

Care Leavers' Stories project

Ian Springham

Interviewed by Rahma Mohammed

C1597/10

In 2013 this Project was carried out by the Social Care Institute for Excellence. The British Library acted as archive partner. The Project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

This transcript is copyright of The British Library. Please refer to the Oral History curators at the British Library prior to any publication or broadcast from this document.

Oral History
The British Library
96 Euston Road
NW1 2DB
020 7412 7404

IMPORTANT

Access to this interview and transcript is for private research only. Please refer to the Oral History curators at the British Library prior to any publication or broadcast from this document.

Oral History
The British Library
96 Euston Road
London
NW1 2DB
020 7412 7404
oralhistory@bl.uk

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it. Should you find any errors please inform the Oral History curators (oralhistory@bl.uk).

Social Care Institute for Excellence

Interview Summary Sheet

Title Page

Ref no: C1597/10

Collection title: Care Leavers' Stories

Interviewee's surname: Springham

Title: Mr

Interviewee's forename: Ian

Sex: Male

Occupation: Trainer: Peer Mental Health, KUF, Art, TESOL

Date of birth: 1968

Dates of recording: 11.06.13

Location of interview: Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2-4 Cockspur Street, London, SW1Y 5BH

Name of interviewer: Rahma Mohammed

Type of recorder: Canon XF 305

Recording format : .mxf

Total no. of tracks: 1

Mono or stereo: Stereo

Total Duration: 03:01:48

Additional material:

Copyright/Clearance: Full clearance

Interviewer's comments:

Track 1

If you'd like to start off with your name and what you're kind of doing currently.

Right. My name is Ian Springham.. Currently I'm working at South West London Recovery College as a peer trainer and also doing various other bits of work, IT consultancy, art, mental health training, in my free time.

And how do you find your job?

[Sighs] It's quite a long story. I've been experiencing some mental health difficulties over – [sighs] over most of my adulthood and much of my childhood, but I only really realised I couldn't go on without assistance from – from other people when I was about thirty-six. So it was quite a long, slow learning process for me. And after a few years of badgering my psychiatrist for appropriate, affordable and available help, which was fairly thin on the ground, she – she suggested that I might wish to try studying some self management courses and self awareness courses at the recovery college, which was just starting as a pilot project. I did two courses there. The first one was Taking Back Control, Planning Your Recovery, the second one was Telling Your Story, both eight to ten week courses. And having done those two, the manager asked if I was interested in working with them. So I trained to do mental health training and worked for about six months as a sort of sessional or, say, like bank trainer. And then about two years ago, just over two years ago, a couple of posts for peer trainers became available, i.e. the funding became available, to which I applied, got through the application process, was shortlisted for interview, interviewed and then the fun and games of going through human resources. So yeah, and so I've been doing that now for the last two and a half years or so.

[02:22]

So how did you feel when it was suggested that you could no longer go on without professional help?

I was already in a desperate situation. I'd been hanging on, metaphorically, by my fingertips for most of my adult life and probably maybe quite a lot of my adolescence and childhood. Then I came to a point – I was about thirty-six and it just – I had a number of breakdowns that were bigger, they were worse. They seemed far – they struck far more deeply than any ones I'd had before. I – my wife – 'cause I'd not long been married, so my wife said, 'So have you – you know, has this happened before?' And I went, 'Er, yeah, loads of times.' She said, 'What have you done about it?' I went, 'Erm, nothing.' And she said, 'Right, we're going to do something about this.' And so it was really empowering, you know, 'cause most – until then much of my suffering that I experienced had been either internalised or I was the only witness to, and, you know, there was someone who I loved, who loved me, who saw the depth of my despair and was willing to give me the support and – not only the support but to sort of motivate me to do something about something that I, you know, had been avoiding for most of my life. So it was strangely empowering, although it was, you know, the first disclosures were really very – very difficult because, yeah, I'd been surviving somehow in a bubble of my own creation for, you know, slightly cut off from the world, for pretty much all my life.

What would you say provoked your mental instability?

Sorry?

What would you say provoked your –

Provoked it? Right, this is – this is even more complicated [laughs] – the complicated answers get even more complicated, because, erm ... partly, you know, because it is obviously quite a complex subject and even – the causes are possibly, erm, sometimes controversial or maybe just hard to unpick. Certainly I had – there's a family history of mental health problems and emotional problems and even sensory problems, so – and I grew up in a very sort of chaotic atmosphere with my mother and grandmother, and my mother being – was mentally ill. And so life started out pretty shaky. And then I went into the care system at quite an early age, which was – although it got me away from the situation I was in, it put me into another one, which felt just as

dangerous and probably more frightening. And this sort of pattern repeated through my adolescence – my childhood and adolescence. By the time I'd reached what was supposedly adulthood, you know, my – my internal map of the universe was pretty scary, very – feeling very threatened and – yeah, and I felt that it was – there were a few people, if anyone, I could rely on, myself included. But also to make up for that, quite often, you know, bounced in completely the opposite direction into, you know, sort of really idealising people and ultimately sort of splitting into very black, white or, you know, thinking about not only people but feelings, events. And this carried on through – you know, through all my adult life, which, you know, I tried to – most of my – what was avoiding – trying my best to avoid mental health services, because my view of them had been, you know, my first experience of mental health services was seeing my mother being sectioned several times as a small child and her behaviour before and after, which was very confusing and frightening. And I briefly came to mental health services' attention at the age of – I think it was six, and I thought, I'm not sure I'm that keen on getting involved with this. So yeah, I ploughed what, you know, what I thought was probably the best way through, which was – yeah, I made all the mistakes that I possibly could and probably even a few more that I hadn't thought of. Yeah, by the time I'd – I'd been struggling sort of with relationships, with my – my sense of self, my interactions with other people. But one of the key things was that – with the support of my wife, I was starting to look back at my early life, because I'd sort of given her a sort of overview and quite often a sort of blow by blow account of things, and that – and she sort of suggested, 'Well, why don't you get hold of your early life records?' And so I applied to get access to those. And at that time I was – I was – a lot of the things that had happened as a child were brought into much sharper focus, but also I was worried whether maybe some of those events were noted or, you know, were known. There was even the truly awful feeling that, you know, this may not have – none of this may actually have happened. You know, my sense of self identity was always, you know, something I'd sort of hung onto very tightly, 'cause it was the only thing I had that I thought I could rely on. So there was that; that sort of – it was a combination of events that led to that – that number of breakdowns. There was that. There were also, you know, I was having a lot of difficulties that I – 'cause I had, you know, I'd worked – yeah, I'd worked in IT for most my adult life, and quite a lot of my adolescence, something I could control. I was starting to think,

well, maybe I need to explore a bit more, and so I was opening myself – well, I felt, you know, opening myself up to a very frightening, threatening and dangerous world, so that could – my natural or learnt paranoia was starting to work – to work overtime, shall we say. And also at the same time there were other stresses. We were being illegally evicted by our landlord. And so there was a combination of, you know, I think [sighs] unguided introspection, lots of frustrations, anxieties, but also the, you know, the looming loss of one's home, you know, through no fault of one's own, combined that events – it felt like my head exploded. And this happened a few times in a short – fairly short space of time. And at that point my wife sort of said, you know, 'What are we going to do about this?' You know, 'I can't have you going on like this.' So, you know – because it's not fair on you and it's not fair on her, you know. It's not fair on either of us. And, you know, we saw what – what could be done, or we tried to find out what help I could get.

[10:17]

Just going back slightly, you mentioned that you felt being in the care system was equally as dangerous and frightening as being with your birth family.

Mm.

What was so dangerous about being in care?

Erm, initially I had some short – short foster placements initially and that was – that was fun. That was great. But I was also very small, so everything was pretty much an adventure then, especially when – you know, escaping from a – a very chaotic family background. Erm, 'cause also it wasn't even a standard nuclear family. There was – my mother had recently separated from her husband, who turned out not to be my father. We were living with my grandparents and my grandfather had just died. It was a very unstable set up. And yeah, after a couple of short foster placements, I went to a residential assessment centre and, you know, there was a lot of people, you know, sometimes just, you know, as or even more vulnerable. And, you know, there was a large degree of bullying and I suppose jockeying for position, but that also

included, you know, physical and sexual intimidation and – well, everybody was below the criminal age of responsibility, so – but, you know, but, erm, I suppose the sexual bullying.

Within residential homes?

So that was within the residential care home, yeah. Assessment centre, I think it was called. And yeah, so ...

Did you mention any of this to the – your care workers?

No, because I – as someone being bullied, I was in fear. You know, there was always the, you know, if you tell, you know, you'll get beaten up, and there was threats of physical violence. There wasn't that much physical violence, but it was very, you know, every day was a – felt like a battle for survival. You know, one's sort of place in the scheme of things, one's own identity, you know, at six or seven years of age, what little sort of self pride or worth one had. Yeah, so that was really very – and also being a residential assessment centre, there were, you know, lots of new people passing through on a fairly regular basis. That includes not only the children and young people staying there, but also 'cause it was run day and night by, you know, supervised by – run by social workers, there would be people on shift, you know, during the day. There would be somebody else on night shift. And so, you know, although there were obviously patterns of who was there, you know, there wasn't the – I don't know the idea of, you know, having a, you know, 2.2 parents, or whatever it's meant to be – two parents, you know, who are there, you know, available or at least accessible day, night, and for many people, all their lives. So that's – I've never experienced that, so ...

How long were you in residential care?

For a year. In residential assessment centre for a year. I was then – I then was placed with a family in London, who I stayed with for about a year.

And how was that?

Mm ... That was quite trying, quite difficult. It was a large foster family. This was – remember, this was the mid 1970s. Getting people to foster was quite, you know, it was quite hard work and, you know, there weren't that many foster carers. So the family I stayed with had three children of their own. They had already, I think, adopted two children and they had – had had a number of children in sort of short stay with them. Erm, I then sort of joined their – their throng and, you know, there – and this was – because they'd been, you know, they'd started taking on additional children, myself included, they, you know, social services kept on saying, 'Would you like some more?' It wasn't quite as, you know, as crass as that, but, you know, the – but they seemed able to, you know, be able to, you know – to care for a large number of children, including their own. And so I – I moved to – I went to live with them. And yeah, and it was – that was difficult because – again, they still had children coming in sort of on short stay and some more children – three siblings then joined a few months after me, and we moved from London out to – yeah, out of London to a much bigger house, which – which we needed to fit us all in. And yeah, and – but I still suffered – for the first ... I think the first couple of years, erm, you know, sexual predation from one of the older children who was in their care and which made me feel, you know, sort of – not just, oh god, here we go again, but it really did make my sense of self, my sense of – my – the idea that I had any value in myself, you know, completely frittered away by then. Also one other difficult – there were a couple of other difficulties, in that a lot of the children who stayed with the foster parents were previously – they came as siblings, as groups, whereas I was, I think, the only child there without any other family members living with them, so I – yeah, which added to my sense of, I suppose, isolation. But also then I – the one – certainly the policy at the time was wherever possible to keep familial contact going. When we were living in London that was possible to keep contact with my mother when she was – when she was well and not in hospital, you know, and it became more difficult obviously moving sixty or so miles from London. So – but we were still keeping that contact up, which meant I felt very – very torn. They divided loyalties between, you know, my foster parents and foster family, where I felt a bit of an outsider, and with my mother, whom, you know, I loved deeply and ... I was, I suppose, in many ways –

yeah, I'd been thrown out of, you know, that – it felt – well, rejected rather than thrown out of the family home or nest, weird and wonderful though it may have been. So there was real divisions. And I felt when I was in care that there was always the, you know, the hope, the plan, that I would return to London, to either, you know, work or study and probably – maybe even live with my mother again. So there was that. That was a continual ... I suppose it was a divided loyalty, but I felt torn in so many directions and unable to, you know, to really explain how I felt or what I felt, because I didn't trust anybody with my feelings. I knew – by then I was fairly sure people weren't to be trusted with my body, so there was, you know, the worries that I had about trusting people with my mind or my emotions was, you know, was such that I really cut myself off a lot from – from everyone else, which, you know, in itself leads to further problems and difficulties relating to people.

[19:08]

How was your relationship like with the foster parents?

Oh, it was variable. Erm ... it was variable. I – a lot of the time I – as I said, like much of my life, I tried to go to – to almost become invisible, to, you know, to not stand out, not get noticed, not – not to put my head above the parapet. And also because they had, you know, three other young children, plus at any time up to probably another seven children, you know, being shy, quiet and retiring, I could – I could almost blend in with the wallpaper, and that was – which was helpful, but it did make – as I said before, the relationships with anybody else in the situation was quite difficult. My foster mother, erm, knew that, you know, I needed probably a bit more work than – than some other children and, you know, so I did get some quality time with her, but I found – again, I always felt torn between her as my mother and my mother as my mother, and that idea conflicted or divided – conflicting or divided loyalties. My foster father was – I was frightened of, to be honest. He was a big bloke, you know, sort of commanding visible presence, big deep voice and, to be honest, a bit of a bully. I left there when I was fifteen and I didn't contact my foster parents again for about another twenty – twenty, twenty-one years. I went to visit them again, erm, yeah, and it – 'cause I told my – by then my wife had most of my

life story, and – and yeah, my – which is loosely, you know, bits about the foster parents, which I've just said. And she agreed that sort of my analysis certainly was correct now and she could see – she was able to sort of see that, you know, I can see, you know, those difficulties I was still having with them, you know, twenty years on.

What was the family dynamic like? Did you ever feel part of the family?

Erm, not really, partly because they were, you know, there were so many other children. Also the – a number of them, you know, it was ... I'm just thinking about this. Yeah, most children came in in sort of twos or threes, with siblings. Erm, it's a really interesting point. The – there were two, three, four – there were four – I think four children at various times on placement there, who didn't – who were sort of sole children or only children, and, yeah, they were the – plus me, of course. I have to include with that [ph]. But yeah, they – they and myself, we were the ones who, I think, had most difficulties and felt more – more as outsiders. I'm just trying to think. [counts under breath] [laughs] I'm just trying not to disclose names as I count on fingertips, but, you know [counts under breath] ... yeah, you know, yeah, there were five children over those eight years I was with them, who – including myself, who didn't have existing siblings or existing siblings in care there with them, certainly had the toughest time – times.

[23:20]

Throughout your eight years there, what would have been your toughest time?

[Sighs] ... That's a big one ... At the time pretty much everything felt difficult. So I can qualify this – it's really, I suppose, when my actions or reactions impacted on others. Yeah, when I was about thirteen to fourteen, I started really questioning myself, who I was, why, you know, what had I done to deserve this, and, you know, the answers were not much and probably quite a lot [laughs]. There was a lot of – and I was having an increased contact with my mother and grandmother in London. And, you know, the idea of gaining independence was – I'd quite often go and visit them rather than they visit me, and I was really torn between my desire to go live back in

London, hopefully, with the remains of my biological family. Also realising quite what a disaster it would probably turn out to be. And – and, yeah, just the difficulties of sort of fitting in with – I suppose what was quite a difficult family dynamic, or quite difficult for me. So yeah, I started, I suppose, behaving like – what now would be seen to be the typical teenager, smoking, drinking, taking drugs, cutting school, generally being as objectionable as I could possibly be, young people. Present company excepted [laughs]. We did it thirty years ago [laughs]. But yeah, there was – but yeah, and because the one thing that I’d – I’d also felt that I was ... I was going to say – the word I was going to use, groomed for success, because my academic ability was recognised at a very early age. And yeah, I was being sort of fast tracked on various things at school. And I thought, well, that’s the one thing that I have – one of the few things I have any control or power over, so things like cutting classes – I even did my maths O level at the age of fourteen when drunk, and passed. It really was a, you know, a teenage rebellion. It was sticking two fingers up at, you know, everyone and everything that I saw controlled me. And also, you know, that I can do this, I don’t need you. The folly and wisdom of youth in one – in one sentence [laughs]. You know, some of it – actually it’s interesting, ‘cause some of these I haven’t really quite pulled together as thoughts before. But yeah, there was, you know. And so that period, yeah, I actually briefly – and I became very distressed on a number of occasions, very anxious. I really started becoming – experiencing anxiety, especially now – having suffered anxiety and panic attacks in adulthood, I can see the roots are there in my – certainly by the start of my teens. And yeah, so I came to, you know, a number of times I walked out of my foster parents’ house, you know, in a sort of dramatic flounce plus suicide note. Yeah, and at the time I really wanted to die. It seemed to be the only way I could get out of the sort of spiral or divisions that I felt within me. So, you know, so I got picked up by the police once or twice, I think ... At least once. There was another incident with the police but that was another matter. And yeah, I found the – and so what then happened, I went to the Tavistock Centre, in – near Swiss Cottage, with my foster parents, social worker, my mother and her partner, and we were sort of trying to work out sort of plans for the future, which was really, again, very difficult, ‘cause I always felt like I was being tantalised with this – or this carrot dangled in front of me. If you’re a good boy, you can, you know, live and work and study, or whatever it is, in London, if you grew up, was the way it sort

of felt at the time [laughs]. And yeah, it eventually got to the point where I was – not long after my fifteenth birthday, I sort of had a – I got my pushbike and cycled – I wish I'd done it in about sixty miles south in a straight line, but it was in fact about ninety miles, using B roads and, you know, and turned up on my mother's doorstep and, you know, said I'd sort of run away. So yeah, certainly the last two years – and I sort of remained in the – in the care of the local authority until I was seventeen and a bit ... about seventeen, I think.

[29:18]

So when you were on the brink of suicide, did you feel you had anyone to confide in or talk to?

No. Erm ... there was, you know, a couple of best friends, who were ... my two best friends at the time both had – both came from – what's the term they use? Broken homes, I think is the term that was then used, you know. It was really quite uncommon. But yeah, you know, sort of mother and father had separated and they used to spend time between the two. And again, you know, between London and where we lived. So, you know, I had two close friends in my year who had – not the same necessarily life experiences, but, you know, certainly sort of the family, you know, it was – family difficulties. And so I talked to them a bit, but ... my foster parents, especially my foster mother, my mother, my social worker, would try to encourage sort of me to open up, but I found that, you know, it was too threatening or too challenging or too – and too difficult, 'cause it was, you know, I'd learnt a way of somehow stumbling through life with the minimum of interaction with other people and certainly not opening myself up to any of my vulnerabilities, as I felt. Erm, so ... not really, I suppose. One or two friends, they were in similar sort of situations. We all started cutting classes and sort of having a mutual – a mutual mope society, as it were. 'Yeah, life is rubbish, isn't it?' 'Yeah, I agree, you know, what can we do about it?' 'Let's listen to Black Sabbath and it will all get better.' No, it doesn't get better, but it ... [Laughs] 'Let's have some – let's drink.' And then again – so again we were – we did have a sort of a – a somewhat destructive mutual support group, network [laughs], you know. We were all in sort of vaguely similar situations, not

knowing, you know, feeling torn, feeling, I suppose, unloved, unwanted or uncertain about how loved and wanted we were. And – yeah, and my experience to that point was that, you know, that adults tended – or anybody older, bigger or in more authority than me tended to either be uncaring, unhelpful, positively antagonistic or likely to launch surprises on you like, ‘Ha ha, you no longer live here,’ or, you know, ‘Oh, you’re going to live somewhere else today,’ or – those sorts of unwelcoming – unwelcome lifestyle – [laughs] beyond lifestyle, complete life changes and out of the blue, you know. I got used, I suppose – although it was frightening, I got quite, I suppose, used to my mother’s eccentric, bizarre, weird behaviour. And, you know, so literally – it was twice I sort of, you know, as a small child, you know, she was there one day, not the next and then not there for a while. So yeah, my experience of adults – my experience and sort of view of adults was not very conducive to me wishing to share or disclose or acknowledge any vulnerability ‘cause I thought that, if I do that, it will just get worse.

[33:22]

What would you say was your earliest recollection of being in care?

[Sighs] [Pause] It’s quite hard to unpick, because it is sort of – the first time I was in short term care was when I was about five and then again when I was nearer six. And yeah, it was being with – and I can’t – I know the order but, I mean, in my brain I can’t actually unpick which was first, ‘cause it was very early memories, but they were both – both times with short term foster parents. Erm, and it was really odd because I think it was trying to – yeah, it was going into a situation with a mother, a father and one other child, you know, of their own. And yeah, erm, so just sort of being there and sort of thinking, this is something I’m not used to. But it was – it was okay. It was not threatening. It was actually being asked – yeah, people actually wanting to find out a bit about me without it being threatening or feeling threatening. Erm ... when I think about it, the actual first memory is – I suppose it would be the food. I think it was a, hurrumph, decision whether I wanted butter or margarine on something, presumably bread, then as I was discovering that if I – I’d been told that if I started the porridge at the outside, it would be a lot safer than starting at the middle

or I would scold myself, my tongue. So yeah, and that was – yeah, that’s about the earliest. Although, come to think of it – I’m trying to – again, it’s unpicking the order is really difficult, but I know certainly I – one point when I went into short term care, you know, I do remember being driven, picked up from – it must be a bit later, but picked up from sort of what would now be called reception, first year of school, and going to the – and being driven by the police to the social services office round the corner, because my mother had been sectioned during the day, without me – whilst I’d been at school. So that’s a very early one as well. But that really is the beginning of going, you know, a period of going into care. I think it may have been the second time that I was in care.

[37:53]

How did you feel when your mother was sectioned, watching her being –

Well, it was really – it was ... really difficult because I don’t really – the first one, I can’t really remember very much. Yeah, I was quite young, I was about four, and I just remember that, you know, she’d been behaving, you know, increasingly oddly. Even I was sort of realising that, you know, you know, her idea and the actual really had such a gap between it that – I don’t understand but one trusts one’s mother. And so I did find it really difficult trying to work out that, you know, my mother is saying this, I’m observing that, where are we – where is this ... I suppose I was torn between, is it one or the other, answer rather than it was something in the middle, which may have been closer to the truth. Yeah, and the second time was really very – ‘cause I was – at that point, by the second time I had been – we’d been living – we’d moved out from my grandmother’s and moved to a one bed – two bedroom flat in Camden. And yeah, it had been ... It was over the course of about a year that her health had sort of slowly deteriorated – her mental health had deteriorated. And I – I’d been attending school less and less. But it really, you know, and the, you know, she had – her thoughts, her ideas, her behaviour, the sort of conversations we had, were becoming really very odd, but because I literally knew no – little different, they were normal odd rather than, you know, almost understandable odd, because I’d sort of got into a – not necessarily the way her mind worked but at least the sorts of strange

surprises that I might experience. So yeah, it really was very – it was very strange, being – ‘cause I felt, again, you know, at infant school, infant classes, erm, slightly different from the other kids. And sort of being picked up by the police rather than my mother from school really was quite – quite a blow, ‘cause it was a – it was suddenly, oh dear, everything’s changing again, and my experience even then at that early age was that most of this change – most of this change very rarely for me seems to be for the better. So it was a bit like, oh god, what happens – what’s happening now, which was ... Yeah, it was really challenging ... Yeah. She got sectioned seven more times after that, but I got sort of a bit more used to – not used – you still don’t get used to it.

Have you ever visited her whilst she’s been sectioned?

I ... I think I did when I – I remember seeing her once when I was in care, very early on. We went to – again, it’s really a very cloudy memory. I think she was in Friern Barnet at the time, which is – I don’t know if it’s still there even, but it used to be quite a famous psychiatric hospital. We went, I think it was there, with my short term foster parents. I certainly have recollections of seeing her. But, you know, mostly it was ... And it was the first time. The second time she was sectioned was when I went into the residential assessment centre and, you know, I didn’t see her for about – must have been a month, until she was released. Erm ... And then as an adult, or as an older child – she was sectioned again when I was about ten, shortly after giving birth to my sister. So my family dynamic sort of changed again as well. But I didn’t see her then. Then again when I was eighteen, I had to do sort of the footwork to get her sectioned and I think I saw her – one of the difficulties that I had with my mother was when I was ill, she wouldn’t actually recognise me. You know, she thought I – if I, you know, she recognised, you know, my physical form, but she was pretty sure that I was either someone else, completely different or an imposter, so it did make the whole point of seeing her very – very counterproductive. But, you know, the second time – that second time, sort of later childhood, early adulthood, I saw her, I think, once that time. And she got sectioned again when I was about twenty-four. At the time I was homeless. And that was about the last time we saw each other.

To this day?

Hm?

To this day?

Yeah, she died of a brain haemorrhage about seven and a half years ago and my, you know, early authorities managed to track down my brother, who's older than me, and, you know, he sort of told my sister and I what happened. But, you know, and because I'd, you know, I'd realised that I'd blown any chance of – of any sort of reunion or rapprochement with my mother. And also I – this was [counts under breath] – this was only a matter of a few months after a series of breakdowns and so I thought – you know, on my own – and so I took it upon myself to actually arrange, organise and conduct the funeral, 'cause I realised that I'd left everything else – everything else had been left too late.

[44:32]

What was your relationship like with your mother when she was well?

[Sighs] ... Very, very odd. And again, it's a – it's really hard to say 'cause it's a very, you know, just within terms of the question, because I'm not sure that either of us were ever particularly well. But yeah, it was ... it was quite unlike, you know, the – because we didn't really know each other very well as mother and son, because, you know, my early experiences or, you know, our early experiences of each other had been through, you know, her period of anxiety and then leading to psychosis and ultimately schizophrenia. Yeah, and those – some of my early life, my grandmother sort of taking charge of – much charge of my care. But it was very difficult. It was – because we knew we sort of had to, you know, well, there were certain things we'd sort of got to do or ... but we felt that there were little or none of the – erm, what's the word I'm looking for? None of the sort of templates or, you know, rules that had been set in place at an early age, from early on. So it was a really odd relationship. Yeah, it was, you know, very blurred, I suppose, because I'd spent a year living only with

her when I was four or five, five I suppose, and, yeah, we'd created our own little insane universe, for want of a better – actually my therapist described it as, 'So we had a universe of two. It was wonderful.' She said, 'Yes Ian, but it was also insane.' That was the one time I cried in therapy [laughs], you know. It was because, yes, I didn't realise, yeah. Our relationship did, you know, really, I suppose, started in at a time when, you know, she was very ill and I was very, I suppose, confused, 'cause I was learning about the world in a – I suppose a very non standard format. So yeah, it was. And as I say, there weren't that many periods where she was well for a long time, you know, for – consistently well, shall we say ... You know, she was coming out of hospital, you know, I worked out, by the time I was twenty-four, it was approximately a four yearly cycle. Erm, and the – and at that point, I thought – I thought, do I want to go through this, you know, breakdown and sort of slow – like a recovery but sort of slowly turning to the world and then a period of sort of vague stability, during which point she'd normally decide that, you know, the medication was unhelpful or perhaps even directly injurious, stopped taking it and become more ill again and be sectioned, ending up in hospital and go round that cycle again. So yeah, that was ... Yeah, at twenty-four I just, you know, I realised that that probably had – it was really hard 'cause I'm trying to remember what it – I've got diaries back from that time, and, you know, I felt that I just had to cut my losses, I think was the exact term I used. And it seems such a harsh thing to say, but I – I honestly felt that we were – we were just going to repeat the same sort of tragedy and farce time and time and time again, that, you know, I wanted out of the, you know, of that ...

Did you ever find yourself wishing you could have changed anything?

All the time. Absolutely everything all the time [laughs]. Now with mindfulness, very little. But seriously, no, yeah, a lot of, erm – oh god, yeah. I know – but I know that many things, many decisions, were made for what felt or seemed or are considered to be the best interests for as many people, you know. Erm, like, you know, there's a period, yeah, when I first went into short term care – my mother had been sectioned. My grandmother was unable to look after me singlehanded, having – yeah, looking after me, my mother, and until fairly recently before that, my brother and her husband. So yeah, and I understand – so it was impossible for her to look

after me. But if – there was nothing I could have done about that, so I couldn't – yeah, if I hadn't gone into care in the first place then things would have certainly been a lot different. Better or worse, I cannot say. And I've – I've tended to have that sort of quite pragmatic outlook. Although I've tortured myself over, you know, internally over things I wish I'd done, said, hadn't done, hadn't said. Wished that, you know, other people hadn't done or said, and really now, you know, I actually now have inner peace and acceptance and even compassion and loving kindness, that I can let it go. But yeah, I spent most of my life, yeah, wishing I could change everything and being incredibly frustrated, because I only fairly recently realised that literally none of it was in my power to change. And even if I had my tardis working and I could leap and go back in time, I probably still couldn't change very much about it. So, you know, there's things that – I wish I'd stood up for myself when the bullying and sexual abuse started because it might not have happened again and again and again. But I didn't have the skills. I didn't have the knowledge. I didn't, you know, in trauma therapy, we've actually done this, we've actually gone back to specific incidents in, you know, after lots and lots of build up and preparation, months of preparation, to actually specific events, and partly I realise there is nothing I can change about them, apart from the way I perceive them or they impact on me. It's a – if I ... and the two worries I have [laughs], even if I did have this ability to go back and change something, I would, you know, I suspect that I would either make a far worse decision in the moment or I'd make one that – that probably life would be very uninteresting. It would be very safe. It would be uber safe. I would be the most safe person there is, yeah. And that's what I did try anyhow, just a little cocoon, a little bubble, you know, sleeping in my own bubble, away, you know, isolated from the world. So... certainly through childhood and much of my early adulthood, there was so much I wished I could change, but it always felt impossible. I now realise that it – it not only is impossible but it probably wouldn't – it wouldn't have – it may well – it would not have helped. And so ... That, you know, that, I think, helped, but ... You know, I certainly don't – probably couldn't have done any better [laughs] myself.

[53:51]

What was your relationship like with your social workers?

[Sighs] I had a number of social workers over the years I was in care, but there were two over a long period, one in the earlier years, so I was about ten. That was ... [sighs] that was really very good. Erm, although I must admit, it was like having a third mother [laughs], you know. I was really having enough difficulties with two, you know, my mother plus my, you know. And it was – certainly when I was – early on in care, my social worker used to accompany – initially used to accompany my mother on her visits. That was good. And when I was ten I had a change, you know, my then social worker was moving on to new and other things, and so I got a new social worker. And yeah, that was – sorry about this. Erm ... it was interesting, the difference, a male social worker, because, you know, I think my foster father sort of – - distance plus his own problems and, you know, but that I'd – in my experience of the care system prior to that, I'd basically sort of always allied myself or been with women, so it was very – it was quite – in fact, all my teachers up till that point as well had been women. So it was very odd, having a man being able to get that – sort of that close to me, erm, or that involved in my life. It was – sorry about this. It really was ... it was certainly very interesting at first because, you know, it seemed we had a number of interests in common and – and also he had, you know, connections back with, you know, with London where I lived, and so on. So it was – yeah, so that was ... it started off well. Can we have a break, please?

Yeah, sure.

[56:47]

So why would you not like to talk about your social workers?

Erm, certainly with my last one, erm, the situation became quite difficult because ... It's where the grooming word comes in again. Erm, but the relationship with my last social worker and I sort of developed in ways that were not appropriate and, you know – and eventually I had to – I made a complaint, although it was a historical complaint, about his behaviour, which, you know, I've dealt with – I've dealt with through – through psychotherapy, through trauma and sort of victim support, but also

through the legal process as well. So, you know, I'm not really sure this is an appropriate forum for, you know, to go much further with that, or that it would necessarily be helpful. But just to add to the point is that, you know, that, you know, historical allegations of inappropriate behaviour are very difficult to, you know, to prove and to unpick over time.

[58:22]

How was your relationship with your brother and sister, growing up?

Oh, that's – again, they're all very complex. My – back to a very quick potted history. My mother became pregnant and got married a few years before I was born, and gave birth to my brother. About a year or two later, they effectively separated and she and my brother had gone back to live with – when she was pregnant with me, gone back to live with her parents, although she still maintained contact with her husband. Her father died. You know, the family dynamic was moving around. And my – I was born as well and my, you know, her husband was pretty sure that I wasn't his because, you know, they'd been separated when I was conceived. And so they eventually sort of decided to – or he filed, effectively, for divorce on grounds of infidelity. And so my brother then went off to live with him. So I recollect – and I was about three years old. So my recollection of my brother being around is very hazy at best. And likewise, his father, I can – I've got only the very vaguest recollection of. And likewise, my grandfather, because these people all sort of left my life around about the same point, 19 – around 1971. My ... you know, the divorce came through some years later and I didn't discover till I was fifteen, actually when asking my mother – no, a bit earlier than that, about thirteen, that actually the person whose surname I bear isn't my – wasn't my father – isn't my father. So – because, you know, I felt – I was trying to work out, well, what's so great about my brother that he gets to, you know, to leave this hellhole and I get lumbered here, what did I do wrong? I didn't, you know, I was fairly sure that it was some failing on my point or my part. Yeah, it wasn't till I was about fifteen that I – fifteen that I finally actually saw the blood test results from 1975 that were demonstrated beyond – beyond any real doubt that my brother's father was not my father. My sister was born in 1977, so

when I was about nine, approaching – about nine. And, you know, I was at that time in care and living outside of London. And I saw her – I saw my mother once, you know, once when she was quite heavily pregnant. A few months – a couple of months later I saw my sister as a very small child. And, you know, the pressures of pregnancy and baby, other problems with medication and other life difficulties meant that my mother became ill again. And, you know, my – and my, you know, so she was obviously unable to care for my sister, and so my sister also went into care, firstly on a short term placement whilst my mother was sectioned, but also realising that longer term plans needed to be made for her. And, you know, she was, again, fostered outside of London and adopted by some other parents. But, you know, I kept – because she was obviously not only known but in, you know, in the social services' loop, you know, we did keep – and our mother and she also kept fairly regular contact when well enough. So, yeah, I saw my mother on a – my sister, sorry, on and off, usually at the same time as my mother, once or twice a year. So until I was about eighteen, so she would have been about ten, and then I sort of – I struck off out on my own again, with my depression, anxieties and other problems in tow, and I really cut myself off from almost everyone. I – my brother, sister and I didn't all meet together for the first time until 1991, so I was, what, thirty-one. My sister was about twenty-two. My brother was about thirty-three. And we've kept in touch since, but it's been a completely sort of, you know, nonstandard arrangement because we've effectively grown up in three, you know, although the same mother, three entirely different lives and actually very separate ones, you know, physically in time and space from each other. So it's – excuse me. It's been ... quite challenging, but also I feel slightly torn because I sort of think, well, I managed for most of my life without very much contact with my brother and sister, you know, why, you know, where were they – I suppose sometimes that feeling of, yeah, where were they – where were they when I needed them. A bit like where was I when I needed – when I needed me. You know, not in a place where they could actually do anything useful or helpful because they were either, you know, too young or going through their own troubles. Erm ... Yeah, and – yeah, my brother and I met up first when I was – again, it was about thirty, thirty-one. Yeah, and we were both sort of youngish, freeish, but not and single. So we used to, you know, meet up quite frequently and we used to go out for a few beers together, probably every once or twice a month. And then, you know, as our lives changed,

you know, you know, my brother's sort of settled down with a new partner, who he's still with. I got engaged at least three times. Serial engager. And yeah, and, you know, different – moving, you know – 'cause we did originally live only, it turns out, a few miles apart, although we hadn't seen each other in nearly thirty years, literally a few miles apart in London. Only a borough between us. So yeah, so that's – yeah, it's – it's difficult, a bit like the relationship with my mother, because none of us ever had, you know, a normal traditional or probably even healthy relationship with her. We, again, don't know where we really stand. We don't know the rules, I suppose, or the – have a map or ideas. 'Cause although, you know, 'cause my brother's father brought him up effectively singlehanded, so, you know, as an only child. My sister was adopted to – within a family with two children, both slightly older than her, so she has, you know, I suppose I'm – again, it's always sort of – it's not really divided loyalties, but it's that, you know, the – I suppose, you know, so she grew up most of her life effectively with two siblings, although, you know, in the family that she became adopted into, and two parents. So, you know, she and I have – I suppose it's quite – I suppose quite a difficult relationship because we don't really know how it's supposed to work. I probably have a – either an aura of glamour or of weirdness that she finds helpful when dealing with her problems. I – 'cause now, you know, because also she lives outside of London, near where she grew up, so it's actually quite difficult to sort of – to see each other very frequently. And also she has a number of – four children now, so she's got lots of other commitments. So it's really been – actually I think in adulthood we've only met a handful of times. But, you know, the – again it's the – I suppose it may be a testament to the stuff I've got through is that I tend to only hear from my sister when she's got a problem that she needs help with [laughs]. And so I recognise – and again it's that recognition that if she doesn't contact me, it's because life's probably not too bad, or quite bearable. And, you know – and the, you know, when things are difficult, I – there's nothing that she, you know, she's always certain that she's going to shock me with whatever, you know, problems she's having, in the same way that I always thought that, you know, the problems I have are far worse than anybody's ever experienced and will make even hardened therapists run away screaming in fear and horror. But no – but we don't – we've never really had any sort of typical roles or relationships with each other.

MS: I'm sorry, can I just slightly move your microphone?

Yeah, sure.

[1:08:57]

Did you ever feel the need to contact your birth father?

Yes, I had several problems in – ‘cause, you know, until I was thirteen I was fairly certain that it was my brother’s father. And I’d sort of been badgering my mother, you know, to find out more about him. Also trying to work out, you know, why did he pick him and not me? Why did I get lumbered in this? When I was about thirteen, or maybe approaching fourteen, my mother actually said, you know, ‘The reason that we sort of split, you know, was that, you know, it was pretty certain that, you know, you weren’t ...’ I wasn’t her husband’s offspring, which led to – I said, ‘Well, who is? You know, who is my father?’ And she, you know, gave me a name of someone that, you know, with whom she’d been in a relationship with at that time, and again, who wasn’t around. So, yeah, I’d ... and at that point I felt, well, you know, I’d had this sort of pent up resentment for someone who I’d thought to be my father, who I’d thought had rejected me, but wasn’t and hadn’t [laughs]. I was thinking – I thought – my experience at thirteen or fourteen was that, you know, adults tend to be trouble. It’s not a view I’ve entirely got rid of still [laughs]. But then I thought, well, yeah, it might be interesting, what do I want to do about it, or even if it’s possible to do anything about it. As I say, I left my foster parents when I was fifteen and went back to live with my mother and her partner, and when I was sixteen she’d actually bumped into this person when out and about one day and brought him home. Said, ‘Here, this is your dad.’ Rather a surprise out of the blue, you know. And it was great. And I thought, wow, I sort of feel a bit more complete, I think. Yeah, so ... and, you know, I sort of – we used to meet up quite frequently. Erm ... and a couple of years later mother disclosed that she wasn’t absolutely entirely certain that he in fact was my father. There was a third name came into the frame. And I felt really, you know, that felt really – it felt pretty crap, you know, that I’d been getting spun a line for the, you know, until – pretty much until puberty. You know, my adolescence I thought my,

you know, my roots were suddenly elsewhere, with somebody I then met, developed a – I suppose a relationship with, and then to be told, oh yeah, there's half a chance that actually it's a third person. And I just thought [laughs], none of the people actively or wittingly or unwittingly involved in my conception, birth and life have been really of any use whatsoever, you know [laughs]. And sort of, you know, I sort of officially despaired of the whole – of the whole setup. And so, no, I didn't. And no, my sister has a similar problem that, you know, her – on her birth certificate she has someone else named as her father, who may or may not be. But, you know, I'm quite often saying to her, 'Look, you know, you do, you know, you do actually have two parents of your own, you know. You've already got more parents than my brother and I, you know [laughs], and both of yours are still alive. You know, what are you going to gain from, you know, meeting up with somebody who, if still alive, you know, may just have been of passing interest rather than, you know, can give any insight into – 'cause having played no part in her life, can give any sort of clues.' But, you know, she does want to know more about her mother, which – because her experience of her mother is, you know, a few months of quite extreme neglect in her very early life, which led to her being hospitalised and my mother being sectioned, and then once or twice yearly visits for a few hours, until the age of about – in fact it was the last time I'd seen her in my younger life, so, you know, until the age of about ten, so ...

[1:14:18]

Do you ever talk to your brother about his upbringing and how that was?

Ooh, when we first met up altogether, before, you know, my sister and I had met as well – but, you know, my brother and I used to meet quite frequently and we'd talk quite a bit about it. And ... yeah, he felt – yeah, he had very, you know, we all had sort of very ambivalent feelings about our mother, but his – you know, and his – his father, you know, brought him up effectively singlehanded, again, long before it became – I won't say fashionable, but, you know, it was far less common forty years ago than it might be now. Yeah, and so – yeah, he's sort of always tried to adopt a sort of fairly pragmatic approach, because I suppose in many ways that's all you can do is, you know, how can I deal with a situation that I am in? Also I suppose in many

ways he's had the influence from his father of, you know, maybe what life was like with his mother, that I – all the difficulties that they had, which is an experience that I don't understand or have had, and my sister, you know, even less so. Probably our degrees of interest in our mother is, you know, sort of directly proportional or indirectly proportional to the amount that we, you know, the experience that we've known. Although I – out of the three of us, I have the most firsthand experience of living with her, you know, for a few years on and off in childhood – in early childhood and a couple of years in adulthood, or later childhood, approaching adulthood. But yeah, so – and there were certain – I think for my brother, there are certain bits of his life that are maybe a closed book, whereas, as I think we can tell, mine's pretty much open with – with page notes [laughs], annotations for all to see as much as possible.

How's your relationship with your sister's parents?

Erm, I last saw them [laughs] last time I – my mother and I saw my sister together, which is, what, twenty-five years ago. They have a ... you know, they have their life as my sister's parents, but, you know, to be honest, I've really, you know, I only know them from visiting my sister in her childhood. So yeah, I'm obviously – I'm interested in their wellbeing, what's happening to them, but it's – I suppose it's more – although it's very much more important for my sister, for me it's a – I suppose they have a status of – I suppose distant relative that one, you know, one sort of – and again, I'm occasionally in contact with her adopted brother and sister, so – but that's – it's not difficult – I mean, it probably – I probably make it feel more difficult than it really is. It's just that we don't really know each other and never really have, apart from, you know, quite often very tightly supervised short visits for, you know, very far apart. So ... this is, you know, it's almost another – they're almost in another world.

[1:18:11]

How was it like going to school and being a looked after child?

[Sighs] I think about this, 'cause firstly I went to school – erm, when I first went to school, that was when, you know – it was the first sort of – second time, I think – I think the first section was before I'd started school. The second one was when I was at school. It was really very, very odd because we'd moved to the area from elsewhere in London, so again I was a bit of a newcomer, and – and because I didn't – and I, you know, didn't socialise. I barely spoke, let alone do any, you know, let alone played or did anything with other people, it was really difficult. And, you know, my behaviour was – it had apparently already become noticed as weird and wonderful by the age of sort of five and six, which sort of set me out as being a bit different. So certainly school from a very early age was really difficult. And also that I had my mother explaining to me her paranoid ideas and views of the world, which usually involved people, you know, either planning, plotting or actually going out of their way to cause harm or misery to us. So I was very wary of other people. Which again, when it plays out, you know, you then act out that misery or weariness, which makes people think, ooh, this person's a bit odd, you know, and so it feeds back round and round on itself. And then it was actually, you know, one day being met from school by the police rather than by my mother. You know, 'cause I was in the same class with the same children all through nursery, you know, the induction, whatever it's called, intake, right the way through primary school. So, you know – and yeah, and then suddenly I would be coming to school in a minibus from an assessment centre. So, you know, even then I realised that I was seen as a bit different. You know, I was having a lot of difficulties relating to other children. I probably related better with my teachers. But yeah, and then – again, one of those surprises out of the blue, it was the third year of infant school, coming back from lunch one day to discover a party being laid on and it was, you know, it was a – 'Are we having a party?' 'Why?' 'Because you're going to – you're starting at a new school on Monday.' I went, 'Oh, great.' Nobody had actually thought about telling me this. So, you know, that was – so then I moved to another school across in South East London from North West London, you know, with some – the foster parents, who I ended up staying with for eight years. But, you know, I'd previously, you know, stayed with them at sort of weekends, but I wasn't really – I didn't really know that I was, you know, the transition from, you know, living in one part of London to living in, you know, in an assessment centre, to living in another part of London with a –

sort of with another readymade family, was going to be so sudden. So I started at a new school and, yeah, it was – it was I think probably a slightly bigger school. And, yeah, I – it was – it was really very – and again, there were – none of these children from the foster family were in the same year as me, so, you know, I felt, again, continued isolation. You know, one of my foster brothers I used to sort of see quite frequently around the school during the day and we'd always sort of wave at each other and smile and, you know, give each other thumbs up signs. We also – we shared a bedroom so we, you know, we had quite a good, I suppose, rapport with each other. But yeah, I did still feel very much – erm, very – rather isolated. 'Cause again, I'd moved as a solo child into a family of, you know, three of my foster parents' children of their own, two adopted children, who were sibling, one or two other people sort of passing through, so it felt quite difficult. And – and also I knew that we were having another group of siblings who would be coming to join us and then assumed that we would be moving out of London, which happened all in the space of about two months. So in one term I was in three different schools [laughs]. No, that's a slight fib. Two schools in, you know, two schools in one term. Started the next term in a third school. But in the space of two months I'd been in three different primary schools, you know, the – three out of three – we had two infant classes and then we, you know, there was no first year of juniors. Yeah, I always get that bit muddled. But yeah, so what is it, year four, I think, now. But yeah, and so we moved to – we moved – I knew we were moving. That didn't come as a surprise. I saw the boxes being packed [laughs], you know. That was less of a surprise. But we still – and we'd been once to visit the place we were moving to and it was big and it was exciting and it was not round here, so – or not round wherever here was at the time. So that was okay. And we started a new school. And my – although my abilities had been – some of my sort of abilities in things like maths had been spotted quite early, also some of the problems I had with writing and speech had also been noted, and so I started my new school in the sort of remedial class for work on writing. 'Cause I could write perfectly, you know, I could read really well. I'd learned to read when I was three. I could write, but it was completely incomprehensible. It was a mess. My speech was a bit of a mess as well. I stuttered. I lisped. I didn't – I tried not to speak anyhow, so when I did, yeah, I felt that I was being mocked. So I, you know, had some – we did some work on my speech, speech therapy, and watching lots of black

and white films, which is where I got this voice from [laughs], years of preparation and practise. But yeah, and so going to a bigger school, meeting new people and again, being in the remedial class, which was in year one and two of primary school, I met a number of people who also – having gone through a number of difficulties. Yep, some of them became friends right through to sort of secondary school. But yeah, there was – and again, it was odd starting a new school, not at the beginning – well, at the beginning of a term but not the beginning of the school year. So I was going into, you know, an established class three months later than everybody else, which was, I suppose, quite, you know, I think I was self isolating by then, but it was – it did make – it did feel like being, you know, perpetually just being thrown in at the deep end. And yeah, my – that’s the first year my – yeah, I learned to write fairly clearly without accident or injury to myself or others, which is – you know, it was a bit touch and go. But also again the skills that I did have were recognised. You know, in IQ tests and I – they didn’t quite go off the end of the chart but they were heading in that direction and it was, you know, so I was given a bit of extra help, more extra help. And so by the second year I’d gone sort of effectively into the mainstream of the school, and third year. In the fourth year it was when I ended up in a mixed year class, I think partly ‘cause it had been – they were, again, streaming the brightest of the third years along with the brightest of the fourth years. But there was always that – there was always that slight problem living there, that we were – we did live in pretty much the biggest house in the town. It had eight bedrooms, you know. I think it was eight bedrooms, you know, big front, detached house, which had previously been the local orphanage. So yeah, all the – most of the children who were going there were just known as being fostered or adopted, and in – certainly in primary school, you know, a lot of my – the friendships I was building, people would ask me, ‘Well, what’s it like being adopted or fostered?’ And I would go, ‘Well, it’s sort of okayish,’ you know. ‘Cause I couldn’t tell them, you know, a lot of the time it’s really awful and other times it’s just – I suppose like anything else, the time just felt like continuing nothingness or disconnection with the world, because, you know, you know, I did feel rather – rather out of place. And I’m sure, you know, a number of my foster siblings did as well. And then through secondary school, yeah, it got a bit better because I knew, you know, I’d actually started at a school on the first day of the academic year, which was a – almost a first by then, and I, you know, there were

some people I knew from my primary school. But also, 'cause it was a big secondary school, it was the main – it was a feeder school – effectively the top stream was used, you know, effectively streamed for entrance to Cambridge. So we – I mean, you know, in the middle of nowhere, the, you know, almost all – all the local schools went, you know, fed into, you know, pupils into that school. There was also a grammar school nearby, which I passed the exams to enter, which was – it wasn't quite the Eleven Plus but it was still that exam that you did at the end of the final year of primary school, to work out what was going in secondary – give an idea what was to happen in secondary school. And my foster parents just thought it would probably be better not to put me into an elite establishment but to, you know, to get me in a more sort of socially inclusive school that did actually – had a wide range of subjects, but also could, you know, further my academic interests. And ... Yeah, and then, you know, the first three years of school went by pretty well, you know. I – I shone in a number of subjects, specifically mathematics and sciences, also English. But I, you know, I was feeling – it may have just been part of the confusion and identity problems that one has sort of in – sort of approaching puberty and adolescence, but, yeah, by the third year they'd really – really caught up with me. And I was having – I was sort of looking back at my life and realising that it was – it did leave a few – a few areas for improvement, to say the very least. Yeah, and actually sort of looking back at some of the, you know, the difficulties I'd struggled through and, you know, the – which meant really, I suppose, I did end up acting out a lot of my frustrations in, you know, where I was living. Yeah, I was able to, as it were, you know, I'd withdrawn most of myself, you know, my social contact. You know, I started withdrawing from school, withdrawing from everything possible. And again, you know, I suppose, looking back, erm – at the time it felt like it was the only thing that I could do. Later on I wished – there was so many things that I'd have done differently. But nowadays I look back as, well, you know, I did the best I could with what I had, which admittedly wasn't much. I didn't have much, didn't particularly do much very useful, but, you know, I knew no better. And also I'd been, you know, through a chaotic and disturbed and, well, very frightening upbringing, that, yeah, I reacted and, you know, like a chaotic and disturbed, frightened person.

[1:32:24]

Was there ever a time where you didn't want to move and you voiced that?

It was usually too late [laughs]. But also that feeling of, oh, what can I do about it? Erm ... I didn't – yeah, compared to some children who've had – I didn't have that many placements. You know, I moved around a bit. Yeah, I know compared to many I've – I mean, it's almost a model of stability. But it did seem very disruptive. You know, and it was ... I suppose there's that – that feeling of – well, one, there isn't anything you can do about it, it's for your own good. You know, these are adult words that I was sort of hearing everywhere as a, you know, looking back at it as a young person, you know, it's for your own good. But also, you know, that there was that sort of feeling, well, you know, we've got, you know, we're in a, you know, we're in a situation, it may not be the best situation, it probably isn't quite the worst situation, and we've got to find some way through it. You know, there's a bit of that sort of, you know, shut up, don't make trouble, outlook, which – certainly I don't think it would have made much difference. But the one time I did have the power to make a choice may have been one of my – not one of my best decisions, was to leave my foster parents. There was one day I'd stopped out all night as I didn't want to go home and my mother, my foster mother, said in the morning that, 'We've had the police round again. We, you know, have had a chat.' You know, 'cause this was starting to become a not uncommon experience with me. And she said, 'Well look, you know, we've had a chat with the other children and if we're going to have any more situations like this, we're not sure if we – if it would be suitable for you to live here anymore.' And in that moment of clarity I realised that I could live somewhere else. And I thought – you know, I just thought, I can make a choice here. So I got on my pushbike and cycled to my mother's front door. In many ways that's probably the most inappropriate and unhelpful decision I could have made, but in a – in desperate times, yeah, I acted – behaved in a desperate manner. And I ... so that was one point where I actually – I had more of a choice in the matter. You know, basically I took the decision making power. You know, I'd always felt my decision making – I'd never been given a decision making power. This time I took it and I took those choices effectively away from my foster parents. It only effectively gave the social services department, you know, a fait accompli to deal with, you know. They had the

option – they couldn't return me to my previous foster parents. You know, they had the choice of either letting me live with my mother or putting me somewhere else, which would have been probably even more disruptive. It wasn't necessarily the best decision I made but it felt – it was one that I felt at the time I had some power over.

So did you stay with your mother then?

For about two and a half years, until I was eighteen. It was the – again, when I came to live in London, I discovered that it – to my – although I'd been visiting – it had been going to the point where I'd been visiting every, I think, six weeks. You know, I'd been staying at half terms and school holidays. You know, I – I revisited most of the London I knew from my childhood, my earlier childhood. But yeah, I got there and first couple of days were pretty good, but then it sort of dawned on me quite early on that – it was quite a rude awakening, even, that this wasn't, you know, the paradise that I'd been promising myself or had felt that had been, you know, dangled as an incentive to sort of buckle down, do your studies, you can go and, you know, live in London when you're, you know, if and when you're grown up. Yeah, and it – and in many ways it was – it was a completely different dynamic, 'cause I went, you know, from living in a house with between usually nine and eleven children and two and occasionally three adults, to myself, my mother, her boyfriend, in somewhere a tiny fraction of the size of where we'd lived previously, obviously in an inner London urban environment rather than a rural one. Everything completely changed. And it wasn't the solution, so it was – and again, there was always – there was a perpetual, I suppose, rivalry for my mother's affections between myself and her boyfriend, so that was difficult. Again, I did this the second week of term, so – the first week of term. The second week of term, I started at a new school again [laughs]. This is – you see a pattern emerging here. And I went to school in – in – near Highgate and where actually I knew a lot of the children from when I'd grown up, when I lived in London as a small child. And, you know, I was sticking out like a – really sticking out like a sore thumb by then and, you know, a couple of people took a dislike to my cavalier attitude and I got beaten up. So I decided, right, I'm not having any more of this. I sort of started standing up for myself a bit more. But, you know, so then I started another school. Again, another of those three schools in one term. And I just – I felt,

you know, all the chopping and changing really very difficult, you know, as I was finding the difficulties of settling down at home, you know, what I then called home, with my mother and her partner. So yeah, and I – again, I realised I could, you know, the only power I had was withdrawal of my either, you know, labour, interests, activities, and so – again, I slated myself. I stopped going to school. I stopped doing just about anything and started going for – my mother and her partner would spend a lot of the time arguing, sometimes about me, sometimes not, sometimes about all sorts of things, so being there was really very uncomfortable. And so I used to either sort of go visit or stay with my grandmother and her second husband by then, or I'd go for long walks. And it was actually one night, going for a long walk, I got hit by a Post Office van in the early hours of the morning, which resulted in head injuries, some spinal injuries, broken leg, loss of a lot of blood, some brain injuries. Yeah, and I suddenly became very much focused into, you know, is this viable or not. I was in hospital for a few months, having been sort of patched, skin grafted around, head injury, brain injury stabilised. And that sort of again brought the, you know, the family focus back onto me, which was fab, you know. It was very painful. I was undergoing great physical pain, but I sort of realised I'd gone through – once again I'd been through the worst and it didn't kill me. Came close but didn't. So actually, you know, I started looking at – at life more positively and, yeah, signed up to, you know, 'cause I'd missed – even if I'd been allowed to go back to school to take the exams, I'd missed them because I was in hospital, so I signed up to go to college to retake all the exams that I'd missed. And that went well for the first year, you know, which I did. I took the exams, got As in most things, apart from chemistry [laughs]. And again, the dynamic with my mother and her partner was getting very stressful. And also I had the same social worker from, you know, from earlier, who was always intervening or being – sort of helping, you know, having to help and rescue me at various points. And so the relationship with him made, you know, again, dealing with both my mother, her partner and other people really very difficult. So – and again, I started, you know, withdrawing into myself, becoming isolated and depressed and very anxious. And realising that this wasn't going to work, staying with my mother and her boyfriend, you know, that I was able to apply for housing as, you know, as I was still theoretically in – sort of just about in the care of the local authority, that they had some sort of abiding responsibility to sort of – sort of get me through to the – as

much as possible into the outside world in a relatively unscathed manner. So yeah, by the time I – just after my eighteenth birthday, I looked at a couple of flats that were – the first two were dreadfully inappropriate. The first was too small. It was tiny and it was also – a tiny place up in Somers Town, and it was like being sort of led to a cell. In fact I've been in a bigger police cell [laughs]. Erm, so that really was a bit of a nonstarter. The second place I went to look at had been – the estate had been run by National Front supporters and, you know, the place – fortunately the – the flat that I was going to loo actually was being squatted, so that became a no-no. Found a, you know, a third one became available, which I, you know, I can't say I fell in love with it, but I thought, thank goodness, here's somewhere I can escape, here's a bolthole. 'Cause at that point my mother was becoming ill again and – over that spring and summer and, you know, she'd – I'd isolated myself. She'd isolated herself. And it got to the point that it was just the two of us. You know, she'd thrown, you know, she'd split up with her boyfriend. She wasn't going out at all. I was – I had almost sort of effectively become her carer, although I was going through – probably not quite as big but enough – a lot of psychological challenges myself. And again, it was like – back like being three, four, five years old again, sort of spinning – sort of a crazy binary system, spinning round each other, you know, neither quite sure who we were, why we were there, what we were doing or why we were doing it, or who each other were. And so, yeah, I – eventually – it took quite a lot of time and effort, but through, you know, through social services and whatever medical authorities, we got my mother sectioned again. And, you know, I went off to live on my own in a bedsit. And she – I saw her once during that sectioning, but, you know, she then sort of reformed her relationship – restarted a relationship with her – which had been, you know, had been one of those on and off cyclical relationships, love you, hate you, leave me alone, oh, I love you, I can't live without you, let's get back together, that had gone on for years. And it finally went on right until – it turns out, right until his death about twenty years later. You know, so it was just – but it was a spiralling, you know, one of those revolving repetitive things that I just realised I couldn't stay involved with, so I branched out for myself. And it wasn't – I didn't then see my mother again until she ... actually it was at Christmas. Amazing blowout – she and her boyfriend had an amazing blowout on Christmas Day and I just sort of went, that's it, I've had enough. We've gone through this basic cycle of, you know,

destructive cycles of behaviour all my life, I want out, walked out. That was the last I saw of her for about two years, until I heard that my, you know, I saw my grandmother occasionally after that, but it wasn't till I heard that my grandmother had become, you know, had actually had the – erm ... you know, it was quite extreme, but, you know, symptoms of Alzheimer's and it was, you know, she was seriously ill, and by which point it was definitely a one way – a one direction journey. Erm ... and my mother contacted me, you know, to sort of say, 'My mother's ill. Do you want to see her?' So I did, but I contacted my mother first and, yeah, we got in touch, you know, tried sort of starting off afresh again for the – whatever it was, fourth, fifth, sixth time.

[1:47:42]

How was your mother's reaction when you turned up at her door that night?

She was, erm, pleasantly surprised. She was trying to work out why I was still wearing my school uniform, or at least the bits of my school uniform that I'd actually deigned to wear. I sort of discovered my own style, which was informed by being partly colour blind [laughs]. But yeah, she was – yeah, she was really quite pleased, quite pleased, but she was also – 'Oh, you've got to tell your foster parents you're here.' I was saying, 'We don't, we don't, we don't have to tell them. I don't care if they know where I am, who I am, anything about me. I've left.' But yeah, she was really pleased. She thought it was – 'cause it seemed like all the increased contact, you know I'd spent – er, it was only two weeks previously that I'd left in order to – you know, I'd spent almost the entire summer holidays with her, you know. I used to spend pretty much all the school holidays in London with my mother and her partner. So it was a bit of a sort of – it was really – it was very exciting for us both, you know. But suddenly realising that between the imagined excitement – not imagined but the excitement of the imagination, how wonderful this is going to be, and the reality of dealing with a, you know, two quite troubled people trying to work out a way forward together. You know, the practicalities soon sort of dulled some of that excitement, shall we say. But yeah.

You've talked a lot about the turbulence that you endured with your mother. Was there ever any time where she was affectionate towards you?

Oh yes, yeah. It – but not – not really – not really in the sort of standard way, because we'd, you know, we had spent so much time not in a sort of standard, you know, relationship, knowing each other, living with each other, being with each other, it was always – it did feel weird, you know. And also because, you know, I was very undemonstrative, you know – I mean, not absolutely withdrawn, you know, I still do find, you know, physical affection ... uncomfortable, slightly unaccustomed to it, slightly worrying, so ... no, not really, I suppose is the answer.

[1:50:42]

Moving around a lot, how did that impact your friendships and your relationships with people?

Oh, very splintered, very, you know ... I think, because – yeah, especially when you're sort of starting and stopping schools mid term, or mid, you know, sometimes even midweek, it felt like, er, yeah, it's – there's lots of those sort of feelings of, erm ... I suppose unfinished business, you know. And also that ... you know, I have been, you know, when I started secondary school in London, I met up with a lot of people I'd been to infant and primary school with, you know, too, and one or two of those people I still keep sort of in touch with occasionally even now. But yeah, it just meant that it, you know, new relationships, you know, I was always – it felt like I'm always either having to, you know, deal with new people, or as I found, a much simpler way was, you know, trying your very best either not to get involved or – so – which then sort of further feeds those fears of rejection, 'cause you behave in a manner that people aren't really – they're not going to approach me or I'm not going to relate to them, then they find it very difficult to relate to you and so, you know, it becomes like self-perpetuating. But yeah, it tended to form quite intense relationships and friendships with other people who – who were having difficult times, who I suppose might be almost considered sort of waifs and strays, you know, somewhat ... adrift, shall we say, you know, without sort of a family rock to cling to, or whatever. I still

haven't quite got the ideas right yet [laughs], you know. I'm not, I suppose, entirely sure what families are meant to do, but I'm, you know, but in that sort of solid basis of support, I suppose is more what I mean. Yeah, and my experience probably in many ways matched theirs, that, oh well, here's somebody who maybe understands a bit, who I'll, you know, be able to relate to for a while, and then everything will change and probably not for the better. We'll have to probably start again in a similar way somewhere else at some possibly unpredictable point in the maybe near future.

Throughout your whole childhood, do you ever recall a time where you felt safe and content?

I'll have to think about that quite hard. Erm ... probably not, probably not. Sorry. Erm, no, there were times where, you know, there were sort of brief sort of flashes of happiness, I suppose, but I realise that they were, you know, just that, brief flashes and that, you know, normal service would be resumed very shortly. So – but also I – due to my prior experiences, am very, you know, negative outlook – negative – very low, you know, I wouldn't even say my expectations were low. Probably they were almost nonexistent, that, you know – that it probably wouldn't last, you know, that it was something that just happened for a short time, then it would soon go. But also that I – because that's the way I saw things, I would try not to attach myself to them. And, you know, the few times I did attach myself or get attached to people, they either left, rejected me or in other ways did things that were – that felt harmful and injurious. So no, they probably – yeah, flashes of things, like studying, you know. I remember absolute joy. Er, but yeah, it was literally engrossed in ... I suppose academic pursuits that only required the resources I had, you know, behind my eyes and between my ears. Yeah, didn't rely on anybody else because, you know, apart from me.

[1:56:17]

You mentioned your wife and how she's helped you to come forward with your mental health issues. How did you two meet and how did she become such a great support?

Do you want the real story or the ...? [Laughs] We were introduced by a mutual friend. It turns out that we'd, you know, somebody I've known since, you know, since I was nineteen. We'd both actually known this third person for about the same length of time, but he had various circles of friends and he'd occasionally introduce one person from one circle into somebody else's, you know, another bit of his life. And it was one of those – one of those curious incidents. You know, Sarah needed something. He said, 'Oh, my friend Ian can probably help you with.' You know, and so he arranged – he said, 'Oh, you know, meet up Saturday at so and so pub at, you know, lunchtime. I'll introduce you.' And he did and, yeah, we literally – we clicked immediately. We talked a bit about stuff, mostly academic things. You know, she'd studied at the School of Oriental and African Studies and did her doctoral studies at Oxford. I at the time was working just next to SOAS. So there was a lot – there was academic stuff we had in common, outlook on the world, interests in music. There were just so many things we had – we chatted for about three hours, you know, incessantly and had to sort of tear ourselves apart from each other. And, yeah, and saw each other again sort of the next week, next weekend, yeah, the – and then we – actually slightly embarrassing 'cause I was already engaged to somebody else at the time. Really was very tricky. I'd just come – oh, this is another problem. I'd come – I was just at the end of a third relationship as well. This is embarrassing. But yeah, I realise, looking back, that I'd gone – from the age of twenty-four, there had only been two days that I had not been in a relationship with someone else, sometimes by multi-layering several at once or, you know, end to end. But yeah, so that was emotionally a very tricky time as well. I was coming – yeah, I was coming to the end of one long relationship. I was already engaged to and engaged in another relationship with someone else and a third person suddenly appears, who – and we clicked. So, you know, there was a bit of – again, a bit like the running away from – cycling away from my foster parents. You know, I eventually was – felt I was in a situation where I – it was only sort of drastic action that could, you know, resolve it, and so I decided – yeah, Sarah said, 'Would you like to come and live with me?' And I said, 'Yes.' And she fainted [laughs], seriously, oof. And I thought, well, I've got to do it now [laughs]. Erm, but yeah, and – likewise, you know, a bit like my serial relationships. I'd, you know, I still have only had a very short period of unemployment in all my life, when I've not had something that I'm doing to keep myself busy, occupied or

even sometimes, you know, just to keep financial body and soul together. I'd been working in a role in Central London, an academic post, for about four – four years or so. It was on a five year contract. I was trying to work out, god, you know, do I want to continue doing this or do I want to, you know, it's a – do something else. And sort of Sarah said, you know, [AUDIO REPEATS 2:00:28], 'You seem to have done what other people have told so far, you know, have some time to yourself.' So I negotiated an exit strategy for that role, 'cause I thought I could, you know, literally it was one of the positions where I was being paid as a – as a research fellow. I was on the academic lecturers scale and, you know, which seems to go on almost forever. I thought, do I really want to do this? And I thought, no, I want to have a sort of – have some probably me time for the first time, that wasn't just peering into my naval and deciding I didn't like what I saw. So yeah, so I stopped work for a while. In that period I then, you know, made contact with my foster parents, as I say, for the first time since I had left their care and sort of set about thinking, well, what do I want to do with my life. And again, so – it was really – I disclosed a lot of information to my wife that ... erm, I think is otherwise only split, you know, knowledge is only known in bits between a, you know, a few therapists and other people in the mental health service [laughs]. Yeah, so she realised I'd faced, you know, not only from what I'd told her about things I'd been through, experiences I'd had, but also my way of looking at the world, you know, she said, you know, realised that I did need some help. And it really was my own, you know, eventually it felt like my head, you know, my head exploded. I had a period of a week when I was – it was effectively a – a week long panic attack. Every moment – as soon as the adrenaline and the panic died down, other difficulties from my childhood would surface. And I had, you know, sort of managed to get through by ignoring everything and everyone. I had no tools, no skills, to really deal with them. You know, it was like ... it was like being dropped into a horror movie that was my past, and it was me. That's how it felt. And I've had, you know, I'd had problems with intrusive thoughts and flashbacks before then but, you know, that was just – I was trying to – also, I think, what I did, I narrated what I was – was going through my head to my wife, so she'd written screeds of the stuff, but, you know, and some of it was the bits of my early life that I hadn't previously disclosed to anyone, you know, especially the sexual abuse and exploitation. You know, and that was the first time I disclosed. So – and I was telling

her about these people I know and she was saying, 'I have to write this down because, you know, it may be the one chance that we've actually got of getting it out of my head and to actually do something more positive.' Yeah, so – but that really was the turning point then. 'Cause I'd been visiting my doctor and saying, 'Look, I can't, you know, I've got some problems. I can't – I find dealing with people, dealing with anything really difficult.' So by that time I'd really sort of – was starting to interact with the local community mental health team. But that was like the real tipping point. And she said, you know, a bit like with a lot of the experiences, 'Have you done anything about this ever?' I said, 'Well, not really, no.' 'Why not?' I said, 'Well, I didn't think there was anything that I could do.' You know, my second hand experience of other people's mental health difficulties was generally they just, you know, went through that cycle. You know, I think what we now refer to as sort of revolving door patients in the system, get your head sorted out a bit, come out full of medication, function trouble free for a while until it gets impossible and then go back through the system. So I'd seen it as a, you know, it felt as a pretty hopeless cause. And I saw myself as a hopeless and probably even a helpless cause as well.

At one point –

FS: Sorry, can I interrupt? Sorry to interrupt. Just to let you know that we've got to our hour and ten minutes, actually, if you'd like to – it's up to you if you want to –

[2:05:54]

Yeah. What were you going to say? You've forgotten now, haven't you? That nearly worked [laughs].

At what point did you overcome your isolation and regain your self esteem?

[Sighs] Still working on it, to be honest, both. [Sighs] Through my adulthood I'd mostly, you know, meeting unmet needs was usually done, like many things in my life, in an all or nothing approach, don't deal with it or go in head and feet first at the same time, with an extra foot in my mouth, all at once. So yeah, very, very, you

know, which is why it was possible to have – be in several, you know, have several jobs or several relationships running all at once, just to apply myself to everything or to nothing at all. Erm, so, you know, entirely inappropriate, unhelpful or unuseful ways of living. But, you know, best I could do with the information, knowledge, experience and needs that I had. After a – after that sort of major series of breakdowns, you know, trying to get – one, trying to get a stable diagnosis – ‘cause most of my diagnoses changed with each visit because – as I disclosed more and more information, but also more and more experiences. It took a long time to sort of say, you know, these are what my emotions are like, or, you know, to build up a lot of trust, you know. Then, you know – so there weren’t really – there wasn’t very much available locally, so I used to, yeah, apply to do everything and some, you know, eventually, you know, a bit of psychotherapy would come along, or in the absence of any therapy there might be a, you know, a support group. And again, it was really difficult to actually interact with lots of people, especially who I didn’t know, but who also were similarly troubled, but with obviously quite different experiences, but to them the worst things that could have happened had happened. So yeah, I sort of applied myself to all sorts of things. I realised that, you know, a return to the job market was not in the – in the offing in the near future, so I tried to get sort of – do some things online, ‘cause I’ve got lots of IT experience, and that was sort of vaguely helpful, but it meant that I was at home all day, staring at my computer, and occasionally going to the odd support group. But one of the first – one day my wife just sort of said, you know, ‘You’re not going to find your salvation down a computer screen, you know. It may help you get through today but it’s, you know, it’s not for all time. It may have been your sort of safety net that’s got you through life so far, but the way things are going, you’ll end up continuing to be sort of staring at your computer, looking for an answer that isn’t probably there. And maybe just connecting with more people who are just as lost as you. Please do something that involves going out of the house, you know. Give me a break, you know.’ Which was, you know, because she, you know, at that point we’d spent about three years almost ... almost with each other twenty-four hours a day. So, you know, very rarely out of each other’s sight for that, you know, for a few years. And that can be quite limiting, both on her, but also, I found, possibly a bit restricting as well. Because also the realisation that I was, you know, life was so challenging, it was very difficult to go

anywhere without my wife supporting me, even just to make sure I got there safely and back in one piece. Erm, yeah, so I looked around to see what there was and there wasn't very many services. I was living in Wimbledon at the time. Yeah, or at least the borough of Merton, sort of, the least expensive bit of Wimbledon [laughs], I might add. And I looked around and I discovered there was – there was a group – the local adult education centre ran a – an art group for people – I think the definition was, you know, who have experienced either mental health or emotional difficulties. And I thought, hmm, that might be worth trying. So I went and joined that and – 'cause my wife's an artist and I've had some, you know, I've tended to, you know, to – since my teens, most of the artwork I had done had been effectively sort of technical or informational, so I hadn't really had much, you know, or worked with IT, a lot of infographics, producing manuals, but again it doesn't really let out the artistic, er, talent that my otherwise more autistic tendencies had sort of filled up with IT, computers. So I joined an art group and it – and I was meeting people who'd been through, you know, very challenging experiences. But yeah, I really started to blossom. And that gave me the encouragement and I actually then signed up – I'd done some online study until that – in the period when actually getting out the house was difficult, and then I actually enrolled at Croydon College to do a couple of courses, things that I thought, you know – 'cause I thought, I must top up, make sure my IT skills are, you know, up to date. So I joined Croydon College. I did their advanced web design course and also Flash animation, 'cause I thought that, much that I – despite my technical views on, you know, Flash and how it helps or hinders website, it's a skill that's really useful. And I thought – 'cause when registering, I disclosed that I'd got a number of issues, and so I managed to get some, you know, I met the people involved in a support network at the college and that, you know, many people who are going into, you know, into adult education, you know, to catch up, have experienced difficulties of one sort or another, so we were all – and trying to – to do things to remedy that. And so, yeah, it was a really supportive class, or two. We had pretty much the same people in the two – in the two classes. That really helped building my confidence, 'cause also – web design I could do, you know, pretty well anyhow; it was more of a skill top up. The animation course was – you know, it was good because also it meant that I was able to draw on work that I was doing in my art course, to sort of fuse the two together much more, 'cause I had separated my life into

very small – very small compartments, all with a lid very tightly nailed down. I suppose in a way I found it helped to, you know, unlock these boxes. At this time I'd also – the woman who'd been running the art course was moving onto other things and so the company who were by that point being devolved from the local authority to a local charity running it, and they said, you know, would you like, you know, 'You seem to do, you know, you're a great artist.' And I sort of blushed. 'You're also, you know, you get on well with other people and you sort of help, inspire and show them things and teach them how to do things. Would you like to run this course, this class?' You know, it was the first – one of the first times I'd recognised the meaning of the expression imposter syndrome, 'cause I was looking over my shoulders to see if there was another Ian in the room, you know. And I realised they did actually mean me. And what I did, I thought, well, I'm in charge now so things will be different [laughs]. And they weren't necessarily that different. But one of the things I started doing was to – I realised, because although, you know, art groups are really, really good and they help people sort of build useful – find helpful support and, you know, for many people it is somewhat of a bit of a distraction. It's something to do, which is important, but I thought we've got – there must be something more than this and more to this. And so I started running the classes as a series of – I think it was eight to ten week workshops, where we actually tried to, you know, we tried not only to have something at the end of the, you know, but try and create something we were proud of in each workshop. And so at the – so by the end of the course that I was running, which covered not only every technique everybody wanted but also liberal splashings of the last 10,000 years of art history, Wimbledon Library was – [laughs] our session was read from one end to the other in the weeks prior to that. Erm, so – but yeah, so – but we also then ran a semi exhibition at the end of each series of workshops in Wimbledon and it was that that was actually, you know, it was not just engaging with other people, but it was productively and through, you know, a positive – not only a learning experience, but, you know, being able to put – find meaning or purpose in one's experience and find a way of expressing it. And, you know, when I first started doing those classes, I, you know, my original work started with very bad versions of Salvador Dali, you know. You know, and there was one session, I was trying to, you know, to achieve that balance. I needed something for my – very specific for my animation class, but something – and something quite less specific for my art class,

and I thought, why not fuse the two together. And I made a, you know, a completely – I thought, there are no limits, I can do whatever I want now, because I know I can animate it [laughs], animate my mistakes afterwards. And, you know, obviously animation – yeah, I – I can't remember how it started. Oh yeah, I picked up a bin and drew round it. Right, I've got a circle, start there [laughs]. I've got lots of paint, what am I going to do? And while there is a bit of throwing of paint at the – actually really getting involved. Yeah, and it was that, getting involved with it but also with other people along with me, whereas, you know, I'd, you know, very much I'd had an all or nothing approach for most of my life. But this really started involving – and realising it was safe to some degree to involve other people. Yeah, and through that ultimately became other training roles, erm, for example. But, you know, again, there was a period – I realised that going out and doing a normal job was going to be tricky for a while, so I ended up working for Rethink as a volunteer moderator for their Rethink talk forum, for which, I might add, I was National Member of the Year 2011. So I did that for a couple of years. I worked for an online sales forum, on the support forum, you know, online, you know, on the large – one of the largest online marketplaces. It isn't eBay. But, yeah, worked on their sort of customer forum, running that. And again, it was just, you know, drawing on skills and knowledge and realising that, you know, I actually did have a degree of control, and in some cases absolute control because I haven't got a teacher [laughs]. But I never – but again – but realising as well not to, you know, my worries always have been, you know, that I would, you know, visit on other people the same sort of tyranny, the same – yeah, I suppose the same abuse that I'd experienced, you know. I unfortunately had known better, you know. But yeah, so that's – and that then led me into my current role as a peer trainer. Yeah, it's really discovering that people – you know, learning – **when you're learning, finding meaning and use and purpose of experience is about the only thing you can do with it [laughs], and certainly the best and most useful thing to do with it.**

[2:19:28]

How did you find moving into independence and having your first accommodation?

[Sighs] When I was eighteen, that was really, really difficult in some ways, but also it was really easy because I was living in splendid isolation anyhow from the rest of the universe as well as the rest of, you know, the people around me. But yeah, then when it actually came to, well, here you are, here's your very small flat, very small studio flat, and there really is nobody else but you and your thoughts, it was very challenging, very difficult. Fortunately I lived opposite a pub. There is a cautionary tale or three or four here. Excuse me. Yeah, very useful. Also – oh sorry, I'm sorry about this. The area which I lived was – was an area that was specifically used by that authority for housing families and individuals who'd had emotional difficulties, mental health difficulties, family breakups, so it was a fairly potent hotbed of people with difficulties and a pub in the middle of it, which, you know, this was in the days of what was laughingly called care in the community, and, yeah, the local community did sort of all pull together, you know, very much like, oh, we've got to do this because it's ... otherwise it could be worse, I suppose. Not quite – it didn't quite have that sort of Blitz or Dunkirk spirit about it, but it wasn't far off, that we realised we were all in, you know, we were all in the gutter and at times at least, you know, if somebody pulled – if somebody flushed the chain, at least we might not all get washed away. It was quite desperate. But also, you know, the point was it – it reaffirmed the, you know, as I met more people, again, initially going to a pub, 'cause you can, you know, at a pub you can get drunk, you can behave like a fool. It's seen as quite natural [laughs], you know. I must point out at this point, I no longer drink alcohol, which is really, you know, one of my better decisions. Yeah, and again – 'cause a lot of my relationships were formed, you know, from other people that were having difficult times. And it reaffirmed that, you know – I think I've actually put it in – in a Telling My Story course that I wrote at recovery college, you know, that life was at least as big a crock of shit as I imagined. I apologise for the language there, but that's exactly how I felt at the time. Yeah, and I was – yeah, my relationship with my social worker came to an end and so, yeah – and I was estranged from my mother, certainly estranged from any other – or was not aware or in contact with any other relatives, so I was – yeah, I was then in, you know, supreme, you know, supreme and splendid isolation and that felt – it ... sorry, I just had a conjoining of thoughts, which I hadn't really thought about before. But yeah, and so I bounced still to extremes of either complete isolation or even, I suppose, reckless socialising, you know, so it was

just – any one other person who might understand what it was a bit like to be me, which got me into quite a number of scrapes. ‘Cause, you know, my sense of what was me was remarkably low. In fact, almost entirely negative, you know, and I sort of spent most of my life concentrating on, you know, the bad things that happened, the bad thoughts I’d had, the bad experiences I’d been through, and somehow it, you know, the only commonality they had was me, must be my fault, you know, was the rather distorted logic that bore that through. And if I was such a bad person, how could I expect to have friends, partners, apart from possibly people who were just as disturbed, challenged, probably maybe, you know, as much outside of society as I felt. So yeah, it was ... and again, so a lot of my, you know, relationships were, you know, through pubs and clubs, you know, very fleeting. Erm ... And, you know, very distrusting, ‘cause the sort of places I went to, you know, they confirmed my, you know, the beliefs that I had that people were out to exploit, manipulate or generally otherwise take advantage of people. And actually I had a golden rule of thumb, which I managed to stick to until I was about twenty-four, when I discovered relationships, was actually never to sleep with the same person twice, for fear that doing so would lead to a relationship, you know. It was that, you know, I was that, you know, though not necessarily completely physically isolated from other people, you know, I was not going to get involved in any long term or meaningful way with anybody. But then, you know, again, there’s lots of things all running simultaneously. It was actually just before my nineteenth birthday, whilst loitering around a gay bar, I bumped into this chap, who actually has the same surname as me. He turned out to be my brother’s father’s cousin. So I suddenly, you know, inherited a new premade dysfunctional family, erm, which in some ways was very helpful. In some ways it was totally destructive. But yeah.

How was it destructive?

Erm ... ooh dear, this is – we’re heading towards slightly dangerous territory here. Can we have another break, please? [Laughs] Thank you.

[2:26:59]

MS: Camera rolling.

Okay. Looking back now, how do you think being in care has impacted you overall?

That's quite – quite – I suppose it's a bit of a mixed bag, to say the, you know, that – at the time it – almost all of it seemed, you know, pretty horrible. I felt that, you know, I was being unjustly or, you know, separated from my family, effectively for something, you know, of which I had no responsibility. You know, I – I suppose one – one of those things that, you know, injustice does seem, you know, to be most keenly felt when you feel you're actually, you know, the victim of it. But, you know – and I used to at the time try to rationalise it, you know, very pragmatically, you know, that the situation I was in was worse than this, you know, this is. This should give hopefully a period of stability. Erm, it tended not to, but, you know, so it really was very much – it felt like a whole series of leaping from, you know, frying pan to fire and back again. Erm, looking at it, I, you know, there's certain things that, you know, if – probably even a small change here and there could have had a massive impact, massive beneficial impact later. For example, if my grandmother had been able to look after me when my mother was first hospitalised, I might not have entered the care system at all. Then again, you know, worse things could have happened instead. And also – that was a big, you know, that's a really big given, if, you know, a really big if, 'cause when I – my grandmother was recently retired, recently bereaved. Her daughter, who was mentally ill, had a grandson, who, you know, the family was sort of falling apart and, you know, splitting up around her. Yeah, and a hyperactive three, four year old, addicted to caffeine even then, running amok, you know, was a big – it's a big ask. So obviously something had to be done. And yeah, no extended family, or in fact no other family, really. There wasn't – there wasn't that safety net, you know, that would have – may have otherwise been used. So really, I suppose, going into care was the only – the only option. And also partly because of the way, you know, the way my mother was ill and of the nature of her illness, the – probably if it happened now, you know, if everything moved on, say, forty years, the, you know, the impact and the stigma of – the impact of mental health medication, the stigma of mental health difficulties, you know, are both, you know, are much less than they were then. Yeah, different policies. Yeah, it may have been different. But

there's two things. One is that there is nothing that any of us can do about any of those things. It is too late, certainly for me. But it's happened and the point is that there is still, you know, it's happened, I've got through it somehow, I've survived. It's only in comparatively recent years I've learnt to positively draw on my experience, whereas I used to focus entirely on the negative, of which there was quite a lot but, you know, and I thought that that defined me, you know, those negative experiences, that I'd, you know, either come to, you know, deserve or not be worth any more than that. So it's also difficult 'cause I know that social care policy does change from time to time. There are, you know, it veers into slightly different directions from time to time. And, you know, certainly – I'm not sure how helpful it was in hindsight to maintain a connection with the existing family. Erm ... I look at my brother and my sister. They're, okay, more well adjusted than I am, but they effectively grew up, you know, in – separately from the – effectively the chaos that was much of my life. Whether that was, you know, because of the, you know, I was always being dragged in and out of the – although small, but the chaotic family set up. Er, my brother has – again, I have to respect his, you know, confidentiality here, but he had a fairly, you know, stable but somewhat limiting upbringing, you know, that's enabled him to get through in a way that's – that he's made a comparative success of his life and, you know, in a stable – a relatively stable fashion. My sister, with her siblings and foster – adopted parents, sorry, has, erm, okay, somewhat – again, I must respect her privacy, but, you know, she ... She has grown up – has, you know, a sort of relatively stable relationship with, you know, her partner and four kids. And that it may have just been sort of the chaos of me, but, you know, being perpetually sort of dipped in and out of that situation I don't think was necessarily helpful, but I can't say that that would necessarily be the case with anybody else. Yeah, erm, given the alternative – almost all the alternatives would probably be at least as bad, probably a lot worse, but the, you know, and latterly I have learnt to put the experiences that I've been through to not only positive use for myself, but really sometimes it was, you know, some of the biggest things was discovering it wasn't my fault, you know. I was not to blame. And even if I was, there wasn't anything I could do about it at the time or now. So that was – that was a long time in learning and that ... As much as I wish I could unpick, change or do things differently, I don't necessarily think it would be particularly helpful. Also the thing is, now that I've – if I hadn't really got a

handle on it, I was still able to use the, you know, the knowledge that I'd picked up in one area of life helpfully into another. As an example, when I was twenty-four, due to excesses of my own and a distrust of authority, I ended up getting evicted from my council flat. And, you know, my support network, which was then at most my mother – she became ill, so I had a sort of nonexistent support network. And, you know, I sort of – I met up with other people who were going through difficult times, doing some squatting, a number of mostly council properties. And I must also add, actually [laughs], council offices once or twice. Yeah, we sort of made our – got our way through. It was difficult but, you know, I learnt an astonishing amount, you know, of sort of half hidden or half forgotten resources, you know, getting through really tough times. You know, building helpful – mostly helpful supportive networks of friendships, quite often on the basis that, you know, once again, you know, one of the worst things that can happen has already – has already happened, you know. This time how do I get through this. Yeah, and when I sort of, you know, finally came out through the other end of that, you know, again it was – I moved into, again, a not necessarily entirely helpful situation, with a distant relative and his – his band of friends and – but through that I got involved in what was then called the Missing Person's Helpline. It's now called Missing People. But, you know, my friend said to me, you know, 'Are you doing anything useful with your life?' I said, 'Well no.' 'Are you using your IT skills?' 'Hmm...' 'You know, this charity's being set up, they could really do with your skills and knowledge.' So I ended up working with them for seven years, designed all their initial computer setups, you know, early explorations into the, you know, I was involved in early explorations into, you know, use of the internet, sort of back in the 1990s. So yeah, it was a way I was able to put my knowledge of, you know, street homelessness, homelessness, broken and dysfunctional families, people who'd been, you know, the difficulties of the care system and, you know, other difficulties, you know, the sometimes desperate choices that we make when in desperate times. And I was able to put that to, you know, very good, you know, personal use for myself, but also, you know, we helped tens, if not hundreds of thousands of people at the time I worked there. So that was, you know, likewise now, you know, I – the experiences I went through in care, good and bad, you know, inform my work now as a peer trainer, you know, that I can – that I can explain some of the situations that I've been through, some of the solutions I found,

some of the things I found that are really bad ideas and not to try yourself. Do not try this at home. But also that I have, you know, through that – I think it's also through, you know, finally developing compassion for my own experience, that that's really improved the empathy that I have for other people, you know, going through, you know, going through what are massive and ... possibly life changing situations, or feel that there is, you know, either nothing they can do or nothing that they – that makes sense, to actually help them find meaning and purpose of that experience.

[2:38:50]

Have you ever tried to access your care records?

I have. I have them.

You have them?

I have them, indeed. I – again, this was just before the series of breakdowns. I actually have them. And I was – as I said, I think, earlier – excuse me. One of the things that terrified me is that, you know, some of the difficulties I'd experienced at the hands of others in my early life might be documented. And that was dreadful, the idea that somebody might actually have known about this and done nothing, or appeared to have done nothing. Yeah, so I got those when I was about thirty-five, thirty-six, and – thirty-six, I think. Yeah, and there was quite a pile of them. So I actually went to the social services in question to collect them, but I was also given a chance to read through them with – with a – that particular authority, you know, have a specialist area and some people involved. You know, it's not just, oh, we'll look in the cellar in the boxes, but they're one authority that have actually taken care in keeping early life records. I know beyond – 'cause before certain dates there was little or no – they had little or no responsibility, but this one council that did. And they have people involved in – even – this is nearly ten years ago, they had people who actively trained to help people actually work through those records. So it took two – two long visits to get them all, you know, to actually flick through. I showed them – it was quite interesting, 'cause I showed them to my wife and she went

through them and she said, ‘Do you know something, Ian? Have you never seen these before?’ I said, ‘Well, no.’ She said, ‘But they’re almost exactly what you told me of your life.’ You know, the bits that, you know, everything that was there was pretty much as I’d told her. So it was – yeah, it was very – it was very validating, you know. A lot of it was just the day to day stuff, as well as the, you know, moving from home to home, school to school. It was really validating. It said, yeah, you did go through this, you did. There weren’t that many surprises. The – the main surprise was that – I didn’t realise this at the time [laughs], but I was obviously seen as a far more troubled young person that I imagined myself being at the time. And this was almost a matter of note that sort of – Ian needs extra work, extra help, extra this, extra that, you know, I sometimes wish I – I felt at the time like I was getting – I probably was, it just didn’t feel like it. But it really did help to validate the experience and actually say, yeah, this really, you know, obviously not everything’s in there, but, you know, there was a series of documents that covered a lot of important periods of my life and in some cases even recognised the distress that it caused.

[2:41:56]

So if you were to tell a younger self of yours – like what advice would you give yourself, your younger self?

I’ve actually done something very similar to this in trauma therapy, so, you know, to be able to – ‘cause, you know, there is nothing more one can actually do to change the situation, but, you know, to change the way that you perceive or are affected by situation. So actually to have done this bit of actually going – going back as big Ian to – not rescue but at least placate little Ian in various points in childhood. Erm, yeah, probably saying it’s alright, you know. With the hindsight of wisdom [laughs], you know, wisdom of hindsight, rather, to say, you know, it will be alright, it will work out. Although at the moment it may feel like you’re in the worst place, it’s because at the moment you probably are in the worst place, but it does and can and will get better. But if I – I mean, if there is, you know, the one thing that I, you know, I wish I could change, that obviously I can only work on now, is talk to people. You know, ask for help. Find, you know, and also – ‘cause it’s difficult ‘cause it’s really

important to find someone appropriate who you can – who can help you or you can talk to, who, you know, may be able to sort of signpost you to other more useful places, because, yeah, quite often I found that the people, you know, from whom I sought help, erm, shall we say, exploited that information or my vulnerability. So, you know, it's got to be someone with whom, you know, you feel safe. But also now, you know, we barely had telephones then, let alone organisations like Childline, the Samaritans. You know, the amount of support services that are there, you know, are around now, didn't, you know, basically didn't exist. But yeah, in one of my, you know, rescripting sessions, we actually did the, you know, actually looking back at very traumatic incidents and saying, 'You know, while you're there, can you ask someone for help?' And I said, 'Well, there's no one there apart from me and this other person.' 'Can you find help?' I realised that, yeah, all I had to do was walk through a door and there was another person I could have, you know, who would have recognised my anguish, almost certainly, and would certainly recognise that I was, you know, that I needed help. So that's one thing I, you know, if I could, you know, go back, I would sort of say, find appropriate help and ask for it. Or even just, you know, find some, you know, 'cause it may just be just [sighs] finding someone who will enable you to be able to, you know, to acknowledge the feelings you're experiencing, because there are so many things that can't be changed, you can't go back and change. But they're not – and it is, you know, it may require what feels like a monumental act of bravery, but I always sort of [laughs] – so I see myself a bit like Eric Cartman. So I screw my eyes up, I take a deep breath and go, 'You'll never guess what's happened, but ...' You know, or, you know, 'You guys aren't going to believe this, but ...' You know, or, you know, this is a hard one to, you know, to acknowledge that, you know, the difficulty and, you know, to find somebody – yeah, whether it's somebody you know or, you know, again now, you know, be able to go through, you know, helplines, online forums, you know, find someone. And, you know, if it's not the person who can directly help, at least someone who can point you in the right direction.

So would you say that the adult community failed to realise your need for help?

Pretty much. There was, erm – as I say, I had my first assessment of my mental wellbeing when I was six. A very respected child psychologist at the time said, you know, referenced back to the Maudsley Monograph, Children of Sick Parents, which sort of indicated that people who were growing up with parents, or often a single parent, with mental health difficulties often end up with very similar problems, you know, because it's the only world they know. So ... There was that. And ... Yeah, so that was recognised, but I didn't actually get psychotherapy until I was thirty-seven. It was thirty-one years. And it actually was – at the end of the report was, 'Ian could do with a supportive environment and psychotherapy may prove useful when, you know, things are more settled.' It took thirty-one years [laughs]. Erm, yeah, and, you know, because nobody – you know, you can't say you make poor lifestyle choices as a child, you know. You haven't necessarily got the information or tools or right knowledge. And also quite often without other, you know, more appropriate support, yeah, you – quite often I act out of the feeling in the moment, which can lead to greater vulnerabilities, which is partly my – quite frequently my experience, that I sort of bounce from one uncomfortable situation into a sort of further disaster in the making. And one also, I think, partly – it was partly the – erm, there was that feeling of, something needs to be done, we're not quite sure what or when, but, you know, I think the sort of – there seemed to be the hope that having what appeared on the outside to be a relatively stable home life in one form or another would resolve a lot of the matters. I don't know, it may have done, but it wasn't through something stable or supportive. And even in my adult life, when I, you know, about nine years ago, when I sought help from mental health services, it felt remarkably, you know [laughs], like the early days of being in care. We understand it's a really difficult situation and there's not much that we can do or know what to – what is the right next move. So ... [sighs] I think generally – I would hope, if the same situation were to happen again, it would, you know, they, you know, the – it would be different, but the – 'cause obviously, I must admit, looking through – my solicitor looked through my early life notes and actually was flicking through and he went – after about half an hour, he goes, 'This is absolutely classic grooming,' you know, that I'd been through. And yeah, I hadn't seen that. It took, you know, you do, you know, because quite often – and also my foster family didn't really, you know, wanted to be a big family rather than have social services' intervention all the time, so there wasn't, you know,

that – overseeing was more – it wasn't really encouraged as much as it probably could have been. So I would certainly hope now that somebody going through a, you know, somebody else going through the care system would, you know, I would hope, have needs. You know, because quite often one goes into care because one's immediate, you know, for one's immediate safety and wellbeing, but for the meeting of one's longer term developmental needs as a – as a human being. That probably wasn't done as well as it could have been. I would hope it's better now.

As a child in –

FS: Sorry, can I interrupt? Just to let you know, you've got another ten minutes.

Alright. Can I have a quick slurp of coffee, just to –

Sorry, it's –

It's okay ... I must say, you're bringing this round to time really well now.

[2:51:00]

As a child – as a child in care, what were your hopes for the future?

Well, partly to live with my mother and my grandmother. You know, I saw that as the – sort of the – 'cause that was the first sort of family set up I knew of. And it was all, you know, 'cause it's all in some distant point in the sort of 1990s, or even the year 2000, which then seemed a very long way away, and that, you know, it was very much more futuristic. I'd have invented machines to cope with most of the, you know, most of the things around the house, for the ease of my mother and my grandmother and myself. That was a big sort of dream. And it never quite – it never really did happen. But also when asked sort of about my – my view of myself and the future, I just – I really just saw myself probably getting, you know, getting involved in academic research by myself, odd flashes of brilliance and ... yeah, it was. I knew I was going to do something special but I [laughs] – I expected it to be in mathematics.

But, yeah, that was – but again, it sort of relied on – not necessarily on anybody else around me. Admittedly on the several thousand years of mathematical theory that had gone before. But yeah, it was that – it was – ‘cause I realised it was the only thing that I had any real control in creating something new, wonderful, discovering things, was with my intellectual powers. But as I say, the other one was, you know, some sort of idyllic setting with my mother and my grandmother, who were the two most – yeah, the most important people in my life.

[2:53:00]

What would you say are the positives that you've brought from being in care into your present?

[Sighs] A lot of it is learning from mistakes, mine and other people's. 'Cause, you know, it is difficult, 'cause the actual process of going into care usually is to protect oneself from something. You know, protect someone from something far worse that may either be happening or might happen. Erm, and yeah, although I was protected in some ways from those, yeah, I had other difficulties. But I suppose ultimately resilience, the ability to bounce back, to not give up, to actually – despite even my – my worst self doubts, to believe that there was a reason, not just for, you know, bad things happening, and especially it felt like bad things were happening specifically to me, but – but there must be – there must be a reason to the whole process that – it wasn't, as I say, until fairly recently, reading Victor Frankl's work, that I suddenly realised that – yeah, the amount I've learnt, yeah, from that experience and that I hope that I can share with others and, you know, if I can, you know, either inspire other people, or just to, you know, goes back to my, you know, to my trauma focus, rescripting, go back – it does actually get better, you will get through this. Because I actually had problems from even more challenging experiences since then and I have got through them. And now – you know, sometimes it is the, you know, realising things I should have realised then, I've actually begun to get – to actually make a really positive success of my life. But, you know, I just wish I'd cottoned onto that idea a bit earlier [laughs] that it was possible, you know. 'Cause I knew there was a – there was a reason and purpose for it all, but I couldn't quite see what it was.

So what are your hopes for the future now?

Oh, erm ... I – I want to almost retire. I want to do, you know, to actually do the things that are important and meaningful to me, which is – it's quite difficult necessarily to fit in a nine to five, Monday to Friday routine. But, you know, the work that I'm doing as a mental health peer trainer is – yeah, it's so important, both to me, but the help and the insight that it can give other people, you know, both people who are using the services, their friends, their families, carers, but also staff. So that's really important. So I'd like, you know, I discovered, you know, that – despite my lifelong love of learning, it's only in the last few years that I've realised it's actually – I can put it into very much more practical personal use for myself but also to help others. And so I want to do more of that, you know. As I say, I've also, you know, recently taken an English teaching qualification so that I can actually, you know, also a bit of honing my training and teaching skills, but also to – yeah, to widen the sort of, you know, the sorts of subjects I can teach, the sorts of people to whom I can, you know, who I can work with. Erm, and it's really, erm, you know, it's really sort of – it was only recently I've recognised that my life has changed from being a – from being a warning to others to being more of an example for others. And yeah, I'd like to do more of that. And ... also to keep my options open, whereas for much of my life they did feel very closed down.

[2:57:40]

Is there anything else that you'd like to mention?

I was about to say being in, I'd like to thank my agent [laughs]. It's been an absolute pleasure, I must say. It's been fascinating, looking at, you know, because it's very rare that one gets a chance to sort of try and put it all into some sort of context and – especially within looking at it from within the – of the care system. And I think that's been a really helpful experience and I hope this is also, you know, helpful in return. Yeah. You know, I think the – it's really emphasised my learning of why it is important, you know, to find supportive people who you can talk to basically when

you need – as close to the event as possible, if not before. You can often head off problems that you may other, you know, may otherwise feel no power over escaping.

What would you say was the main focus that helped you get through your time in care and all the turbulence?

Erm ... a number of things. There was – a sense of humour. It sounds – yeah, but also a sense of the ridiculous. ‘Cause, you know, it was – yeah, ‘cause quite often long periods where I had literally no idea what was happening, why it was happening, you know. Yeah, for periods, that there was – there’s always the feeling that there is something better ahead, that, you know, emotionally it may have been, you know, my dream for much of the time in care was to, you know, the end result was to live with my mother and – you know, and possibly at the same time my grandmother, at least, you know. And that proved, you know, not to – not to be an ideal result. And that, you know, always that there is ... there is something more. There is something beyond this. There is ... it does get – there is something better ahead. That, you know, challenging as this might be now ... I’m thinking, I can always imagine the worst, you know, whatever the worst, you know, catastrophise on whatever the worst thing that could actually happen is, but then it’s – that recognition is I’ve actually probably already been through it and I’ve survived and that’s made me, you know, without going into too much Nietzsche [laughs], it’s made me stronger as a result. And, you know, one day I will learn great things from this. Yeah, it’s – it was not even necessarily sure many times quite what the – the better time, the better thing, the, you know, the release from this torment or tedium might be, but just knowing there is going to – there certainly will be something that will – and that, you know, these difficult times are not, you know, not without their purpose, unobvious as it may seem at the time [laughs], which is, you know, I cannot work out, why is this happening, I’ll, you know, I eventually will find out and I will make sense of it. ‘Cause that is one of the biggest difficulties is making sense of things that made – sometimes actually no one, or very few people, actually have any real say or control over. But yeah, the idea that one day I will make sense of this and that something better will come of it. I think that’s probably ...

Thank you.

Thank you.

[End of Track 1]