

Care Leavers' Stories project

Eddie Prendergast

Interviewed by Camelia Borg

C1597/06

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Social Care Institute for Excellence

Interview Summary Sheet

Title Page

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Interviewee's surname: Prendergast

Title: Mr

**Interviewee's
forename:** Eddie

Sex: Male

Occupation: Senior SHE Advisor

Date of birth: 1970

Dates of recording: 09.05.13

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**Interviewer's
comments:**

Track 1

Hello, hi. Could you just confirm for the recording your name and whereabouts it was that you live now, the area.

My name's Eddie Prendergast and I currently live now in Liverpool.

Okay.

But I grew up in London, in Wandsworth, Battersea and Wandsworth.

Okay. So before I get really stuck in with the questions, we'll focus on kind of things that you're doing now. So you're living in Liverpool now.

Yeah.

Okay. How long have you been there?

I've lived in Liverpool now for over twenty years. I've continued to work in London. I still work in London now, at the moment, but, yeah, I've been living up there for over twenty years. So – met my wife up there and that was it, and I sold a tiny flat in Tulse Hill and I bought a big mansion in Liverpool with the proceeds, so ... [Laughs] that kind of influenced our decision. And we live by the beach and countryside and we've got everything, so. And it's not too bad up there. It's not as grim as what they say [laughs].

So was the countryside and, you know, the beaches – was that kind of a big factor for you to move there or ...?

Oh definitely, definitely, yeah. You know, if I had to move down to the south east tomorrow, I'd probably have to move to Kent or Sussex, you know. I couldn't live in London again. I wouldn't want to be too far away from London, but I'd – you know,

the beach and the fresh air's – it's a weekly routine now, just going for a walk and – or cycling or jogging, you know, along the prom or whatever. So yeah.

Right. And you mentioned that you're still working in London?

Yeah, I'm working in London. At the moment I'm part of Crossrail, so I'm on the – I'm working on the C510 project, which is – we're constructing Liverpool Street and Whitechapel stations, the Crossrail part of it, the new tunnelling project. So I've been down here now on that project for eighteen months and probably got about another two to three years to go yet. It's quite – it's quite interesting. It's the biggest construction project in Europe at the moment and it's going to deliver a fantastic new tube line for London when it's finished. So it's good, it's interesting.

And do you commute from –

I go – yeah, I go home on a Friday and come back on a Monday.

How do you find the travelling and that distance away from home?

It's two hours ten minutes from Euston to Liverpool on Virgin, you know, so it's – the train link's brilliant now. When I used to do it twenty years ago, fifteen years ago, it was over three hours, but now the trains are so much better and they're getting quicker and quicker all the time. I used to fly, you know, but they stopped that. You used to be able to fly one time. But no, the train's good. I can drive but I drive – I drove last week – I made a terrible mistake and I drove last week and it just reminded me how much I hate the M6, so I'll be training it for the foreseeable future again.

Yeah. You mentioned that you've – obviously you've been working here for quite a few years. Have you been with Crossrail for a long time?

Well, no – well, I work for a construction company, Morgan Sindall, and it's part of a joint venture. So who I work for's called BBMV, so it's made up of four pretty big – four of the biggest – well, one of our partners is VINCI, who's the biggest

construction company in the world. Another partner's Balfour Beatty, who's the biggest construction company in the UK. Then you've got Morgan Sindall and we've got ALPINE BeMo, who are our technical specialists from Austria. So they make up – they've made up this JV to do the project line up. So I actually work for Morgan Sindall and I'm hired out, if you like, to BBMV. And I've just been put on the Crossrail project for the duration of the contract, three or four years' work. So when that's finished, then they can send me anywhere [laughs]. That's if I stay.

With the – obviously the job that you're doing now, was it something that you saw yourself doing?

No, couldn't be further from it. I actually – I'm a senior health and safety advisor now. I've got a construction background, an engineering background, but nowadays our job's more and more health and safety related and I just found I had to go on certain courses and take certain qualifications and I just found myself then – like most people my age fall into health and safety. You don't – you don't go into health and safety. I daresay there's people coming out of university now choosing it as a career, but most people my generation just kind of fell into it. But, you know, when I say health and safety, I meet somebody for the first time and they're thinking, you know, I'm one above a traffic warden and one below a tax inspector, but I don't see it like that [laughs]. To me it's varied and it's interesting and I'm more educated than a policeman. I don't go round telling people 'Don't stand on that, don't do this or don't do that.' I'm – you know, I'm more a trainer or educator, if you like. That's the way I see it, anyway.

So you said it couldn't be further from the –

Oh, when I first started, you know, I probably broke every safety rule under the sun [laughs]. I certainly didn't practise what I preach now. But yeah, you know, I think most construction – the way the construction industry's gone, it's evolved and it's a very good industry now. It's – you know, twenty years ago – I've been in this game for twenty-seven years, so when I first started it was a – people's perception of builders and what have you, cowboys I suppose. There's probably still a few, you

know, but the industry – it's a great career and I wouldn't – I wouldn't dissuade anybody from going into construction.

[06:25]

Okay. So where you're living in Liverpool, you've got your wife there. Do you have any children at the moment?

Yeah, I've got three. I've got a twenty year old daughter. She's currently in Rome at the moment. She's at university so she's on her third year at university. She's been doing languages, Spanish and Italian. So she comes home next month and then her final year – she's at Manchester. And then I've got an eleven year old, who's starting senior school September, and an eight year old. They're all – two boys, one girl and two boys. So they're a good handful.

And with your wife obviously staying in Liverpool while you travel down, do you speak to her during the week? Do you have much contact?

Oh god, every day [laughs], every day, yeah [laughs]. If I don't report in I'm in trouble [laughs]. So yeah, you know, I speak to the kids every morning before they go to school and, you know, try and catch them before they go – before they go to bed. But I suppose, like normal kids now, they're doing something after school every day of the week, whether it's rugby or it's music or it's – so I try and catch them when I can rather than, you know – but yeah. I speak to them every day, every single day. Obviously text messaging now, you know, you – sometimes you have a text conversation 'cause it's easier. If you're on the tube, you don't want to be talking on the tube, you know, so ... but yeah, communicate all the time.

Okay. And does your wife work at the moment?

Yeah. She's a teaching assistant in a primary school. So she's with Year 2. So she's been doing that for – she worked at John Moore University for fifteen years and then she decided that she wanted to go into teaching assistant, so she quit her job. She did

it voluntary for about a year while she finished off her qualifications and then she was lucky to get a job and be given a contract. So yeah, she loves it, loves it. She's at a challenging school as well, so the kids are not as privileged as some other kids. So ...

Yeah, okay. And you said that you've been in Liverpool – was it twenty years?

Oh, over twenty years, yeah.

Over twenty years, okay. So whereabouts in London were you living before you moved?

Well, I was living around Tulse Hill, just near Brixton.

How long were you there for?

Oh ... I don't know. I bought a flat there when I was quite young. So I lived round – I lived round Tulse Hill – but I continued to live there – you know, even though I bought a property in Liverpool, so I was in Liverpool at weekends, but working in London, I'd stay in Tulse Hill. So I stayed around Tulse Hill for quite a while, even though I was – officially my home was Liverpool.

Did you grow up – when you were younger, did you grow up near there or ...?

No. Well, not a million miles away, but I – I was born in Lambeth, Clapham, but I grew up in Battersea first. So I lived in Battersea for the first seven years and then from when I was seven to fifteen, I lived in Wandsworth. And then I went to live in Ireland for a few years and I come back to London when I was about eighteen.

A lot of travelling.

Yeah [laughs].

[10:10]

What I'll do, if we go back, if possible, to your earliest memory. So when you were younger, what – what do you have as an earliest memory?

I can remember my first day at school, you know. Before that? I haven't got – yeah, not too many, I suppose. But earliest memory ...? There's a couple but I don't know if it was – if I was – if I was before my first day at school. But yeah, I remember my first day at school. Went to St Joseph's in Wandsworth. I remember, you know, turning up in my new uniform and, you know, my satchel or whatever I had, and I remember my first day at school, just drawing pictures all day. Didn't do no work at all, it was just all about drawing pictures, I think. Yeah.

And were you living with both parents at that point?

No. My mum and dad divorced when I was three, three years old, so I've no real – I'm – you know, I've been – I've been in contact with my dad, you know, a long, long time, so I have a very good relationship with him. I actually went to live with him when I was fifteen. That's why I went to Ireland. But – but as a youngster, yeah, I had no recollection of him at that age, no.

Okay. So when you were living with your mum and you first started school, did you have any brothers or sisters?

Yeah. I have two brothers and a sister. So I've got Annette, she's – Annette and Pat are both older than – are older than me. So Annette's five years older than me and Pat's four years older than me. And then I've got a younger brother, Sean, who's eighteen months younger than me. So I'm middle – third, third child.

How do you find that?

Er, it's good. I think – you know, when we get together at weddings and christenings and – I think, me and Sean obviously, we've got more affiliation with each other. And I think Annette and Pat have got more affiliation with each other. 'Cause there

was that kind of four, five year gap, so ... I wouldn't say I'm not – you know, I wouldn't say I'm closer to one than the other, but we probably are [laughs], probably are, you know.

[12:59]

Yeah. Okay, so I'm just going to go back again. So you had your memory, which was at school. What kind of memories do you have after that?

Erm, well, I remember growing up. Lived on a – lived on social housing, lived on council estates. Just – the '70s, growing up in the '70s and – you know, it was – it was – to me it was idyllic, you know. It was – in them days you went out all day. You played out. There was no worries about the things that parents worry about now. So we had a lot more freedom and you could go down the park on your own with your mates. You didn't have to be babysat all the time. Yeah, just – I was just football mad, you know, absolutely football mad. And it was – we just played football all day long. I know it's an old cliché, but literally you came home when you were hungry, you know. And that's the way it was. Or you got called in for dinner or whatever, you know, or you got called in 'cause it was time to go to bed or whatever. But you literally got home from school, got your uniform off, went straight outside to play. And the weekends were just spent, you know, literally just playing outside all the time. Didn't matter – nobody was worried about weather conditions or whatever, you know. It was alright, you know.

Did you have a lot of close friends in the area?

Well yeah, I had friends, yeah, yeah. I don't know how you would say close or whatever, but yeah, friends, yeah.

Do you still keep in contact with any of them?

There was a couple – I was on – I used to be on Facebook, you know, and I went off it on the end 'cause I got fed up with reading about people's breakfast and – you know,

so – but yeah, there was a couple from my very early childhood who – we had kind of found each other on Facebook. And a lot of – obviously lots and lots of school friends are on it as well, so ... but I went off it about two years ago. I just got fed up with it. And my mother in law's on it now as well, so – and my mum's on it, so ... [Laughs] you've got to watch what you say.

Do you have – the friends that were on Facebook, do you have their – you know, their numbers? Do you stay in contact? Or is that kind of the end of the contact now?

No, that's – yeah, that's kind of ended it, yeah. Didn't get that – didn't get that far. There was a few school reunions but they were always on a weekend when I was obviously going home, so ...

[15:42]

Okay. Sorry, excuse me. Okay, so when you were younger, you mentioned that your mother and your father, they divorced when you were three?

Yes.

When you were three. Did your mum remarry or can you –

She had – she had a few partners, yeah. She did remarry, yeah. She married one fella and she was with him for a few years, and then she met – she had another partner than – she was with him for about ten years, but she's single again now.

With the first partner –

Yeah.

What was your relationship like with him?

Oh, he was absolutely brilliant. I absolutely loved him, yeah. He was like a dad, you know. He was like – I guess what a dad should be. He was – his name was – I don't – Anglicise his name, it was Dax. He was Iranian. And so it was mixing cultures as well. So I come from an Irish family, but we'd eat Iranian food and that, you know. It was good. I liked him, you know. He was – he was a scaffolder, so he worked quite hard but on a Saturday – in them days he'd take me to the building site on a Saturday and we'd sit in the cabin and play around on the building site, you know. I don't practise what I preach, I told you [laughs]. And, you know, he'd play football with you and, you know, take you swimming, that sort of stuff. Yeah, it was – it was good, yeah. He was just a – he was a genuinely nice man and for whatever reason – I don't know, you know, I was only young, but whatever reason, they couldn't make it work. So it was sad. But yeah, I did like him very much.

With him obviously working with the scaffolding, do you think that might have influenced you at all for your line of work, perhaps?

Possibly, but I've always been quite a practical person anyway. And although I sit in the office now – you know, most of my day is spent in an office now on a laptop or whatever, but I still make a point of going out on site for a couple of hours every day, going down into the tunnels and that and – but earlier on in my career, as a site manager or whatever, you know, I always made a point of being out on site for a few hours a day. But I can – you know, when I left school there was – I was going to work either using my hands or outdoors. Being stuck in an office was the furthest thing from my mind, you know. I know kids these days – it's all computers now and they – you know, but to me that was alien, alien to me, you know.

Okay. I'm just going to pick up on the Iranian food you mentioned. Were there any particular things that are still very vivid to you, maybe any tastes that you can imagine?

Er, crikey. There was probably certain spices that – you know, I come from a family, you know, and it was like stews and, you know, potatoes with everything, potatoes with potatoes, you know, just typical meat and veg all the time. There was no such

thing as lasagne or spaghetti bolognaise or anything like that, you know. And so then we started getting rice and kebabs and, you know, it was totally alien. And yeah, there must be sort of spices and that through it, and we just – we were kids, you know. We were playing football all day long. We'd eat – we'd eat a horse, you know. You'd eat anything and it was just – 'cause it was different, it was nice and – well, it actually was nice, you know. But I can't actually remember specific – I can't remember specific tastes, but it was – yeah, it was just different [laughs].

You mentioned obviously you're from an Irish background. How did you – how did you find kind of first getting used to the different culture? How did you – can you remember any –

Well, he must have been Muslim. I assume he was Muslim, but I don't think he was practising. So there was no – he was – you know, he was just a – I don't know, how would you put it, you know? He was just a normal bloke, you know. He had a normal job, a normal – you know, hard working. It's not – you know, so it's not as if we were taken down the mosque or anything like that. I do remember, when he was – his family would come and visit and, you know, you had to – you had to put your best clothes on and that sort of thing, and you weren't allowed to make a noise. You know, you had to be seen and not heard, whereas that would be against – that would be against, you know, our background, you know. Kids – you could make as much noise as you want and play and whatever. But, erm, but yeah, there was no culture clash, no, he was probably more British than what we were, you know.

[21:10]

Okay. Excuse me. And then you said that your mum had another partner and she was with him for ten years?

Yeah, about that, yeah.

What was your relationship like with him?

Erm, so-so, you know. We went to live with them. He had a pub, so we went to live in a pub. And so he had three kids of his own. So his wife had left him and he had three kids. So then we integrated with this other family, so that was a bit challenging, you know. And obviously, you know, he's got his own kids, his own kids were his priority, which – fair enough. But, you know, it was okay, you know. A bit strict, you know, but I think it's – running a business and living above the business as well probably – probably was pressurised. But no, you know, if you needed any help, he'd help you, you know. If I needed help with homework or, you know, if I needed lifts anywhere or – you know, he was okay. He wasn't – wasn't horrible or nasty or anything like that, so.

What age did you move to the pub, can you remember?

Yeah, about twelve. About twelve. And that was down in Hertfordshire, in a little village called Pitstone, which is not far away from Tring. So I used to have to – I still went to – I still went to school – my school in London, so – my secondary school was in Sloane Square, so I used to have to cycle to Tring in the morning and get the train, so – about forty-five minutes into London. So I was getting up pretty early and then not getting back till pretty late. So I was, like, commuting when I was – like a seasoned commuter when I was, like, twelve. But they did offer me to go to a school, like a local school, but I – I was funny, I had my mates and, you know, I loved my school, so I didn't want to move. And my younger brother did the same as well, so he was going to school in Fulham. He did a – we both done that. We did it for a few years.

Again, a lot of travelling.

Yeah, yeah, I'm a seasoned traveller.

And with your brothers and your sister, how did – from what you can remember, how did they kind of get on with your mum's other partner – well, second –

Erm, yeah, I think – I think okay, you know. I don't think any different to me, to be honest with you. Let's say he wasn't a nasty horrible man. It's just – you know, it's what it was. They made a decision to – to move in together and live together and we just had to accept it [laughs] and make the most of it. But yeah, you know, just things – I don't know, don't know if he had a routine or not but things just – things just fathom out and things just play out the way they are and we just accept it. We just accept it.

What was your relationship like with the – with his other children?

Yeah, fine. There was a girl who was – I think she was between me and Sean, so we were quite a similar age. So yeah, that was – we got on okay with her. She had loads of girl mates as well, that probably helped [laughs]. And then two younger boys, but they were just a fair bit younger so there was no real – there was no real camaraderie there. They were just like pests, you know, like little brothers are, I suppose, you know. No, you know, we'd play with them, play football with them and, you know, look after them and whatever, if we were down the park and stuff like that, but generally we weren't really bothered with them. But with the girl, yeah, we'd – you know, we'd probably socialise together, maybe go to the pictures together, that sort of stuff, so – 'cause we were the same age.

Do you have any specific kind of memories from living in the pub? Is there anything that really comes to mind whenever you think of it?

Erm, yeah. I used to work behind the bar – probably illegal, but I used to work behind the bar, help out, you know. I first started just collecting the glasses and the bottles, you know, 'cause they used to have a disco on a Saturday night so the place would be pumping. Bearing in mind this was a small village, you know. And so, yeah, then I progressed, then I'd pour the odd pint, you know, and then – then it was like, go on then, you might as well just serve behind the bar then. So I was getting – I was getting pocket money. And I remember one time – 'cause there was a youth hostel up the road and a load of lads come in, you know, all underage, and I'm underage obviously behind the bar, and they were trying to buy beer, and I was telling them no.

And one of them was from my school [laughs]. And then I was mortified then, going back to school the next Monday, I was doing my best to hide from him. He was a year older than me, but I was trying my best to not bump into him 'cause I'd stopped them getting beer at the weekend [laughs]. So ...

Did you bump into him?

Oh yeah, yeah. He probably went looking for me [laughs]. 'You – yeah, I seen you, what are you doing here?' 'Cause it was a shock to him, he wasn't expecting to see me there, and I certainly wasn't expecting to – to see him there. And another really big thing – I got the fright of my life. This was – I don't know if you remember this, you can Google it, but this was back in the early '80s, there was a guy going around Hertfordshire, around that area, Tring and Leighton Buzzard, and he was called the Fox, and he was raping and murdering people, I think. And so there was a huge manhunt – he was on the run for about six months, I think. I think he attacked loads of people. And I remember – 'cause I was getting up for school really early in the morning and I remember going down to the bar one morning and I was just helping myself to a few packets of crisps, you know, to put in my schoolbag and some cans of Coke. And I come down, I obviously put the light on in the bar and they must have been – the police must have been parked in the car park and they've seen this light go on and then they've seen me dukeing around the bar, being as quiet as I can 'cause I didn't want to make too much noise upstairs, and next minute I know, the back door's been kicked in and there's about ten coppers, you know, looking, finding out what I'm doing, you know, 'cause they thought – 'cause this guy was burgling. He was breaking into houses and then he was attacking people, so they – and I think he had done some pubs as well, so they obviously thought I was him [laughs]. So yeah, I'll never forget that, you know, having police kicking the back door in. And then obviously the whole – everyone got woke up then and they had to come down and explain that I was – I lived there, you know, I wasn't a burglar. Yeah [laughs].

Yeah. I bet that was definitely a shock.

Oh, I won't forget that in a hurry.

Are there any other things that come to mind?

No it was just – you know, I lived in a small village. Erm ... well, we used to go swim in a canal. It was the – the Grand Union Canal. I remember swimming in the canal, stuff like that, just – again, we just used to play football all day or cycle, you know, at the weekends, go out cycling. We had a dog there, you know, a dog, and I just used to walk her for miles. Some great – it's full of countryside, loads of public footpaths, and I just used to take her out and walk for miles and miles. But no, just – pretty – nothing interesting, I'm afraid.

Okay. And while you were living there at the pub, can you remember kind of doing any family things together?

Not really, because the pub was a seven day a week operation. In them days as well, it wasn't open all day like pubs are now, so it used to open at eleven o'clock and it then used to – it used to close at three o'clock, I think, and then it would open up again at half seven, I think, until eleven or whatever. The licensing laws were different then. So everything just – everything operated around – around these hours. So you might have a couple of hours leeway in the afternoon where, you know, you would go shopping or whatever, or, you know, a day out was a trip to Luton or Aylesbury [laughs]. It was a small village, you know, Aylesbury was exciting. Luton was a little bit more exciting. You know, that was – everything around the pub. There was no – there was no real days out, as such, you know, 'cause it was a business. It was a 24/7 – well, it was a seven days a week business.

[30:15]

And throughout this time, had you had any contact with your father?

Not much. Very, very scarce, but that was more to do with my mother, to be honest with you. She – she kind of – I'd say didn't – well, basically didn't allow it, yeah. We'd get the odd Christmas present, birthday present, phone call. But yeah, my mum,

I don't know, she's still – still very, very bitter, always has been very bitter about it, you know. It broke down, you know. Not condoning it, I'm not taking sides, but it broke down and – but she could never move on. No, not much contact, you know. Occasionally – I went to school with one of my cousins, one of my first cousins, who's my dad's brother, so I'd see my uncle, you know, quite regularly at school, school dos and what have you, so I'd see him quite often. But my dad, no, not really.

Was he living in Ireland at that point?

Yes.

[31:26]

So – okay, so you're living in the pub. Where did you kind of move to next, or what happened next?

Erm, well, what made me move to Ireland was literally – I suppose you could call it running away, but I would say I walked away [laughs]. But I'd been getting in trouble at school and it wasn't – like I went to a very strict school. I went to a Catholic school. I always went to Catholic schools, but this one was particularly strict. And I was – I was always in the top class, you know. I was clever-ish. But I was always getting in trouble, but it's not because I was outrageous or – or nasty or anything like that. It was – they used to call me disruptive. I would – I was just – I just liked a laugh, you know. I'd be a chatterbox. And I'd probably – I'd be – if the teacher said, 'Quiet,' I'd have to finish off my sentence, you know, and then I'd get sent out, you know. And it was petty little things, but – but one hundred petty little things probably turns into one big thing. And I'd be – I'd been suspended a couple of times and my mum had said, 'If you get suspended again, I'm going to put you in care.' And I believed her [laughs]. I truly believed her. So I actually got suspended again and it really, really wasn't my fault. It really wasn't my fault. And so that was it. I went home. I didn't tell her I'd been suspended, got rid of the letter, got up for school the next morning as usual, went into London, and then I got on a coach from Victoria to Dublin. Shows you how good our security services are when a fifteen year

old boy can leave a country get into another country [laughs] unaided. But – so I done that. And then I phoned up my dad – I got to Dublin and I phoned up my dad and I just said, ‘I’m in Dublin, you’d better come and get me.’ So that’s a four hour drive from where he lives to Dublin. So he phoned up the police, the guards, and next minute an announcement come out over the tannoy – ‘cause I was in the main railway station in Dublin, not knowing where he lives is the only county in Dublin that hasn’t got a train station – in Ireland, rather, that hasn’t got a train station. And so this guard took me to the guard station and I sat there for four, five hours until he arrived. But they did feed and water me and they looked after me. It was quite interesting.

And how old were you at this point?

Fifteen.

Fifteen.

Yeah.

When you woke up that morning, did you have any idea that you would travel all that way or was it a spontaneous thing or ...?

I think it was spontaneous, spontaneous, definitely. But when my mum said she’ll put me in care, I truly believed her. She probably would have. She would never have believed that it wasn’t my fault that I got suspended, you know. She didn’t – you know, if a teacher said something – alright, most of the time they would be – you know, I probably was a bit disruptive, but I was never – as I say, I was never – I was never fighting, I was never – you know, never stole anything. I never – I never damaged anything, you know. It was just mischievous, you know, that’s all I was, you know. Still am [laughs]. But – yeah.

[35:00]

So obviously the thought of care really, really frightened you. At that point, at fifteen, do you remember what your perception of care was?

Well, I'd been in care when I was eleven, so it wasn't – that was the last time I was in care was about eleven years old, so – and that was – wasn't a great experience. I didn't like it. So, you know, I'd been in care – I'd been in care as a baby, but I can't remember that, and at a few stages, you know, throughout my life. But yeah, it was only four years since the last time, or three – you know, three or four years since the last time, so, yeah, I didn't really want to go down that route. And trust me, moving to Ireland was no picnic, you know. It was certainly no picnic, but to me it was a better option than going into care.

Can you remember any of those feelings that you were experiencing, you know, that day or even just perhaps when you were –

Oh, I remember sitting on the coach – to go on the coach from Victoria to Holyhead is a hell of a long journey. And I mean, it stops everywhere, you know. I think it went – if I remember rightly, it went Luton, Birmingham and god knows where it went from there, but it was a – it was eight or ten hours on a coach, you know. Then you get to Holyhead, it's only two hours across on a ferry, but it was – you know, it was a hell of a journey. And I remember talking to some older lads, I can't remember – I think they were going on a stag do or something like that, and I remember one guy being really drunk. And I must have been annoying him, some fifteen year old, probably asking him personal questions, you know, I can't remember, and him telling me to eff off, you know. And I was like, oh shit [laughs], you know. And then obviously, you know, I remember, you know, pulling up in Holyhead and you go through security, you know. And I'm thinking, you know, sooner or later a copper's going to say to me, you know, 'Where's your mum? Where's your dad?' Or – you know, obviously you don't need a passport to get to Ireland. You still don't need a passport now. You need some form of ID, but in them days, you know, you didn't need – you didn't even need – I don't even know if you needed ID, I'm not sure. But nobody – nobody checked nothing, you know. And I was waiting, I'm going to get nabbed, I'm going to get nabbed. Got on a ferry and even then I was thinking, you

know, as soon as I get to Dublin someone's – the guards or customs, someone's going to think, why is a fifteen year old boy on is on here. And I did look fifteen, I didn't look eighteen or anything like that, you know, like I wasn't – like some kids now are six foot six, you know, when they're fourteen and it's like – you know, I was my age. So ... but yeah.

Had you packed anything with you or any food or ...?

No, I was literally in the clothes I stood in. I made sure though – well, I tell a lie. In my schoolbag I took – I had a really nice leather jacket that I'd had for Christmas. It was really fashionable at the time, trust me. And I had my best pair of trainers as well, you know [laughs]. So I ditched my blazer and my school shoes and my schoolbag and I made sure I had my trainers and my leather jacket on, but apart from that I had my school uniform on. I had a pair of black – a pair of black trousers on, a white shirt on. So yeah, that was – I literally stood up in – I went in what I was wearing, so ...

Had you ever done that journey – obviously not on your own, but had you ever done that – had you ever done that journey to Ireland before?

Yeah, yeah. Well, not by coach. But my mum's got a sister who lives in Longford, which is in the midlands of Ireland, and we used to go over there – we went over there for a few summers, and we literally went over for the six weeks in the summer holidays and – but we used to get the train from Euston to Holyhead and then the ferry across and then we'd be picked up in a car. But even still, back in that day, you know, that was probably about six hours on a train. That was still a horrendous journey, you know, because we've stuffing ourselves – you know, we'd be given sweets for the journey and you'd have them all eaten before the train left the platform, so by the time we got to Watford Junction we were puking up, you know [laughs].

I'm just going to go back to that – that day, if you don't mind, where you ran away.

Walked away.

Walked away, sorry.

[Laughs]

Travelled away.

Travelled, yeah [laughs].

Did you leave any notes for your mum or ...?

No, no, no.

And had you had any contact with your father prior to this? Did he know that you were –

No, he was totally, totally in the dark. He was actually – he was working on a fishing trawler. He had his own fishing trawler and – ‘cause he lived on the coast of Donegal. And he was out at sea and a message come over the radio that you need to return back to the pier immediately, so he got back to the pier and his – it might have been my stepmum, his second wife, she was waiting for him and she just said, like, ‘Mick Gallagher’ – he’d be the local guard, the local policeman. ‘Mike Gallagher’s been to the house,’ you know I’m in Dublin, in whatever guard or station it is, you need to go and collect him. So went back home and got in the car and drove down to Dublin. And he didn’t have a clue what was happening, didn’t have a clue at all.

That’s a lot to experience, especially at fifteen.

Yeah.

Did you have any thoughts of how it would pan out? Did you kind of –

No, it didn't even cross my mind. [Laughs] I – you know, I wasn't expecting them to say, 'Right, you can stay here for a week and then you've got to go back.' You know, it wasn't like that. It was – you know, obviously driving from Dublin back up to Donegal was – we had four hours to chat nonstop, you know, so we had a lot of – I daresay they gave me a lot of searching questions and what have you, but, you know, I was adamant that I wasn't going back and I was – I knew what I was doing and I was happy and – I knew what I was getting into 'cause I'd – you know, I knew the house, I'd been there before, you know. I'd been on – on holiday before and nearly stayed and lived there one time before as well, so I knew exactly what I was getting into. So I think he was – you know, they – you know, the sort of people – you know, they weren't rich, you know, by no means, you know. They probably did not need another mouth to feed at that particular time, but it was – you know, just get on with it, you know, we'll survive whatever. We'll just take it as it is and we'll survive. It doesn't matter, you know. If you want to live here, you live here. That's the kind of way – the way it was. Although he did make me phone up my mum a couple of times and, you know, talk to her. But yeah.

[42:15]

If possible, I'd like you just to walk me through, talk me through, that first moment when you saw him, kind of what – what did you feel? What was around you? What were you experiencing in that point?

I think I was just glad to get out the police station, you know [laughs]. The longer you're there, you're thinking, you know, it was a – I was there literally all day and – and it was just boring, you know. I think they did let me out – I asked could I go out to the shop and buy a magazine or comic or something and they let me out, but – but yeah. And Dublin – you know, Dublin's just like London, you know, a smaller version, but I'm in this police station and there's – I'm literally – you've got the front desk, you know, and I'm literally in this little backroom and – and you've got criminals after criminals being led in in handcuffs and it's like, blinking hell, you know what I mean. There's some robust language going on, you know. So everything was just 100 miles an hour, you know. So – and when I saw him I was

thinking, oh, thank god. It was just like – it wasn't 'cause I was overwhelmed to see him, it was just like, thank god I'm getting out of this place [laughs] and I'm not getting sent back. Nobody's put me back on a ferry or a flight back to London, so ...

And what was your relationship like with your father's second wife?

Erm ... up and down, you know, up and down. I think it was a bit hard – hard for her at the start, having – having me around, you know, a teenager, full of testosterone and ... [Laughs] you know. But no, you know, we had a great relationship. She died a – a few years ago, but, you know, she was unwell for a very long time and used to go over all the time. I consider her more my mum – you know, obviously my mother's my mother, you know, but I consider her more my mum than my actual mum. No, I had a good relationship, you know, but she wouldn't take no rubbish, you know. She wouldn't be – you know, she'd tell you off and give you a good dressing down when you needed it and when you deserved it. You know, she was – she was alright, she was alright.

[44:45]

Sorry, how long did you say you stayed in Ireland for for that – that period?

For about three or four years, about – yeah, about three to four years.

Did you go to school over there?

Yeah, I went to school, yeah, but I didn't – I left early. In Ireland you can leave – you go to senior school and they go a year later than we do in this country. They stay at primary school a year later. So you can leave when you're fifteen, after, what they call it, the intermediate exam, or you stay on, you do another two years and you do what they call the leaving certificate, which is like our GCSEs or O levels. But I left after the intermediate. But a mistake we made, a mistake I made, was – was the fact that – 'cause I was clever-ish, they sent me to the convent. The convent used to take – it was predominantly a girls' school, you know, and the girls used to board there, but

they did take in so many boys per year. Well, they – you know, they took in so many boys every year if they were in the top sort of set, and so I got into the convent. And I should have went to the technical college, ‘cause if I went to the technical college I probably would have stayed and – ‘cause it was all about construction skills or design skills or art, you know, working with your hands, and I probably would have embraced it and liked it a lot more. But – so they sent me to the convent and – and I just did not like it. And it was literally – most – some teachers were civilians but a lot of the teachers were nuns and they didn’t like this young – young Cockney or – I don’t know what they would call it, you know [laughs], this wide boy, you know, corrupting everyone. So I didn’t stay there very long. I stayed there for about six months and I got out the first chance I could get. I started in the January, I think, and I left in the summer, the September – the – when we broke up in June, I left in June. I never bothered going back for my following year. But there was one day, it was a Thursday – I didn’t even bother going to school on a Thursday because it was – it was double Irish, which I – they weren’t going to start teaching me Irish at fifteen years old. It was double French. I’d done Spanish at school, so they weren’t going to start teaching me French. And it was double music and I haven’t got a musical note in my body. So we decided – we agreed that I didn’t have to go to school on a Thursday, so – and that was kind of like – it wasn’t – they should have made me go in and made the – they let me get away with that one. But ... yeah, I got out of it as quick as I could. It’s a shame, but I – you know, I went back to college and I’ve done so many courses and qualifications, you know, as an adult and I wish I’d have just flipping stayed at school. It’s just the way it panned out.

When you said that – you used the words we agreed, was that between you and the convent, you agreed?

Yeah.

Oh okay. So it wasn’t like you and your father that –

No, no, no, no, no. Oh no, the last thing he wanted was me knocking around the house all day, you know. Where we lived as well, it was like – you know I was

talking about the village, Pitstone, where the pub was, but where we – in Ireland, it's not even a village. It was a hamlet, you know. It's officially a town because it had a post office and a church, but it was a hamlet. It was – you drove through it in two seconds and if you blinked, you know, you drove through it, you know. It was like that, it was seriously like that. So there was absolutely nothing there to do. I'd have just been stuck in the house all day long – well, I was stuck in the house all day long, doing nothing.

Did you manage to make many kind of friends throughout that time?

Oh yeah, I got friends, yeah. Yeah, two of my best friends are from Ireland. One is now a senator. He got like – MPs – our equivalent of MPs are like – they call them TDs and our equivalent of lords are senators, so he sits in the Irish equivalent of the House of Lords. My age, he's just – what it is, he's in the Fine Gael Party and where he is, they – over here they'd put you – the Tory Party would give you a safe seat somewhere, but in Ireland it doesn't work like that. There is no such thing as a safe seat, kind of, and he couldn't get in – where he was trying to get in, it was staunchly Fianna Fail, like Labour to Conservatives sort of thing, so he couldn't – he was never going to get the seat. So rather than lose him, they made him a senator, so – because they want to keep him 'cause he's a great politician. So yeah, he's one of my very, very good friends. And another friend of mine ended up being a priest and this guy's the best looking guy you'll ever meet in your life. The amount of girls who must have, like, cried their eyes out the day he joined the priesthood ... but he left the priesthood – he's left the priesthood since and he's now the youth director of the Football Association, Irish Football Association. So yeah, so my two best friends have went on to good things. I don't know what happened with me [laughs].

And are you – I'm assuming you –

Oh yeah, yeah, they come over. They come over to the races. I invite them over to come over to Aintree, you know, to the Grand National, stuff like that. And whenever I go back to Donegal, I always catch up with them, yeah. Yeah, we do stick – we do keep in touch, yeah. And I've got their telephone numbers [laughs]. Proper friends.

[50:44]

Is your – sorry, you might have told me earlier. Is your father still in Ireland or is he

–

Yeah, yeah.

He is. But it was his wife that passed away?

Yeah.

How did you find that – that kind of period of time?

In what way?

Obviously you'd had a lot of changes, a lot of things to deal with.

Oh right.

You said that you – you saw her more of a mum than your birth mum.

Yeah.

So having to go through all of that, how did –

Yeah. She was – she was unwell for a long, long time, about five years, you know, she was really unwell, so we were kind of expecting it. When she first went unwell, she was actually out in Spain and she'd developed whatever illness and she was flown back in an air ambulance and flown back and was in intensive care. So we all rushed over and – but she came out of intensive care and she was back on intensive care on and off over the next five years. But it got less frequent, less frequent. They just used to keep her at home then and just treat her at home. But – so it wasn't – it wasn't

really a shock when she died. It was more – more of a relief, to be honest with you, ‘cause she was in a lot of pain, you know, a hell of a lot of pain towards the end. So it was ... I know it sounds bad but I think – you know, I was relieved, you know, ‘cause she had no quality of life. She was bedridden, you know. And although her body had packed up, her brain was still sharp, you know, and she used to do the crossword every day and – you know, so it was killing her, you know. You know, it was killing her ‘cause she was still mentally sound yet she – you know, she was in pain and she couldn’t – she couldn’t lead any quality of life. So I think it was for the best, to be honest with you. But yeah, we had a long time to get used to it ‘cause we knew it was coming. We never actually expected her – the initial time she was taken unwell, when she was in intensive care, we didn’t – I didn’t expect her to come out of intensive care that time. It was only through the – the genius of the doctors and nurses who looked after her, I think.

And who was there to support you throughout this?

Oh, my brothers and sisters, my dad, you know, my wife. We were all there with each other, so ...

Did you have much contact with your birth mum at that point?

No, no. No, I kind of – not a great deal, not a great deal.

[53:49]

Okay. So I’m going to backtrack again, going to go quite a bit back. You mentioned that you were in care as a baby.

Yes.

Do you – have you been told why you were in care or ...?

No, no, never been told. I can only – I can only guess. But my mum had four kids, you know. She was a single mum with four kids. It could have been – it could have been that they took us away for respites, to give her a break. I don't know, you know. But my mum's – all her life she's – she's suffered mental illness. She's a drug addict, but, you know, painkillers – antidepressants, you know, Valium, you know. She's been on stuff like that all her life. Erm ... so, you know, I'm just – it's either to do with her mental state or the fact that she just couldn't cope with four kids and maybe the social workers – 'cause we always had a social worker. So maybe the social workers had just said, 'Listen, we'll put them in care for you. They're not going to know any different, you know. We'll give you a break for a few weeks or a month,' or whatever the case was, you know.

Have you ever asked or tried to find out?

No, no. I probably wouldn't get a straight answer. I probably wouldn't get ... I don't have conversations like that, you know.

What type of care was it? Was it foster care with a foster family or ...?

No, always – always in children's homes.

Okay. Do you know roughly what age you were when you came out of there?

Well, I can't – I can't remember being in as a baby or a toddler, but I know I was but I can't remember. But the earliest stage I can remember being in care is about six or seven, erm, 'cause the first home I can remember being in was West Hill. It was in Wandsworth. So ... it was on West Hill. I don't know if it was called West Hill as well, but it was just – it was a massive big house, beautiful house. And I remember walking to school, 'cause it was literally half a mile away from my school, so I was walked to school by one of the staff. But I remember going to school from there. And I remember them giving me a haircut and my mum kicking off, you know, 'cause she didn't give them permission to cut my hair. I was like a hippy at the time, you know. I didn't want long hair [laughs].

Can you remember what had happened at that point for you to have been taken into care?

No, no.

No?

I do remember one – I don't know if this is linked, but I do remember being about that age and my mum collapsing at home. And I can – I can actually remember calling 999 on the phone and the ambulance came out, so she must have went into hospital. So that – that could have been linked. It was around – that might not have been that specific time but that might have been one time when we were put in care, 'cause she was in hospital.

And when you were put in care, were you with all of your brothers and your sister or were you ever split up?

I can't remember. I – I can't remember being – I can't remember ever being in care with – oh no, sorry, I can remember once being in with all four of us, but generally I think it used to be me and Sean, Annette and Pat. You know, I think they – they didn't put the four of us – we were never all together, bar one occasion I can remember, I think.

Have you ever spoken about your experiences in care with your brothers and sister?

No, no. I think everyone's – you know your brain's conscious and subconscious, I think we've all – I think we've all filed that at the back of subconscious. You know, when we get together and – you know, we have a laugh and we have a joke and, you know, we take the mickey out of each other, like, I suppose, normal siblings, and we talk about the kids and work and winning the lottery, you know, dreaming of winning the lottery. We don't talk about crap, you know.

You mentioned – let me go back slightly. You mentioned that it was a beautiful big house.

Yeah.

What else can you remember about either the building or the staff?

Erm, I remember it had a gravel drive. It was – I know it was just a – I can't tell you how many bedrooms were there, you know, but I remember it was absolutely massive. I remember – I remember on a Saturday you used to get pocket money, you know. It wasn't no big deal, probably enough to buy a packet of sweets or a chocolate bar. They weren't spoiling you. And we used to – they used to have a dog in the home and we'd walk – we'd all walk in a group – a member of staff would walk us all in a group down to the local sweet shop, which was maybe about three or four hundred yards away. And, well, this one particular Saturday morning, I'll never forget it, they'd given us all our pocket money. And I'm waiting by the front door and I'm impatient, you know, I'm impatient, you know. So I've opened up the front door – it was on a latch, I've opened it up. It was just like a regular Yale – you know. Normally I think it was double locked, you know, Chubb locked, but it was on the – on the Yale, so I've opened it up and I've went out and I've walked down to the sweet shop myself, bought my sweets, I've come back I wouldn't have come back, 'cause I've went on my own, they've taken it off me and I've been in trouble and I've been sent to my room and – you know, but I didn't see I was being naughty. To me I was just being impatient and – you know, I got punished for that. I remember that.

What was the punishment?

Oh, I think they – I think they took the sweets off me and I think they sent me to my room, so ...

So you weren't, like, grounded or anything?

I think in this day and age, I think they'd be in trouble for me getting out, but there you go [laughs]. But yeah.

[1:00:27]

Female: Can I interrupt? You've had one hour now, so if you want to, you can have a break.

I'm not bothered, to be honest with you. I'm ...

Completely up to you, however you feel.

No, keep going, I'm fine, yeah.

Female: I'm happy with that, if you are.

Yeah?

Yeah, fine, yeah.

Yeah.

Female: Shall I give you another nod when it's maybe half past?

Yeah, fine, yeah.

Yeah, if you want.

Female: Is that alright with both of you?

Mm, yeah.

[1:00:55]

Okay, so focusing on the staff there, what were they like to you and the other children that were in the – in the care home?

I can't really, really remember, you know. I can't remember anyone being nasty or I can't remember, you know, anyone being – I'm sure – I'm sure they were fine, you know. I do remember one time – this was – this was West Hill, and I do remember at West Hill and we were making sandwiches, and the butter must have been hard and I remember, like, trying to spread sandwiches and ripping all the bread, you know. You know when you've got hard butter, you know. And I remember them – I remember somebody getting annoyed with me 'cause I was – you know, 'cause I couldn't spread it nicely, you know, 'cause it wasn't – not like today when you buy spreadable butter out the – you know. But that's the only thing I can really remember from there, you know. I can't really – I can't remember staff being – you know, I'm sure they were fine, you know.

When you said that they were annoyed with you, were they shouting or were they –

No, no, I don't think anybody – no, I don't think anybody was shouting. But yeah, I think – I think obviously there must have been some comments or maybe – you know, just the way they said, you know, what – you know, 'Why are you doing it like that?' Or, you know, 'Can't you do it properly?' Or, you know, I – yeah.

Okay. And then do you know roughly how old you were when you left there?

Well, I think – I think the oldest I was in there was about six or seven, 'cause the next home I – after that, then it was Garrett Lane. It was – the address wouldn't have been Garrett Lane, but it was opposite the Arndale Centre. There was a graveyard and there was a home –

This is another children's home, is it?

Yeah.

Okay.

So I'm – you know, I was – I was there – I was in that one three or four, five times for short periods at a time.

Okay. So when you left – sorry, is it West Hill?

West Hill, yeah.

[1:03:27]

When you left there, where did – where was the next place – did you go back to your mum's or did you go straight to the other children's home?

No, no, home, home.

Home as in – sorry, as in your –

No, back to the family home.

Back to the family home, okay. And how were things? Can you remember how things were when you – when you were returned?

No, no. Erm, as I say, I – you know, I think, going into care, I think it was probably to give my mum a rest, you know, or – whether she was having hospital treatment or whatever, I don't know. You know, I do – you know, she did collapse one time. Whether that was linked or not, I can't honestly remember. But – so I don't know if she had health issues, you know. But she has – as I said, she's had mental health issues, but whether it's because of that and they just – the social workers just took us away just to – maybe they thought – I don't know, maybe they thought there was a risk. You know, that would be over my head at that time, you know. But – but it was always for brief periods, you know. It wouldn't be – it wouldn't be for very long. I

don't – I think the longest term I ever spent – as far as I can remember, you know, I think the longest time I spent was maybe a month, you know, and then we'd be back in the – back in the house again. And, you know, then it'd be another while, then you'd be back in the home for a bit.

What was that like, that constant moving between the homes?

Erm ... I think as a kid, you know – you know, kids – you're just resourceful, you're adaptable, aren't you, you know? It just – it's – when you go to a children's home, as you know yourself, it'd be – it's very regimented, isn't it, you know? You've got set times for your breakfast, your dinner, you know. You've got set times to do what – you know, recreational stuff or – you know, you've got to go to bed when they – you know, at a set time and you've got to have your lights out at a set time. So it's very regimented. And I think I probably kind of like that, you know. You know, I kind of embraced that side of things because that's kind of like – I'm kind of like that anyway, you know. You know, if I go – if I've got to take the boys to rugby on a Sunday morning, they're playing an away game, I'm like – I work out how long it's going to take me to get there and I say, 'We're leaving here at half nine.' And god forbid, if we don't leave there at half nine, I've got the right hump, you know. I'm – so I'm kind of like that anyway, you know. I probably would have been great in the army. I probably would have been great, you know, but I never went down that route.

Yeah. So you've got like your structures and your routines, as it were.

Yeah. Probably a bit anal. That's just – you know [laughs], OCD, I don't know what it would be, but ...

No, but it's – you know, obviously if you've got these set things that you like to stick to then having that routine, it's something that – you know, did you find that the routine kind of perhaps preoccupied your mind of other things or – how did you respond to it?

Maybe. Like I say, I think I embraced it, you know. I've always – I've always been a good sleeper anyway, you know. I've always – I've never been one to stay up late, you know. I'm not – I've never – when I was a kid – you know, once I'm tired I go to bed. I've never been one to keep my eyes open and – you know, as long as I possibly could and get forced to go to bed, you know. Nine o'clock, if I'm tired, I went to bed at nine o'clock. But when I wake up in the morning, as soon as I open up my eyes, I get out of bed, you know. So it wasn't no problem for me being – you know, being told, you've got to go to bed at half eight or nine o'clock. That wasn't a problem for me, you know, 'cause I probably would have been in bed anyway. So no, it was – you know, the structure was fine. The structure was fine.

[1:07:25]

And what do you remember of your social workers?

We had a few, you know. There's been a couple. But there was one particular guy who I actually liked and he actually used to remind me of Tom Baker, Doctor Who. I don't know if it was the social worker's uniform but he used to wear, you know, like a jacket with arm patches on it. It was a 1970s thing, I don't know, but – and he used to cycle everywhere. And yeah, he was good. I remember he took us out one Saturday and – do you know Wandsworth? Oh right, okay. But – this is before McDonalds, so there was a – we used to – we had the Wimpey, but there was like a coffee shop where they did hamburgers and stuff like that, which is more or less identical to Wimpey anyway. And I don't know whether this was out of his own money or – or whether he got expenses, I'm not sure, but I remember ordering, like, the king size – the king size burger, the Coke, and then I said I wanted, like, you know, the knickerbocker glory afterwards, and he was looking at me thinking, you're not going to eat that, you're not going to eat that, and he was, like, really concerned. And I was thinking – thinking now, I don't know whether he was like, I'm paying for this out of my own pocket, I'm getting stung here by a kid, you know [laughs]. But no, he was good, you know. I remember he used to take us out – you know, take us out for little trips like that, you know, or take me –

Do you know roughly how old – sorry.

Erm, well, I was living in Wandsworth at the time, so it was – I lived in Wandsworth from seven to – seven to fifteen, so – but it was – it must have been between seven and ten years old because I would have – you know, once I went to senior school, you know, there was no social workers then. So it must have been – must have been between seven – seven and eleven anyway. It must have – I was at primary school at the time.

So when you kind of think about experiences, do you use landmarks or do you go by birthdays or events to work out how old you were?

Kind of landmarks, 'cause I know where I was living, you know. Yeah, probably – I probably use landmarks more than anything.

Can you remember any – you know, any of your birthdays or perhaps any birthday parties or ...?

We didn't really do birthday parties [laughs], not like that. No, we probably didn't really do birthday parties much. I do remember one birthday party where – well, where my mum let me take a – bring in a couple of friends for tea, you know. But it was a few sandwiches and a bit of cake and that was it, there was no pass the parcel or you know, musical chairs, anything like that, you know. It was literally have your tea and get out and play football or whatever. Yeah.

And what about, like, Christmases?

Erm, Christmas – you know, my mum – you know, she – she'd do the best to make sure that we all got presents and try and get us what we – you know, try and get us what we wanted, you know. She was fairly unselfish like that. But no, Christmas was just always just spent at home, you know. One year we went to Ireland for Christmas, but we just simply spent it at home. But she'd always – you know, she'd always cook, you know, the traditional dinner and, you know, she was – she'd always do that.

She'd always put up decorations, you know. And when you think about it now, it was naff, you know. And we used to put cards on bits of string and them streamers and balloons in the corner, you know. It was ... [Laughs] yeah, typical 1970s.

[1:11:30]

Okay. Again, I'm just going to go back a little bit. So you were in Wandsworth, you said, was it between the ages of –

Seven and fifteen.

Seven and fifteen, okay. So –

Well, when I say seven and fifteen, you know, we still had the house in Wandsworth, but I was living in the pub that time. Actually I lived in Wandsworth seven and eleven and I lived down in Hertfordshire then from eleven to fifteen. But we still kept our house in Wandsworth. That was always there.

Okay.

I used to spend the odd weekend – you know, just go down there the odd weekend and stay on my own. I would go there the odd night after – they'd let me go the odd night after school and just stay there, just so people knew it was being occupied, and I'd collect the post and – you know.

How did that feel, being there on your own?

Erm, yeah, sometimes – you know, I think the first time I done it, I was a bit nervous, you know. But no, you know, it was a novelty, you know. It was a novelty, 'cause I didn't have to travel back to Hertfordshire and I'd see a few mates and – I certainly wasn't letting people come in and have parties or anything like that. You know, I'd get in and bolt the door and put the telly on and have the remote control to myself, you know.

[1:12:50]

Okay. And with – ‘cause there was – you said that there’s been quite a lot of moving obviously between houses, how did that affect your education?

I – erm, well, my – I went to the one primary school and then I went to the one secondary school in this country and then I went to the convent, which didn’t last very long. But no, school was – school stayed consistent, you know.

Did you find that – or sorry, I should say, how did you find – when you were at school, how did you kind of find it as a break away from home life, kind of? Did you – did you see it as, you know, perhaps a way to – to be – not disruptive but, you know, a way to be kind of a bit more yourself, or ...?

Maybe, maybe, you know. I absolutely loved school. And if any of my teachers see this, you know, then they’ll probably think, I don’t believe what he’s saying. But I did, I absolutely loved it. And, you know, I never bunked off. I never bunked off school once – you know, once in secondary school. I never bunked off, you know. So, you know, I loved it. I just loved going in. I did actually look forward to going to school and seeing my mates. And, like I say, we’d have a laugh, you know. I wasn’t naughty – well, you know, I just enjoyed it, you know. And most of my lessons, you know, I did like, you know. You know, most of my subjects I liked. As I say, I was fairly, fairly decent at it. And I was with – you know, ‘cause I was with other good kids, you know, who – so lessons were interesting and ...

Did you find that – were any of the teachers, you know, supportive or did they know of your – of your situation, of your home life?

Yeah, I think the – all of them must have – yeah, all of them would have known, yeah. Well, in primary school all the teachers – you know, the teachers would have known, you know, ‘cause it was such a small primary school. And as well, I think I was one of maybe – like St Joseph’s was a very small school and I’d say out of – I’m guessing

200 kids in the whole school, kind of, you know, it was – 200 kids, there was probably only three or four single parent families. And I would fathom a guess that the single parent families were probably widows or widowers. I was – coming from a divorced family was a – was a bit of a stigma, you know. Not that the teachers – not that the teachers ever put it to you, but, you know, I think it was always there, you know. I think it was always there.

Did you ever feel that off of any of the other parents or any of your friends' parents?

No, I didn't, no. Erm, no, I never got it off any of the parents, no. But I didn't – you know, you – you didn't really go round to people's houses or anything like that, you know. You tended to – you'd go knock for somebody and you'd wait at the front door and they'd come out and you'd go down the park or whatever. Not like now, you know, you – kids bring anybody in, you know. But no, it's – no, I didn't – didn't really get that at all. But no, I did sense it with the teachers though, you know.

'Cause I remember primary school, when I did my – you know when you're in your fourth year at primary school – what do they call it, Year 6 now or whatever, but fourth year at primary school, and you had to choose what school you wanted to go to, and I chose Salesian College in Battersea, which is a very good school. It's an all boys' school. But it's Salesian, it's very conservative, Catholic. It's the Jesuits who basically run it. And back then, this would have been the early '80s, there was still a lot of priests teaching there, and I remember my headmaster calling me into his office and he said, you know, 'You know you're not going to get into Salesian.' And I was like, 'Why not?' 'Cause our school was basically – you either went to John Griffiths, which is now Pope John Paul, I think – you either went to John Griffiths or you went to Salesian. That's where the boys went. And then the girls went to Notre Dame, which was the Catholic girls' school. And I remember him saying to me, 'You're not going to get into Salesian. Why don't you go to John Griffiths?' And I didn't want to go to John Griffiths because my older brother had went there and he hadn't got on very well there and he thought he was picked on by the teachers and what have you, and I thought, I'm not going there. And plus it was up – it was up near Tibbet's Corner. You're walking uphill every day, I'm a lazy git, so I didn't want to go there anyway. And he kept saying to me, 'You know you're not going to get in. You're

not going to get in,' and he didn't turn round to me and say, 'It's because your parents are divorced,' but it took me a long time to realise that then. But I went and took the exam at Salesian and I – I don't see why I wouldn't have passed it, 'cause all my mates did and, you know, we were in the same class at school and everything, but I never got in. So I never got into Salesian, so. But I think that was because of that. I think it was purely because my parents were divorced and the headmaster was trying to tell me but didn't tell me, you know.

How did that make you feel?

Well, it was only afterwards – you know, it took me a while to realise why I didn't get in, you know. And I think that's the – I'm pretty sure that's the reason. But no, I think it's sad, you know. But back then, that's the way it was, you know. We can't just keep – we can't keep excusing stuff 'cause back then that's the way it was, but you know, it was very – very conservative back then and, you know, people – you know, people get divorced every day of the week now. It's – if a marriage doesn't work out then it's unfortunate and you move on. There's no point sticking around for the sake of face or – you know ... the way I see it, at least my parents had the balls to admit that they made a mistake. That's not the way that the Catholic church or teachers see it [laughs].

Were there any specific incidents with any teachers that you can remember where perhaps they maybe said something or, you know, their behaviour or – were there any actions or ...?

Oh, I can't – no, no, but – I don't know, you know, 'cause I always thought there was an underlying – you know, I always thought that they looked at me differently. But maybe they did say something and it's – you know, I've – I've forgotten about it, but maybe it's back there somewhere. But yeah, I definitely knew that I was treated differently.

And you mentioned that your brother went to that other – the other school and he wasn't happy there. He –

Oh, my older brother went to John Griffiths, yeah.

Okay. So what kind of treatment did he get there?

Oh, I don't know. I don't know. I just – but I know he used to bunk off and he never – he used to miss a hell of a lot of school. And he left as soon as he could. He didn't take any qualifications or anything like that. He got out as soon as he could. I honestly don't know why – you know, what – I don't know what – but John Griffiths wouldn't have been nowhere near as conservative as Salesian College. You know, Salesian College was – like I say, it was run by the Jesuits, you know.

And what about your other siblings, where did they –

We all went to different schools. Annette went to Notre Dame, but that was the typical girls' choice. And Sean, he went to London Oratory. I could have went there but I didn't want to – you know, I didn't want to go. Well, saying I could have went there, two of my friends went there and I was thinking of it, but you know – well, silly this, but in the first year you had to wear a cap and I wouldn't go 'cause I thought, I'm not wearing a – I'm not wearing a cap [laughs]. And you had to wear it. But I went to St Thomas Moore in Sloane Square, right just at the back of Sloane Square, so – but it was a mixed school as well and I think – I quite enjoyed that as well. Salesian College was all boys. So my two brothers went to all boys' school and my sister went to an all girls' school. I went to a mixed school. But I liked it. I liked the mixed school.

[1:22:30]

And was this when you were all living in the same place but you were all travelling out to the different schools, or had you –

No. Pat and Annette hadn't – weren't living with us then. Annette – I really don't know the full story, but Annette, she was – well, she would have been sixteen or seventeen then, but she was still in care. But she was – she was in Margate.

Sorry, I didn't catch that.

She was in Margate in Kent.

Okay.

So she's lived in Margate for – for thirty years. So – but she was put into care down there. And we used to see her, like she'd come and visit us, you know, a couple of – three or four, five times a year she'd come and visit us, but – so she was away then. And then Pat, he was away in care somewhere else as well. So I don't know why – you know, I don't know why they were – at that age, why they were put away where they were. And to be honest with you, I don't know the full story and, like I say, we don't – I've never asked, you know. It's like – I just let bygones be bygones, you know. I think we've all kind of like just looked after ourselves and – you know, and dealt with it ourselves.

[1:23:50]

Did you – did you ever have any – apart from that time when you were younger, did you ever have any other social workers kind of visit you or take you out or even just, you know, talk to you about things or what was actually going on?

Er, I can't recall a social worker actually sitting down and – and talking as such, you know. I remember a few coming in and just taking us out and stuff like that, but generally – well, social workers then – the social worker would escort you from your home to the – from your house to the home, you know. They'd come and pick you up in a car – and they all seemed to drive old battered old Renaults at the time as well. But they'd come and pick you up and, you know, generally you'd see a social worker

and it was like, oh god, I'm going in a home again. That's when you seen them, you know.

So if possible, could you talk me through one of your memories of having the social worker turn up and then, kind of stage by stage, what happened?

Erm ... I do – I remember a social worker turning up. It was a woman. I don't know why I was going into care. But I just remember, you know, my mum opened the door, said 'Come in,' I don't know whether she had a cup of tea or not. I don't even know. And I remember just – all of a sudden it was just, pack a few things – you know, it's not like we had a lot to pack, basically your school uniform and your games kit or whatever you needed for school, you know, or whatever it was. And you packed – packed a few things into a bag or whatever, and next minute, then you're getting into the back of a car and – and, you know, you'll end up in a home. She'll pull up somewhere then and take you in and then you'll be handed over to the – to the care staff. There'd be no communication. There'd be very little talking in the car, you know. But, you know, you'd just be sitting there in the window and you'd be trying to figure out where she was taking you or – you know, there was no, like, why or where are we going. It was just – I don't know whether you just accepted it or just – you know, or just – just done it, you know.

Can you remember the social workers ever making any effort to – to describe to you what was happening or –

No, no. Maybe they did but I – you know, maybe they did and it went in one ear and out the other. But no, I can't, I can't. And I never knew why – I've never known why I've been put into care. You know, like I said to you before, I'm just – I'm just guessing, assuming.

Would it be something you would want to know?

Well, no. I think I'm probably – I've probably got the right answer anyway. It's probably my mum needed a rest or – you know, or she's unwell, you know, unwell

and couldn't cope, so, you know. We weren't abused or anything like that – well, I say abused, like, you know, she wasn't averse to giving you a good slap if you were naughty, you know. But again, that's what parents did in them days, you know. I wouldn't dare slap my kids, you know. If I did they'd probably call Childline [laughs].

[1:27:40]

Yeah, things have changed a bit. You mentioned – I think it was right at the beginning, you said obviously that your mum did, you know, the best that she could with – with four children. Can you remember there being, like, enough food and –

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Potatoes with potatoes, yeah.

No, it was never – you know, she worked – she was a care assistant, so not fabulously well paid, you know. I'm sure in today's market it wouldn't be much above minimum wage. So she worked for the local authority. But, you know, she got everything – you know, she got everything like – well, there was no sort of family credits like you get now, but she obviously had child benefit. We had free school dinners. We had – I remember we used to get uniform – you know, vouchers for your school uniform every year. So whatever was on the market for her to claim, I'm sure – I'm sure she was getting assistance every way – which way you could. I can even remember very early milk – the old fashioned milk vouchers you used to get. That's showing my age. But yeah, I'm sure she – you know, she got loads of things that supplemented – you know, but we were never – we were never short of food anyway, you know, and – 'cause she got the school uniform vouchers. We always made sure we had the – what we needed for school. And I think it was quite generous 'cause there was always a few vouchers left over and the shops – you could buy, you know, jeans or t-shirts. There always seemed to be, like, a tenner left over once you'd bought your school uniform, so you'd get something for yourself out of it as well, so ...

Was there anybody there to support your mum?

Erm, I don't know, you know. I don't know. And if there was, whether she would have took it or not would be debatable. She might have took it and then – very – you know, she – with part of her illness, you know, she'd – she'd be very paranoid and she would have friends – she did have friends but then she would lose them very quickly 'cause she'd accuse them of doing things or – you know. So she's never had any long term friendships.

[1:30:03]

Have you ever found that perhaps – when you were younger and obviously witnessing that behaviour, have you ever found that it's affected your friendships or your relationships?

My own personal ones?

Yeah.

No, not at all. I can't believe how my brothers, my sister and I are so well grounded and we don't really talk about the past or whatever, but when we do sometimes the odd comment comes out and it's like, you know, 'I don't believe how ...' 'cause we've all went on to have fairly successful careers and we've all went on to – most – you know, my sister's went and done a degree in nursing. She's a nurse. I've obviously done my path. Like my older brother's – he works in construction but he's more labour, but he could still progress if he wanted to. And my younger brother, he's done loads of things as well. So, you know, we've done pretty well for ourselves. And we've all got mortgages, we've all got houses and – and my eldest sister sent – you know, two of her boys have went to – well, one's at university now. One's finished. I've got a daughter at university. I daresay Pat's girls will go to university, you know, and Sean – you know, Sean's probably will as well when they get older. You know, so we've all – we've all done – you know, we've all done quite well for ourselves and we've all – every one of us is in a – a long term stable

relationship as well. You know, Annette's been with her husband for, crikey, over – she's been married for about twenty years. And me, Sean and – me, Sean and Pat all got married in the year 2000. I think our wives all got together and said, 'We're doing it next year.' So we got married in August, September and October. But we've all been together – like we've all been with our partners for over twenty years, you know. So yeah, so it's quite – considering, you know, we've all done – we've all done quite well, you know. We're all quite well grounded. But I think that all comes down to our own inner strength and, you know, being resourceful or whatever. I don't know.

[1:32:24]

Can you remember perhaps any – any specific times or any specific moments where, you know, it kind of helped to give you that inner strength? Or is there anything that kind of –

I don't know. I think it's – it's probably somewhere in my back – in the background there. But I – as I touched on before, I remember being at primary school – it wasn't so much at secondary school now 'cause it wasn't that unusual, or there wasn't so much stigma, because we're getting into the '80s now and we're becoming a lot more tolerant and what have you. But in the '70s, you know, you go to primary school, you know, the mid to late '70s, and I remember – I did feel stigmatised coming from a one parent family, being on free dinners and, you know, that sort of stuff, you know. And the teachers wouldn't hide that, you know. It was – they'd call out your name at the start of the year – well, every week kids used to bring their dinner money in, you know, whatever, it was, £1 a week or £1.50 a week for school dinners, and obviously the kids who were on free dinners, and there wasn't that many of them, maybe four or five kids out of the whole class, you know. So you were kind of stigmatised and I think that's maybe made me think, you know, I'm not going to go down that road myself. Don't get me wrong, you know, being with my partner – being with my wife – partner [laughs] – being with my wife for that long and, yeah, we – you know, I've done my best to mess it up a few times, but, you know – but, ah, we're – you know, I think – I've got no reason to disbelieve that we – we won't be going on cruises together when we're sixty or whatever. So, you know, yeah, no, we've done – I think

that's been there, you know, to make sure that – and certainly with my kids, there's certainly – you know, there's no way I want to be a Saturday and Sunday day, although I am technically 'cause I'm working away from home. But, you know, I don't want to be the dad who gets them on a Saturday and takes them to McDonalds, you know, and then hands them back to Mum in the afternoon, you know. Certainly that's always drove me on to make sure that I don't mess things up.

[1:34:50]

Female: I said I'd tell you when it's another half an hour. We've had an hour and 34 minutes. So would it be a good time to –

Did you want a break?

I'm fine. It's up to you guys. If you want to get up and stretch your legs, I'll get up and stretch my legs for a couple of minutes, yeah.

[Pause for Break]

[1:35:15]

Okay, so before the break there, obviously we covered quite a bit. If possible, I wanted to focus on something you mentioned. It's to do with, like, stigma and obviously receiving, you know, stigma. Did you find – 'cause you mentioned you had it obviously from your teachers, did you find that as you got older you were still kind of receiving, you know, that –

No. In secondary school in England, yeah, it wasn't an issue. It wasn't an issue whatsoever. There was some old fuddy-duddy teachers there, I think, but most of them were modern and, you know – 'cause it was a big school, there was a lot – well, I say big school, there was about 750 pupils there, not big, big, but there was kids from – 'cause the school as well was situated in Sloane Square, just at the back of Sloane Square, most of the – there was very few English kids in the school. Most of the kids were South American descent, Filipinos, from all over the world, because

you've got all the embassies around there. And not so much the ambassadors but the embassy staff, especially the Catholic countries, would send their kids to that school. So it really was a very diverse school, you know. I mean, kids from all corners – heritage from all corners of the globe. I think we did a survey in our class one time and out of thirty odd kids, only one kid had English grandparents, so it shows you how – and because of that, I think the teachers were very broad and open minded. Well, they had to be 'cause they were dealing with a lot of different cultures and what have you. So not in secondary school, but going to the convent though – yeah, when I went to the convent in Donegal, I remember going for my interview with the nun, the head nun – the head teacher was a nun. And she obviously had my school – she'd spoken to my teachers in Chelsea and – I don't know, you know – I don't know what she had been told or what she – what she was reading, you know, my file as such, if it was a file, but I think she was only taking me in because – because the school had said, you know, he had a certain amount of ability, or whatever, and maybe in Chelsea they were probably glad to get rid of me. So I don't know [laughs]. But I think there was a bit – I think she was a bit wary of me, you know, and I kind of felt that. She was giving me a chance. It wasn't – you know, she wasn't embracing me. It was just like she was – you know, I've been thrust upon her as opposed to, you know, come into our school, be a part of our family, sort of thing, you know. But St Thomas Moore though, that was – no problem there whatsoever with the teachers, brilliant – most of them, anyway [laughs].

When you were in the convent, did you have – did you feel any of the stigma from any of the other kind of young people that were there?

Not really. The – see, the convent was in a town called Milford, which was – it'd be one of the bigger towns, and I mean, even that's tiny. And kids would get bussed in, you know, from a twenty mile radius. So everybody who came in from our village who knew me would know my background – obviously 'cause they'd know my father or whatever, they'd know my background. But the other kids who I made friends with who'd come from other areas, they wouldn't know my background. There was no stigma anyway. The kids – you know, the kids were fine. I remember having – we had a debate one time in – it was like – they didn't call it RE but it was basically RE,

and we were having a debate about divorce. And we had a vote and I was the only person who voted for divorce out of the whole class. And they were adamant that you made vows for life and what have you, and my take on it was, well, if the marriage is not working, why stay for the sake of the kids and for, I don't know, for God. Dare I say that in front of a nun. But – you know, but, no, there was never no stigma, never no stigma. I got on well with pretty much everyone. Fairly easygoing [laughs].

So what happened when you did – when you were the only one that voted for that? What was kind of the reactions?

Well, I lost the debate [laughs] by a landslide. No, there was – you know, people – people didn't like my view at all. It was – you know, but a lot of these kids as well, you know, very religious, more religious than me maybe, and – and maybe – I don't know, I'm insinuating, but maybe some of them maybe did agree with me but maybe wouldn't – wouldn't dare to exercise them views in front of a nun, whereas I – my views are my views and I don't care. If I'm wrong, I'm wrong.

Okay. And then kind of throughout your – your life since leaving there, have you – can you remember feeling any stigma or – or kind of feeling any of that?

No. No, not at all, you know. I'm quite at ease with myself and, you know, like I say, you know – I keep saying it but, you know, it was what it was and I just dealt with it. Like, you know, now and again, you know, I – I don't mean to say row with my wife, but now and again – I don't know how it comes up but, you know, I always take the mickey out of her nice middle class lifestyle, upbringing, you know. She's going to be absolutely shocked when she sees this. But, you know, it's – it's just – it was just the way it was. I knew no different, so – you know, I knew no different. And put it this way, you know, I wasn't ... I wasn't mistreated as such, you know. You know, there wasn't a lot of love or affection but, you know, but I wasn't mistreated as such, you know. So – and I've met a lot of kids and I knew a lot of kids who were in a lot worse situations than me, you know, who were getting, you know – well, who really had horrible lives. So, you know, I just – you just dealt with what you – what you had.

Those other kids that you've just mentioned, was that from your time in care or was that –

Well, there was some – some kids in care. There were some kids who lived around our area on the estate or whatever, you know – this was back in Wandsworth, you know, who were most certainly worse off than us. So, you know ...

Okay. Obviously you've mentioned that you haven't really – since then you haven't really felt the stigma, which is good. Have you – I mean, I know with being in care, it's – it's a subject that not everybody talks about, but have you – have you kind of ever, you know, spoken about your experiences?

No, none of my colleagues know, have ever known. My wife knows but – but 'cause I talk so infrequently about it, I don't know if she even believes it, you know [laughs]. She knows I was in care but nothing – you know, she doesn't know why or to what extent or ... So, you know, 'cause nobody knows, you know, so, yeah, I've kept it to – you know, it's not something that I tell people. It's part of my life that nobody needs to know about, you know. To the majority of people – well, to the – yeah, to the majority of people, I'm successful, or relatively successful. I'm relatively well grounded. I've – you know, like I say, I'm – I don't know if I'm a great husband but I'm a great dad, you know, and I've got three absolutely fantastic kids. So, you know, I must be doing something – well, maybe I – maybe twenty percent of that's down to me, eighty percent's down to Mum. But, you know, at least I – you know, I've done some things right, so I can't be – I'm doing okay, so ... And I think people see – see that side of me. And I'm – I'm generally quite happy and have a laugh and quite sociable, so that's – nobody – you know, nobody really knows about that – you know, about my upbringing. I don't kind of – I kind of – I don't go past Ireland [laughs], you know, really.

Have you told your children about it?

Erm, no, no. I don't know if – I don't know if they know. I don't know if they know, if they've heard me or whatever. I don't know. But no, I've never told them. They – they – they would disbelieve me anyway. It's like, you know, when I start going on about, you know, in my day, you know, it'd be like during the war, you know, Uncle Albert's going on again, you know. 'Cause they've got such great lives and, you know, they everything they want, they're spoilt rotten and they just lead – you know, lead good – good normal lives and they can't believe – they wouldn't know what poverty is or – well, not that I had poverty, but they wouldn't know – you know, they've lived in big houses with gardens and, you know, holidays and – you know, they wouldn't know – they wouldn't believe me. They wouldn't believe – you know, they'd think I'm just being – as I say, Uncle Albert [laughs].

Do you think you would ever tell them?

Well, they'd be welcome to watch the DVD [laughs]. That'd be an icebreaker. You know, I don't know if it's – I'm only going to tell them what I've told – what I've told the tape, so it's – you know, it's all – I'm telling you what I know, what I can remember, so it's all – it's all out now. There's nothing kind of secretive, whatever, stuck kind of – nothing I'm not declaring, so ...

Do you know if – I mean, you might not do, but do you know if any of their friends have – your children's friends have been in care or had any care experience?

No, none of them, none of them whatsoever, absolutely none of them. Maybe my daughter – obviously going to – when she went to senior school, so the senior school she went to, there was a – it covered a big area as well. None of her immediate friends, but maybe – maybe there might have been kids in her year at school who might have been in care, I don't know. But I know that all of her immediate friends, most of them come from good stable homes, and certainly my boys, all their friends are all from good stable homes. So yeah, no, I don't – no, I don't know any of them have been in care, no.

And their schools have always been in Liverpool, haven't they?

Yeah.

Okay.

Where we live – well, the school – they all went to the same primary school and they'll all end up going to the same senior school as well, but where the school is as well, it's predominantly a white middle class area, so you haven't got the social issues maybe what some kids – why some kids go into care. That doesn't exist in – in where they live and where they frequent, if you like, you know.

And that must be, you know, quite kind of apparent for you, especially when you're travelling down to London and, you know, you're seeing the differences between London and Liverpool. When you travel down, do you find that it ever brings up, you know, kind of any old emotions or any memories or ...?

Well, I know when I get to Euston and I'm going down that escalator, my elbows come out and I turn into – into – er, commuter rage. God forbid anybody stands on the left on the escalator and – you know, I want to kick them. And I hate slow walkers and – you're a lot more relaxed in Liverpool, you know. Yeah, when you get to London it's, you know, a bit frantic. Yeah, sometimes – sometimes when you pull into London on a train and it's like, oh crikey, here we go again, but within half an hour you're back in – you're just back into your way again, aren't you? But yeah, I do – I do – when I get off at Lime Street on a Friday, it's kind of like – you do kind of – a big burden comes off your shoulder, you're off for the weekend. Like I say – don't get me wrong, Liverpool's – you know, it's a different Liverpool from when I first moved there, but it's – the city centre now is – is as diverse and as whatever as London, you know. It's quite vibrant, it's a really nice place and it's just as busy, you know, huge amounts of stag dos and hen parties, and then obviously the football fans will come in on the – on the weekends as well, so there's all – and the racing fans and what have you. So it's quite – it's fairly busy. It's just as busy as London in the city centre, so – but when I get out to where I live, it's, you know, not as frantic.

[1:50:10]

Have you taken your wife and your children to Ireland before, perhaps to see your dad or ...?

Oh yeah, they've been there many times, yeah, yeah.

Okay. Through the – the years when you were growing up, especially kind of after you – you left the convent, did you ever kind of – or I mean, you may not have known, but did you ever come across anybody else that had been in care that you know of?

No. In Ireland?

And in England as well.

Oh right. Erm ... no. No. Again, I don't think people advertise it, do they, you know? Why would you? Well, it's nothing to be ashamed of, but it's – I don't think – I've never known anyone to advertise it.

[1:51:16]

I'm just going to go back to one of the first things you said. It was about your job. You mentioned, obviously it's a – you know, you've worked your way up and you've done really well. When you were younger, did you have any – any kind of specific jobs or goals that you wanted to achieve when you'd got older?

Erm ... I've always – I've always had like a caring kind of social – like a social care kind of side to me. I wanted to be a policeman [laughs]. That was probably more to do with kicking football hooligans' heads in and riots and that stuff [laughs]. I wanted to be a policeman. I wanted to be a soldier. I was very, very close to joining – well, I say soldier but it was the Royal Navy, but I was very close to joining the marines, and I absolutely would have loved it, absolutely would have loved it, but the reason I didn't was because – it was when I came back to England from Ireland and

had I joined the marines – there used to be a rule in the British Army – well, in the armed services, that if you were Catholic and Irish descent you didn't have to go to Northern Ireland, so you wouldn't serve in Northern Ireland. But they took that rule out and if your battalion gets posted, you go where your battalion goes. They don't make an exception for you. So I passed all the exams and everything and it was while I was – the final interview process and it got brought up and I said, like, 'I won't be going to Northern Ireland, will I?' It's very rare that the Royal Marines get stationed in Northern Ireland anyway, but there was always an off chance that they would. And I just mentioned, you know, if they got stationed there, would I have to go. And the commanding officer said, 'Yeah, you would have to go.' And then I was like, well, I can't join then, because my parents lived in Northern Ireland and it was – sorry, lived in Donegal, which is on the Northern Ireland border. It's in – it's in the Republic but it's actually in Ulster. It's the most northerly county and it borders Derry, okay? And they would have been a terrorist target, you know. If anybody would have found out that I was in the British armed services then my family would have been a terrorist target. So I couldn't do it. So – 'cause there was no guarantees. It would have been fine if I would have been posted to the Falklands or Bosnia or anywhere like that, it would have been fine, but if people would have got to know that I was serving in Northern Ireland – and it was a possibility that, had I been stationed on the border, people would recognise me, I'd see people that I knew, you know. 'Cause it's only forty miles away, fifty miles away from where we live, so it'd be quite – you know, it'd be a big risk, so I couldn't join it. But I would have loved that. I would have absolutely loved that. Erm, and I wanted to be a social worker as well [laughs]. I don't know where that come from. No, I just – you know I just – 'cause at school as well, one of my favourite subjects was sociology and I've always dabbled in psychology and – you know, obviously I use it a lot for my work now as well, 'cause – behaviour and how the mind thinks and stuff like that as well. So we – I dabble – I dabble with it all the time. But – so I've always had that sort of caring social side part of me. It's ingrained in me somewhere. I want to give love to other people 'cause I didn't get it myself [laughs]. My wife's going to cry when she sees that bit [laughs]. Cries of laughter or cries of sadness, I don't know.

Okay. I'm going to go back very slightly. You said that it was when you came back from Ireland that you were going to join – to join up, and obviously you went through the interview process. Can you remember what it was that initially attracted you to the idea of doing it, or that made you think, you know, that's the path you wanted to take?

Well, I like – I like the structure, you know. That would – that would suit me very, very well. I was boxing at the time and the marines had a very good boxing team. They actually had two former ABA champions and Terry Marsh actually went on to be a world champion. Well, he was a marine, he started boxing in the marines. So they had a very good boxing programme and it was – that was one of the reasons. Plus I was getting paid to keep fit, to travel the world, you know – you know, crikey, you know. And I would have – I would have done things – you know, I would have learnt how to ski, 'cause you've got to do arctic training. I love the sea, you know. I love water – there would have been a lot of water sports involved, 'cause – obviously the marines, you're pretty much out at sea all the time, or, you know, you do – you've got to do jungle training as well, so you get sent to Belize. You get sent to Norway for arctic training, you get sent to Belize then for – for jungle training. So I would have seen and done things, you know, that you can only dream about, really. And you would have probably learnt trades and you would have – you know, you could have progressed. If I would have joined – if I would have joined, I'd probably still be in it now. I'd probably have done my twenty two years, you know, more than likely.

Okay. So then obviously you were also considering to be a social worker.

Yeah, that was always – you know, I liked, you know, some of the social workers that I had, the – Tom Baker, whatever his name was. You know, I just remember him. He was fairly caring and, you know, and just had a very nice nature. And I – and I've liked – you know, I like the idea of helping kids, you know, helping kids who come from a background like my own or far worse than my own, you know. So I've always had that. And hence why, you know, I'm involved with Action for Children, which is the link to why I'm here now as well. So I'm kind of – you know, I've always had that kind of side, that I want to help, you know, disadvantaged kids and that, so.

[1:57:48]

Okay. I'm just going to probe that a little bit further, if that's okay? What's your involvement with Action for Children?

Just as an IV.

What's that?

Independent volunteer. I've had one – been matched with one lad at the moment – I haven't been in the programme long, but I've been matched with one lad and – well, we've just had a bit of a break, 'cause he's having a bit of trouble. So I've seen him a couple of times and, you know, I've just told him I'm – you know, if he wants – that I'm there to help him and mentor him, you know, if he needs – 'cause he hasn't got a father figure as such. And he's in – he's in care, so – and the idea is that I just take him out for a burger or take him bowling or for a game of golf, you know, and just be a voice – you know, just be available to listen to him, or if I can help him in any way, you know, homework or – I might not be great at that, but if I can help him in, you know, any capacity then I'm there available, so ... like I say, he's just had a bit of a – he's just had a bit of a slide lately, so he's just getting himself sorted out and then we're – we might continue later on in the year, maybe. Giving him a bit of space.

How does it – you said you've seen him a couple of times now. How does it make you feel when you're there and you're – you know, you're helping him, or even just talking through things. Is there any specific feelings or emotions that you feel?

No, you know, I just want to do my best for him. I just want to, you know – when I first met him, the first time I met him, you know, he was a bit dubious as to why this forty year old – forty odd year old man wants to help him and – you know, so I talked to him a bit robustly, you know, and I just said, 'I'm not going to be mugged off. I'm here to help, 'cause I'm a volunteer. I'm not getting paid.' I've been in the same situation as him and I had nobody to come and be a father figure to me. You know, I

had nobody to talk to, nobody to turn to, so I'm there if he needs it and if he doesn't want – you know, if he's going to mess me about and not turn up when we agree to meet and stuff like that then, you know, you can sod off and I'll – you know, I'll get another kid then who wants to do it. You know, that's – and I think he liked that and he realised then that, you know, I had the right intentions, you know. But like I say, he's got a lot of – he's got a lot of personal issues, so – with family and that, so it's a bit hard for him at the moment to have a stranger coming in, so ... but we'll – you know, as I say, we'll probably get back later on or whatever, you know, when he's – when he sorts a few things out. But he's a smashing kid, smashing kid.

So have you been connected with Action for Children for long?

About a year. Well, it's about a year since I did my training with them.

How did you find out about it?

Well, somebody at work told me, because we – we were contracted – you know, Crossrail being this super duper project, have got so many charities and – so many charities and local community stuff that they fund and what have you, and they pass that on to all the – throughout the whole supply chain. And it was our HR girl, she knows – she doesn't know I've been in care but she was just, like, talking to me and she said, 'Have a look at this email and look at this programme.' And she said, 'You'd be good for it.' You know, 'cause I kind of – we've got a lot of apprentices at work as well and for – I'm an NVQ assessor as well and I take – I look after a lot of the kids then, the apprentices doing their NVQs. I help them with their portfolios and what have you and I kind of mentor them. And she said, 'You'll be ready good. And this is – you know, we've got to do so much work in the community and, you know, would you mind if I put you forward for this?' So went along and done all the – done the course and then they came up to Liverpool to interview me in my house, just to make sure that I wasn't – you know, I didn't live in a dingy flat and have an altar and sacrifice people, or whatever. Once I – I obviously passed the criteria and then it was a little while before we got a match, and then we got a match and, like I say, there we are. But I've enjoyed it, you know. I enjoyed the course, like, learning about the

safeguarding and everything, because now I understand what my wife does, you know, with working in the classroom. I know now what she's – you know, I know now what she's on about, what she's talking about, 'cause I've done the same – not to the same level but, you know, similar, similar.

Is your wife involved in any kind of other activities like that?

No, no, she's a – basically she works fulltime and then all her spare time is spent being a mum, because – professional chauffeur. 'Cause after school, five days a week, they've got one activity or another, one's got to be here, one's got to be there. So that's – I don't think she has a rest until about eight o'clock at night, until they get their pyjamas on.

[2:03:02]

What other activities are your children involved in?

They both play rugby. Well, my older lad, very, very good, and he has midweek training. They play music – they play music. They have all sorts of after school classes. It could be Spanish, it could be reading class. They like to go – once a week they like to go to this, like, indoor – it's called Rampworks, it's an indoor BMX or skateboard track, and they go – they like to go there, go up there and fly around on their scooters or their – or their BMXs. Cricket, you know, cricket's started again now, so that's a Friday night now for the next couple of months. There's an activity – I don't even know half of them. There's an activity one night of the week for literally all of them, you know. And if – and if there isn't then they'll want to go to the gym or they'll want to go swimming, you know. They want to do something every day after school, or they'll want their friends to come around or they want to go to their friends', you know.

Very active.

Oh, they are, yeah, yeah.

[2:04:25]

I'm going to touch back on the point that you made about wanting to be a social worker. Did you ever take that interest any further? Did you –

No, no. See, once I left Ireland, come back and then I drifted into construction then and then I just – you know, I stayed at it then. I did have a spell when I went to night school and – and was doing psychology A level with – to give me kind of like an access into it, but I never pursued it. I never pursued it. I just kind of – I was earning money and I had – you know, then I had a mortgage and, you know, it was – yeah, it kind of – didn't get the opportunity then. I don't – you know, it's – I don't regret it. I'm glad – you know, things happen and evolve for a reason, or whatever, also. I'm quite happy where I am.

Are there any other things that you can remember when you were a child or even when you were in Ireland or, you know, perhaps the care home? Are there any other specific things that you thought, you know, when you're older you're going to make sure that you do it or ...?

Erm ... well, based – like, based on what we're talking about, but ... I don't want to hit – you know, I've always made a point that I would never hit my kids. Alright, okay, I might not be 100 percent successful with that. You know, when they're babies as well, you tap them on their nappy. But, you know, growing up, you know, my oldest – my oldest lad, he's a very, very strong boy and now and again he – he flies off and sometimes I've pinned him down, you know, but, you know, I wouldn't actually smack him or anything like that, never. I wouldn't do that, you know. So, you know, I've vowed that I'll – you know, we used to get beat every – well, not every day of the week but, you know, if you – if you dropped a fork at dinner time, it'd be like, 'What have you dropped that fork for?' [Claps] You know [laughs]. So, you know, I wouldn't hit – you know, I wouldn't – you know, it's physical assault. And teachers – you know, we used to get caned at school, back in primary school, you know. Just imagine sending your kids to school now and they came home and told

you that a teacher assaulted them with a piece of wood, you know. It's – it doesn't bear thinking about. But that's the way – you know, so I vowed that I would never do that, you know. But what – you know, goals and achievements? I don't know, I've just – I've just strived to be as successful as I can, you know, but not at any cost. I want to be happy, you know, not like sad and driven to be this Alan Sugar or anything like that, you know. Just – I've got my little place, my little niche, and, you know, I'm quite happy and content.

You've found that balance.

Yeah, you know. A few years ago, you know, I was – I was, you know, trying to earn as much money as I can and be a millionaire and all that, but, you know, I'm quite happy with getting my salary and, you know, I work for a great company and, you know, I've learnt to live within my means and – nearly [laughs], you know. It's alright.

[2:08:10]

You mentioned about being caned in primary school.

Yeah.

Was it an often – you know, was it a regular thing?

Well, the cane – well, the cane was going to the headmaster and that was very – that wasn't too often. I had it a few times. That was like six of the best on the back of the knee. But our – our class teacher was Mr Durkin.. You didn't have to do very little to get the ruler on your hands. And I wouldn't say there was a week went by that I didn't get rulered on my hands, on the palm of your hands. Yeah, that was – I must have had it at least – at least once a week. And again, you know, we were kids. We weren't malicious. We weren't – we weren't fighting. We weren't shouting. We weren't stealing. We weren't – you know, we weren't breaking things. It was being mischievous, talking, 'cause you were told to shut up and you might have talked, you

know. You'd be marched up to the front of the classroom and you'd get six on your – on your hand, you know. And that was sore [laughs]. It was physical assault though, you know, when you think about it now, but they were allowed to do it. They were allowed to do it then. You went home and told your mum, 'I got the ruler today,' or, 'I got caned today,' and it was like, 'Well, you must have deserved it 'cause teachers don't give you the cane for no reason at all.' That would be the mentality – that would be the mentality in them days as well.

[2:09:40]

You mentioned earlier you didn't know if – about the support for your mum. Do you have kind of any memories of – of, you know, her other family members or perhaps her parents?

No. She was an orphan and her parents had both died very young, so I never knew my maternal grandparents. But she came to London when she was about fourteen and that's all I know, really. Well, I know she came to London when she was about fourteen. She had five sisters and three brothers and she was in about the middle. But she did have some older brothers and – and sisters living in London at that time. They all live out in the – live out in the suburbs – live out – well, some of them moved out Hemel Hempstead way and Milton Keynes way, and she had a brother over in – in South East London. But no, she never – she never really – we certainly never met up with any of them and she had no contact with them. Before I was born, you know, she was close to one or two particular sisters, but then they drifted apart. And knowing my mum, you know, it'd be my mum's fault, you know. She – when she's on a downer she – she's got a very – can be very malicious, very paranoid. And with her – she's obviously – you know, she's got issues, health problems and issues, and she's literally drove everybody away from her, so there was never – never no support like that. But when I say we used to go to Ireland, you know, for the six weeks on holiday, well, that was her sister, Mary, and I think she just took us away for the six weeks, just to give my mum a break or a respite.

When you said your mum was an orphan, did she go into care or was she adopted or ...?

No, no, no. No. I don't know – I don't know what age she was when – when her parents – her last parent died. I'm not sure. I don't even know who died first, whether it was her mum or her dad, you know. I know very, very little about my mum's side of the family. And – but I know – you know, I just know that she came to London when she was fourteen and she – she literally had to fend for herself. But one of her – it must have been one of her older sisters was over here and – and she got her work as a – she started off working as a chambermaid in one of the big hotels up in – up in London. And she obviously had a flat too – you know, her sister had a place and she'd probably got the – till she got on her feet, kind of thing. So – but yeah, from fourteen years old she had to fend for herself.

So your mum knew that her sister was there? She didn't do like a –

Oh, she – yeah, I think she had an older sister – I don't know which one it was, but yeah. She came to London 'cause she had family there, otherwise she would have probably stayed where she was and, you know, what would have come of her, I don't know.

[2:13:00]

And how about on your dad's side? What about his parents?

Well, his – his dad died very young. His dad died before I was born. He died in 1966. But he – he was taken in a car crash, so he died a young man, really. He died in his forties. But my – my grandmother, she died when I was about ten. But I'd only ever seen her a couple of times and I don't remember seeing her. I don't ever remember seeing her but I do know, you know, she'd been over to London to visit us and that. But yeah, my dad – you know, he's got two sisters, two brothers and he kept in contact – he fell out with his two sisters. That was a dispute over – 'cause he inherited the house, you know, so it was a bit of a dispute about that. But he – he –

you know, he kept in contact with his two brothers mostly, most of the time. And they worked together as well, so they – they worked together all throughout the '60s and '70s and that.

Was this on the – on the boats?

No. Dad worked in the tunnels. He worked in the tunnels most of his life. But then when he went back to Ireland then, you know, there's nothing there, so it was either farming or fishing. So he did a bit of both, put his hand to anything, yeah.

So you – kind of growing up, you never really had the grandparents on either side?

No, no. Never had grandparents, no.

And with your – your wife, you said, you know, she's been quite fortunate. Are her parents, you know, still alive and able to –

Yeah, her parents are alive. Her grandparents are all dead now, but she – I did meet her paternal grandfather, you know, so ... he died about fifteen years ago. So I knew him for – I knew him for a short while. Yeah, nice man. And her maternal grandmother, she lived at home with them, so her own mum and my wife cared for – cared for her for the last how many years of her life, 'cause they – you know, she lived at home so they, you know, looked after her.

That must have been quite a difficult time.

It was before I met her, you know.

When you were younger, obviously, you know, you – you – from what you said, you didn't really have a stable father figure or grandparents. What kind of coping strategies or – yeah, I mean, methods, any strategies can you remember using to help you kind of cope with everything.

Erm, no [laughs]. Er ... I don't know, you know, just ... You just learnt yourself. You just – you know, rightly or wrongly, you just learnt yourself and learnt off your peers and – you know, I know what's right, I know what's wrong, you know. You know, try to do mostly right things, you know. But yeah, we did a few wrong things as well but, you know, you learn as you – you learn as you go along and you learn by your mistakes. But I did have some good teachers, you know. At secondary school in Chelsea, like, I had – I had one or two very good teachers who I – who I liked. I wouldn't say they were father figures as such, but – or that I ever asked them for help, but – but if I needed help, I know they would have give it, you know. But I think they did look out for me a little bit and maybe were a bit more tolerant to me.

[2:17:18]

Can you remember any of your friends' parents perhaps or any of your friends' kind of relatives, did they – you know, did you feel that they – they tried to help you as well?

Er ... I'm sure they did, you know. I'm sure they did. I probably just – I probably didn't notice it, you know, 'cause you're blinkered as a kid. You're selfish or whatever, I don't know. Yeah, I – I daresay they did, you know. I daresay I was taken to football and I was taken here and taken there with daytrips as a treat, you know, 'cause they knew my mum wasn't going to take me or whatever. So – you know, I know – I was an alter boy for a while and I had quite a few –

Sorry, I didn't catch that, sorry.

I was an alter boy.

Oh okay.

[Laughs] I got a St Stephen's medal for service to the altar. So I did that for a few years and I know, like, you know, the church community – you know, a lot of people there would look out for you and, you know, people would always – like, I know, like,

if there were weddings or christenings or funerals, the parish priest always picked me and I always done it. He'd phone me up and say, 'There's a wedding on Saturday. I want you to do it.' And I'd come up and do it, 'cause you got two quid. So the best man would give him a few bob and then he would – he would give the altar boy two quid, so he'd always give me two quid. That was like a fortune to me back then. So that was him kind of looking out for me and – you know. So yeah, there's a few – yeah, there was a few people that would look out for you, yeah, yeah, who were maybe sympathetic.

When you were the – the altar boy and you'd be there for like the weddings and funerals, what kind of an experience was that for you, obviously not having necessarily a big kind of close family around you? What was it like to then kind of see that for – for others and experience that?

To me it was just a job, you know. I'd be concentrating on my own performance. And it was a performance, you know, 'cause when the – every time the priest sat down, you'd have to go and lift his cassock over the chair so he didn't crease it. I'd have to get the – the offertory ready. I would – you know, I would have jobs to do. I even used to do readings, you know. I'd have lots of jobs to do during the course of a mass. Obviously weddings were joyous and funerals were a bit sombre, but – you know, but there were – different masses, you had to do different things and you didn't worry about – you just worried about what you were doing on the stage, if you like, on the altar – stage, crikey [laughs]. That's another year in purgatory [laughs].

But then with that role, obviously you've got the structure again, haven't you, you've got the routines that you can work to.

Yeah.

[2:20:25]

When you were living with your mum, was she able to implement many structures or routines for you?

Er [sighs] ... not really. Well, she worked ... Living in Wandsworth, as I said earlier, she worked in care work, so we were latch – you know, we had our own key. You know, we used to come home and we'd be home before she got home from work. You know, she went to work the same time as we went to school in a morning, but we'd be back at four o'clock and she wouldn't get back till half five or five, you know. When she was working, she would – you know, obviously breakfast – she'd make sure that we had breakfast. That would be a bit of a routine. She'd insist that we had breakfast before we went out in the morning, and then obviously she'd come home and she'd cook dinner. But apart from that, you know, she wouldn't tell you to do your homework. She wouldn't – you know, she wouldn't tell you to go and have a bath, you know. No showers in them days. You know, she wouldn't tell you – maybe on a Sunday, she'd make sure you had a bath on a Sunday for school Monday morning, but didn't have to be clean any other day of the week. No, there was no real structure as such. But she lost her job then as well. She lost her job doing the care assistant – and it was a couple of years then before she got back into work again and she got just – she got into like a really depressive state. So there was no – you know, some days she wouldn't even get out of bed, I don't think. Well, I'd go out to school and she'd be in bed. I'd come home from school and she'd be in bed, so whether she got out of bed or not – you know, I doubt it. And yeah, so there was no – she was no real structure there, no.

[2:22:25]

You mentioned quite a bit that when you were younger you used to like to go out and play, you know, and play football and – and kind of stay out and do all of these activities. When you were in Ireland, were you able to do kind of as much of that or –

Yes, yeah. Oh definitely, because they'd want you out the house, you know. What are you going to do, sit in the house watching telly all day or moping around or – you know. Obviously, you know, my dad would be – you know, we had a bit of land. He had cattle. We'd cut wood, you know. We'd work, you know. We'd work as well, very physical work. But, yeah, when you had free time, yeah, you wouldn't be in the

house. You would get off out, you know. The sea – you know, the shore was, you know, very close to the back of the house, you know. We'd go down the shore. We'd go and do – go and do something, find something to do, you know. We certainly wouldn't be sitting around the house, no, unless it was the middle of winter and it was, you know, minus ten, you know.

[2:23:35]

When it comes to things like cooking and cleaning and those kind of general things that – that, you know, most people tend to pick up from – from a home environment. Where did you pick up those skills from?

In Ireland, yeah. I learnt to cook some – you know, basic cooking, you know, and, yeah, you know, cleaning and ironing. My wife's going to say, 'No, you didn't,' but – you know, 'cause I don't do absolutely nothing at home. I know it's – I'm sort of embarrassed to say it, but ... but yeah, there in Ireland, yeah, yeah.

So it sounds like you've gained quite a few different skills from, you know, different areas in your life and you've been very focused on doing that. And you mentioned about the courses that you've done. Have you done any other courses recently?

Oh crikey, through work I'm always on a course, you know, always. Crikey, what have I done recently? I'm – I've been doing train the trainer courses lately, you know. But I've – crikey, I've – I've done so much in the last – in the last two years it's just been one after another. Auditing, erm, oh Christ, you know, I can't [inaud]. You know, I can't even – mind blank, you know, I've done that much. You know, I wouldn't even – if I had to update my CV now I'd probably have an extra page, you know, on what I've done, you know, in the last year.

Talking of obviously, you know, updating the CV and kind of looking – looking to the future, as such. Have you thought about where you see yourself in perhaps five or ten years?

Yeah ... I'm – I'm – well, professionally wise, I'm about – realistically, I'm about two years away from being chartered. So when I'm chartered then that's like – well, the world's my oyster kind of thing, you know. I can do – you know, professionally, you know, I'll be at a very good level. And ideally, you know, once I get chartered status, you know – well, maybe in five years' time – I'll do what I'm doing for five years maybe and be chartered, I'll leave chartered and I'll probably get a job in a local college, local to me in Liverpool, and I'll just lecture, you know, a couple of days a week. I could even, like, take a – you know, take on a few clients and work one day a week from home, sort of thing, and I'd be far more better off than I am now as well. But the key is to get chartered status and, as I say, I'm about realistically about two years away from getting it.

And if you were to do the lecturing, that would be kind of enhancing on those – on those feelings that you were saying earlier, of helping others and – you know, kind of helping to train others and mentor them as well. With your children, have you found that they – I mean, do they share any of – any of the same kind of feelings towards perhaps helping others? I mean, I know they're still relatively young, but ...

Erm, yeah. My daughter, she's – she's done all her dance – her teaching qualifications – she's been dancing since she was three years old and she's done a lot of her teaching qualifications for dance. And she definitely will have a dance school, whether she does it at weekends or whether she has her own business and does it professionally, I don't know. But when she finishes uni she's going to have a degree in languages, so she speaks fluent Spanish and Italian, so teaching would be – would be the ideal step for her. She's a bit wary about it though, you know. She's not convinced teaching's for her, but she would – that would be the ideal role for her and with her dance background as well. So she's got more than one egg in the basket, you know. My son, my oldest son, he's very similar to me in that he's very structured, you know. He needs to know what he's doing at what time, you know, how long it's going to take to get there, that sort of thing, you know. And I can – I most certainly – I'm not trying to wish his life away, I wouldn't force anything on him, but I could see him being in the military. I think that would be ideal for him, you know. But hopefully he goes to uni and he goes in as an officer, you know, as opposed to – I'd

like him to go in as an officer if he did as opposed to going in as a – as a squaddie, so to speak. Not necessarily army but – you know, I'd rather he went into the RAF or the navy than the army. Less chance of him coming home hurt. But yeah, I could definitely see him going down that route, definitely. But who knows, you know, who knows what – you know.

[2:29:17]

Do you ever kind of pause and ... How can I phrase this? Kind of just stop and think kind of – you know, living in the moment, as such, and almost pat yourself on the back, or, you know, think of – you know, kind of acknowledge your own achievements. Do you ever –

Yeah, yeah. I know it's selfish or sad, but yeah, I do, you know. I am proud of myself and – for what – for how far I've come and what have you, yeah, definitely. And I know – you know, as I said earlier as well, you know. Me and my brothers and sisters, we get together and sometimes somebody will turn round and say, you know, I can't believe, you know, that we've – you know, that none of us has – you know, we'd all – we'd have every right to be druggies or whatever, you know, but none of us – you know, we've all got our heads on and nobody's looked for excuses. We've just taken life and seized it and just done the best we can. And all four of us have done that. And – yeah, you know, yeah, I do, I do [laughs].

I'm going to go back slightly, just a little bit again. You mentioned earlier that you came back from Ireland and you tried – obviously you went for the test and they told you about – you were at the final interview and they mentioned about – you know, that you would have to go and work in Northern Ireland. What kind of happened for the – for the next few years of your life once you came back? Where did you live or, you know, what – what did you do?

Well, I was – I was working in construction then and I was living around Tulse Hill. I just – you know, just plodded along. And I was tempted to maybe go back and reapply and – but then – there would always be – that issue was never going to go

away, you know. That issue was never going to go away, so – back then – you know, back then you had the borders up. It was not like what it is now. You know, you had – now there is no border anymore, you just – it's an invisible line and you just drive over it. There's no checkpoints as such. Maybe there is customs on the Irish side, but – but back then there was proper checkpoints, proper army checkpoints, army patrols and they did get targeted, so it was a real risk. But, you know, I did – I did think – I did think of reapplying but, like I say, it was never going to go away, so ... I don't know, I just – I just plodded along what I knew and I just – you know, like I say, I was working in construction and just – was just happy to have a job and – and getting paid decent money, you know. I had good – had a good standard of living, so ... Good at it as well. I'll blow my own trumpet [laughs].

When you came back, did you manage to kind of meet up with any of your old friends or did you – did you find that you needed to make new friends?

I did – you know, I did – I kept in touch with a couple of old school friends and I have – you know, up until – one particular friend, Francis, been friends with him – we were best mates throughout school and that and we kept in contact. And another fella, a very famous fella, who was not – well, infamous, the fella who was doing all the phone tapping, who went to jail for it, he was one of my best friends at school. So I used to – I used to – yeah, I kept in touch with him for a few years. But no, I haven't seen him for years. The last time I seen him was News at Ten when he was getting into the prison van, but ... [Laughs] but yeah, you know – but no, at work, you know, I'm making friends at work and more acquaintances and you bond with the people. 'Cause I've worked in some situations, down tunnels and stuff, where you work in a gang and a team and you've got to look after each other 'cause it's a dangerous environment and – so you bond with them people and you've got the same mentality, the same goals. And, you know, you're earning the same money and you've got the same lifestyle, so you tend to – you drift apart after – kind of like drifted apart from m older friends and – and stick with my work colleagues. But saying that, up in Liverpool though, none of my friends there work in construction, they all come from very different – one's a teacher. One's a civil servant. One's a policeman. One of my friends is a GP. One's a lorry driver. You know, so we're quite – quite broad and

– and it's good not to – you know, they don't know what I do and I don't really know what they do, you know. But in London my friends would be all work related.

[2:34:44]

When you were growing up, did you have any kind of specific role models or any – perhaps any people that you looked up to? I know you mentioned the teachers as well. But can you think of any – any role models perhaps that you had?

No, not really. Not really ... No.

Do you have any now? Are there any now that you can think of?

Obviously, you know, I wanted to be Glenn Hoddle, you know. Even though I don't support Tottenham, but, you know, he was my – my footballing idol, you know [laughs]. But no, not really, you know. My – my father in law has been really, really good through my career. It was him who kind of got me in – it was him who persuaded me to get into health and safety side of things and it's him who gave me my first opportunity to get – you know, giving me – getting me to take these certain qualifications and what have you. And he's been – he's been very good through my career and I could phone him up tomorrow if I had a problem and he'd give me a lot of advice and what have you. So he's been really, really good. I wouldn't say he's a role model though [laughs].

[2:36:12]

I mentioned earlier about – where do you see yourself in, say, five or ten years, and you – you said about being chartered. Where do you see yourself kind of in ten years? So past that.

Erm, well, probably still doing the same role and just, you know, maybe – maybe then counting down the clock to – to retirement and – you know. But yeah, we're a long time retired now, aren't we, you know? In the old days you retired at sixty five and

you died at seventy, didn't you? Nowadays, you know, we're – we're going to all live till we're – unless you're – you know, got something wrong with – you know, unless you've got some sort of condition or whatever, we're all going to live till we're in our nineties, aren't we, you know, maybe more. You know, every generation's – so, you know, you're a long time retired, so – I don't know, I've got that work ethic in me anyway, so I'll probably just carry on working as – as long as I can and doing lecturing and that, I'm not going to be putting any miles on the clock, you know. It's not as if I'm physically, you know, abusing my body. So I'll probably be – I'll probably be able to carry on doing that for – for a fair old – fair old amount of time. So I'll probably carry on – I'll probably be doing that.

So looking to the future is always a tricky one, especially when you're got a lot of things kind of going on. And your children are very active so there's always something that's – that's happening.

Yeah. They won't be able to afford mortgages or deposits, will they, so we'll – we'll have to carry on working and – and sort them out.

And you also mentioned that you've done a lot of courses in the past two years. Was there ever a specific course that you wanted to do or perhaps something specific that you wanted to know about?

Er ... I do – well, education wise, you know, I left school with no qualifications and – and I do regret – seeing my daughter now as well, but I do regret maybe not having a degree, 'cause most of my friends have degrees. Most of my colleagues now have degrees and I do regret, you know, not going to uni, 'cause I certainly had the intelligence and the – the ability to do it. But saying that, you know, I've done the equivalent, so I've done the equivalent anyway, so I've got – you know, I've got it now, you know. Well, I've got an NVQ Level 6 diploma, which is nearly – nearly a degree. So, you know, it hasn't really – hasn't stood me back in any way, but I might have done things a bit quicker had I had it. But, you know, I don't know. The way I've went is – I'm fine with – I'm fine with the way things have panned out, so ... but I would have liked to have done that though.

[2:39:29]

Do you know if anybody kind of – I know you didn't have much contact with anybody in your mum's family, but did you know of anybody on either side, on your father's or your mother's, that went on to continue their education?

Erm ... my dad's siblings were all – all will have left school as soon as they could, none of them would have had further education. They probably didn't even finish secondary school. My mum's side, with them all being orphans, I'm not too sure but I daresay they all left school very early. But I know – like, you know, lots of my cousins have – lots of my cousins – well, lots of my dad's cousins, so that's the generation above, have done – you know, he's got some cousins who are doctors and teachers and what have you. So, you know, they've went and made sure that they all educated themselves and what have you. But – and lots of my cousins have – you know, their parents have made sure that – you know, loads of my cousins have got degrees and have got very good jobs and, you know, all different but – in all different industries but, you know, they're – most of them seem to be doing very well for themselves. It's just us [laughs].

So when you were growing up, there wasn't – 'cause you mentioned earlier as well that your – your mum wouldn't – wouldn't tell you, you know, do your homework and things like that, so was there anybody there kind of trying to – to show you, you know, the importance of education or ...?

No.

No.

No. My – my dad – well, this was – because I wasn't with him at the time anyway, but he says now, like, you know, my grandfather was a – my dad's dad was a very well read man and there's a famous politician, he's dead now, a fella called Neil Blaney, who – who was what they call a Father of the House. He was the longest

serving TD MP in Ireland and he held the record for – you know, for a long, long time. He was a – an MP for over thirty – for over thirty years. But he was – it was my grandfather's best friend and the two of them would be sitting every night in front of the fire, talking about history and politics and what have you. And so my dad always says my grandfather was very well read and well educated. But he went bankrupt twice and maybe that affected the education that he gave my dad and his siblings, 'cause my dad left school when he was thirteen to work. He was made to go out and work 'cause they – provide a wage for the family. And – but, you know, my dad did try to give us – well, so he tried to give me – he – when I went to live in Ireland, he made sure that he got me into the convent, so I suppose that was his way of trying to make sure that I got the best education. But it was a bit too late then, but ...

'Cause earlier you said that you – you really enjoyed going to school.

Oh yeah, definitely.

But obviously you didn't have anybody there kind of, you know, reinforcing the importance of education, yet you still –

No, nobody – nobody sat down and said to me, you know, you really need to get your O levels 'cause then you'll get your A levels and you can go on to university, you know. I don't even know – you know, I didn't really know what university was until – you know, I was past school then before I realised, blimey, if I would have done this and done that, I could have went, you know. You know, it was – it wasn't an option. It wasn't – you know, it wasn't – never talked about. It was never a goal, you know. Whereas all my generation now, you know – all my cousins my age have all – most of them went to university. But all – all our kids now, so, you know, the last generation, all our kids, we all want them to go, you know. We're expecting them to go, you know. Well, I know they've got these fees now, but, you know, all the older ones have been given the opportunity to go. Most of them have gone.

Did any social workers ever kind of talk to you about your future or –

No. No, but bear in mind, you know, I haven't seen a social worker since I was probably about ten. But yeah, if they – if they did, I can't – I really can't recall it. When I'm ten I probably would have – I wanted to be a footballer or something [laughs].

[2:44:38]

Did they – I mean, again at the age of ten it might be slightly different, but can you remember if they ever offered you any other support, like any therapies or counselling or any other type of support like that?

No, I've never been offered therapy or counselling in my life. And I probably – I probably would have declined it. I probably would have been very sceptical, to be honest with you. No, I never ...

[2:45:15]

Okay. You mentioned – I think it was right at the beginning, that you – you bought your flat and you was in there for quite a few years.

Only for a few years, yeah.

Yeah. What happened the – obviously when you – when you first kind of bought that – that flat, can you remember how you felt or the experience that you had as you turned –

Oh no, it wasn't nothing like that. It was – you know, my mortgage was cheaper than rent, you know. It was – no, I just – and my dad obviously was encouraging me, you know, get a mortgage, don't be wasting money on rent and, you know, every month you pay your mortgage, it's money in a savings account. Even if you don't save anything, as long as you're paying your mortgage off – 'cause, you know, at this time as well – this was, you know, the mid '90s, you know. House prices were rocketing

up on a – on a daily basis, you know. So no, there was never – no feeling like that. And I think even now, even to this day – [laughs] maybe this is linked now to me getting my bag of possessions into the social worker's car, but I could go home now and my wife always says to me, 'We don't even know that you live here,' 'cause I don't leave nothing out. I don't leave – you know, I don't leave my possessions lying around. I put them in my wardrobe or my drawer, my shelf or – you know, I don't – you know, she says, you know, 'We could walk in here now and we wouldn't even know that you lived here.' And that's the way I've always been. And I don't know – you know, a house doesn't mean – a house to me – don't get me wrong, you know, my wife makes her best to ensure it's a home, you know, and it's a base and what have you, but to me it's just where you sleep, you know.

And do you feel that is from when you was younger?

I don't know. I don't know. Maybe, possibly. Possibly, you know.

[2:47:18]

When you were younger as well, did you ever go on any holidays or any breaks?

Yeah.

I mean, sorry, apart from Ireland, did you have any –

Yeah. Well, I – I remember one holiday that we had as a family, if you like, and we went to Clacton, stayed in a caravan park, a bit like a Butlins but I don't – I think it was privately owned. But I remember that, like, you know, getting the coach from Victoria down to Clacton and staying there for a week. But apart from that, any other holidays I had were – this must have been through the local authority, 'cause you'd get sent away to this big farm in the country and, you know, the social worker would take you to the station and escort you down to somewhere in the middle of beyond and then drop you off at this farm or whatever, and then come back and pick you up a week later, take you back to London again. So we used to – had a few of them. And

then obviously school trips, you know, we had a couple of school holidays as well. But yeah. But certainly not going to Ibiza or – or Majorca or anything like that.

[2:48:23]

Female: You asked me to remind you, it's coming up to fifteen minutes. It's about thirteen minutes.

Oh okay.

[2:48:34]

Okay. So when the social worker would take you to – to that place, would it just be you in the car or were there other ...?

Well, me and my brother, yeah. I – yeah, it was mostly – it would just be us. I do remember going – one time that we went to this place where there was lots of other kids there. A couple of times it was just the two of us and you'd go to a farmhouse, somewhere like that, and you'd just be with this family for the week. But there was one holiday, yeah, we went somewhere and there was kids, a lot of other kids. And I remembered this – and I recognised one particular kid from play centre. I used to go to play centre, you know, in the summer holidays, 'cause obviously my mum worked. So the play centre would be held in a school but obviously there was no work, you just played all day long. So we – and I recognised this one kid from there. So she – she must have been in social care as well, or – well, we weren't in a home at that time but she must have, you know, been in some – had some sort of affiliation with, you know, whatever, same as us.

Were there any particular kind of good memories that you have or anything that stands out from those – those different places that you went to?

Yeah, you know. I remember – I love dogs, you know. We never had a dog, you know, until we went to the pub, but I remember this one particular time on the farm

and they had a Labrador and they had a big Alsatian. And I loved Alsatisans. It must be the police dog thing. And, you know, and it was friendly as well, it wasn't – you know, and I just – and I remember just loving it. And then just walking out and walking the dog every day and – you know, or it walking me. And I remember like – you know, it was a proper big farm. There was no cattle there, if I remember. There were no animals. It was a – what do you call it, agriculture. It was corn and whatever, big combine harvester. I remember bales of hay and stuff like that, you know, and stacking them on the – on the trailer with the farmer and that, you know. And that was good. You know, coming from London, you know, and, you know, going out into the countryside and being on a proper farm, like, you know.

And did you – from what you can remember, did you get on well with the – you know, with everybody that was there with you at the same time or even just ...?

Yeah, I think so, yeah. I think so.

So there weren't any other kind of incidents or anything that you can think of?

No.

[2:51:24]

And when you went to these places – 'cause obviously there have been a few – a few different ones, what was the kind of – the – kind of like the living like, you know, in terms of food and the actual area itself? You know, was it kept clean? Things like that.

Oh yeah.

What can you remember from the –

I doubt – you know, I probably wouldn't have even noticed. But, yeah, when we stayed on the farms or whatever, yeah, you're living with a family, so – you know,

and you were fed – you know, you ate – farmers eat blinking well, don't they? You know, you'd be fed, you know, three square meals a day, sort of, thing. And, you know, no, it's – but when we stayed in this bigger place where there was a lot of kids there, you know, I can't remember too much about the accommodation, to be honest with you. But it would have been fine. I'm sure it was fine. I wouldn't have noticed if it was – you know, I didn't go hungry anyway, you know. I wasn't mistreated, so ...

So food was never kind of an issue?

No, I don't think so.

And from what you can remember, were you all generally given the same kind of food or was it –

Yeah. And, you know, back then as well, you know, I'd eat – you'd eat anything, you know. There was no – nobody had any dietary requirements either in them days. You just ate what you were given, you know. The only thing I wouldn't eat is greens, cabbage, you know, but apart from that I'd eat – you know, I'd literally eat anything that was put in front of me, so ...

[2:53:06]

I'm gonna skip forward now, but almost going back. You mentioned earlier about – that you drove, that you drive. How did kind of the driving lessons come about? How did you start on that path to driving?

Well, living in Ireland, there's literally – the police are nonexistent. Where we live, it's very, very rural. And you know, there's a local policeman but, you know, it's like PC – PC Plod in Balamory or ... so I've been driving tractors off road, you know, so I had the basics of driving and – and then you – you know, my dad would just let me jump in the car, you know, and you'd just drive two miles home, you know. You can't hit anything, 'cause sheep would be the worst case scenario, or a fencepost. But,

you know, no, he'd just let us drive, and kind of like self taught, you know. And then over here then – I took my test in 1990 and over here now I was driving dumpers and stuff like that at work, so off road but you're driving all the time. When I took my lessons, I paid for it myself and only had about ten lessons, and I've got to say, probably four of them were out of nerves. As I got nearer and nearer to the test I was getting double lessons for myself, but more out of nerves. And, yeah, I took my test and passed it first time.

What about other kind of – I suppose some people would call them typical moments in your life? Obviously, you know, buying a first property, learning to drive. Are there any other kind of big moments in your – in your life that you've had and, you know, perhaps you've had support from others or even, you know, you haven't?

Erm ... well, no, like my in-laws have been absolutely fantastic, you know, and I can't speak highly enough of them, really. I joke about them but, you know, they're brilliant, really. And yeah, when we got married, you know – we got engaged, we got married, they done an awful lot for us and, you know, my own family didn't really – you know, I wouldn't go to my dad and ask him for any advice sort of thing, you know. So yeah, stuff like that, like, you know, getting married and stuff like that. If I had any problems with the house, the first person I'd go to would be my father in law, you know, 'cause he was a builder by trade as well before he got into lecturing. And yeah, I would always go to them, you know. They'd help you. Anything like that, they'd be good for – good for help. You know, obviously – big milestones, you know. I was at the birth – when my wife gave birth, you know. That's something that we shared between us, you know. That was – nobody can really get in there [laughs]. But, you know, that was – yeah, that was quite a big milestone and nice to be part of. Although, you know, I made sure I stayed up north [laughs].

When you were younger, did you ever kind of imagine that you would get married? Did you ever think kind of about it or think that far ahead?

Erm, probably, but – yeah, I'm sure I would have – you know, I'm sure I did. I'm sure I expected to get married at some stage, yeah. You know, it's natural, it's – well,

it's natural, isn't it, really, you know. But maybe – maybe now – kids now might not expect to get married but they'd probably expect to settle down with somebody and live with someone, 'cause it's natural to share, you know, have a relationship and share, you know, whatever – whoever it's with. So yeah, I probably did think about it but, you know, it wasn't – it happens, it happens, you know, no panic. And me and my wife were together for a hell of a long time before we actually got married, you know, so we certainly didn't rush into anything. You know, we had a – you know, we'd had one child, we'd bought a house and – you know, so we were getting ourselves fully established. Like we've got a nine – there's a nine year difference between our first and second, so – but then the third came out pretty quick after that. But yeah, just – just – well, as I say, I think – yeah, I expected to get married but it wasn't – I didn't go out and grab the first girl I could get [laughs]. Or the first one who would take me.

Because obviously when you're – you're younger and, you know, you – some people, you know, look to the future and some have clear plans that they want to – you know, they want to enforce and others don't really, you know, have – have kind of any structure to it. It's, you know, a case of taking it as it comes, really. With your brothers and your sister, do you know if they had – if they had kind of planned out or if they had looked to the future and thought about things that they wanted to do or ...?

I'm not really sure. I'm not really sure. I know my younger brother – he's got his own boxing club and he coaches kids, and I know he's wanted to do that for a very long time, so he might have been – you know, that's – that's probably one of his goals that's been achieved. Erm, but as far as Annette, like I know she had her son, her oldest son, very young – I say very young, like, you know, about eighteen, I think, eighteen, nineteen. Maybe she was planning – you know, maybe she was planning to settle down for – you know, 'cause she's got a kid and for security and, you know, to make a stable environment for – for a kid. You know, maybe but I wouldn't know that, you know, I'm just – I'm guessing –

You never really kind of discussed any –

No, no. Possibly, but – but I don't really know, to be honest with you. I don't really know, you know, what their goals and – and dreams were.

Okay.

If I went to ask my brother or sister, one of them, they would – we would just take the mickey out of each other, just laugh. They would laugh at me, what sort of a question is that [laughs]. And if they asked me, do you think – I'd tell them a load of old rubbish. I would tell them something which couldn't be – you know, way off track, just – you know, just be a wind up.

[3:00:34]

Okay. I'm going to bring it back to the here and now. Do you have any holidays booked for this year?

Yes, August sometime, we're going to Majorca. We've been there quite – we've been there a few times in the past, we kind of flip between there and Portugal. But we're going back to Majorca this year 'cause our – my daughter's coming with us, so – it's probably going to be her last holiday with us, since she's twenty. Can't keep funding her forever. And I want to see if she actually can speak Spanish. I'm going to make sure that she speaks Spanish every single second of the day when we're out there, otherwise she's been wasting three years at university. And we're going all inclusive for the first time, so we're giving that a try. We've always went self catering 'cause we do like eating out and trying new places, but this year we've – obviously the economy and penny pinching and what have you, and value for money, we've decided to go all inclusive. So that might be – it might be the first and last time. But we'll see – we'll see how it goes. We'll probably still eat out once or twice anyway. It'll be just good for the day, for the ice creams and stuff, I think.

Do you have any – when you're on holiday, do you have any – any routines or any set things that you think, right, I have to do this and I have to do that?

Er ... well, nah, we're there to relax, you know. We're there to relax and make the most of the sun, I think. We ... We'll go to the beach at least once, you know, at least once, you know. Seeing as this now as well – 'cause it's Majorca, 'cause it's the Mediterranean, I will go and swim in the – I'll probably go to the beach every other day in the Med, you know. When we go to Portugal it's the Atlantic and, oh, it's too cold. So we will go to the beach and we do probably go to the water park. You know, we make a point of – we'll have one trip, you know, whether we go to the water park or the zoo marine, you know. We'll do something like that. So we always make a point of that. But generally it's just there to relax. The kids just swim all day long in the pool and make friends and if there's any kids clubs they just do that, you know. It's for all of us to relax.

So is it mainly Portugal and Majorca that you go to?

Mostly, mostly, yeah. You know, we've holidayed in this country quite a bit as well, you know. We go to North Wales quite a bit. We've been down to Devon, Cornwall. But, you know, this year we're going back abroad again, so ...

Okay. Before we kind of wrap this up, I was going to ask you, was there anything else that you wanted to discuss or you wanted to tell us, or is there anything else ...

Yeah. Well, I – you – well, you haven't – I haven't talked – haven't talked too much about when I was in care, you know, as an eleven year old, and I was surprised that you haven't – I was surprised that you didn't ask me too much about that. But – 'cause I was – the last two days, I'm thinking, what are they going to ask me, what can I say, and – and, er, so I had it all planned, but then obviously it's totally not like that, it's just ... but, er – 'cause this is about care and I just remember, like – the last time I was in care and it was in Wandsworth and I was about eleven years old. And I do remember, like, some of my school friends came to call for me on a Saturday and I was very reluctant to tell them where I was. And eventually, 'cause he was a very good – you know, one was a very, very good friend, so I said, like, I'm here in this home, but – so he came and met me. And I think he asked, 'Why are you in there?' But I made up a big story that, you know, I was a gangster and I was ... [Laughs]

Well, I didn't say gangster but I – I made up a big story that, you know, I was in trouble so that's why I had to go there. Other – you know, not to say the truth, that my mum's a flipping manic depressive and, you know, drug addict and what have you. 'Cause it wasn't cool to say that, you know. So I remember – you know, I remember being there – you know, him coming and me being really embarrassed about it. But obviously I wasn't too embarrassed 'cause I told him where I was in the end, so. But I do remember being there, like, and – I was never actually bullied but I do remember, like, there was loads of bullying going on, you know. I kind of kept myself to myself, but, you know, some kids really did pick on other kids. And, er, I don't know if the staff had a grip on it or not, I'm not sure, you know, but – not a lot they could do 'cause they can't watch you 24/7, can they? And like bearing in mind this is, you know, very early '80s now, you know, you're talking about 1981, and I remember, like – 'cause growing up in Wandsworth as well, whilst it's not as diverse as it is now – it wasn't as diverse then as it is now, and whilst there was, you know, a few black people coming into the borough, there certainly wasn't as many, you know. And growing up back then, I remember, like, skinheads and National Front and – you know, and people used to, you know, target Asian shops and – and blacks and what have you. And I do remember in the home, you know, you weren't in a gang as such but there was a divide. White kids used to stay together and black kids used to stay together. There wasn't – you didn't really particularly have any Asian kids in there. And there was this divide. And it wasn't intentional 'cause I – one of my best friends at school was black. It wasn't – you know, my parents were immigrants, you know, so it wasn't nothing like that, you know, not with me, anyway, but you just didn't mix, you know, it was – it was really divided. And I don't know if that's the same for everybody else at that time, but, you know, it'd be worth asking them that. I found it like that, you know. And I found the home – you know, I've never been to prison, thank god, I've never been to borstal, you know, but the home to me felt like – for me it felt like a bit like a borstal. You know, you were locked in at – well, you were allowed to go out – you know, you were allowed to come and go as you pleased as long as you told them where you were going, but you were given set times that you had to be back and if you broke them then you kind of lost that privilege, you know, for a while. But it did seem a bit like borstal 'cause it was so regimented and you had to tell everyone where you were going and you had to account for every minute of

your time, nearly, you know. And I remember one time, I wanted to meet up with my mates on a Saturday and I made such a stupid – I lied to the staff, you know. I don't know why I did it 'cause if I'd have said the truth they probably would have let me anyway. But I had it into my head that if I tell them where I'm going, they won't let me, so I told them that I had a school football game. So they asked me, 'Who are you playing and where are you playing,' and blah, blah. So they only go and phone up and check it out. So they come back to me and said, 'You haven't got a school football game on. Where are you going?' So then I told them the truth and it was like, 'Well, you can't go now. If you'd have told us that in the first place you could have gone.' So I learnt the hard way. So I don't know why I done it, but ... you know, but there was consequences, you know. They – they would punish you, not physically, you know, but you would be punished, you'd lose your privileges if – if you did do something wrong. And you were given chores to do, you know. Everyone had a job. There was a rota. You were to wash the dishes up or you were to dry the dishes or you were to – you were given something that you had to do. And ... like where we was as well, like there were some – some really dangerous kids in there, you know. There were a lot of kids who should have been in borstal, or young offender institutes, whatever you want to call them, but there were some kids who should have been in there. They were getting charged or had been charged with stuff like robberies and assaults and stuff and – but for whatever reason, they were put into care. So I don't know why, whether there was placements for them or not, or whatever, but they were put into care. And these kids you had to be really wary about, you know, 'cause they were dangerous. Like some of them were really dangerous. Some of them literally would stab you, you know, if – you know, if you upset them. So that's why I say it was like tenterhooks, you were like on tenterhooks sometimes, you know. You had to be – you had to be really careful who you chose to pal around with, if you like. And I remember one time, I did – I was palling around with one particular kid, but he was a skinhead and he had the full gear, the Dr Martens, the bleached jeans, the bomber jacket, you know. If he went – if he went around like that now, you know [laughs], you would think he was attracted to the opposite sex, but ... he had the full regalia. And I don't know why I hung around with him, but I used to – 'cause he was a bit older and he smoked and he was – you probably thought he was cool or whatever. And I remember the staff warning me and

warning me, 'Don't hang around with him. Don't hang around with him.' You know, more or less saying – you know, begging me not to hang around with him. But the more they asked me not to hang around with him, the more I did, you know [laughs], typical. But thankfully, you know, I wasn't there that long, so, you know, I didn't get involved with anything with him, but, you know, I'm sure – I was a bit naïve back then as well, but I'm sure what he was putting in his rollups wasn't 100 percent tobacco, you know. Not that I would have – I wouldn't have personally known that back then, you know. I wouldn't have had a clue what it was. But I'm sure that's what he was doing. I'm sure the staff knew as well, hence why they were telling me not to get involved with him. That's – you know, that's what I can remember.

Yeah.

I thought you were going to – you know, I thought that – that's what I was – this is what I was trying to remember 'cause I thought that's what you were going to ask me about, you know.

I mean, like I said on the phone and earlier, it's kind of – you take it at your pace and you obviously, you know, divulge the information that – that you're happy to give. Were there any key incidents that you can remember from your time there?

Key incidents?

That have – you know.

I remember seeing kids getting beaten up, yeah, definitely. But in the whole, you know, it's – the staff took us – I remember going – we went to Brighton for the day, took us down to Brighton, and we stopped – they took us back to – come back and they took us to the Trocadero. I remember falling asleep, you know, looking up at stars, you know, boring to me [laughs]. But no, I think – you know ... I've read – you know, I've read so much, you know, since then about some kids being abused in care, and I know back in the '60s and '70s and what have you there was no safeguarding like there is now and there were probably no CRB checks like there is now, not that a

CRB means anything. It just means you haven't been caught. But at least – you know, at least you're making checks, if you like. But back in them days, I know – I've read about – you know, I know there were some issues with some places and all that, but – but, you know, I never seen anything like that. I absolutely had never ever seen anything like that. But like I say, I'd seen kids assaulting other kids but physically, not – you know, not in any other way, just fisticuffs 'cause whatever they've – upset them or been disrespectful to them or whatever, you know, whatever. When I – you know, the staff – all I know, the staff that I had looked out for you. Like I say, you had to do – you had to do your time, if you like. You had to do your chores. You had to – you had to abide by the rules and if you abided by the rules then you were fine. They had no problem with you. But if you broke the rules then you got punished, you know – not punished as such but, like I said, your – any small privileges you had were – were withdrawn.

Is there anything else that you wanted to –

No, that's – I think I've told you I can remember, unless you prompt something. But yeah, I think I told you. But that last bit though was – you know, I wanted to get that across 'cause that's what it was like. And I don't know what the other people have said to you, what their experience – if they were in care homes at the same time, but there was – I do remember like a tension, you know. There was always a risk of – of violence and there was a racial divide as well. I'm sure nowadays, you know, kids are so interactive with each other, it doesn't matter what you are or who you are or – you know, they don't care, you know. But back then, even if I wanted to, you know, the black kids wouldn't let me hang out with them, you know. They probably wouldn't – they probably wouldn't have let me hang out with them, you know. You just – each party – each divide was like a divide.

Did the workers there show any favouritism to either side as such?

Well, I don't remember any black – it was all white – all the staff were white. I don't think they were – I'm sure – I'd like to think they'd be treated – everyone the same. I never witnessed any – I never – I never witnessed them not. And I can't honestly

remember if – you know, if they did do that. I obviously didn't realise it and I didn't – I can't remember it.

Okay. Is there any – any last bits that have sprung to mind?

No [laughs]. I'm just dreading now listening to myself, 'cause you always sound different, don't you? Your voice sounds a lot different when you hear it back. It's like, crikey, is that me talking.

[3:15:20]

Yeah, I think everybody dislikes the sound of their own voice recorded. But obviously thank you for today. You've given us some – some great information. And thank you for sharing your experiences with us. Really appreciate it. And, yeah, it's obviously great to have you on board with this.

I'll be interested – I'll be looking forward to seeing other people's and seeing how – especially somebody around the same kind of timeframe, I'd like to see what they – if their – if their views match – if their experiences match mine. But I daresay – I daresay no two homes were the same, you know. Different staff, you know. A staff member could make it seem like a totally different environment, couldn't they?

Yeah. And, you know, obviously, like you said earlier, there are some bits that, you know, you just kind of put to the back of the mind. So, you know, there'll be other people that perhaps would have been in similar care homes but perhaps have chosen to – you know, to forget that or – you know, they have – they concentrate on other things. It's – I think that's another reason why this – you know, this project is so – you know, so unique really, is that we're getting so many different experiences and different views and opinions. And, you know, even just for somebody to look back, how it was for them at that time, when they get older and they look back, it can be slightly different. So it's – it's good to, you know, obviously get views from everybody. But if you're happy to end the interview there, I think –

Yeah, that's fine, yeah.

Yeah? Are you sure?

Yep.

Okay. Well, thank you again.

Oh, that's no problem.

Really do appreciate it.

[End of Transcript] [3:17:04]