**Interview Details**

**Name of interviewee: Deborah Cameron**

**Project: Growing Old Gracefully - SubCo**

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**Name of interviewer: Francis Ball**

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*Interviewer*

Interviewee

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*It’s the 26th March 2018 and this is Frances interviewing Deborah Cameron as part of the Subco 25th anniversary project. Um, would you mind telling me your date of birth please Deborah?*

I might do, but I’ll tell you anyway [laughs], its 25.12.48

*Thank you. Um, how long, where were you born?*

I was born in Hertfordshire, in Hemel Hempstead but that’s because I was born in hospital, one of relatively few people born in hospital just after the NHS started.

*Is, was it just more common for you to be born at home?*

Yes, my younger brother was born at home as well.

*So was the hospital you were born in, presumably that was fairly newly built if it was just after the foundation of the NHS?*

I wouldn’t have known at nought [laughs]

*[laughs]*

I would suggest, I would think it was probably a hospital there already and it’s, I’ve seen it recently and it’s very different now so who knows, but probably was a newish maternity wing at that stage, but a lot of the hospitals at that time were developed from existing buildings, particularly workhouse buildings.

*Oh really?*

Yea.

*What were your parents sort of doing at the time?*

Well my father was, what was then called an electrical engineer, when he was actually an engineer he worked for Ilford films inventing X-rays and things like that and he’d been in the admiralty in the war and my mother, when I born wasn’t working but she’d been at the time the only woman driver in the fire brigade and had been based at Bethnal Green. But by the time she had me, she, she wasn’t working.

*I think it was quite common, that you know, women would take on work, especially during the war, but then when they started to have families it was kind of expected for them to look after their families, wasn’t it?*

Er, for a lot of people. My mother would have done whatever she liked frankly, um [laughs], she did work quite a lot and ran, did farming projects and things like that because when I was older we lived in Essex. She would breed cattle and all sorts of things so…

*Wow*

…but she wasn’t working when I was born and she’d not long married my father, because he was her third husband, so she was a fairly unusual character for those days.

*How old were you when you moved to Essex?*

About a few months, so…

*Oh right OK.*

So it’s not, I can’t tell you much about…

*So you, you*

…Buckinghamshire and Hemel Hempstead

*…you grew up in Essex though, presumably?*

Um?

*Did you grow..?*

I grew up, mostly, we spent a little time in Scotland as well, but mostly in Essex

*Where did you go to school?*

I went to a nursey in Essex and then a, a primary school that seems to still exist, which is a private school and then I went to Brentwood County High School. Which appears to still exist whether it’s the same is another matter.

*Yea, did you enjoy going to school?*

Not much, no.

*I suppose no-one does really do they?*

Well I worked quite hard at school but I was a bit nervous, I was a nervous child, was scared of quite a lot of the teachers they used to be quite menacing in my day.

*What did you go onto do after? What did..?*

What did I go onto do?

*Yea*

I went, I went straight to do a social work course as an undergraduate which was very unusual, there was just one course at Keele. Um which was always a 4 year course anyway, so it meant that I didn’t have holidays, we studied all, all the vacations doing social work training.

*Was it, I mean what was access to higher education like? Um*

In my era pretty good if you’d been to a grammar school or a high school and if you went to a comprehensive or secondary modern, as they then were called, it was not at all good. Um, but one of the big education issues that’s gone on, on and off since then has been that more ordinary people got into further education from grammar schools then now happens from comprehensives on the other hand who gets into grammar school and high schools is a slightly selected group at the very least. So, um that was an issue then, it was an issue now, my sister didn’t get into um high school so she went to some ghastly school and then she went to a place called Clarke’s college and then she went off to boarding school which upset her terribly, I remember it. But I know my parents view would have been that’s the only chance she had of anything, so it was pretty competitive world.

*Yea*

But my generation got far more access to university than people do now and at least the academic tuition was free then.

*Um, and presumably you got grant as well, like to live on?*

Yes, I didn’t get a living grant because although we weren’t that well off my father was well off enough, and that was always an issue because um, I had a row with my Dad and um, said I’d keep myself, I used to, as well as doing social work I used to um work in shops so I kept myself.

*Must have been quite full on with studying and sort of holding down a job as well?*

Oh yea, I was active in the union as well, that was a sort of, workaholic person I think from an early age.

*What did you do in the union?*

Um, well I ended up briefly being president but mostly I was deputy president and I had some other role before that but I can’t actually remember what it was, it can’t have been terribly interesting.

*What sort of work did, you know, does it take to be president of the union? What sort of things do you have to do?*

Speak at meetings, I’ve, for some reason I was relatively good at speaking that makes a huge difference, it’s completely unfair cos it’s nothing to do with capacity. Um be interested in politics because we all were, especially in those days, very, probably in some ways differently than people may be now, may be that’s not fair. We, we were very interested in politics, we were interested in what the university did for students, that was a huge issue because there was, during the late 60s all sorts of action by students about what the content of courses was, who got on them, um, how students were involved because it, when I was at university we were very little involved and we felt we should have a say, so we demanded it, so those sorts of things were crucial, and we ran a union building which I did have a role in, and had a staff, a big canteen and all sorts of things, Keele’s a little bit out of town and remote so there’s the union shop and building and facilities were run by the union, which isn’t true everywhere, but..

*No, but I think increasingly less nowadays, sort of as it all gets sold off. I know the university of London union building’s all been taken over by a company.*

Um, well, we owned our building and ran it. How that had started I can’t remember now.

*Um*

The other thing we were very involved with apart from all going off to Paris and being involved in demos and politics and things, was um, we were very interested because there’s always travellers camping on the university grounds, it still has got large grounds, Keele, a lot of farm land round it, it won’t be land that’s of the same value as the university of London and um, we um, objected to the way the travellers were treated and subjected the poor things to all sorts of education programmes which they may well not have appreciated [laughs]. I think we thought it was a good idea and none of their children had been to school so we felt it was important to prevent them being removed.

*That’s interesting. Um, I was going to actually ask about the sort of, the student movement in Paris as well, cos clearly that’s a very famous moment, in sort of the history of the 1960s. Um was it common for English student to go over there and participate as well?*

Yes, to a degree. You were monitored if you did that.

*Really?*

Oh yes, but um, so when I worked in America subsequently they called us all in, any of us that did that, called us all in for interviews and things…

*Wow*

…before we could get a visa. But um, I didn’t do vast amounts with that, but we did all go over there and discuss what was happening and what the aims were and what we would do and as I said we had a great interest in the role of students and how we would expect to have a say in our training and the academic work, mine was a course that included a social work training as well so it was a particular issue for us. Um, but I, it was only a, I only went once to Paris, it was only a relatively brief trip and to, ‘s exciting but I don’t know that we, we, met some interesting people but I don’t know whether we made any difference, and I don’t know that it made a huge difference to what we did in this country but we felt it did and we felt a connectedness that may not be quite the same now, it may be over the gun things in the USA now, but we felt a connectedness with students in Germany and France and to a degree in the States where lots people were in Vietnam anywhere and the draft was there, so…

*Um*

…that was obviously another interest of ours, mostly against what we were so…

*Yea. Was there a sort of unified student movement in the UK or was it kind of, you know just your universities and..?*

No, there was an NUS existed then

*Um*

Jack Straw was secretary of the NUS when I was at university.

*Really?*

Um

*That’s interesting. Um*

And we had Teriq, um what was his name Teriq Ali spoke at, was due to speak at Keele and then it turned out that, I can remember sending an extremely rude message [laughs]. So we were interested in the wider issues and everybody was.

*Um. Did you take part in protests and stuff as well as kind of organising within the union?*

Within the university we did, and there was a, one point a three day strike which was about selection and course content and student involvement but um, on the whole our academics were very keen to talk to us.

11mins 56secs

Of everything, so um, wasn’t frightening, Paris was a little bit frightening, but it was, it didn’t feel a, a scary event which subsequently some protests did I think. The, the more scary situations were anti-apartheid demonstrations and things like that. They, they would get scary.

*Was that because the police were more sort or heavy handed?*

Yes, they’d come heavy handed in their great green coaches and knock everyone down.

*So have you been sort of, participating in kind of political movements like that your whole life?*

No. Much more when I was a student. I got my ribs broken for me on a Stop the 70s Tour demo and that puts you off a bit because..

*Wow*

I was initially charged with assaulting a police but um, it never went for trial because my defence lawyer, who was from the university legal department, um called the police officer to stand beside me and he was so much bigger than me, um the case crumbled before committal, so…

*[laughs]*

…which was a good thing because I was planning to be a probation officer so it would have been very awkward if I…

*Um*

..had got a conviction for assaulting police, which I didn’t do as it happens.

*Yea. What protest did you say that was part of?*

That was part, I can’t, trying to remember where it was, it was part of the Stop the 70s Tour, so it must have been just before I graduated or just after, I think just before.

*What, what was the Stop the 70s?*

It was, it was not accepting teams from South Africa.

*Arh. OK.*

And nearly everybody, not everybody obviously, but a lot of people, much wider movement um boycotted food from South Africa and so on. People who weren’t particularly political…

*Um*

…because it was quite a strong movement.

*Yea. So after you did your 4 years a university what did you go onto do?*

I’m very old, this is going to go on and on, and we’ll never talk about Subco, but I went um to do my final placement in the States, which is why I needed a work permit.

*Um. Hence the awkward questions about…*

Yea. Well we had to be interviewed and make a commitment that we wouldn’t indulge in, indulge was the word used I believe, in any um political activity that wasn’t regarded as our business.

*Would you have just been expelled from the country, had you…?*

I think so, but I don’t know, how seriously, how serious it really was, but you had to go in for an interview anyway. You could just get a visa which other people did. To get a green card so you could work you needed to be accepted.

*Was, presumably America was quite different to England?*

Different in many ways, it was very different, yes. Whether it’s, many English speaking countries, America’s always been very different, but any English speaking country is easier to navigate in some ways, even if they don’t use quite the same words. Anyway I travelled round the US by coach because I couldn’t afford to stay where I was going, so… I travelled very, very light stayed in Chicago and then went and did a work placement in California and… then came back via the deep south, stayed in Alaba, Birmingham Alabama, and then came home. And I couldn’t work as a probation officer which was a job I had until December of that year that I graduated which was 1970, because you had to be a certain age to be a probation officer in those days…

*Oh, right,*

I was slightly young, even though I’d done a 4 year course.

*But then you became a probation officer?*

Um

*Where were you based at that time?*

At Old Street which is um, south Hackney, south west Hackney, just north of Liverpool Street.

*Yea, I know the area.*

Yes

*Yes*

Trendy now.

*Yea, it is isn’t it?*

Wasn’t then

*So, so what was it like?*

Very poor, indeed and pretty [xxx]

*Yea. Presumably your clients would be members of the local community?*

I, my patch was south Hackney by Victoria Park and that it really quite grand now but in those days all the big houses there were all multiply let. Plenty of families just in one room accommodation.

*Um*

That was my little patch and it was not long after the Krays had been um, sent to prison, so there were lots and lots of really very young people on drugs.

*What particularly attracted you to that sort of side of social work?*

That side of social work, or social work in general?

*I suppose both.*

Well I made a decision about social work when I was so young that I don’t know how relevant it really is, because to apply for degree courses, I was applying when I was 16,so um, cos I went to university when I was 17, so the rationale probably doesn’t hold true for all your life but I, I felt I wanted to help people and change things and there was a social work movement that’s long gone now, called Radical Social Work which was about the connection between social work and empowering people and activism rather than social workers managing and policing which it is a little bit like now.

*Um*

Particularly for families and younger people. So our training was very extensive and very counselling and empowerment focused really and I don’t, it’s not my experience that that’s the same now.

*And, and, what attracted you to the probation side of social work?*

I was interested in why people got into trouble and whether they would be stuck in difficulties for ever. I was particularly interested in women who got into trouble which made it rather a hard job. We had a lot of children in those days they didn’t go over to local authorities, ‘till a year or two after I’d become a probation officer and then they, poor children got nothing whereas we’d actually seen them a fair amount, but the local authorities really weren’t ready…

*Um*

… certainly not in east London to, to look after them and take them on.

*Did you find the work quite demanding?*

I enjoyed it. Some of it was demanding. I did a liaison role in Holloway prison and used to drive home crying I was totally unsuitable probably [laughs]. No-one asked.

Yea

But um, in those days the probation service, unless you were going to be a psychiatric social worker which was the other issue, the other career I thought about, were much more social work focused than a lot of local authority child care, which um, tended to be less well supported, so if you wanted to do social work in the technical sense those were the jobs you went into, which is not the case now, probation isn’t actually a social work profession, you can be a social worker and do it but that’s not how it’s treated any more.

*Yea. That’s interesting when do you think there was that sort of change, cos I mean, I’d consider it more part of policing really. I hadn’t considered it…*

I can’t remember which year there was a change now, I’d have to look it up and tell you but um, it did change at one point relatively recently, so that you didn’t have to be a social worker to be a probation officer and believe it or not there was a time before I became a probation officer when you didn’t have to be, but at the time when I was a probation officer it was a social work job and we were very well supervised and supported actually and we thought very carefully about our role and what we did. Um, as I said I’m not sure it was entirely suitable some of it, for as young a woman as I was because I worked on the murder wing at Holloway for my caseload and that included a lot of women who may or may not be in prison nowadays who’d killed children. Um so it was very, very hard work because at that time all my clients had been abused themselves, so the, the connection between childhood abuse and not coping with having children was not so well understood as it is now, I think, and we had a lot of people who’d been sexually abused who were working in prostitution and um, again the connections weren’t nearly so well understood at all.

*Was it quite hard for people to understand those sort of correlations between…?*

Well the academic work hadn’t been done, the Home Office research unit was actually very good in those days, but very little academic work had been done, on some of this. Most of the work, as true to some degree nowadays, tended to be American, there wasn’t um, an academic focus on, on child protection as it became known, now safeguarding, at all and there was no adult safeguarding whatsoever. Some of the work might safeguard adults but they weren’t the focus really.

*When you say safeguarding what does that entail exactly?*

Safeguarding is the term used nowadays for protecting vulnerable child, children or adults. Um, as far as adults are concerned um, safeguarding means protecting and supporting vulnerable adults who aren’t in a position to protect themselves and so my definition might be different from the officially accepted definition and since you can be someone with capacity and still be abused and mistreated by family or other people but the way law works in this country to protect older adults if you consent to give your son your money, um and you have full capacity um, it would be quite difficult to apply a safeguarding approach.

*Um*

Whereas, the reality is that um, you may consent and you may make a perfectly ration choice but you may have little choice in fact, so these things aren’t quite as they seem.

*Yea*

But in those days we talked about child protection if we talked about anything at all, mostly about child abuse and neglect and there weren’t posts to protect children except local authority children social work and some probation role as well because we certainly had people who’d neglected or mistreated their children and it was very common for parents, usually men to be prosecuted for not keeping their children, which you don’t see so much now…

*No*

…um, so the world has changed, a lot, but they were the sorts of things I did.

*How long were you in probation…?*

The probation officer that time for about 2 or 3 years, so by ’73 we’d lost children, just trying to think when the 1970 Act came in, I think it probably was ’71 or ’72 but I can’t remember now without looking it up. Um, so I did 3 years and then I went to a, a community work role, at um, place called Blackfriars Settlement in south London. There’s a settlement movement still exists but in those days they were social action centres doing mostly community work and welfare rights advice and things like that.

*Um. What sort of people were you working with in..?*

As colleagues or as clientele?

*As clientele*

As clientele I worked on a couple of estates that were very poor and vulnerable, I worked with individual people to some degree, I run a volunteer scheme that worked with frail elderly people and we had a families project that I set out where older people were linked with families and helped them manage shopping and families befriended them to a degree. I was involved, I remember, with Southwark council in removing a very, very neglected child so we still picked up the same issues, child whose nightie had grown into her, and picked up, the skin had actually grown over the elastic, she’d been left in the same clothes for so long, so...all sorts of things were..

*Was this all council sort of run and administered?*

Well my work wasn’t council run but the, the local authority children’s service was, was council run, yes.

*So who were you working for?*

Well we were a voluntary agency, Blackfriars Settlement, so we scrabbled for funding all over the place, had all sorts of movements and activity

*What, what sort of funding streams were available at that point?*

Mm. Some local authority funding, some private sector funding, we got a lot of money from Shell, we got help in kind from Shell, um, because companies could still give money to charities then and save on their tax bills, and Shell were just along the river in those days, um they printed all our handbooks and things I remember. We had a law centre, I can’t remember, that’s why there was a pause, how we had everything funded, lots of the work was voluntary, so our law centre solicitors all came in in the evenings and did it as a freebee. Um, met all sorts of interesting people there, Helena Kennedy was there who’s now in the House of Lords…

*Oh, wow*

…but she was a volunteer there at the time, so we did all sorts of stuff.

*Yeah.*

I, heaven knows who funded my work stream, I can’t- cannot remember. We had, we had things like adventure playgrounds as well and they, they would’ve probably been council funded but… who knows. All sorts.

*Yeah. You mentioned there was a settlement movement, what sort-?*

Well there’s still a few settlements, Blackfriars was one, there were one or two in the east end. The settlements were set up erm, by the universities after the turn of the cen- the twentieth century and people did voluntary work and lived in them.

*Ah…*

So, I don’t know how many are left now but there were five or six of them at least about then.

*Am I right in thinking in that Toynbee Hall was that sort of things?*

Toynbee Hall was a settlement, yeah.

*Okay, that’s interesting. Erm, so I mean presumably you’re entire professional career has been spent in London then, sounds like?*

No, but most of it.

*Most of it.*

Most of it.

*Where did you move on to after?*

After that I worked in probation service again in south east London, which was Croydon, Bromley, Bexley – setting up what was called a community service. Again, community service still exists but it was brand new then, and it was meant to be an alternative to prison, and we were very keen to make it an alternative to prison. We worked a lot with voluntary agencies and ran all sorts of projects, and we may have been different from some of them because of the background I’d come from. Erm, so we had offices in each of the local authorities and our head office, which was in Penge, near Crystal Palace, we did all sorts of things. We sent groups of offenders out doing building and gardening and things like that. We did silt stream work and printed posters and did all sorts of stuff and a lot of our staff were volunteers as well although they could be paid to do their supervision work. Erm, as I said the key was to erm, get them coming in and doing the work, erm was a huge issues, we were very- we got inspected once, we only had one not turn up, and we raced out and got him. He was apologising I remember, in front of the inspectors for not coming in soon, and we were really tough at chasing them and getting them in, whereas nowadays I don’t think they are. I think they just go back to court if they don’t turn up. But we were very keen on getting them in and very keen on getting people who would otherwise had gone to prison, but they were a bit of a handful [laughs].

*So was that the sort of beginnings of community service?*

It was the beginning of community service for offenders, yes. They were new orders when I was involved.

*What was your feeling about that sort of scheme being set up? Was it something you were positive about?*

Well yes that’s why I went to do it, but I think the way we ran it and the way many people ran it in those days wasn’t the same as nowadays. We did send people off to National Trust at Petts Wood, chopping down trees and things, but on the whole we aimed for individual placement for people, and, and tried to make something mean- meaningful, it’s just some of them weren’t very safe to link up with frail elderly people, so you had to start them off at very practical work.

*Mm.*

As clearly you didn’t want to put anyone at risk.

*No, absolutely not. Was it, I mean, was it, you said it was quite hard work to get these people to turn up to the-*

Well we made them turn up, but we, we as, we, we all raised out after them and made them come [laughs]. We did sometimes have people not turn up but very rare because it was very embarrassing for them to have the sort of social worker looking people knocking at the door and ringing the door bell and things.

*Mm, yeah.*

I don’t, I really don’t think that happens nowadays. It may occasionally but we were very keen on taking high end offenders and making them do something.

*Did you have quite a good success rate eventually?*

Well who knows what the long term success rate was? Our success rate at the time, it was measured, was good. But you have to go on measuring these things for years, and most offenders stop offending. Only a few of them carry on and on. An awful lot of male offenders in particular start to stop offending by the time they’re thirty. Or stop getting caught by the time they’re thirty. And persistent offenders are a different category, so it’s hard to tell because I, not familiar with how long the research went on, but we knew we were taking people who would’ve gone to prison otherwise, because we did a lot of work on that. And we knew the majority of ours were not re-offending. But, we would’ve preferred to have done more extensive research than we could about whether people were actually able to change their lives. And employment was not a huge issue at that time, so if you could get people going their chances of getting into meaningful work were higher erm, whereas that’s always been a problem for offenders, when employment is scarce because nobody wants to employ them.

*Yeah.*

Even if they are reformed, so they don’t have a chance. And I think public attitudes were less punitive then, actually.

*That’s very interesting.*

That is my experience, because I remember a punitive approach coming in during the Thatcher years. I remember, because I was fair-, a little, not very, but fairly active in the Labour party, and we started to notice people on the doorsteps taking different attitudes, it was very interesting.

*Why do you think the, sort of attitudes changed in that way?*

Difficult to say isn’t it… Certainly it was politically endorsed. I think if feelings are regarded as negative by everybody they get at least suppressed, it’s the same with racism and anything else. If they’re regarded as more acceptable they get expressed. So I think there came a time when attitudes to offending certainly got more punitive, so it was alright to say, you know, prison was luxury, it should be harder, meaner, these people deserve to be pub- punished, whereas also probation officers in particular were from a school that was about reform and about advising, assisting and befrienders, which is what our role was. Erm, so, and it wasn’t regarded as a bad thing to do in those days at all. So erm… I guess all I can say is you observe attitudes change but only within the milieu in which you operate, and London is very different from other areas of the country and always has been.

*Mm.*

I think the police were much less popular in those days than in other areas of the country too, so that raised issues about why might people get into trouble that may or may not have been realistic, but certainly would have formed part of the community view.

*Yeah, well I guess especially that gives some sort of context erm, to anti-racism work in Newham. I mean, is that a thing you have experience of or in other boroughs in London?*

To a degree erm, my take on it, my interest in it was really about services that were inclusive rather than explicitly anti-racist, I would say. Erm, because my, me as a probation officer, responsible community service was still some way away from working in Newham, and erm, I went on to child protection work from, from that role in community service. And, my interests were really in, in why people got into difficulties and how you could empower them to take some control and keep their children safe, or help children to be safe, which was probably not at home. Erm, and it was very clear that in those relatively early days, services were not inclusive. They were not directed erm, at the whole community. It was very common for, as it still is, for the black children in care, erm few Asian children in care. Erm, but I remember a piece of research I did in my next role which was in Lewisham, showed us that the children that were most likely to be on what was then called the child protection register were children with relatively complex routes. So from families that were very mixed, not necessarily white families or black families, but families with a very complex heritage where there wasn’t parental or grandparental support, where young parents might be very isolated, where young women might make very dangerous choices of partners because they had no way of finding out what people were like in the way that can happen in smaller or more erm, closed community. So it definitely was, for a lot of people, about being isolated, and isolated from support. So that was the strand of interest I had, I guess.

*Mm*.

But I worked in Lewisham for a long time before I came to Newham. Erm, then I came to Newham as an assistant director and then as director. And Newham was a very different kettle of fish from Lewisham in those days.

*What were the sort of main differences between the two boroughs?*

Local authority was very different, much less subject to change, much less subject to opposition, there was no opposition politically. So anyone that wanted to go into politics joined the Labour Party – it’s still a bit like that, but it meant there were parties within parties, it meant that services were very old fashioned here. In, in Lewisham we had the most children fostered, I don’t believe we had more than one children’s home and that was on the way out, whereas here most children in children’s homes and the children’s homes were nearly all run by men, and actually pretty unacceptable men it turned out. And… most older people were either looked after by very supportive home care service, which did far more than people would get now, or in homes that were usually out in Essex, a few of them were here but many of them were out in Essex, and there was a whole push that made the council have to outsource those homes, because we, if we retained homes we didn’t get the same funding per capita as if they were outsourced to housing associations. All sorts of things were going on but I, I found the borough, it’s difficult to say this if this is for public use, because some of, you might have to edit it for me, but I found the borough fairly startling compared with Lewisham: much poorer, much more old fashioned, and it seemed to have less ambition of equality services at that time, though that changed.

*Do you think that’s because, as you said, erm party politics was kind of, you know, a bit of a one party borough so there wasn’t any-*

It was partly to do with that, it was partly because the same people had been about for a long, long time. Erm, this is a different area, and so there were different views about what was the right thing to do. Members selected members who were very actively involved in visiting homes, but they visited in a bus… you, we will have to edit this, but they visited in a bus as if they were higher status than the residents, and sat at a high table when the residents had their meals.

*-Really?*

-Yes. And erm, that doesn’t mean they weren’t caring, but there was much more of an issue here about the status of our clientele compared with in Lewisham, at that time.

*Mm.*

But I’m not saying everything was bad, in some ways the- Newham was incredibly committed to providing services, they were just relatively old fashioned services, I think. And so by the time I was director one of the interests in having services like SubCo was really about having services that would meet the needs of a changing community.

*When did you become director?*

-In nineteen ninety.

*Okay. So I mean, from being sort of focused on children’s work, how did you become involved in SubCo which is obviously focused on-*

-Because I was director of social services.

*Oh right okay, so everything came on your remit then?*

Yes, not education, but all of services for vulnerable people from nought to hundred.

*Yeah. Erm, so-*

So mental health services were ours, whereas a lot of them are health run now, even if they’re joint services. All the services for older people and home care, children’s services, they were all ours.

*Is there still erm, I mean, what’s the body now that would-*

Well there’s, there’s a children’s services department and an adult services department, and children’s services includes schools. Now a lot of local authorities have put them back together again and in my day we had youth offending under my ser- dep- department, and we had early years under my department, although that was a joint service between leisure, education and social care. But it had its own subcommittee with all three directors involved and jointly appointed posts, but they were in my per view, I was the lead officer as you like, as I was for youth offending. Erm, so it was different. And local authorities are highly variable-

*-Mm.*

-Now but they, they weren’t then. And the appointment of a director still had to be approved nationally.

*Really?*

Yes.

*So was the body that would do that-*

Well the department of health had to agree to it.

*Mm that’s interesting. Was- do you, presumably that doesn’t still happen anymore?*

No… And we had to be social workers, although my predecessor hadn’t been a social worker and had been director for a very long time. And erm, there’d been a special exemption made for him, which was interesting, but I was a social worker anyway. And directors of social services were expected to be in there for years, they haven’t needed to be now. Even in my day there were beginning to be people that weren’t, sort of come up other routes.

*Was there a reason for that?*

Social workers are professionals, risen and then fallen as a, sort of, an occupation of any status. We don’t even have our own body controlling our registration now, we’re included with health. Erm, so we’re registered by the health care and allied professions erm, body which is erm, not how things were. But don’t ask me about too much detail because I haven’t looked it all up and remember details and years, or not- misremember details and years. But anyway, we were separately registered body in those times, and you had to be a social worker to run the social services unless exceptions were made and I don’t think that lasted very young, I don’t think that lasted more than a year or so. Other exceptions were made pretty soon.

*Yeah.*

They must’ve been around the time I became director that that was changed.

*So how did you first erm, hear about or become involved with what became SubCo?*

I think this is where I may not be accurate, I may have to correct it, my memory is we had development posts in my department to erm, look at developing services that were more suitable for minority communities, and I think SubCo developed from some of that work, but there would’ve been a local wish for it as well, so… But my recollection as far as it goes was that we were looking to develop services that were more suitable and that was at least one of the streams from which this service and others grew, but it won’t have been the only thing. There clearly was community interest. I think there was a lot of concern that out existing services weren’t suitable. Our own fashioned, or people’s homes weren’t suitable. Erm, as I said there was a lot of debate about having the right staff, and of course a lot of politics as there is about gender and social care. About, whether our clientele are set to their goals or whether they had the right to choose a man or a woman and these things come to and fro even now. But on the whole most of us think that its better if a man or a woman can chose someone of the same gender if that’s important to them, and we tend to think it’s better and we did then, that someone can communicate with a client in their own language and understand what their concerns and traditions and diet would be. Erm, and indeed if you think about social work where you definitely didn’t necessarily match the clientele that there would be sufficient knowledge in teams to understand cultural differences. At the same time, because I’ve got this safeguarding protection background, there was a lot of concern that practices that might be cultural would still be abusive and so there was a lot of careful thought about what would be right services. I remember that about the time that we were having conversations about SubCo and other projects starting we had a frail elderly lady dumped at St Andrews hospital which doesn’t exist now, there’s a St Andrews wing at Newham, but was a St Andrews hospital which was just into Tower Hamlets, the other side of the Blackwall Tunnel, and there was a lady dumped there erm, and family had gone away and left her and she’d had no services and no support and hadn’t been picked up by anyone as a need. And the GP hadn’t picked up that this was happening, so we were aware that things would go wrong in, in even what was then pretty close-knit Asian community and you couldn’t necessarily accept that there wouldn’t be difficulties because the community was close knit. At the same time, we knew people were very anxious about local authority agencies and nervous of them. So it was important from my perspective to have services that were empowering and engaging, because I do believe that social works more effective and social care is more effective if you help people to help themselves. SO that would have been the routes of it from my perspective, but I may be leaving out all sorts of other people’s work I have no doubt.

*What erm, sort of, particular challenges or needs did you think that SubCo would address, erm when it was founded.*

Well, I think the obvious need was to have day time services that would support families with older relatives erm, that would understand difficulties that there might be and would be approachable if there were difficulties. It would be hard for me without getting all the documenting to go into massive detail because this wasn’t the only services that was set up, but its been a long lasting one. And there were other community services then so, already in existence, some beginning to form. Erm, and there certainly was a community focus within the department but we had something like two or three community workers: they’d been in post before I came. I didn’t determine those posts but they saw their role very much as looking to develop resources within the community and I would say its pretty unusual social services department has community workers in it nowadays.

*Mm.*

So that was something that was very positive in Newham… I think, although I’ve talked about services being old fashioned, there was a developmental focus here that perhaps hadn’t been in Lewisham, I think its fair to say. I guess that’s partly one of the very positive issues from, from the council perspective. The other side of that was that it meant that there was sometimes more energy going into new services than in improving existing services. And I remember with the departments then raising we had, I was involved in service closing down at some point around the same period erm, over in East Ham where we felt it was a very, in inverted commas, white service and it was really probably not that suitable for anyone it was so traditional. Erm, but it was much appreciated by some elderly white people who’s families had moved away and it was quite common to have people who’s families were way out in essex who were still themselves based here, which is probably less common now, there was still an issue. And, because when I was in Newham, elected members were thinking about newham to be a place where people would stay and not simply a place of transition, which is I guess why some of the developments in docklands and round the now Olympic Park or queen Elizabeth park seemed important, because it became obvious that people that wanted to better themselves might want better housing and if it wasn’t here then they would move. But that, that’s a rather vague conversation about how it started. No doubt other people were telling all sorts of other things because my view would be partial-

*Yeah. Well I suppose everyone’s you know, everyone has their own-*

Yes, but I haven’t been in a position to get my files and read them.

*No.*

Heaven knows where they all are now anyway, but erm-

*You mentioned there were other sort of community groups set up. Were they predominantly focused around providing care or provisions to a particular sort of race, background or a particular national community?*

Well… with and for disabled people because there was a big issue about services for disabled people being much more user lead then provided by the well-meaning, for those who needed help. That was a huge issue for us and was something I was very interested in when I came. And the same with mental health services. So it wasn’t only about ethnicity erm, but the community is very different now I would say. We didn’t have eastern European living here much then, and the Jewish community which is just, I would say, almost completely gone was still here to some degree then. But no, I think broad movements, less around older people for themselves but particularly around mental health and learning difficulties, and the learning issues were very complex because clearly families get very anxious about the safety of empowering their erm, children with learning difficulties, its very complex indeed then. But there was no real adult safe guarding approach, although it was known about and there was, during my time as director here, there were concerns about safeguarding. But they were much more basic, less well researched; tended to be lead by the voluntary sector I would say, not entirely, but to a degree, and I guess other issues were about trying to have a staff that reflected the community as best we could, trying to create some posts that you could erm, fill to enable you to match the community, and trying to have services that were suitable for the community. But it was relatively simplistic.

*Mm.*

I guess.

*Err, do you think that the sort of Asian community was fairly, erm I don’t know what the word is, not homogenous, I mean within the Asian community clearly you have sort of, people from various national backgrounds or various-*

Well it isn’t homogenous-

*-Religions… were they a coherent, I mean, did they work well together or was it sort of times had changed for the… erm…*

I’m sure it was a challenge and there were particular issues about erm, Bengali Indian and err, Pakistani families and the politics of division in the subcontinent were quite complex. Possibly, in some ways, more complex than now, erm maybe that’s not fair. The Caribbean community when I was working here tended to be from smaller islands and that had issues in itself. There was a huge issue for us around finding appropriate foster families and we weren’t doctrinaire about it, and of course there’s great criticism now about social work being too doctrinaire about placements, but we did try and reflect children’s background in the placing of them because our experience with all families including white families is if children are going home you don’t want to disrupt their total way of thinking erm, because you make it harder and if foster carers are working with families to try and support them to improve as opposed to local authorities looking to remove a child, it was particularly important that children didn’t have massive disruption and both families have some trust. Even if we were looking to remove children because we felt the family wasn’t safe that didn’t mean that the courts would agree. So to me, it’s foolish not to try and reflect the community within reasonable limits of safety and appropriate nutrition and so on. But some times that’s very hard, some families are so distraught or violent and angry that you have to place children elsewhere anyway. We had far too many children placed way out of Newham, talking about children rather than older people, so in Wales and out in south Kent and we wanted to change that particularly because that really meant it very hard for those children, and very hard for them to come back. So it wasn’t all driven by culture of ethnicity at all it was driven, to my mind, by need, but clearly the politics of that are complex. And some people would have argued that any Asian family is better than a white family for children. I’m talking to the birth parents, they may not agree. So you would want to gain cooperation from both parents. Similarly in those days we had lots of families with active high risk HIV, and mostly African families, and they might have a view that they would prefer a white family than an Asian family which they felt was nothing to do with their culture at all. Or they might feel their child would get on better in a white family and those were all things to discuss with parents I feel. Err, nowadays the department of Health and the department for education would both take a view that that would be very doctrinaire, and you certainly shouldn’t keep children waiting for a placement either. So these things are very complex.

*Yeah, I suppose there was a lot to way up, there’s a lot to way up.*

Yes, and you have a fostering panel, an adoption panel with independent people on and you have courts making some of these decisions, so that it isn’t only for the local authority to decide. Now with older people services erm, there’re a safeguarding services, but there’s somewhat less degree of scrutiny, so the thinking may be sometimes there’s complex erm, to me what matters is older people have an environment within which they’re comfortable, because nobody wants to go to a day centre where they feel patronised and put upon and that can be very hard for some one with dementia because you may have moments of lucidity where realised you are being patronised and put upon. These things are very difficult to manage, and you may be no better being patronised from someone from your own community than someone from another community. So these things are all complex I would say, but your confusion may be less if you’re within a community that can speak to you in your mother tongue, that can remember things that you remember.

*Well certainly if you share similar cultural coordinates you’ll be able to have more of a rapport I suppose-*

Well you’d hope so: people don’t always feel that, and this is where self-determination is complex.

*Mm. Do you remember the first time you came to SubCo?*

No, I remember coming here but could not possibly tell you the first time I came. I think it was still a, not SubCo when I first came.

*Oh really? What was it-*

No I think it was still a building being looked at, but I may be wrong. I remember where it was and I erm, had forgotten where it was but the front of the building was quite different now so…

*What sort of things, I mean, would you come I suppose in an official capacity to-*

Yes.

*-Look at what they were doing and monitor-*

But the thing I objected to with erm, erm the elected members like you have to be careful about these things. It’s very easy erm, staffing the department would’ve been more directly involved. It was very hard when you’re a director not to arrive and everybody saying, how’s your father? And how are you? And you’re not necessarily able to have a straight discussion about what’s going on and what services are. Quite an issue for all of us about how you actually see services as they really are.

*Yeah.*

But anyway, I will have come in an official capacity.

*What sort of erm, things were SubCo doing when they were founded?*

Don’t ask me too much detail about that because it would be in a bit of a blur from twenty-five years ago along with other services that I visited, but erm I’d probably need reminding- but I remember older people arriving for services and talking about what services they might need and I remember discussions in the community about what services might be needed and how they might be provided and whether lunch would be something useful or whether day care was useful or- there was a very strong anti-day care movement in many ways to try and help people be more independent. Or try and make- help life be more productive for people if possible. At the same time there was a discussion about deafness in the Asian community which, as I said, was quite a high rate partly because of erm arthritis and the climate here compared with people’s home countries. So there were a lot of complex issues to sort out including how dementia was diagnosed because it’s easy to misdiagnose an issue when some ones got dementia, when actually they’re hard of hearing, depressed. Depressing can look very like dementia. So we were having those sorts of discussions about older people’s services and how they can eb better provided. And so that would’ve been the context- I’m going into too much detail except I remember being in the building- going in too much detail, I think it’s a bit harsh on me, a long time ago…

*No worries. Erm, you mentioned you did a lot of sort of consultation work with the community, erm how would that kind of take place, would you sort of-?*

Well, there were staff in the department that would be going out doing all sorts of discussion. What I would tend to do more would be to go to large meetings and hear what people had to say, or occasionally speak at large meetings and they would hear what I had to say and argue with it, but erm, certainly the staff involved, we were mostly staff working to a race advisor looking at developing suitable services, or staff involved in commissioning. Erm, because we, we started thinking about commissioning and service development while I was here. Err, it would be then that we would be involved in discussing and identifying funding and developing services and finding erm, potential staff and volunteers and so on. But we had a lot of discussions with GPs as well- a lot. Some of them quite difficult and a lot of discussions with health, who were very interested at that time- there was a geriatrician here, who’s long gone, and is actually I think in Barking & Dagenham or Havering now- been at Barts when I worked at Barts- but he was here for a long time and very young at the time but isn’t now. And we had an older people’s service development grew- that discussed the range of services we might need and what might health services were required and what provision might be needed in hospital and so on. So we talked quite broadly to scope what might be able to be provided, and could we re-jig some of what we did… I don’t really know what came of it but we looked to transfer a lot of our homes to housing associations but retain some locally erm, that might be where people either had an initial assessment or erm, might stay short term and then maybe get home. The, the world goes round because now-a-days is thinking about NHS continuing care funding is something that is developed in the community rather than in hospital. While I was working in the NHS most people would get their funding while they were in hospital and it might be totally inappropriate because nearly all of us are much more vulnerable and dependant when we’re in hospital, and so assessing our needs is not ideal frankly.

*Yeah.*

So that’s what the, the department of health is requiring again now, that most NHS continuing care funding is erm, assessed and provided in the community and not through hospitals, but- And I was in the NHS until very recently, and people were stuck in hospital waiting for assessments. The arguments would be, with local authorities, about who would provide, and with families saying they wanted health funding because clearly health funding, is, is free whereas local authority funding is charge for. So, these complex issues were all around. Always have been.

*Yeah. Erm, you mentioned also that there was a kind of movement against daycare. Erm-*

Yes, particularly around mental health and learning difficulties, but for everybody because there was a strong notion that it’s now picked up with pension age and so up, about people maintaining their independence as long as possible and not being passive recipients. And that was particularly the case for, as I said, for mental health and learning difficulties that people should be able to have productive lives. But it was an issue with older people that comes and goes a bit.

*Yeah.*

And erm, it’s an issue we would think about as we get older because we don’t want to be parts, don’t we either.

*No, definitely not.*

It just hasn’t quite resolved itself for older people I think.

*Yeah. Erm, I was also wondering if you gave staff any sort of special training or provision for working with erm, various racial groups or kind of being mindful to diversity as a whole?*

Well we had a race advisor; we had community workers; we had, at one point, an inspection team which went off separately to a national body. But we had one for a long time when I was here. We would be inspecting services to make sure they were appropriate, and we would be wanting and expecting our staff to reflect the community and a lot of our thinking was if your staff reflected the community then the services had more chance of being right. I think we might be more sophisticated than that now. Erm, but we also sort to quality assure what we did to make sure we were concerned to understand where individuals and families were coming from, including in terms of their origins, their ethnicity, their culture, and we would train and manage our staff accordingly. A lot of that was procedurised in my day. I think there was a fair bit of work on reminiscence, but it tended to be very much focused in day establishments and residential establishments and particularly in the local authorities provision, and I think it’s thought about more widely now. Erm, I don’t think we sufficiently understood the impact of dementia, and I think that’s still changing. And of course those services are largely held by north east London foundation trust now, but erm, and very professional services. Whereas I think our thinking was more about what we’d expect social workers to understand and do, then they were under us rather than under a health trust, and what we’d expect our community staff to, to do and how we would support the community and manage it. So, I think times have moved on.

*Were there lots of changes even during the period as head of social services?*

Yeah. Constant. Constant. But, I’ve given you a very kind of, crude summary I would say.

*Yeah.*

Of how things changed. I think we felt our services were overwhelmed by asylum seekers at the time I was director and so much of our resources went to looking after families that wouldn’t be looked after now erm, but were our statuary responsibility that we had a whole wing of the department that was dealing with accommodating and supporting people erm, that swallowed up our resources and people- it was like the poorer people would be shoved from one borough to another erm, with local authorities looking to avoid their responsibilities. So it took up a very damaging amount of our resources in those, those years. And I think it’s probably a good thing that local authorities aren’t burdened with it in the same way, but of course it means that we have lots of people sleeping on the streets that, that weren’t then.

*Do you think, I mean do you think there’s more homelessness now than there was?*

Well there’s definitely more homelessness now than there has been for a while. Erm, these things have come and gone during my social work career. There was a time when London was full of homeless people and they disappeared erm, and all sorts of services were set up and in the years since I left Newham I was working with drug and alcohol agencies for a long time, and we were all providing a whole range of services ourselves for people because only the tough ones who tended to be ex forces would survive on the streets for very long. Erm, but we had services in everything from very primitive shelters right through to accommodation services. You see again, a lot of people, a lot of people have passed away in the cold spells this winter, erm that wasn’t the case until relatively recently so, that’s not about social workers, it’s about income and accommodation. And I think some of the debates we had about, were about what’s more important. And certainly, when I worked for Barts’ Health, which I did for some time, there were huge issues about whether accommodation was more important than health because we know that if people don’t have accommodation they tend not to survive well.

*Mm.*

And that’s carved off from what many local authorities do- not entirely, but very substantially. Local authority rolling housing is far, far less than it was in my day.

*Was there a reason for that or was it just sort of taken out-*

It’s a matter of legislation. And government approach. And of course, housing association provision is very secure, but erm, local authorities have been selling off their properties for a long time now. And there’s, of course, concern about the need to have local authority provision, or local authority accessible provision, again, but that wasn’t the case. So these things come and go as I’ve said. In many local authorities adult services linked with housing and children services linked with education and that’s why social services were split. What I’m saying is I think the evidence is if you don’t have decent accommodation your health and wellbeing is very, very severely affected.

*Yeah. I think that’s, I don’t know, would seem sort of almost immediately apparent surely?*

Well it wasn’t apparent. It, it’s obviously sounds completely, it sounds completely obvious but it wasn’t apparent, and it clearly has been a huge issue for health in particular, who has no health service has no facility to accommodate people. So some of the work I’ve done since being in Newham has been about discharging people safely from hospital, and if they get discharge to the street they are not safe. So this has been a huge issue for the NHS, as now the issue is bottled up very significantly about charging people if they cant prove who they, well all sorts of people, not just people with a right to stay here bec- but who’ve come from abroad, but people erm, who are definitely indigenous but have no passport, may have been passport and had it stolen, or may have never had one, have difficulty in getting health services as well as accommodation services, and bounce between local authorities. So old style homeless people, one of the vulnerable groups, about getting a whole range of services, and clearly, the understanding hasn’t been there but these services are all interconnected whether we know it or not.

*Mm.*

And I think local authorities have always been troubled that if there, in inverted comments, too generous then they may attract vulnerable people from elsewhere, and that isn’t necessarily associated with a particular political party.

*Yeah.*

I know elected members felt we were too generous and that’s why we had more asylum seekers, and it certainly wasn’t the case.

*Really?*

Mm.

*Why do you think Newham attracted more asylum seekers?*

Because there was a community here already… And if there’s a community erm, people will have relatives and they’ll gravitate to where they no someone or have an address on a piece of paper.

*Mm, absolutely. Erm-*

Also where there’s cheap accommodation people will gravitate towards that.

*So, presumably Newham-*

Had very cheap accommodation, and it was one of the reasons why the council wanted to have better accommodation.

*Just thinking about erm, other community organisations, I mean have many had the longevity that SubCo has?*

I couldn’t tell you that because I haven’t worked in Newham since I worked in local authority. Erm, but I know there are others because I occasionally here of them, or from them. There’s some that have had a longer life than SubCo but its done pretty well, it’s great isn’t it?

*Yeah no, it seems to have-*

But I mean some of the things I was involved in, Blackfriars Settlements, still exists. That’s really nice from my point of view as well.

*Yeah it must be nice to-*

Yeah, if you set up something or, someone else sets up something that meets a real needs it going to carry on.

*Yeah.*

Funding, I’m sure it gets tougher and tougher and tougher as the money is tighter and tighter. And its no surprise to me that SubCo gets individual payments for older people and looks for its other funding elsewhere because local authority block grants for everything that passed, very much, not entirely but-

*Is that something that changed while you were still-?*

Oh we- no, we gave out a lot of block grants and we required information about who got services, but it wasn’t the same as individual budgets. We were only just begininning individual budgets.

*Could you explain the difference?*

Well an individual budget is to meet the assessed needs of an individual, and it will be met by health and social care depending on what the budget streams are for that individual. That was at the very beginnings of its development, both in terms of legislation to inform that way of thinking and practice. It was very new and most of our services were block services that people might be referred to.

*Mhm. So you’d fund the service rather than the individual?*

Yes. You might require the service to evidence its performance, and the difficulty with individual funding can be that services aren’t required to evidence their performance in the same way. So that is an issue about individual funding because each social worker will be thinking about their clients. And that may not be the safest way to ensure that there’s real change for people.

*Mm.*

So people may be trapped in services that they can step beyond.

*Yeah.*

Because they’ll be trapped within the limits of their assessment. It’s the same point I was making about NHS continuing health care assessment. If you assess someone in a geriatric ward in a hospital they may be still a bit ill even though they’ll be well enough to go home they may be still a bit confused, they may be very anxious. You may not see what state the home is in. You’ll be relying on a social worker to tell you that or an occupational therapist so your assessment may be narrow, and it may be very difficult because it’s meant to be a then and now assessment to judge whether someone’s going to deteriorate or not. The same will apply with an individual social work assessment of someone. Umm, they may improve, they may not. We know for example that some people are considered to have dementia when they’re actually febrile. Erm, so just as children can be delirious its very common as you get older to seem extremely confused and you’ve just got an infection, so all these things can be a problem and you may set standards that are different for an individual agency, though of course its also subject to inspection now, that you might have set in terms of a block grant. And speak about that with most authority for things like drug and alcohol services where you will look for people to make significant improvements but it may be harsh to expect all the clients suddenly to start taking drugs and you may look for other things as well and that becomes much harder when you’re looking at individual funding.

*Mm, absolutely. Umm, I think maybe just before we finish up, I was wondering if you have any particular stand out memories about working with SubCo or anything that happened here?*

Well I always enjoyed it, erm and I’d like to walk round again. I probably should’ve walked round before, I might have recollected more myself. As an older person but erm… no, I might want to add something later if you’ll allow me to.

*Absolutely, yeah.*

But as I say I have no access to my own documentation and I happen to know its long gone a load of it so.

*Mm.*

We did use to have a whole huge office full of filing and I know it wasn’t kept.

*Just decided not useful anymore so got rid of it all.*

And there is a limit to how much you can keep.

*Absolutely yeah.*

Because its your statutory duty to keep some of it, and there wouldn’t be a statutory duty to keep information about community services.

*Mm. Erm, well my final questions ends sort of leading from my last one. Why do you think SubCo always seemed to have a nice atmosphere, was there anything in particular about the way they worked or?*

Well a little bit about the quality of staff and adequate selection of the clientele I would say. Erm, ive learned a lot but having been responsible for housing association services in my later career and when you accommodate anyone with any vulnerability, whether they’re a young person or a person with speech and language issues- I still do work for sense, the death, blind organisation for example- or people with mental health needs. You want to choose a group that will get on and support each other as well as have staff that are able to create a positive atmosphere because the two will play off, and if you give some poor staff team the most difficult clientele you may expect that they wont be bale to generate such a good atmosphere unless they’re all geniuses. So I think it’s a combination of selecting people properly and having a decent staff team, and without doubt good leadership. And I would say also adequate links to the community its serving because you won’t provide appropriate services if you don’t do that. And that’s why voluntary sector services can be terrible if they’re bad, but really brilliant and excellent if they’re good- that they will have stronger routes into the local community. Which is why I’ve always supported them, still do. And definitely having worked in larger voluntary sector myself I’m well aware that you would get some absolutely brilliant staff because some of the drive will be erm, personal, erm and not just professional. And that makes-

*Do you think that comes from erm, like you said, an organisation that has a better basis in the community? Do you think that’s responsible for creating-*

Well it’s about the relevance of its staff and the two will be interlinked, but to give you a different example in the drug and alcohol sector, it is very, very common to recruit people that are former clients. Now, you make a mistake with that they’re very high risk. Umm, you do it correctly and you’ll have people that are much sharper at knowing what’s happening and incredibly committed compared with a passing professional. And so, so long as you protect them, because they’ll work too hard, to the degree that it may not be safe, they will deliver a most fantastic job, and I think that applies in the voluntary sector. And it’s, it’s huge advantage, and as you say some of that’s about community links, some of its about who comes into those jobs. The danger in a, in a poorly run voluntary sector agency is that it’s not held to account in the same way and can be dangerous. And can treat people very badly. So, there’s always a quality issue. And inspection is all externalised now and that gives a certain sort of truth but it’s not the same truth as being inspected by people who know you, because people who know you know what to look for.

*Absolutely.*

People who come in with their questions set and an established team, they may be after you or not, but they won’t, they won’t actually know what to look for in the same. I would say.

*Well, I think I’ve come to the end of my questions. Do you have anything more to add or are you-?*

No, I might want to add something if I’ve walked round the building and had time to do some recollection and one of the people that was involved with me with some of this work is no longer with us, so she’s someone I cant talk to but erm, might help me to talk to some individuals that I worked with then and that would help my recall.

*Hm, well absolutely.*

Because its quite a long time ago and things do slightly blur [laughs].

*Well, thank you very much for your time.*

Your very welcome.

*Its been very interesting talking to you so thank you for that.*

Hope I haven’t got a parking ticket.

*[Laughs] Yeah lets hope not.*

There’s an ambulance out there, so…

**The End**

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