. And that was the exact words they used. And I was sitting there..

Researcher BN: Ah it’s frustrating.

SP8: I mean joking apart I’m, I'm not badly off, but I live on a pension. It's not like a police pension where somebody gets half their final salary, or, you know more, I’ve got a small private pension, and I've spent eight thousand quid so far,

Researcher BN: (gasps) Ah my god.

SP8: And that's just to put them in a room for three of them, or a couple of rooms, I've relied on the friendship on some cheques on there to get, you know, knocked down prices on the bed and breakfast or, somebody’s got their house empty for a month, this has gone on since may.

Researcher BN: Ah my god. Dear me.

SP8: And you know, could you, could you live on, well it's been six months it’s about eight hundred pound a month, including your rent and your food and everything. Well your supply.

Researcher BN: Bloody hell.

SP8: You, you couldn’t do it. And that, they just say well there’s no reason to escalate it. Ah, well I was actually just about in tears in this morning Beth. I feel responsible for these people I've never met. They don't speak English. I've got photographs that, you know, we exchange a texts backwards and forwards. It used to be a happy little conversation. It's now going like that. And there's nothing happy in the, have you heard anything, have you heard anything, what the hell do I tell them?

Researcher BN: Mmm. Ah it’s frustrating.

SP8: Yeah, you know care, yes is good, but there’s limits.

Researcher BN: yeah, definitely. Well that was everything I had to ask you anyway, so is there anything you wanted to add?

SP8: I think you’d get, yeah, go and take two aspirin and decompress after talking to me for two hours (laughs).

Researcher BN: (laughs) Ah now, thank you very much for your time, I appreciate

SP8: Well I, I doing enjoyed it, it’s something that I enjoy doing, despite my lack of academic successes in school or university, or anything like that, I do enjoy learning.