What does it mean to Flourish?
A Psychosocial Investigation

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Bournemouth University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Bournemouth University

Abstract

The concept of 'Flourishing' has been a key idea in the history of positive psychology. The narrative of positive psychology has been influential within politics, culture and society and its language and philosophy have informed key social policies of the UK government, particularly in the area of welfare and wellbeing policy. This thesis examines the ways in which positive psychology is mobilised in political discourse and considers the implications of this. I argue that a psychoanalytic viewpoint is missing from that government policy arena and so, consequently, a significant alternative narrative on what it means to flourish is denied the space to be explored. I argue that psychoanalysis offers an important dimension to our understanding of human flourishing and can provide a more nuanced interpretation than positive psychology allows. Its means of exploring flourishing takes account of the affective dynamics that shape social relations in the contemporary social and cultural context, together with the potential spaces that can be opened up for change and transformation.

The purpose of my thesis is to get a purchase on the complex and contested nature of what it means to flourish by exploring 'structures of feeling'. This involves exploring the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, as well as the whole lived social process organized around dominant meanings and values at any one time (Williams 1977, p.108), The role of the researcher, in this instance, is to document the things and feelings which can block the paths to human flourishing, yet also actively seek what has the potential to offer a more hopeful future (Highmore 2016). It does this through four key case studies, employing a multimodal and psychosocial approach. It argues that the repression of psychoanalysis reveals a deficit that can be fruitfully filled by its rehabilitation in public discourse. This allows a new space for thinking about the complexities of contemporary social and cultural experience. The thesis sets out to foreground an alternative narrative of what it means to flourish from a psychoanalytic, specifically object relational, standpoint.

As an original contribution to knowledge, this thesis shows how austerity measures in the UK since 2010 had a direct impact on people's capacity to flourish. The thesis reasserts the value of psychoanalysis for an understanding of flourishing. By adding a psychoanalytic dimension, I am contributing a new intervention into the evaluation of the meaning of flourishing and its relationship to the contemporary political culture of austerity. I am also offering an alternative articulation of what it may mean to flourish by presenting a psychoanalytic object relations understanding of flourishing based on a capacity for concern.

Key themes: Childhood; Capacity for Concern; Character Strengths and Resilience; Flourishing, Mattering Theory; Positive Psychology; Psychoanalysis; Social Injustice; Wellbeing and Happiness; Welfare; Winnicott, D.W.

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Statement of Original Authorship

Acknowledgements

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Acknowledgements

"I may not have gone where I intended to go, but I think I have ended up where I needed to be"

(Douglas Adams: The Long Dark Teatime of The Soul 1988)

This thesis is dedicated to Lorcan (mo stóirín) and to Chris (who would have been so proud to have seen this finished).

Grateful thanks must go to Professor Candida Yates who believed in me. I am pleased to be able to call her Director, supervisor, mentor and friend. Thank you to Dr Mark Readman who joined the supervisory team at just the right moment. Both Mark and Candida have helped me to see the forest when I was caught up in the trees.

Thanks must also go to Professor Susanna Radstone and Dr Heather Price for their invaluable insights. Also to Professor Philip Marfleet for his constructive criticism, observations and advice.

To my family, I thank you beyond words for your support, and love, especially to my mother Jenny for her encouragement and for checking for 'infelicities'. To Stephen, Iris, Jim and Sally for their source of comfort and strength.

To my interviewees, thank you so much for your time and for telling your stories, it was a pleasure and an honor to engage with you during my research.

Chapter 1: Introduction

My motivation to write my thesis came because I had written about the policy to measure the wellbeing of the UK population (Lennon-Patience 2013) and I was interested in how positive psychology had influenced policy making in the UK. I noticed how psychoanalysis was absent from discussions around the meaning of wellbeing and human flourishing. In addition, I was concerned that the implementation of austerity measures in the UK may be impacting on the possibility for flourishing for many UK citizens. The purpose of my research is to examine definitions of flourishing, how they are mobilized and how meanings can change over time, and how that shift in meaning is played out in UK government policy. Flourishing or wellbeing is a key idea in contemporary cultural and political discourse; positive psychology is often invoked explicitly or implicitly in relation to it. Positive psychology's roots can be found in the 1960s; in humanistic psychology for example, where it thrived as part of the hippie counter-culture. It is possible to consider positive psychology in the light of an individualistic turn taken since the 1960s. To 'flourish' is construed in a social Darwinian context with its omnipresent value of competition. Those who 'flourish' are the ones with the will, talent or good fortune to compete successfully, as I will go on to explore.

According to psychoanalytic psychotherapist Graham Music (2001), "positive feelings have received a bad press within psychoanalysis and psychoanalysis has received its own bad press as a result" (p.67). Music (2009) has gone as far as to suggest that psychoanalysis's focus on painful and difficult experiences may actually be an Achilles heel. Attention to the more negative aspects of the personality may mean that psychoanalysis has under theorised concepts such as resilience and feeling good. Music argues that positive psychology presents a challenge to psychoanalysis. Whilst it is right that psychoanalysis helps to manage bad experiences, he said, it should also enable us to have good experiences because, in his view, good experiences can protect us when bad experiences come along. I want to know what is at stake if the positive psychology view of human flourishing takes precedence in a narrative on wellbeing, to the detriment of alternative ideas. I argue that what is missing from discussions about human flourishing is a psychoanalytic viewpoint. Therefore, this thesis aims to use a psychoanalytically informed approach in order to offer an alternative understanding of what it means to flourish that will encompass greater tolerance of the complexities of what it is to be human. My study is thus a psychoanalytically inflected, qualitative exploration of flourishing. The research takes the form of four case studies where I examine potential impediments to

flourishing but also explore the possibilities for social policy which can go some way towards creating an environment conducive to flourishing and wellbeing.

In my first case study I set out to consider what the consequences would be if we took psychoanalysis into account when discussing what constitutes human flourishing. I believe that psychoanalysis has something important to say about what it means to flourish that is more collective and feminine in its approach. I argue that this is absolutely vital for a society which has due regard for the vulnerability of its citizens and wants to ensure that, when we talk about human flourishing, we mean that this is for all and not just a few. This is about recognising that we are unable to consider wellbeing without considering justice. It is about the vital capacity to care. The psychoanalytic concept of the capacity for concern (Bowlby1953; Winnicott1964; Murray 1996) arises from the fostering of a sense of something good within the self, which is then felt to be worthwhile giving to others. Most importantly, the capacity for concern consists of "a felt experience of being of value" (Murray 1996, p.57). For my first case study I investigate the UK Sure Start programme initiated under the 1997- 2010 New Labour government. I argue that this had the potential to be a facilitating environment for parents and children, which could lay down the foundations for future flourishing and wellbeing. I suggest that the Sure Start initiative had the opportunity for transformation in terms of social policy that would have positive impacts for subsequent generations. Because of the ideology of austerity, this germ of a good idea has been allowed to fade.

In case studies two, three and four, I take a psychosocial approach using a narrative method of qualitative unstructured interviews, to examine how social welfare is perceived in the public sphere and how welfare restructure and austerity have impacted both from an individual's perspective but also from a community perspective. I focus particularly on UK coastal towns. The purpose of this case study is to show the shift that has taken place in welfare policy where there has been a distinct move away from any understanding of welfare as having a part to play in how members of a population may flourish. Instead, the emphasis is on workfare. My case studies demonstrate the tension felt by the individual to flourish under neoliberal conditions. Flourishing means taking responsibility for oneself, and to thrive in the face of adversity yet without the containing function of a welfare state. I take a particular interest in coastal towns as they are so often evoked as placed of good health and wellbeing, an environment in which to flourish. Yet often they are areas of social injustice and deprivation which are not conducive to the flourishing either of the self or of the community.

1.1 The Good Society

  A key idea in political philosophy is that of the good society. Michael Rustin, in his 1991 book *The Good Society and the Inner World,* examined the ways in which psychoanalytic concepts often intersect with the philosophical ideas of what may constitute a good society. His book demonstrated the social and political relevance of psychoanalytic ideas, particularly the focus on the reparative drive or the more generalised capacity to feel concern. It is possible, as Rustin suggests, that "the social architecture of a more benign world" may function as an almost universally shared internal representation (Rustin and Rustin, 1982). I want to revisit some of the key themes raised by Rustin and evaluate their relevancy and potency for today, notably the idea that psychoanalysis is linked to social justice and that we are members of a social community from birth. The cultural forces and political movements emerging from the emotional aftermath of the political turbulence of the late 1960s offered a vision of a society free from restraints in both the internal and external worlds. However, as Rustin notes (1991), rather than providing spontaneous social harmony as an alternative, the ideology of personal liberation is actually more individualistic than the rhetoric implies.

  Against this backdrop my thesis examines the concept of 'flourishing'. Life events meant that this thesis took far longer to write than had been originally planned. As a consequence, the time period it covers saw immense change and significant political events took place. I began writing as the Conservative-led coalition government began its time in power in the UK and President Obama was in office in the USA. But as my writing began to draw to a close, the UK had voted for Brexit which saw the demise of David Cameron as UK Prime Minister and, in America, the billionaire and former reality TV star Donald J Trump was elected president. My interest had been piqued because of David Cameron's acknowledgement of the influence of positive psychology in the formation of his policies, notably to measure the wellbeing of the UK population (Lennon-Patience 2013). This thesis sets out to find out what impact positive psychology has had and how it has been mobilised for social policy in the UK in relation to wellbeing. I want to know what is at stake if the positive psychology view of human flourishing takes precedence in a narrative on wellbeing to the detriment of alternative ideas. What is missing, I will argue, is a psychoanalytic viewpoint.

  Frosh (2010) has said that psychoanalysis can be seen as a universal methodology. Rather than supplying solutions to research questions, its role is in "undoing", "provoking" and

"questioning" (p.189). He warns against the use of psychoanalysis to assert ideas of certainty about human nature; the psychoanalytic stance, Frosh says, should be both "tentative and creatively disruptive" (Frosh 2010, p.195). Therefore, my thesis does not seek to counterpose positive psychology with an alternative psychoanalytic structure advancing ideas on human optimism and potential. Indeed, this would perhaps serve only to co-opt psychoanalysis into a project of optimism. I am heedful of Wollheim's injunction; "do not do Freud the disservice of recruiting him into the kind of bland or mindless optimism that he so utterly and heroically despised" (Wollheim 1991, p.234). Rather than 'mindless optimism' in the relational approach, conflict and destructiveness are recognised as part of the whole lived experience. Applying this knowledge can enable a more settled society characterised by more fulfilling relationships which are based on mutual recognition (Frosh 2010). I find the work of Paul Hoggett important for informing my position on welfare and wellbeing, notably his book *Emotional Life and the Politics of Welfare* (2000). In this work he called for a model of collective altruism where society is seen as an interdependent community of friends and strangers. People's emotional wellbeing or flourishing is dependent upon the quality of social relationships in which they are immersed. What is often absent, suppressed or denied space to engage in the current commonsense perception of wellbeing is a psychoanalytic point of view, notably for this thesis, an object relational one. As my thesis unfolds I consider that the inclusion of a more object relational ideal of human flourishing may prove fruitful for social policies that recognise and enhance the qualities of our social relationships for the benefit of our collective wellbeing.

Psychoanalysis can and does contribute to ideas around what makes a good society (Rustin 1991). Relational psychoanalysis, I will argue, offers an alternative perspectiveon what it means to flourish. I propose to add a psychoanalytic inflection to a critical understanding of positive psychology as well as presenting an alternative narrative on what it means to flourish from the vantage of a psychoanalytic object relational perspective. The latter places emphasis on the containing environment necessary for emotional and psychical growth. "Object relations theory 'provide[s] a useful theoretical container for the idea that human beings are innately social, that is to say are dependent on, and preoccupied with the wellbeing of others from their earliest months of life" (Rustin 2001, p.189). Emotional growth is the development of a capacity to integrate conflicting emotions and cope creatively with conflicts, contradictions, challenges and opportunities in life. The containing environment is not limited to the family sphere, but more broadly, can encapsulate the social and political arena. Problems arise when that containing environment fragments and fails, or worse, becomes an active assault on human

need. I therefore intend to present a way in which psychoanalysis can inform social policy in order to offer a more containing environment.

The purpose of my thesis is to get a purchase on the complex and contested nature of what it means to flourish by exploring 'structures of feeling'. This involves exploring the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, as well as the whole lived social process organized around dominant meanings and values at any one time (Williams 1977, p.108), The central motivation of this thesis is therefore taken from Ben Highmore's description of Raymond William's theoretical perspective:

> "We need to chart the relays of things and feelings that block the paths
> to our flourishing, just as we need to grasp hold of the feelings and
> things that can, potentially at least, offer a more hopeful future"
> (Highmore 2016, p.23)

1.2 Aims and Objectives

- To explore how meanings of flourishing and wellbeing emerge from particular social, political and economic spheres within a particular social formation or conjuncture.
- To get a purchase on the complex and contested nature of what it means to flourish by exploring 'structures of feeling'.
- To document the impediments to flourishing as well as grasp hold of feelings and things that have the potential to offer a more hopeful future.
- To provide an original critique of positive psychology and its relationship to the contemporary political culture of austerity in the UK.
- To foreground an alternative narrative of what it means to flourish from an object relational psychanalytic standpoint.

PART 1: Literature Review and Contextualisation

In order to provide context for my case studies which follow in Part 2, this first part of the thesis constitutes a literature review where I define key terms, set the parameters of my subject and provide an historical contextualization for my research. I review the key constructs that inform my thinking about flourishing and demonstrate why I am interested in this particular topic. This is a thematic review with the aim of defining key terms, examining the historical progression of positive psychology, reflecting on a particular period in the UK marked by economic austerity and what impact that may have on a person's capacity to flourish. Finally, the intention is to identity what has potentially been absent, suppressed or denied, and here I will discuss psychoanalytic ideas pertaining to human flourishing linked to the capacity to care.

Conjuncture

The following is a brief description of the contours of a given social, political and cultural conjuncture. This will be followed by a more detailed discussion of how that comes to bear when considering what it might mean to flourish. I draw on the conceptual framework of conjunctural analysis, pioneered by the late Stuart Hall, which seeks to examine politics through analysis of the contours of a given social, political and cultural conjuncture at a number of different levels (Rutherford and Davison 2012). As the thesis continues, I aim to identify the social, political and historical dimensions that have given rise to positive psychology as an influential narrative. Conjunctural analysis is also about analysing the ways in which aspects of culture have been deployed as a particular version of common sense (Hall and Massey 2012). "Common sense shapes our ordinary, practical everyday calculation and appears as natural as the air we breathe" (Hall 1988, p.8). This thesis examines the narrative of positive psychology and suggests that it is an exemplar of common sense thinking and, as such, becomes taken for granted as a way of interpreting the world.

There is a need to study all the elements of the culture that we inhabit so that we can effectively construct a counter narrative. As I will discuss, the emergence of positive psychology is set in the wider political context of neoliberalism and the emergence of a particular mode of common sense that is linked to it. Hall, in collaboration with O'Shea, brought to our attention the significance of "common sense neoliberalism" (Hall and O'Shea 2015, p.52). A tactic mobilised by politicians when they want to gain support for their policies

is to speak of them as though they are firmly in tune with popular thinking, in keeping with the taken for granted truths and wisdoms of the age. This common sense thinking bestows on government policy a sense that it has been legitimised by popular thought: "it is a form of everyday thinking which offers us frameworks of meaning with which to make sense of the world. It is a form of popular, easily-available knowledge which contains no complicated ideas, requires no sophisticated argument and does not depend on deep thought and wide reading" (Hall and O'Shea 2013, p.8).

The contemporary conjuncture I explore has been characterised in the UK by inequality, cuts to welfare and an increase in the neoliberal workfare state (Seymour 2014; O'Hara 2015; Ryan 2019). The workfare state links welfare and public support to work activity (Betram 2019). Neoliberalism as an economic theory proposes that wellbeing or flourishing is best achieved through the maximisation of entrepreneurial freedoms; individual liberty and freedom is seen as sacrosanct, the social good will be increased through the maximisation of the reach and frequency of market transaction (Harvey 2005). As a consequence, however, "we are obliged to live as appendages of the market" (Harvey 2005, p.185). Mental illness is considered an individual problem and the social causation of mental ill health is not considered. (Fisher 2009). This conjuncture then is one characterized by melancholy and in inability to feel hope (Fisher 2009). As Hall and O'Shea point out;

> "The structural consequences of neoliberalism - the individualization of everyone, the privatization of public troubles and the requirement to make competitive choices at every turn - has been paralleled by an upsurge of feelings of insecurity, anxiety, stress and depression" (Hall and O'Shea 2015, p.6).

Psychoanalyst and author, Christopher Bollas (2015, 2018), suggests that American and British society are experiencing an 'age of bewilderment'. Characterised by a pervasive sense of cynicism, the age of bewilderment Bollas describes is a period of intense melancholia, where people feel that they can no longer find a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. There has been a rejection, he argues, of depth psychologies, with a resistance to reflection. This is seen, he argues, in the antipathy towards psychoanalysis and the embracing of 'myopic utilitarianism' (Bollas, 2018, p.xxiii).

There has been a shift to privatised culture, with the penetration of market forces into every aspect of life. People, increasingly, seek personal solutions to social problems in the hope of shutting out the risks, terrors and persecutions that dominate our lives in the global age (Elliott and Lemert, 2006). What has resulted is the unlinking of the individual from their social

contexts. The psychoanalyst Lynne Layton (2006a, 2006b) describes this as the dominant norm of liberal individualist ideology. She argues that there has been a subordination of 'sensuous human existence and morality' to the 'facts' of the marketplace, this technical rationality severs the individual from their social and natural world and also from each other (Layton, 2006a, p.109). The split between the public and the private realms, Layton suggested, produces hostile and submissive versions of dependency on the one hand and hostile and omnipotent versions of agency on the other. As Richards contends, the acceptance of our dependence on others "cannot be endured by the neoliberal mind" or by the "psychologist connoisseurs of happiness" (Richards, 1989, p.26). The result of this denial of dependency is a need to expunge the world of reminders of the reality of dependency as exemplified by welfare recipients or the NHS. We find ourselves in a post-dependent society, argues Dartington (2009), in which individual self-interest has become a sufficient explanation of socio-economic theory.

The neoliberal ideal of human flourishing is therefore comprised of pro-market values, underpinned by a culturally powerful therapeutic discourse. There has been an ongoing debate amongst cultural analysts about the absorption of the language of therapy into everyday life and an associated preoccupation with the self. Early work by Reiff (1966) stimulated a range of social scientists and academics to examine a therapeutic culture as a negative feature of late modernity. For some (Lasch 1991; Reiff 1966; Sennett 1986) this is an indication of modern culture in which people had become self-absorbed and selfish. For Reiff (1966) wellbeing has become an end in itself, rather than a byproduct of striving after some superior common end. Cloud (1998) identified therapeutic rhetoric as a hegemonic force in American political life. She argued that therapeutic discourse works within what she calls the hegemonic framework of liberal individualism, with a focus on privatisation which has facilitated a channeling of social discontent into an individualistic private sphere which forces reform and adaption. Furedi (2004) argues that British culture since the Second World War has uncritically assimilated the therapeutic ethos, with therapeutic language permeating government domestic policy initiatives. Therapeutic culture has come to encompass concern about cultural decline, self-surveillance, and emotional governance (Richards 2007). There are others who offer, if not a positive, then at least a more nuanced and ambivalent reading of the therapeutic turn (Elliott and Lemert 2006; Illouz 2008; Layton 2011; Richards and Brown 2011; Wright 2008; Yates 2011).

Richards (2007; Richards and Brown 2011) proposed that emotion has become a more visible part of everyday life, which he described as a process of emotionalisation. He noted that

the development of therapeutic culture is complex and multivariate with the enabling possibility of self-reflection, as opposed to self-fulfilment, as an ideal. In these more nuanced readings of therapy culture we find that a better understanding of the self enables us to be more attuned to others and their suffering. Whilst it is possible to view the absorption of the language of therapy into everyday life as concurring with the preoccupation with the self. It is also possible to view therapeutic culture as a valuable resource, both in professional and cultural terms, which has enabled a language of the self, of emotion and of identity underpinned by an emotional style with a potential for empathy and recognition of the other (Illouz, 2008). Richards (2007) noted that a therapeutic culture could allow for an expressiveness of different types. Whilst it can be commandeered for the expression of selfishness and contrivance, it can also allow for the opening up of an opportunity for reflexivity and a growth in compassion. My work is situated here, taking a more nuanced view of therapeutic culture which recognizes the ways in which it can allow for an opportunity for the growth in compassion.

Having outlined the contemporary conjuncture I will now move on to chapter two, defining the multi-dimensional term flourishing.

Chapter 2: Defining Flourishing

In this chapter, I aim to define flourishing and consider associated terms such as happiness, wellbeing, resilience, thriving, optimism and generativity. Flourishing is a multi-dimensional construct as I will show. It encompasses a wide range of psychological, philosophical, economic and political theories. The term flourishing has now become synonymous with the positive psychology movement, with the concept of wellbeing seemingly an interchangeable term (Dodge et al. 2012). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the word flourishing means to grow vigorously, to thrive, prosper, to be in one's prime, to have good health, or to be successful. The definition means to grow or develop in a healthy or vigorous way, especially as a result of a particularly congenial environment. Wellbeing then is defined as the state of being comfortable, happy or healthy and has a synonym, welfare which signifies the health, happiness and fortune of a person or group.

Corey Keys, one of the earliest psychologists to examine flourishing as a psychological construct, defines flourishing as "high levels of emotional wellbeing and social wellbeing" (Keyes p.89). Keyes (2003) defines mental health as "a syndrome of symptoms of positive feelings and positive functioning in life". According to Keyes, a diagnosis of the presence of mental health can be described as flourishing, and the absence of mental health is characterised by languishing (p.207). Diener and colleagues (2010) produced The Flourishing Scale to quantify eight aspects ranging from leading a meaningful life, being a good person and being optimistic about the future. Wellbeing can be viewed as a multi-dimensional construct with flourishing being understood as high levels of wellbeing (Dodge et al 2012; Diener et al 2010; Fredrickson and Lousada 2005; Huppert 2013; Keyes 2003; Seligman 2011).

In a detailed review of the key theoretical works on the psychometric measurement of flourishing Hone et al (2013) found that while there were some commonalities in how flourishing was defined there were also significant differences. For example, some psychologists chose to include optimism in their working definition of flourishing (Diener et at 2010), others include vitality or resilience (Huppert 2013). There is a lack of clarity therefore amongst researchers on the subject about what to include or exclude when trying to define flourishing as a psychological concept. There is also a gap, suggest Hone et al (2014), between these definitions offered by psychologists and a "real world understanding" (92) of what it may mean to flourish.

The concept of wellbeing can be defined as living and faring well. It is usually understood to entail happiness and the sort of life it is good to lead, whether that is both what

the good life is and what the good life achieves (Honderich 1995). However, there is ambiguity in the concept of the "good life", which can be variably interpreted as a morally good life, or a life where comfort and enjoyment are paramount. The concept of wellbeing is a fundamentally political notion, as according to Honderich (1995), a good person cannot experience wellbeing under conditions of poverty or oppression. Wellbeing is explicated in both moral and political terms. Politics, therefore, involves the consideration of what constitutes the good life, how we should live, and what kind of values should underpin social action. Moreover, resources and power are then distributed accordingly in relation to those values. Therefore, how a society debates and decides what is deemed to be 'good' will be affected by the dominant cultural and political discourses of the time.

2.1 Flourishing: a Keyword?

Raymond Williams (1976) is important here for thinking about how words are formed and transformed through cultural use. In *Keywords* (1976) Williams describes how he chose the words he included in his study:

> "[e]very word I have included has at some time, in the course of some
> argument, virtually forced itself on my attention because the problems
> of its meanings seemed to me inextricably bound up with the problems
> it was being used to discuss" (Williams 1976, p.15).

Whilst the word flourishing was not included in his extensive discussion, the way Williams thinks about how a word functions or transforms is important here. He suggested that keywords are polysemous, in that they are capable of bearing multiple meanings depending on the context in which they are deployed. In looking at the way the word flourish is being used, or perhaps even usurped by other words such as wellbeing or resilience, one can cast light on the struggle over the meaning of the word, as I go on to discuss later in the thesis.

In recent times, the narrative of positive psychology has been influential within politics, culture and society. Its language and philosophy have informed key UK government policies, particularly in the area of welfare and wellbeing. The use of the word flourish is often limited to academic circles, used more in the realms of moral and political philosophy rather than in public political discourse. An sample search of UK policy documents to find the word 'flourish' brings up more than 1000 results. More often, the word flourishing, in these contexts, is used

when talking about business or economy. Upon closer inspection of policies relating to health, education or community, the word flourish actually appears considerably less frequently than the term 'wellbeing' which is by far the more common choice of word. It is perhaps pertinent that the word flourishing is not the first choice in political discourse because it is possible to argue that human flourishing is the very point of politics. Instead it is more likely that the terms used will be 'wellbeing', 'resilience' or 'thrive', as I will go on to discuss. Flourishing, more often than not is designated as a psychological construct, not an immediately identifiable goal for the UK political system. The terms used in place of flourishing are more about the making of a good moral subject rather than enabling flourishing.

2.2 Eudaimonia

Aristotle [384 BC – 322 BC] argues in *The Nicomachean Ethics*, that Eudaimonia is the aim of life: It is a kind of enduring happiness that can only be achieved by the cultivation of virtues. In recent times there has been a renewed interest in this concept from both philosophy and psychology (Evans 2012; Snow 2008; Schwartz and Sharpe 2006). Evans (2012) argues that there is a neo-Aristotelian consensus emerging in UK public policy making, but it is a consensus that incorporates quite distinct variations. He makes the distinction between the social science version of neo-Aristotelianism, and philosophical neo-Aristotelianism. The social science version is like the work of Martin Seligman or Lord Richard Layard, who are seeking ways in which concepts such as 'wellbeing' or 'flourishing' can be scientifically measured. There are then the philosophical neo-Aristotelians, such as Martha Nussbaum who places an emphasis on renewed civic activism and public ethical reasoning, as I will go on to discuss. Eudaimonia was Aristotle's term for the human good or welfare, and is frequently translated as flourishing or to flourish, coming from the French term "*florir*" to thrive and prosper like a plant coming into bloom (Darwall 2002, p.76). Wellbeing or welfare is therefore viewed as a function of fulfilling one's potential. Eudaimonia requires the ordering of the soul, which has three motivating parts, rational, spirited and appetitive. The rational and spiritual parts need to work together to keep the appetitive part under control. This, according to Aristotle, is how virtue is achieved. In line with the ancient philosophers' understanding of eudaimonia as "the life well lived", positive psychology sees its remit here as the study of values and virtues that are most desirable and most indicative of the highest good (Compton, 2005, p.11-12).

A central tenet of this Aristotelian understanding of eudaimonia is a distinction between "man as he happens to be" and "man as he could be if he realised his essential nature" (MacIntyre 1984, p.52). Eudaimonia is experienced not though the acquisition of wealth or power but by rational activity in accordance with one's virtues. Aristotle believed that flourishing should be the ultimate aim of all political activity, the target of ethics and governments (Prah Ruger 2010). Flourishing is a central theme for positive psychology; Seligman has developed a theory of wellbeing with the acronym PERMA for Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Purpose and Accomplishment as the vital components for the life well lived. "The goal of positive psychology in well-being theory ... is to increase the amount of flourishing in your life and on the planet" (Seligman 2011). As Seligman's book title *Flourish: A new understanding of Happiness and Wellbeing – and how to achieve them* (2011) implies, flourishing is goal oriented, something to be achieved by following a guide.

2.3 Are Virtues Necessary for Human Flourishing?

The philosopher Bernard Williams (1985) problematised the idea that virtues are somehow derived from human nature. Williams has argued that we can no longer accept Aristotle's method because it can only be supported by a particular conception of human nature. He problematises Aristotle for seemingly deducing that virtues are derived from human nature. Properly functioning human beings, argues Williams, can still live well even if they are not virtuous. Critical too of enlightenment rationalism, so dominant in much of British philosophy, Bernard Williams advocated a return to the philosophy of the ancient Greeks in order to grapple with fundamental philosophical questions. Too much emphasis, he suggested, had been placed on the systematic theories of Kantianism and Utilitarianism. Moral life was being over simplified, according to Williams. Universal principles are an insufficient basis to understand the good life and the good society. The point of the Aristotelian concept of flourishing was that it referred to the good life *within* the context of society. Social roles and relationships are at its essence. There would inevitably be a plurality of goals and values. Ethical behaviour, therefore, does not depend merely on supressing or inhibiting our selfish desires, but of being social beings with all the complexities that entails. Returning to positive psychology, Schwartz and Sharp (2006) point out that the strengths and virtues model requires the individual to identify their so-called signature strengths and then work on them. This is an appropriation of Aristotle's philosophy which misses the point that eudaimonia requires all the virtues but above all it is

practical wisdom that will enable flourishing, such wisdom orchestrates the other virtues to guide us in conflict resolution and problem solving.

2.4 Flourishing: Something to be Achieved?

Positive psychology suggests that wellbeing or flourishing can be achieved by the application of a rationally laid out plan in order to achieve the good life, or life well lived. Psychoanalysis brings an important dimension into the study of what may constitute a good life and that is a recognition that both reason and emotion must be taken into account when considering the conditions for human flourishing (Cottingham 1998, Lear 1999). Space here is given to thinking that, whilst we are capable of rational reflection, we are also profoundly influenced by unconscious processes, emotions and passions that also give meaning to our lives.

Philosopher Charles Lamore (1999) argues that the basic mistake at the core of wanting a life plan is that this view suggests that life is something to lead. Instead he argues that life should be something 'we should allow to happen to us' (p.97). The idea that one can flourish by following a life plan is flawed, according to Lamore, because the underlying assumption is that it is possible to gain mastery and control over one's life. He states; 'we flourish as human beings, it supposes, only if we shape our lives ourselves, instead of leaving them to be the hostages of circumstance or whim' (Lamore, 1999, p.97). Being guided by an all-embracing plan, in Lamore's view, fails to take into account that 'unlooked for good' may occur in one's life. What is missing from a rationally laid out plan is an openness to the unexpected which may be 'revelatory, offering new meaning, experience or opportunity', being open to the unplanned and unexpected can make for a more enriched idea of what flourishing means. However, a concern here would be in what form being a 'hostage to circumstance' may take, or to what extent for some individuals there may be no opportunity to gain even a semblance of control over their lives. This is why it is important to consider flourishing in relation to social justice.

2.5 Flourishing and Social Justice

Whilst the word flourishing may not readily appear in political discourse or social policy it is a central idea which underpins theories of social justice. Rawls (1972) defines social justice as the systems and practices that govern the way in which individuals interact with each other and how individuals within a given society are able to access material resources. In his

Theory of Social Justice (1972) Rawls argues that everyone should have an equal right to the most extensive total system of basic liberties with a similar system for all. It is the role of government to provide that system.

In contrast, there is an older view of how society functions based on the philosophical theories of John Locke whose Law of Nature (1689) states that people are morally bound not to damage other people's lives and property. The role of government here then is to defend the individual against anyone else's attempt to damage their lives and their property. Distribution of wealth is seen to be beyond the scope of government, rather the focus is on the protection of property rights and the adjudication of contractual disputes. In contrast to Aristotelian philosophy which understands humans to be social by nature, Locke instead suggests that humans are social only by habituation, naturally preferring to be solitary individuals.

The Eighteenth Century economist and philosopher Adam Smith, considered to be the first theorist of capitalism, wrote about enlightened self-interest. Smith's conception of human nature was that people who act to further the interests of others ultimately serve themselves. Individuals do well for themselves through doing good. An advocate of *laissez-faire* economics, Smith argued that free markets regulate themselves via the invisible hand of competition, supply, demand and self-interest. At first sight, Smith may seem to be advocating a good society in which only the most talented are able to flourish, In his treatise *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) Smith sets out his understanding of human communication and the reliance on sympathy. Whilst human nature is based on self-interest, Smith suggests that humans also have a great capacity to want to help others. He introduces the idea of the 'inner man', an internal and impartial spectator that guides human action by creating balance between passion and reason;

> "We begin, [upon this account], to examine our own passions and conduct, and to consider how these must appear to [them], by considering how [they] would appear to us if in their situation. We suppose ourselves the spectators of our own behaviour, and endeavour to imagine what effect it would, in this light, produce upon us. This is the only looking glass by which we can in some measure, with the eyes of other people, scrutinize the propriety of our own conduct" (Smith [1759], 2013, p.105)

Human passion is then regulated by institutional frameworks that steer human productivity towards actions that benefit society as a whole. It is through the exchange of sympathy that individuals cultivate a sense of propriety and internalize the ethical values necessitated by the

modern market society. A society based only on mercenary exchange is one that subsists and does not flourish. A flourishing society is one in which the majority of its members are able to flourish, not just a select few. According to Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* 1776:

> "No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable. It is but equity, besides they that who feed, clothe and lodge the whole body of people, should have such a share of the produce of their own labour as to be themselves tolerably well fed, clothed and lodged" (Smith [1776], 2014, p.44).

A flourishing society in Smith's terms then, is best achieved through free market economics. The market is the best way in which the conditions of the poorest are alleviated. Markets, from this point of view, are indispensable to human flourishing and it is economic liberty that will enable a flourishing society (Hanley 2016).

2.6 Structural Injustice: An Impediment to Human Flourishing

Injustice occurs when social processes put large categories of persons under threat of domination and deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capabilities. The processes involved in structural injustice also enable others to dominate or have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising their capabilities. Structural injustice is perpetuated when large numbers of people act unquestioningly within accepted norms and practices. Beyond the post-Rawlsian focus on individual responsibility, Young suggests the social connection model, in which an interconnected world is considered. Structural processes produce wrongs on a local and global level. There should be a shared responsibility, all those who therefore contribute to structural injustice have a responsibility to rectify injustice where it is found. Young's model, therefore, generates political responsibility rather than moral responsibility because it requires collective action. According to Young; "what I mean by 'politics' here is public communicative engagement with others for the sake of organizing our relationships and coordinating our actions most justly" (Young 2011, p.112).

2.7 Social Capital and Flourishing

Communitarian philosophy emphasises the importance of community in the functioning of political life. Particularly prevalent in philosophical and political debates in the 1980s, it arose as a critique of both liberalism and libertarianism, although the term was first used by the Chartists and utopian socialists. Communitarians argue for attention to be paid to

the role of civic society and the fostering of pro-social conduct. Sociologists such as Tonnies (1887 [1957]) and Durkheim (1912) had problematised modernisation, where society becomes composed of atomised individuals who had gained their liberty but lost their social moorings. This view of Western society, particularly in America, was born out by Robert Putnam in his book *Bowling Alone* (2000). His work examined the decline in civic engagement in the USA over a thirty year period. Social capital, according to Putnam, refers to the features of social networks that facilitate action and co-operation for mutual benefit. He is concerned about the link, as he sees it, between the decline in social capital in the USA and the breakdown of family and community ties. Putnam's detailed analysis demonstrated just how much is influenced by social connectivity or lack thereof. From school performance, crime rates, economic productivity, public health, through to human happiness, all are influenced by how people are connected to families, friends, neighbours and fellow workers. It is not enough, as Putnam has argued, to just have a society based on virtuous individuals. He questioned the idea that virtue was a necessity for living a full life. His suggested instead that our lives are made more productive by social ties. He advocated social capital, social connections based on trustworthiness and reciprocity.

Bourdieu, in contrast, considers social capital as being instrumental in the reproduction of social inequality. Bourdieu's (1986) concern that social capital is essentially about who you have the good fortune to know, a network not open to all in a fair and just way. Putnam's networks are horizontal rather than vertical structures of inequality. Women, in particular, would often find themselves excluded from the opportunities to gain social capital in any meaningful way, and women are often more likely to organise themselves in a more informal, less hierarchical way. There are problems too with how Putman diagnoses the society in which social capital is failing, for example, he was concerned about the increase in women in the workplace. At its heart, social capital theory is inherently conservative with a disregard of gender power imbalances. It places women un-problematically at the centre of community life as the good mother, the good activist or the good social capitalist. Social capital theory "offers answers which are simple, nostalgic and conservative. The perfect tonic for uncertain times" (Thomson and Franklin 2005, p.168).

Whilst social capital is problematic as a theory, it is nevertheless pointing to something important: the recognition of the embeddedness of the individual. The social connections a person has, the opportunity to make contacts and the relationships formed are fundamental to a person's ability to flourish. I would like to expand on this by drawing on both care ethics and

mattering theory, which I will go on to discuss. First, however I explore the capabilities approach which draws on Aristotelian eudaimonia.

2.8 The Capabilities Approach

The economist and philosopher Amartya Sen (1999) contends that all human beings are equally entitled to enjoy a life that they value. Social facilities, he argues, should aim to provide opportunities that increase the wellbeing of the population. The freedom to achieve wellbeing is of primary importance. What is necessary for a flourishing human life is the same everywhere; food, clothing, shelter, health and education. A person's capabilities, therefore, are the real freedoms they have to achieve these. Sen's capability approach can be traced back to Aristotle's eudaimonia and as Martha Nussbaum notes, the approach does not reduce human wellbeing to a numerical scale, measuring the average wellbeing of an individual. Instead, according to Nussbaum (2011), this approach seeks to examine what opportunities and freedoms are open to the individual and is concerned with the discrimination and marginalization that many people face in achieving wellbeing. Nussbaum and Sen argue that it should be the task of governments and social policy to tackle entrenched social injustice and inequality (Nussbaum and Sen 2011).

Knowing how people thrive or flourish must go beyond how much money they have and how they are able to conduct their lives. In order to assess people's capacity to flourish it is necessary to understand how they can access healthcare, education, can they participate in democracy, is their labour rewarding and are they treated with dignity in the workplace and have the sense that they can have control over their work environment. As Nussbaum and Sen (2002, p. 3) argue:

> "We need perhaps above all, to know how people are enabled by the society in question to imagine, to wonder, to feel emotions such as love and gratitude, that presuppose that life is more than a set of commercial relations"

Martha Nussbaum (2011) develops the "capabilities approach" which can allow for a more enriched understanding of human flourishing. She does this from the perspective of moral and political philosophy rather than economics. The three capabilities that she thinks we need to cultivate for the 21st century are critical thinking, global citizenship and empathy. I will go on to examine in depth here the need to cultivate empathy or, as it is described in psychoanalytic

terms, the capacity for concern. Nussbaum and Sen place human capability at the heart of distributive justice, resources should therefore be distributed in such a way that everyone has the opportunity to actualize their capabilities. Disabled people, for example, may need greater resources directed towards them to ensure capabilities can be met. Nussbaum's argument that some may need a greater distribution of resources in order to bring themselves to a common level of welfare should be taken into account when calculating distributive justice. Respect for the dignity all human beings possess, regardless of how rational and social they are, requires a just society which assists all its members to attain eudaimonia (Nussbaum 2006).

Nussbaum further developed this approach by compiling a list of what she considers to be central human capabilities. These are; life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; play; and lastly, political and material control over one's environment (Nussbaum 2000; 2003). The capability approach does not reduce human wellbeing to a numerical scale measuring the average wellbeing of the individual. Instead, according to Nussbaum (2011) this approach seeks to examine what opportunities and freedoms are open to that individual. This approach is concerned with the discrimination and marginalisation many people face in achieving wellbeing and therefore tasks government and social policy to tackle intrenched social injustice and inequality.

Nussbaum suggests that it is possible to look at Aristotle's virtue theory in a different way. The shared problems that human life presents to human beings mean that we can only understand, as a truly human life, a way of living which involves values directed towards the easing of those shared problems. Any life which lacks the values of trying to ameliorate human need is therefore not deemed to be a flourishing life. The understanding of human life, sought by Nussbaum, is of an ethical life common to human beings. This may be seen by introspection of our own ethical attitudes. One must understand one's own behaviours as well as try to understand the behaviour of others and, in doing so, apply the same concepts to others that we would do to ourselves. Virtue then comes in the similarities of human experience and the ways in which humans seek to problem solve.

The function then is to 'provide the circumstances under which humans can be cared for and thrive given their differing degrees of frailty and vulnerability' (Kittay 1999, p.78). Kittay says that equality requires an inherent understanding that "we are all some mother's child" she employs this phrase as a means to convey "our inherent equality in the face of inevitable human dependency". She continues, "when I remind us that we are all some mother's child, and we use that phrase to recall ourselves, our common humanity and equality. I wish to invoke the care required for each of us to survive and thrive" (p.78). The purpose of the phrase

is to recall a someone whom we fail to honor and respect when we do not care for one another. In doing so, one fails to honor the founding relationship between people. Kittay concludes, it is not that the state should treat its citizens as children, but as "someone's cherished person" (Kittay 1999, p.78). Crucially, those who are most vulnerable need respect and assistance but so too do their caregivers.

2.9 Community Flourishing

Hetan Shah and Nick Marks from *The New Economics Foundation*, a think tank with the aim of developing a new model of wealth creation rooted in equality, diversity and economic stability, put forward their manifesto for wellbeing (2004). Their aim was to refocus attention away from the idea that increasing economic growth is the only way to enhance a population's wellbeing. When defining wellbeing they incorporate two personal dimensions, life satisfaction and personal development, as indicators of wellbeing. They also include a social dimension to their definition, here wellbeing is evaluated according to how one feels about having a sense of belonging to a community, to what extent one is able to feel positive towards others and feel able to contribute in a pro-social positive way to society. They conclude "for people to lead truly flourishing lives they need to feel they are personally satisfied and developing as well as functioning positively in regard to society" (P.5). Shah and Marks express concern that a society devoted solely to increasing living standards will be to the detriment of fostering and building relationships and this will have very negative implications for wellbeing. I find Shah and Marks's definition of wellbeing useful as it encompasses a broader understanding of wellbeing where individual wellbeing is given parity with community wellbeing. They argue that a key aim for government should be to provide a flourishing society. To achieve this, Shah and Marks offer a number of key ways in which politics could work to actively promote wellbeing. One area that stood out for me was that governments should invest in the early childhood years. Shah and Marks state that "cost benefit analysis shows that investment in the age group zero to three will repay itself many times over, due to reduced health, education and social costs in the future" (p.3).

Reading Shah and Marks's definition of flourishing and their highlighting of the importance of social policy and investment for the early years struck a chord with me as a researcher with an interest in psychoanalysis, notably object relational psychoanalysis. It seemed to me that psychoanalysis had a great deal to contribute towards an understanding of both individual and societal flourishing. Particularly, in my view, in terms of evidence based

social policy making and practice for early years health, care, support and education. I chose therefore to look in more detail at the Sure Start initiative, as I will go on to discuss in my first case study. The preferred term in the original proposals for this initiative was that it would enable children to "thrive" (The Stationary Office 1998). Thrive, a synonym of flourish, means to enable something to grow vigorously, healthily and strong.

It has been argued that there is a diminishing ability to consider any form of collective capacity for change (Gilbert 2013; Cederstrom and Spicer 2017). It is this that I want to address in my thesis. I want to challenge the current ideology of wellbeing and flourishing, whilst also considering a notion of flourishing where childhood is its crucible, and which can only be viewed as a collective process. I foreground a feminist ethics of care approach which I see as having significant links to object relational psychoanalysis. Psychologist Barbara Held (2006) argues that, by placing the ethics of care at centre stage, we would have a society that takes seriously the enablement of all children to flourish as well as the development of caring relations. This would not only be within a personal context but also at the level of government, civic institutions and social policy. Even though this thesis does not centre on childhood and mothering, I do consider this significant in my interpretation of flourishing, the origins of human wellbeing and flourishing emerge from our earliest relationships. There is an openness to experiences, both positive and negative, and this can offer us a way of thinking about the psychological preconditions of a good society.

2.10 Psychoanalysis and the Meaning of Flourishing

The potential, however, is that the focus is only on the rules governing acquisition. Economic liberty becomes the primary aim in itself, rather than how a more caring, sympathetic, flourishing society can be achieved. In *The Good Society and the Inner World* (1991) Rustin writes on psychoanalysis and social justice, which is useful when discussing the meanings of what it means to flourish. He notes that there is a difficulty in extending the idea of social justice to include the more subtle areas of say, relationships or understanding. They are not 'goods' that can readily provide quantifiable, measurable outcomes. This is soft data gleaned from people's narratives, opinions or feelings. Rustin argues that it should be possible to begin to define social justice in terms of the provision of opportunities for emotional and psychic growth as well as other types of development. This is important, he suggests, because "when one defines these conditions of 'social justice', it means of course that we can protest at the society or its institutions which fail to meet them" (Rustin 1991, P.49). Psychoanalysis,

Rustin says, has contributed to a richer, broader conception of social justice. The understanding gleaned from psychoanalysis of the conditions of favourable development of children and adults was incorporated into the workings of social institutions like the NHS. Such knowledge can continue to be applied beyond the clinic to offer preventative measures rather than just treatments by enabling a more informed awareness of emotional needs and vulnerabilities (Rustin 1991).

2.11 Wellbeing and Flourishing from a Psychoanalytic Perspective

In the conclusion to *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* Williams (1985) says that psychological theory, particularly of a psychoanalytical kind, would be supportive for ethical conceptions necessary to human happiness. A depth psychology, like psychoanalysis would potentially provide a robust explanation, justification or critique of a value laden life. However, he does not consider this in more detail, only that he has reservations about the ability of psychology not to just collapse into a moralised psychology rather than a moral psychology. Although Williams does not engage further with psychoanalysis, the psychoanalyst Jonathan Lear nevertheless argues that his conclusion leads inevitably and essentially to an engagement with psychoanalysis.

Lear (1999) argues that psychoanalysis can allow us to devise a more humane ethics in which we consider humans more fully and realistically before saying how they should live. Lear says that we also want to understand and to be understood; in doing this we are able to grow and to flourish. For Lear (2014) psychoanalysis is akin to Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* or practical wisdom which is the capacity to think effectively and well about how to live. Psychoanalysis can be both an understanding and a manifestation of human health and can be carried out in the service of a flourishing human life because it can help us to become active, thoughtful, self-conscious people. Lear believes that the ideas of both Freud and Aristotle have something really important to offer each other. For Aristotle, a happy and healthy existence is achieved when reason and rationality govern over the harmonious soul. What is missing from this understanding of the flourishing human life is a more nuanced account of who we are, taking account of the non-rational parts of ourselves that Freud brings to our attention.

Whilst it may be possible to think effectively about how to live well, as Aristotle advocates, a more nuanced account would recognise that, when people try to think who they are and what matters to them, this will be based on core fantasies, held at a largely unconscious level, about their sense of the world and their place in it. These core fantasies will have begun

formation in early childhood as a way of coping with the sense of vulnerability one feels. What psychoanalysis has to offer in understanding human flourishing, according to Lear (2014) is that we need to take in to account our rational and non-rational elements and to try to understand them both; the skills to do this should be enabled to develop right from early childhood.

An aim of this thesis is to add a psychoanalytic inflection to a narrative on flourishing. Frosh has described psychoanalysis as a voice speaking from the margins of psychology (2003). In the discussion that follows I therefore consider what that voice may contribute to the notion of wellbeing and flourishing. I appraise the possibility that psychoanalytic ideas could enable the retrieval of an alternative narrative. I now explore what may be lost if psychoanalysis is rejected as a useful body of knowledge in the debate about wellbeing and human flourishing. The house of psychoanalysis has many mansions writes Janet Malcolm in her book *Psychoanalysis: The impossible profession* (1980). It is therefore necessary to establish what I mean when I refer to psychoanalysis and why I think that, as a theoretical orientation, it has something useful and relevant to contribute to these debates. In particular, I choose the Independent tradition in British psychoanalysis because of its focus upon human interdependency and in its presumption that individual 'character' always appears situated in, and determined by, intersubjective affective relations. I think that it can speak to the issues raised in my exposition of positive psychology and has something important to say.

It is because of the multiplicity and heterogeneity of psychoanalysis that, when calling upon it in the construction of a thesis, one must define not only *why* psychoanalysis but also *which* psychoanalysis. The British School of Psychoanalysis in its Kleinian and object relational forms provides a significant basis for a relational way of thinking. With a shift away from a solely drive based theory, this school of thought views humans as essentially relationship seeking. There remains a focus on the inner world yet there is an understanding of the importance of environmental and social issues.

Seen as "an honourable use of psychoanalytic understanding" (Rayner 1990, p.98) the British School theorists sought to reach beyond the consulting room. Their endeavour was to understand environmental influences on the causes of psychic pain in the hopes of initiating preventative measures, for example, by informing and influencing social policies. Harcourt (2013) suggests that the ancient philosophers and relational psychoanalysts are concerned with the same inquiry, that of 'how should I live?' Relational psychoanalysis has as its subject matter the moral and emotional growth of the individual. Socialisation, seen in these relational terms, is consistent with flourishing, according to Harcourt. Our development of an inner morality,

reciprocity and concern for others can "perfect our natures rather than pulling them out of shape" (Harcourt 2013, p.14). The psychoanalyst D W Winnicott held the view that all human beings are geared to health and integration given the right facilitating environment. The British School of Psychoanalysis sets forth a set of ideas which show that mental pain should receive attention and help us to consider the conditions in which psychic development is most likely to take place (Rustin 1995). What is often absent, suppressed or denied space to engage in the current common-sense perception of flourishing is a psychoanalytic point of view, notably for this thesis, an object relational one. As my thesis unfolds, I consider that the inclusion of a more object relational ideal of human flourishing may prove fruitful for social policies that recognise and enhance the qualities of our social relationships for the benefit of our collective flourishing.

Rather than impose an arbitrary categorisation on the reality of human experience, instead psychoanalysis seeks to develop an understanding of it. Key to this is the recognition of the normality of psychic pain and an acknowledgement of states of being which are generally found unbearable. Rustin and Cooper (1996) argue that one of the principal emancipatory contributions of psychoanalysis is the recognition of the normality of psychic pain, a commitment to a certain kind of psychic realism, whilst holding that this can open the possibility of improvements to individual lives and society. I would concur with Rustin when he noted that: on a more macro-social plane, the idea that mental pain and anxiety constitute valid claims on social attention has import for broader principles of social organisation, qualifying and constraining the logic of markets or bureaucracies as arbiters of social life. (Rustin, 1995, p.241)

Writing on the subject of the relational society Michael Rustin (2015) puts forward the argument that human capabilities and potentials, that enable the production of social goods, are dependent on the quality of relationships within which they are nurtured. He cites Sure Start as a good example of the acknowledgment that children do better in terms of physical, emotional and educational development when in receipt of good quality care. Rather than the wellbeing of a society being measured in monetary terms, a better measure of value would be the quality of relationships which are available to individuals throughout every stage of their lives. He notes

> "enabling individuals to learn, over a life time, to acquire the capabilities to be good citizens, attentive to the developments and needs of others as well as to their own interests, is more relevant to

human well-being than the pursuit of the chimera of 'economic growth'
as the measure of human happiness" (Rustin, 2015 p.16).

2.12 Ethics of Care and Wellbeing: A Psychoanalytic Understanding of What it Means to Flourish

"The term depressive position is a bad name for a normal process, but
no one has been able to find a better one. My own suggestion was that
it should be called the stage of concern."
(Winnicott [1949] 2007, p. 264).

"With strong loving and concerned impulses, an internal state of love
leads directly to a more or less stable sense of well-being and self-
confidence." (Hinshelwood 1994, p. 70).

Object relations theory is a complex term that has been applied to a range of different psychoanalytic formulations. However, object relations theorists, such as Winnicott, Fairbairn and Guntrip in Britain and Kernberg in America emphasise the relational context of development. Most importantly their emphasis is on the quality of early relationships for a child during their formative years which can bring so much to bear as templates for future relationships in adulthood. Just as Freud's ideas emerged from the cultural milieu of Vienna at the close of the 19th century, object relations theory emerges from its own socio-cultural environment, Rayner (1990) described the Independent mind in psychoanalysis, as group of psychoanalysts who did not want to take sides when Anna Freud and Melanie Klein took psychoanalysis into new directions. This loose association of psychoanalysts all came from similar backgrounds and philosophical outlooks. According to Rayner, this group combined specific philosophical values of romanticism, which considers that essential knowledge must be emotional and intuitive, with the classical psychoanalytic tradition developed by Freud. What they added to the classical psychoanalytic theory is a recognition of the importance of environmental effects upon the individual. They wanted to extend their influence beyond the clinic to inform social policy-making as this seemed an honourable application of psychoanalytic understanding.

The Independent School in British psychoanalysis finds its roots in the first half of the 20th century; social democratic thinking of the time emphasised the values of both family and community, stressing our need for interpersonal connection and social solidarity (Zaretsky

2005). Object relations theory recognises the continuous oscillations between the inner and the outer world and brings together the individual and society; in doing so it has "transcended the crippling antithesis of individual and social" (Rustin 1991, p.15).

In postwar Britain, British psychoanalysts such as D W Winnicott and Marion Milner had hands-on experience of working in hospital and child guidance settings and saw themselves actively working to rebuild an inclusive society where the best care, education and support would be available to all (Pajaczkowska 2007). The early welfare state was formed around the idea that we are all interdependent and consequently must share responsibility for one another. The conceptualisation of welfare was seen as having the ethical end of optimising human creativity and eliminating extremes of inequality; the role of welfare in this context was understood in terms of human flourishing and wellbeing (Freeden 1999).

From the very first moment we are born we are dependent on others and these early relationships are foundational for our future emotional lives. The British school of psychoanalysis emerged from two major traditions in psychoanalysis, Kleinian and Independent, which placed an emphasis on the inner world of the child in the early phases of life and may be referred to as object relations theory. However, references to object relationships emerge first in the work of Freud himself, as I will explore. I will then look at the key contribution of Melanie Klein to Object Relations theory; and then to the contribution made by Donald Winnicott.

The emergence of an understanding of object relations begins in the work of Freud, notably in his discussions regarding the development of the ego. The ego develops and strengthens as external representations of objects are taken in and become internalised; once internalised, the mind identifies with them. Freud (1923) writes "it is possible to suppose that the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object cathexis and that it contains the history of those object choices" (p, 29). Our inner world, therefore, is made up in a large part of internalised versions of our actual relationships with others in the outside world.

The object, in Freud's view, can be whatever satisfies a drive. Klein, however suggested that drives are always directed towards a particular object, therefore an appropriate object is always known. The mouth, for example, seeks the breast because the knowledge of objects is inherent in the drives themselves. To Freud's theory of development Klein added two key developmental phases or positions, the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive position. Stemming from powerful primitive emotions these phases continue to influence our mental states throughout life. Melanie Klein's theoretical work emerged from her analysis of children, with her particular interest being the inner world of drives and unconscious phantasies.

Contained within Klein's theories is the recognition that we all have the capacity for destructiveness, yet also an inbuilt ability for reparation and making good.

2.13 The Depressive Position

It was Winnnicott's analyst, James Strachey, who introduced him to the work of Klein. For Winnicott, Klein's most important contribution to psychoanalysis was the identification of the depressive position: "this is Klein's most important contribution, in my opinion, and I think it ranks with Freud's concept of the Oedipus complex" (Winnicott [1962] 2007, p. 176). The depressive position is constituted by an introjection of the whole loved object, giving rise to "concern and sorrow lest the object should be destroyed" (Klein [1940] 1991, p. 150). Klein uses the phrase "pining for the loved object" to describe the feelings of sorrow and concern which combine with fear that the loved object may be lost (Klein [1940] 1991, p. 151). As the child develops, they continue to test external reality and, through proof and counter proof, the child is able to have belief in their capacity to love and in their reparative powers (Klein [1940] 1991). Winnicott says that what he learned from Klein was that, to feel guilt or in his words "concern", is an achievement for the developing child; it is from here that restitution and reparation can take place (Winnicott 1962 [2007]). Melanie Klein had postulated the idea that a baby experiences depressive feelings, particularly at the time of weaning, when the child has a sense of loss for the breast. Simultaneously the child has begun to acknowledge her parents, and other important people around her, feeling them to be live people inside the body; they have formed internal objects for the child, and the foundation for the child's inner world in which the real external world is assimilated and merged with internal phantasy. The loving, trusting bond between the child and the care giver serves as proof that the inner object has not been permanently injured and that the feelings of depression and loss can be overcome. Along with the introjection of a whole loved object comes concern, concern that the loved object may be subject to attack and destruction (Klein 1940 [1991]).

The depressive position is constituted by an introjection of the whole loved object, giving rise to "concern and sorrow lest the object should be destroyed" (Klein [1940] 1991, p.150). As the child develops they continue to test external reality and, through proof and counter proof, the child is able to have belief in their capacity to love and in their reparative powers (Klein [1940] 1991). It is through this introjection of loving and concerned impulses that we establish a stable sense of confidence and wellbeing (Hinshelwood 1994). The depressive position is not only normal, it is also an achievement, a signification of personal growth.

2.14 The Capacity to Care

Winnicott preferred to use the phrase stage of concern to describe the depressive position. "Concern" Winnicott says, "is used to cover in a positive way a phenomenon that is covered in a negative way by the word guilt" (Winnicott [1963] 2007, p.73). To begin with the child is dependent for survival on an auxiliary ego, usually that of the mother. The child, through experience, must develop an ego of its own and form an understanding that there is both an inside and an outside reality: "the inner psychic reality which Freud taught us to respect now becomes a real thing to the infant, who now feels that personal richness resides within the self" (Winnicott 1963 [2007], p.5). So crucial are the early experiences in the formation of the self "to build a personal ego, to ride instincts, and to meet with all the difficulties inherent in life" (Winnicott 1956, p.304), that without an early good enough experience the difficulties we inevitably face in life "cannot be reached, let alone the satisfactions" (Winnicott 1956, p.305). The capacity for concern, Winnicott asserts, forms the basis of all constructive play and work and, as such, is an important feature of social life. He contrasts it with the notion of guilt. Guilt, he says, is coupled with anxiety and ambivalence and implies that a certain degree of ego integration has taken place allowing for the retention of an imago of the good object along with an idea that the good object can be destroyed. Concern, however, indicates further growth and crucially "refers to the fact that the individual cares or minds, and both feels and accepts responsibility" (Winnicott 1963 [2007], p.73).

Healthy early development requires that the child experiences continuity of being. This is achieved at first in a perfect environment which actively adapts to the needs of the infant. As the infant develops, the need for perfection lessens and an environment that is 'good enough' not only further enables that sense of continuity but the slight failures that may occur in that environment actually facilitate growth and development. For it is the child's own mental activity and understanding rather than the (m)other's that turns a good enough environment into a perfect one (Winnicott [1949] 2007). At first, the very young infant exists in a state of ruthlessness but gradually there is sufficient ego integration for the infant to appreciate the personality of the mother figure "and this has the tremendously important result that he is concerned as to the results of his instinctual experience, physical and ideational" (Winnicott [1950-55] 2007, p.206). This significant development means that the infant has an ability to feel guilt and, in a healthy environment, the child can hold onto that guilt and with help from

the (m)other he is enabled to find "his own personal urge to give and to construct, and to mend" (p. 207). The reparative impulse transforms feelings of guilt, loss, and concern into a more constructive effort of an altruistic kind (Hinshelwood 1994).

If the infant has achieved sufficient enough integration of a good enough object imago, along with the idea of the destruction of it, then they begin to care about what happens to the good object, feeling and accepting responsibility. The capacity for concern and to feel guilt is an achievement, the infant can begin to experience this in conjunction with ideas of restitution and reparation under the care of a consistent love object. Pre-Oedipal in its origins, the process starts in early childhood and continues to develop even into adulthood. For Winnicott, maturity encompasses not only personal growth but also socialisation. In contrast to the so-called atomised individual, we find in Winnicott's understanding not an isolated individual but one who is related to the environment in an interdependent way. In other words, the achievement of healthy independence has a "built in social sense" (Winnicott [1963] 2007, p.84). The value of understanding this intertwining of the individual and the environment is that both internal and external factors in human growth and development can be discussed. In healthy maturity, Winnicott observes, one is able to identify with society without too great a sacrifice of personal spontaneity "yet also be able to attend to his or her own personal needs without being antisocial" (Winnicott [1963] 2007, p.83). Crucially, health means both the health of the individual and the health of society. There is a degree of responsibility for the maintenance or modification of that society, "we get left with certain social conditions, and this is a legacy we have to accept, and if necessary, alter, it is this that we eventually hand down to those who come after us" (Winnicott [1963] 2007, p.84). As the child's emotional development emerges, the capacity for concern develops. The personality of the (m)other is appreciated by the infant and with that comes a concern as to what impact the child may have on his/her care giver in terms of the results of their instinctual, physical and ideational impulses. With concern, Winnicott suggests, comes guilt about the damage that may have been inflicted upon the loved object. With the help of the (m)other, this guilt can be held onto by the healthy infant as the infant discovers the capacity to repair. The depressive position lays the foundation for internal moral structures because the child internalises an object, the primary care giver, that can be both bad and good; this enables the child to accept that others in the world can be imperfect, they too have needs and entitlements of their own. Underlying the depressive position is the knowledge that the whole, repaired object can still be lost. A sense of responsibility emerges,

the child begins to resist excessive attacks on the loved object despite facing frustrations and, instead, exercises concern towards the loved object to ensure its wellbeing.

The emergence of a sense of responsibility out of the depressive position was seen by followers of Klein, such as Donald Meltzer, as the locus of moral achievement. The depressive position signalled the "relinquishment of egocentricity in favour of concern for the welfare of the loved objects" (Meltzer 1981, p.1). When the child develops the capacity for concern, the inner world becomes more complicated. There is a concern for the impact of impulses on the care giver, and also on the self. The satisfaction of instinctual impulses makes the child feel good and this initiates and maintains confidence in the self and in what the child feels they can expect from life. However, there are times when the child experiences an angry attack on the other and becomes filled with a sense of bad and persecutory feelings inside: "now starts a life-long task of management of the inner world, a task which, however, cannot be started until he is well lodged in his body and able to differentiate what is inside himself and what is external, and between what is actual and what is his own fantasy. His management of the external world depends on his management of his inner world" (Winnicott [1950-55] 1884, p.207).

With his interest in etymology, Winnicott would have chosen the word capacity fully aware of its Latin origins, capare meaning to hold or to contain, yet it also has English roots in the word capable, in other words, the capability to do things (Hopkins 2003). This word is rich with meaning, both active and passive at the same time, at once we can have the ability to hold and the ability to do (Phillips 2007 [1988]). At this vital point in a child's development the psychological inner world becomes complex. The child begins to feel concern for the effects his or her impulses have, not only on the self but also on the mother. Input is perceived in both a physical and a psychological sense and, if what the child is filled with is perceived to be good, the child's confidence is then enhanced in terms of how they feel about the self and also what can be expected from life (Winnicott 1950-55). The management of this input and output from the inner world becomes a lifelong task according to Winnicott. Our ability to be alone yet retain a sense of curiosity which enables us to reach out to the world, is predicated on us having established a sense of being thought about by another in the first place (Frosh 2012). If the infant experiences the world as containing and trustworthy then their true self can flourish. Winnicott's work concentrated not only on the causes of mental ill health, but also what makes people thrive. He wrote that the experience of frustration, disappointment, the loss of what is loved, and the recognition of weakness and personal unimportance, are hugely significant parts of a child's development. For Winnicott therefore, the aim of education, for example, should

be to "enable the child to manage life unaided" (Winnicott [1931] 2007, p. 66). At the heart of Winnicott's work is the belief that human beings are "programmed for health and integration" (Boyle Spelman 2013, p.3). Which is why he advocates for the aspects of life which might indicate quality of living such as creativity, wellbeing and aliveness (Boyle Spelman 2013).

It is the child's ability to keep alive in his mind what he loves and to retain a belief in his own love that has a significant bearing on how good or bad the things inside him and outside feel:

> "... The cumulative effect of happy experience and a stable and friendly atmosphere round a child build up his confidence in people in the external world, and his general feeling of security. The child's belief in the good things and relationships inside himself are also strengthened. Such little steps in the solution of central problems come in the everyday life of the infant and young child, and every time the problem is solved something is added to the child's general stability, and the foundation of emotional development is strengthened." (Winnicott 1931 [2007], p.66).

2.15 Psychoanalysis and the Negative

Rather than trying to recruit psychoanalysis into a kind of "bland or mindless optimism" (Wollheim 1991, p.234) it is important to remember that psychoanalysis is more often about learning from that which is not. It can be about the empty space as opposed to the plenitude and fullness offered by positive psychology. Freud in *On Negation* (1925) says that the thinking about objects or events defined negatively for example as non-exisitng, such as through the process of repression, can actually allow the mind to think about issues that may otherwise remain unrecognized (Freud 1925).

The psychoanalyst André Green's work shows the significance of the negative for psychoanalysis. What is often of interest in the analytic setting is that which is absent, lost or latent. The negative in psychoanalysis is a normal and necessary part of development. Reflecting on Winnicott's work on children's play, Green (2005) points out that play can be driven by violent, destructive and provocative aspects. Aggression is inherent in emotional development and interference on its expression can compromise psychic maturation. Creativity and aggression are intrinsically linked in what Winnicott called the "love-strife drive" (Winnicott, 1969, p.245). How that aggression is expressed will be dependent on the

environment. Aggression expressed as part of healthy development will be dependent on a *dependable* facilitating environment which is able to withstand that aggression and help the child find healthy ways to express it. Inadequate environmental provision leads to either compliance or anti-social and destructive responses by the child. Winnicott's explorations of aggression and its links to creativity are important as they offer a rich and complex understanding of human nature. Love and aggression are explained in Winnicott's writings as expressions of the same drive and are expressed through primary creativity, primary aggression, primitive love, greed and appetite. They conclude that it is through the recognition of one's personal aggression and potential for destruction and the strong links to primitive love that there is a possibility to live 'creatively and with zest' (Posner et al. 2001, p.187).

2.16 A Healthy Society Carries All of its Members

Writing on the subject of psychoanalysis and policy making, Andrew Cooper (2015) points out that the psychoanalytic community has been "slow to advance its ideas and practices" noting that there "has never been a 'movement' to promote its version of 'human flourishing' and emotionally intelligent policy making" (Cooper, 2015, p.162). He outlines a psychoanalytic approach to policy making which would be informed by actual lived experience which would recognise the complex realities of social relations. Rather than making policy from the top down, the policy makers need to be grounded in the complexity of social relations and be able to negotiate solutions based on real life experiences. Cooper argues that modern psychoanalysis engages with a vast array of social realities and brings them to attention. This can bring a richness and depth to policy-making beyond the traditional discourses of rights, opportunities or redistribution. A psychoanalytically informed discourse, therefore, "insists on the thick textures of social and personal suffering, desire and aspiration as its point of departure for theory and action and speaks to the inherent value of participatory democracy" (Cooper, 2015, p.163).

The morality at the heart of psychoanalysis is that an increased insight into our own psychic lives may lead to more tolerance of everyone's complexities and contradictions and an increased capacity for concern (Richards and Brown 2011). Winnicott in particular helps us to think about what it means to be 'good enough', in knowing that we are capable of inflicting damage to others we are also capable of remorse and a desire for reparation, we therefore have a capacity to respond creatively to another human being experiencing hopelessness and distress. Richards and Brown (2002) defined a psychoanalytically informed therapeutic

sensibility constituted by three factors, emotional expressivity, knowledge or thoughtfulness and concern for the other. Object relations psychoanalysis recognises the capacity for emotional expressivity and the deep routed reparative impulse. An ideal psychic constellation for object relations psychoanalysis is the ability for us to develop our own observational capacity whereby we can be a participant observer in our own minds. We can be at once beset by complex feelings yet also able to be observant of them. Object relations psychoanalysis recognises our internal conflicts and destructiveness which brings forth the desire for reparation. "The compassion that is described is not, therefore, one which turns away from ugliness and 'dispels the Freudian gloom' but is instead a reparative generosity born from a knowledge of and remorse about the damage we are capable of inflicting" (Richards and Brown 2011, p.21).

Iain Craib wrote; "perhaps the good thing about object relations theory is that it does not generate a blueprint but offers a critical standard, It enables us to see when things are not happening and leaves us free to create ways for them to happen" (Craib, 1989, p.200). The ideal self that is offered by object relations theory is significant, in Craib's view, because it leaves a place for what is bad. Although envy, greed, aggression or helplessness, for example, can be suppressed, they can also be acknowledged. It is also recognised that they cannot always be sublimated. "They exist, and we have to find a way of living with them in ourselves, and in other people" (Craib, 1989, p.200). The view of life experience here is that it will be a mixed one with anxiety and distress forming part of the human experience. A healthy society must carry all of its members. If anger and destructiveness are acknowledged, what this tells us is that there will not be a 'perfect self' (Craib 1989: 198), but an ideal self would be one which is sufficiently strong to tolerate powerful and difficult feelings 'which will often be unpleasant feelings of dependence and anger, if not hatred, without acting immediately or blindly on these feelings' (ibid.) Craib argues that under these circumstances: 'there will be normal human misery and the capacity for happiness should the world allow it' (Craib 1989: 198).

It can be argued that the object relational view of human development has a distinctly social emphasis, which can lead to a certain degree of commitment to social projects ranging from neonatal care to the hospice movement (Rustin 1995). Cooper and Lousada (2010) argue that the old welfare state was modelled on a metaphor that would be immediately recognisable within psychoanalytic discourse, that of the provision of good, unconditional care and attention to the ill, unhappy and distressed. Psychoanalytic thinking played a part in the construction of the post war welfare state; Rustin and Cooper (1996) argue that, as such, it has earned the right to remain in the debates surrounding the reconstruction and remodelling. Whilst I am not

proposing a movement within the psychoanalytic community to promote its version of human flourishing, as Cooper (2015) put it. What I am doing here is to foreground the valuable insights from psychoanalysis that can bring a richness and depth to discussions around what it means to flourish. How psychoanalysis can involve itself in such a debate will be explored further as this thesis develops.

2.17 Flourishing and the Capacity for Concern

Ahmed (2014) argues that emotions are intrinsically related to civic participation and social justice. There is a tension, however, between discourses of emotional care and compassion and rational duty to social justice (Jackson 2014). For care ethicists it is compassion that is the most crucial emotion related to social justice. For the purpose of this thesis, it is also the most fruitful area of discussion in relation to social justice and human flourishing. To this I would also like to add the related concept of mattering theory that takes into account one's perceived significance to others and the world around them (Elliot, Kao and Grant 2004). First, I will examine the ethics of care in more detail. In this thesis I take the opportunity to consider the notion of flourishing which is more akin to Tessman's (2005) concept, which takes a feminist view of what it is to flourish. She suggests that liberatory politics must develop Aristotle's account of flourishing so that it goes beyond the pursuit of one's own moral good. Flourishing would therefore require pursuing the good of "those whose very lack of well-being may have been a condition of my privilege" (p.76). In this context, flourishing can only be promoted as a worthwhile pursuit if it is considered as part of an inclusive social collectivity. Drawing on a feminist ethics of care approach, I argue that psychoanalysis can provide an alternative narrative on flourishing to the one presented by positive psychologists. I consider the psychoanalytic concept of the capacity for concern to be important here. Flourishing, in this instance, is about the cultivation of desirable emotions and is therefore concerned with establishing what makes for good people, and good societies. The psychoanalytic concept of the capacity for concern (Bowlby, 1953, Winnicott, 1963, Murray, 1996) arises from the fostering of a sense of something good within the self, which is then felt to be worthwhile giving to others. Most importantly, the capacity for concern consists of "a felt experience of being of value" (Murray 1996, p.57).

A largely overlooked source of welfare and wellbeing is the orientation to care for others and a willingness to adopt a caring approach to those in need and those we love (Daly 2011). Our ability to care for others is a complex concept imbued with a combination of

feelings from obligation and pressure to reward, commitment, trust and loyalty (Daly 2011). Most importantly, an ethics of care places an emphasis on the relational foundations of social life. An ethics of care approach broadens the concept of welfare so that care is not just about meeting needs but is about an orientation towards both self and others as independent and at times vulnerable (Daly 2011).

Wendy Hollway (2006) is interested in how an infant's early relationships inform their developing ability to care for themselves and others. She argues that the accounts of mothering in which it is seen as an oppressive aspect of patriarchy fail to take into account the genuine joy that can be experienced when we care for others. Yet she recognises too that, in any caring relationship, there can be ambivalence, conflict, frustration and even breakdown. The language of caring is more often the language of the mother, with a focus on relationships, needs, care and connection (Noddings 1984, 2013, Gilligan 1982)

The introduction of wellbeing as an indication of how well a society is doing provides a, perhaps welcome, shift away from the traditional focus on the satisfaction derived from consumption. As such, "it resists taking income or other aspects of people's 'external' lives as proxies for their wellbeing and is inclusive of life spheres beyond the market" (Daly 2011, p.40). The problem with this approach, however, is that it runs the risk of valuing the individual's sense of fulfilment over and above a more collective and relational notion of flourishing. Rather than reject wholesale a wellbeing approach to welfare, it is possible to draw on some of its useful aspects. Jordan (2008) for example, suggests that it enables a move away from an over-emphasis on economic welfare. He argues for an understanding of welfare based on social value, incorporating the cultural and institutional characteristics of human flourishing. Jordan's model of welfare is based on a culture of respect and support. If we are to offer a potential alternative to the idea that flourishing is about the successful and thriving individual, then the concept of the ethic of care may enable the expansion of the meaning of welfare or wellbeing: "a focus on care emphasises the relational foundations of all social life. There is no place here for solo individuals" (Daly 2011, p.47).

The ethics of care approach enables us to understand that a fundamental source of wellbeing and welfare stems from our orientation to others in terms of our willingness to adopt a caring approach, not only to those close to us but also to those in need (Jordan 2008, Daly 2011). In essence, welfare is about the kind of care we receive when we need it, both physically and emotionally. To acknowledge that at times we all have a need to be cared for, or about, allows a recognition that we are all interdependent and vulnerable. The definition of care here is nuanced, not simply the meeting of needs, it is more an orientation towards both self and

others, with an emphasis on mutual responsibility. The ethics of care approach emerges largely from feminist scholarship and is frequently sidelined in debate around welfare and wellbeing (Daly 2011). Yet it offers an opportunity to explore a more social explanation of wellbeing (Jordan 2008). Emotions, personal relations and informal support are essential elements in this ethics of care approach. Gilligan (1982) claims that women consider moral issues in a different way from men. Rather than the masculine focus on rights, duties laws and doctrines, women see moral issues in terms of intimacy and relationships. "The ideal of care is thus an activity of relationship, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone" (Gilligan 1982, p.62).

Hollway (2006) challenges the idea that we are born with a capacity to care and that it is somehow innate. Instead, she argues that the capacity to care emerges through key phases in early development. Psychoanalysis, particularly object relational, can help us to develop the ethics of care approach with its explanations of developing childhood as the crucible of the capacity to care for others: "the easy kindness of children all too easily gets lost in growing up, and that this loss, when it occurs on a wide enough scale is a cultural disaster'" (Phillips and Taylor 2009, p.112). From an ethics of care approach as outlined, I am suggesting that flourishing can only be seen as a worthwhile pursuit if it is considered to be part of an inclusive social collectivity. Flourishing can mean to foster something good within the self that can be shared such as concern or kindness: "With strong loving and concerned impulses, an internal state of love leads directly to a more or less stable sense of well-being and self-confidence." (Hinshelwood 1994, p.70). According to Jessica Benjamin (1988), whilst the infant seeks self-assertion and autonomy, simultaneously they also seek connection and closeness to the other. What is important is not just to understand how we become independent but also how we connect with and recognise others, actively making ourselves known to them.

It is Winnnicot's work, as I will go on to discuss, that allows for an understanding of how the child is able to secure a sense of self in relation with others. The ethics of care approach provides a framework to examine the moral dimensions of caring relationships because it takes 'care' to be a political value (Tronto 1993). I think that this aspect allows the countering of the claim that so-called cultural feminism served a de-politicising function. The ethic of care approach diverges from the unilateral individualism central to much of moral theory. It exposes the binary thinking of oppositions between autonomy and independence, or individual and community. To live a good life the individual needs caring relationships with others (Sevenhuijsen 2003).

2.18 The Innate Desire to Feel Significant to Others

> "When I look I am seen, so I exist. I can now afford to look and see"
> (Winnicott, [1967] 2010, p.154)

How one goes about enacting one's commitments to various things, such as relationships, work, commitments to causes, is what allows the individual to find meaning in life. Williams states that an individual has a set of desires, concerns, he calls them projects which help to constitute character (Williams 1981). According to Williams, we evaluate how well our lives are going by how well our ground protects are going. By this he meant a person's commitments and conceptions of what makes life worth living. They are the things that a person takes seriously at the deepest level and are what his life is about. They are projects that are closely related to his existence and to which, to a significant degree, give a meaning to his life (1981). According to Williams, ground projects give one a reason to go on propelling the person into the future, giving them a reason for living. The philosopher Rebecca Goldstein (2017) suggests that what these ground projects highlight it that mattering is more urgent than the concept of meaning when one evaluates what it means to flourish. Coming under the umbrella of relatedness, mattering is our subjective perception and interpretation that we make a difference to others in our lives. "A powerful source of social integration … consistently reinforced by our interdependence with others and others with us" (Rosenberg and McCullough 1981, p. 165). Mattering is an inter and intrapersonal fundamental need (Elliot et al, 2004). That our presence is noted and our actions are validated. Mattering to others occurs both at the interpersonal and the societal level (Rosenberg and McCullogh 1981). Mattering involves "the beliefs people have, whether right or wrong, that they matter to someone else, that they are the object of someone else's attention, and that others care about them and appreciate them" (Schlossberg, Lynch and Chickering 1989, p.21). Feeling that one does not matter leads to a sense that one is marginalised and disconnected. That sense can make one feel insignificant, socially isolated, and to a feeling that one's life has lost meaning and purpose. People need to feel that they matter to others.

In psychoanalytic terms it is useful to think about Winnicott's use of the concept of mirroring (1967 [2010]). Mirroring, in the Winnicottian sense, is where the infant looks to the mother's face and sees themselves reflected back. This gives the infant the sense of being cherished. The reflection back proves to the child that they exist. What the mother looks like, as she returns the gaze of the infant, is related to what she sees. The accurate reflection of the child's emotional experience gives validation to those feelings. Rather than feeling chaotic and

fragmented, the mirror mother helps the child to feel integrated and self-assured (Bollas 2011). Over time this validity is internalised, giving the child a sense of self awareness and acceptance. The needs of the self, according to Winnicott, are to be seen, to be recognised, and to be understood. This is not about a need for dependency but is part of the human experience of moving from dependence to independence. The experience of good enough mirroring "creates within the baby a feeling that his resolution of existential difficulties derives from nascent creative abilities of his own" (Bollas 2011, p.146). Through this the child begins to acquire a 'thinking apparatus' (Bion 1962), an awareness that they have a mind. They learn that human behaviours are motivated by ideas, feelings and beliefs. The child is then able to think about their own feelings (Fonagy and Target 2007).

We have to learn to have a life, especially a good one, a sense of curiosity plays a crucial role in making us feel that we want to learn. Being able to be curious about our environment begins in childhood as we play and explore. This curiosity about our environment helps us to develop the skills needed to make skilled judgements about the future. This sense of curiosity about the world needs the presence of care givers who are consistently sensitive and responsive to the activities of the infant. The infant experiences then a care giver who is engaged and excited by them and who is capable of providing a stimulating environment (Brazelton et al 1974, Cassidy and Shaver 2008). The sense of security lays the foundation for the developing of social and emotional skills required for experiencing a good life imbued in which one can be said to be flourishing (Chisholm 2011). A future oriented outlook is not just about the potential future flourishing of the individual, it incorporates a belief that it is good to invest in future generations in a way that will endure.

2.19 Flourishing as a Generative Process

Generativity is understood here as the intergenerational transmission of human flourishing. Humans, argues Chisholm (2011) are born with emotional functions that point to the future, we are motivated to share emotions, experiences and activities with others. A sense of curiosity directs us to find the right people to share a sense of we-ness, making us strive for a sense of connectedness. As Chisholm argues;

> "Our affective connectedness and coordination with fellow group
> members makes us empathic, and we want to share with the group, to
> show altruism by taking part in the life of our community in order to

experience the feeling of positive existential meaning" (Chisholm 2011, p.205).

The transmission of human flourishing is an intergenerational process, we do not just learn from and about mothers and others, but through them with shared symbols and meanings.

Erik Erikson (1950) introduces the idea of generativity which encompasses a constellation of desires, commitments and concerns that can motivate an individual or a society to pass on legacies to the future generations. He coined the term to define a concern a person has for establishing and guiding the next generation. It is the sense of care and responsibility that moves down through generations and into the future. It is about caring for the next generation and beyond in such a way that it benefits their development and wellbeing. I suggest that this could be considered as significant for a more relational version of flourishing. Erikson's concept is multi-faceted in that it can also include the creation and production of things that benefit others, as well as the generativity that comes with being an active member of one's community. More broadly generativity is a blend of "inner desire, cultural demand, conscious concern, belief, commitment, action and narration revolving around and ultimately justified in terms of the overall psychosocial goal of providing for the survival, wellbeing and development of human life in succeeding generations" (McAdams, Hart and Maruna 1998, p.9). Erikson (1950) also identified the concept of 'rejectivity' whereby some people or groups are excluded from the scope of our care and concern. This is a symptom of failed generativity.

The philosopher Nancy Snow contends that in order to flourish one must be generative. She says that generativity coheres with the overall Aristotelian picture of a life well lived and can be considered an Aristotelian type of virtue. Generativity is defined here as the desire to invest one's substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self and benefit others; it is the sense that we have experienced love and care in childhood and we want to pay that forward as adults. A flourishing person not only experiences psychological wellbeing, that is a sense that life is going well for them, a generative person, in addition, to this sense of wellbeing, sees themselves as having something worthwhile to bequeath to future generations. In Snow's view, Aristotle is urging that life is lived to the fullest, with robust emotional engagement, showing wholehearted care and concern not only for the self but for loved ones and the wider community. She goes on to note that Aristotle thought the individual was habituated into virtue. Parental influence, for better or worse, will not only impact on one's ability to show virtue, but also the capacity for generativity. Snow states "my hunch is that children who are encouraged

by loving parents to share and be generous are learning lessons about themselves and social interactions that pave the way for later generative attitudes and activities" (Snow 2015, p. 276).

Generativity is about nurturing the things that are deemed to be good in life and the transformation of the elements that need improving. This is done with the common aim of fostering the development and wellbeing of future generations (McAdams and Logan 2004). I will go on to discuss this in more detail in my case study on Sure Start.

2.20 Relational Foundations of Human Flourishing

The purpose of this chapter has been to define flourishing, showing the complexity of the term. I have suggested that the embeddedness of the individual in a social structure must be taken into account when considering what it means to flourish. I argued that a significant voice has been lost in the current narrative of what it means to flourish, or to fare well. I contend that psychoanalysis can bring a richness and depth to discussions on flourishing and offers a more nuanced understanding that is more relational and social. The capacity to care is an often-overlooked source of wellbeing and therefore deserves greater attention when considering what it means to flourish. Drawing on object relational psychoanalysis, I have presented a more collective and feminine approach to flourishing, that recognises its relational foundations with the capacity to care being a fundamental aspect. This is absolutely vital for a society which has due regard for the vulnerability of its citizens and wants to ensure that, when we talk about human flourishing, we mean that this is for all and not just a few. It is about recognising that we are unable to consider wellbeing without considering justice.

Giving consideration to how human beings may flourish has been central to positive psychology. I will now move on to define and discuss positive psychology in more depth, paying particular attention to the ways in which positive psychology's theories and methods have been influential in UK social policy.

Chapter 3 Influence of Positive Psychology's View of Flourishing on UK Social Policy

3.1 Defining Positive Psychology

I now provide a brief cartography of positive psychology and the cultural conditions from which it emerged. I am particularly interested in how the concept of flourishing has been deployed within positive psychology. To flourish according to positive psychology, it is necessary to work on one's character strengths in order to enable the cultivation of greater resilience.

Established nearly twenty years ago, positive psychology is a rapidly developing and expanding field of psychology which places emphasis on being a new and forward thinking discipline (Boniwell 2006). Although it is possible to pinpoint a precise date when the psychologist, Martin Seligman (1999), first announced his intentions to form a positive psychology movement, it is also clear that positive psychology has its antecedents. What adds to the complexity of definition is that positive psychology has continuously evolved, shifted its emphasis or widened its remit, to the extent that it has rather become an umbrella term which covers more than just psychology; "so dynamic is the movement" Woolfolk and Wasserman (2005, p.82) point out, "that critique becomes difficult, given the speed with which the target moves".

In 1998 Martin Seligman began his tenure as president of the American Psychological Association and, along with a few select colleagues, he announced the formation of what he called positive psychology. He considered this to be important because, in his view, the discipline of psychology had become too focused on the things that could go wrong for/with people. According to the positive psychologists, traditional psychology tended to emphasise individuals' shortcomings rather than their potentials (Boniwell 2006). Instead, Seligman wanted to develop a branch of psychology that would study scientifically a whole range of areas that focused on human potential. In addition, they rejected psychoanalysis as a useful body of knowledge.

Wallis (2005) describes the events leading up to the birth of the positive psychology movement. On New Year's Day 1998 in Akumal, Mexico, Martin Seligman called a meeting of his colleagues. It was the first day of Martin Seligman's tenure as President of the American Psychological Association (APA) and it was at his behest that fellow psychologists, Ray Fowler and Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi joined him to discuss his vision for the direction of

psychology during his APA presidency. Seligman had set himself a mission, it was his view that psychology had somehow lost its way: the discipline had become too focused on the assuagement of life's troubles rather than prioritising the states that make life worth living (Seligman 2002). From this initial meeting evolved the positive psychology movement with plans for its first conference to be held the following year.

From this conference came the development of the Akumal Manifesto that provided a definition of positive psychology. Even at this early stage of its inception, the movement had a clear list of potential applications, such as in education, psychotherapy and the moral character of society, to name but a few. As the founder of this movement, Martin Seligman saw it as his mission to create a positive psychology with high aims for its remit: he stated that it must be 'tethered from below to a positive biology and from above to a positive philosophy, even perhaps a positive theology' (Seligman 2002, p.251 & 265). Seligman described what he called "psychology as usual" as negative psychology, focusing mainly on the remedial disease model, with its main mode of intervention to repair damage. Initially, positive psychologists distanced themselves from other psychological schools of thought, notably psychoanalysis and also humanistic psychology. Over time, however, a rapprochement has taken place with humanistic psychology. One of the founder members of the positive psychology movement, Csikszentmihalyi (2009), acknowledged that "the reason positive psychology developed so quickly and ready to go ... was because it was built on already existing knowledge from Aristotle to the earlier humanistic psychologists like Maslow" (Csikszentmihalyi 2009, p.203).

Drawing on the traditions of communitarian social theory and virtue ethics, positive psychology has been described as a 'revitalisation of Aristotelian philosophy' (Jorgensen and Nafstad 2004, p.16). The Aristotelian concept of eudaimonic wellbeing became known as 'self-actualising' to the humanistic psychologists (Robbins 2008). In Seligman's view, traditional psychology had focused too much attention on negative aspects of human psychology, to the detriment of studying growth, mastery and character building (Seligman 2007). According to Peterson and Seligman (2004), the meaningful life is one in which the person makes use of their signature strengths and virtues, and that good character can be cultivated. It is through the acquisition of virtues that a person is able to live a good life. The result of living a virtuous life is pleasure and happiness; to flourish and obtain happiness, therefore, is a fundamentally moral endeavour.

It is of interest to note that Seligman and Peterson (2004) have used the model of a medical statistical manual (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - DSM) to devise their own handbook of classification, "Jokingly referred to as the un-DSM" (Boniwell

2006, p 82). They classified 24 strengths under 6 core virtues that they deemed to be valuable, attainable and seen as cross-culturally important. The development of strengths and virtues is viewed as the key to the good life and it is identifying and using one's key strengths in the main areas of one's life that can "bring abundant gratification and authentic happiness" (Seligman 2002, p.161). Evans (2012) says that positive psychology represents a revival of virtue ethics and an interest in neo-aristotelian philosophy with a focus on trying to understand what can help us to live a "good life" and achieve a state of eudaimonia or flourishing. This can clearly be seen in Martin Seligman's move away from an attention on what constitutes "authentic happiness" (2002), via the categorisation of character strengths and virtues (Peterson and Seligman 2004), and towards a proposition that we can achieve "flourishing" by following his rules of PERMA, his acronym for the five pillars of wellbeing that he has identified: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment (2011).

An example of how a positive psychologist examines human flourishing can be seen in the work of Barbara Fredrickson (2010). She developed what she called 'the broaden and build' theory for positive psychology. According to this theory, negative emotions close down people's ideas about possible actions in a given situation. In contrast, positive emotions broaden people's ideas and open awareness. Fredrickson says that with an open awareness it is possible for people then to build new skills and knowledge, with the ultimate goal to "achieve flourishing" (Fredrickson 2010, p.22). Fredrickson outlines a 'toolkit" that includes "cultivating kindness", "ritualizing gratitude", and "savouring positivity" (p.231). The practical task suggested is to assemble portfolios "as a gift to yourself" on joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspirations and awe (p.231). Fredrickson concludes that in "making more moments glisten with positivity we make the right choices for our best future and our best world … And as you reach this noble goal of flourishing, you help create a world that is truly worth leaving to our children" (Fredrickson 2010, p.23). Fredrickson and Lousada (2005) wanted to find out if there are predictors of whether people will "flourish" or "languish" and if these predictors can be found in individuals, relationships or groups. They sought to track people's experiences of genuine positive emotions and concluded that a key predictor of flourishing is the ratio between positive and negative effect, arguing that the ratio is 2:9; for an individual, relationships or groups to flourish they need to experience positive feelings at a rate of 9 times to every 2 negative feelings.

There have already been several critiques of positive psychology. Clinical psychologists Woolfolk and Wasserman (2005) have questioned the philosophical scientific underpinnings of positive psychology, which they see as having both prescriptive and

descriptive concepts laden with value judgments. They welcome a psychology that claims to study 'the good life', yet they argue that it succeeds only in providing the illusion of the pursuit of higher things, whilst contributing to a contemporary 'therapeutic culture' that focuses on a less noble drive for self-fulfilment. Writing from a humanistic psychology perspective, Held (2004) is highly critical of what she terms "The Tyranny of the Positive" in American culture. Her concern is the "separatist message" she sees as emerging from the positive psychology movement's declarations of independence and establishment of itself as a new branch of psychology; she asks the founders to acknowledge their debt to humanistic psychology. In an extensive research paper by psychologists Chambers and Hickenbottom (2008) the ethnocentrism of positive psychology is explored and exposed. They conclude that positive psychology has not demonstrated a capacity for self-reflection, resulting in cultural disrespect and 'psychological imperialism' that serves only to perpetuate the status quo.

The writer and activist Barbara Ehrenreich (2009) has also provided a forceful critique of what she sees as the "cult of positivity". She argues that positive thinking is endemic in American culture and is deeply rooted in the corporate world. Her exploration of the topic covers the whole gamut of positive thinking, from 'cosmic ordering' to the field of academic research which rests its claim to respectability in science. Her conclusion is that the "positivity cult" is a hugely negative phenomenon, reducing tolerance to other people's suffering and contributing to an individualised culture that blames the victim. Although not tackling the subject of positive psychology per se, Ahmed (2010) makes use of philosophy and feminist cultural studies to explore happiness as a duty; in doing so she demonstrates that happiness has been used to justify social oppression.

Fernandez-Rios and Novo (2012) contend that positive psychology as a paradigm has acquired popularity without sufficient critical thinking. They argue that positive psychology does not constitute a new paradigm but instead recycles old ideologies and world-views. They suggest that positive psychology places too much emphasis on happiness and self-realisation which, they argue, serves only to support the individualistic ideology of capitalist neoliberal society. According to Binkley (2011), positive psychology can be viewed through the lens of governmentality theory. From this perspective, positive psychology is seen as an emergent therapeutic discourse and technology for the management of subjectivity. He says that the language of positive psychology appears to be simultaneously uplifting yet technical (Binkley 2011). Davies examined what he calls The Happiness Industry (2015) and suggests that wellbeing and positive psychology have come to dominate our lives to the extent that our emotions have become commodities to be bought and sold. In a detailed analysis, Davies traces

how wellbeing measurement is poised to replace market pricing as the main measure of the economy. Wright (2014), in a similar vein to this thesis yet from a framework that makes use of both Foucault and Lacan, seeks also to examine positive psychology and the shift in emphasis from happiness studies to flourishing. Wright argues that the current vogue for happiness studies and positive psychology is merely a new neoliberal interpretation of utilitarianism. Wright then draws on a specifically Lacanian psychoanalysis to critique modern consumer happiness and demonstrate a clinical commitment to working transformatively with unhappiness. Evans suggests that positive psychology and questions pertaining to the "good life" have emerged as a direct result of the baby boomers questioning the values of the so-called "affluent society" (Evans 2012). As I have noted, my particular interest is in how positive psychology had influenced UK social policy in recent times. I now move on to consider that influence in more detail.

3.2 Measuring a Nation's Wellbeing: How Positive Psychology Influenced UK Government Policy

Positive psychology's proposal that positive emotional states can be scientifically studied impressed the UK's coalition government. In November 2010, the then Prime Minister David Cameron initiated the Behavioural Insights Unit followed, in April 2011, by a £2 million plan to measure happiness in the UK (Cameron, 2010a). This was implemented through what the Office for National Statistics described as "an ongoing dialogue with citizens, specialists and others", in which people have been asked to rate their own wellbeing. They published the first official wellbeing index in 2012 (ONS, 2012). This prompted me to examine and evaluate positive psychology's influence on government policy (Lennon-Patience 2013).

The proposition that wellbeing could be measured was already under consideration by the New Labour government under Tony Blair, with the incorporation of wellbeing into policy initiatives (Michaelson, 2009). A strategy for wellbeing had already been proposed in 2005 (DEFRA, 2005) which committed the government to reviewing research evidence on wellbeing and led to the establishing of the Whitehall Wellbeing Working Group. In 2008 the government published the Foresight Review on Mental Capital and Wellbeing which called for the development of a Wellbeing Index. These proposals were never to make it to fruition during Labour's time in office. However, wellbeing remained firmly embedded in the rhetoric of New Labour. It was there in their promotion of psychological therapies, through the implementation of the economist and government advisor, Lord Layard's Improving Access to Psychological

Therapies report (Department of Health, 2008). This report initiated the recruitment of 3,500 cognitive behavioural therapists with the specific remit to suggest ways in which the people they saw could become more upbeat and optimistic (Dorling, 2010). A key proponent of wellbeing measurement, Layard went on to become one of the founding members of Action for Happiness (www.actionforhappiness.org) which describes itself as a movement for social change, "bringing people together to play a part in creating a happy society for everyone".

It is necessary to unpick how the term 'wellbeing' was being defined and mobilised for the purpose of measuring a nation's wellbeing. As previously stated, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) was tasked with developing measures of national wellbeing and progress. Jil Matheson, National Statistician, emphasised that the term 'wellbeing' is often taken to mean 'happiness', however she went on to say that:

> "Happiness is one aspect of the well-being of individuals and can be measured by asking them about their feelings – subjective well-being. As we define it, well-being includes both subjective and objective measures. It includes feelings of happiness and other aspects of subjective well-being, such as feeling that one's activities are worthwhile, or being satisfied with family relationships." (Matheson, 2011, p.2)

I noticed however, that the term 'wellbeing' was interpreted by the mainstream media to be firmly equated with the notion of happiness, rather than positive psychology's preferred emphasis on flourishing (Lennon-Patience 2013). The complexity of defining wellbeing is evident when examining how the term has been deployed by David Cameron at various points in his political life. The emphasis on what constitutes wellbeing, according to Cameron varies depending on the audience, purpose and timing of his speech. Prior to the global economic crisis of 2008, David Cameron's modernising of the Conservative Party was about forming a credible alternative to New Labour. Early Cameron speeches showed a willingness to explore topics not normally seen as priorities for Conservatives, such as quality of life issues, climate change and social activism (Peele 2016). Before the general election in 2010, when David Cameron became prime minister in a coalition government, he demonstrated his advocacy of wellbeing measurement. As early as 2006 Cameron began to develop his ideas about measuring general wellbeing as well as gross domestic product. In a speech to students, which was on the subject of sustainability, he includes his ideas on wellbeing. He states:

> "Of course economic growth is vital. Capitalism is the engine of progress and it has brought us unprecedented prosperity and opportunity. There is, however, a yearning for more – for capitalism with commitment, for work that has meaning, and for relationships that are about more than just money and markets …. It needs to find the words to articulate, the means to fulfil, the nation's yearning for a general wellbeing that goes beyond economic prosperity." (Cameron 2006a)

It is important to examine how David Cameron himself defined wellbeing, as I think the way he deployed wellbeing in varying ways highlights the rather nebulous quality of the term. He does not use the term flourishing, although he does use the more popular term, happiness. In this 2006 speech he explained that he thought there were two components to wellbeing, 'time' and 'control'. To increase the amount of time people spend with family and less time working, Cameron's proposal was to improve the UK's transport networks. He said: "So to put it in the language of traditional politics, I'd like us not just to think about how we give people a tax cut, but how we give them a time increase". The second factor, according to Cameron, is control; "we know that happy families are ones where the parents can control their lives - travel home on time, access good health care and childcare and care for the elderly. We know that happy workplaces are those where employees feel in control of their careers and involved in the direction of their company" (ibid.).

In a speech to Google Zeitgeist Europe, Cameron's defining of wellbeing was broadened, he says;

> "On the one hand we want to be heroic individuals, making our own way in the world and shape our own fate. One of the ways we express ourselves is when we exercise our sovereign power of choice."

The second strand to wellbeing, according to Cameron in this speech, was a sense of commitment to relationships and in particular to the place where someone works. He did not specify how he planned to initiate policies to improve people's wellbeing, however, he explained that his political agenda was not about redefining the relationship between the individual and the state, but the individual and society; "we believe in trusting people and sharing responsibility". In his view, improving wellbeing would not come by regulation and legislation, a mechanistic approach. Instead, he argued, an organic approach was needed; "one that understands the complexity of human relationships and trusts in the power and importance of human relationships (Cameron 2006b).

Following the global economic crash of 2008 Cameron's narrative on wellbeing began to shift in tone and emphasis. He made his reasons clear in a TED talk (Cameron 2010b) where he declared: "we have run out of money" and he wanted to know how it would be possible to make things better but without spending any more. He argued that this was a "post bureaucratic" age where we have seen a shift in power from the local, to the central and finally to the people and what the people want is "transparency, choice and accountability", with choice being the underpinning Conservative philosophy because it "puts people in the driving seat". In his view, developments in "positive psychology" and "behavioural economics" would have a part to play, in enabling governments to "treat people as they are rather than as you would like them to be". Cameron suggested that the developments in these two sciences would enable new modes of measuring to succeed. He stated that "If you think everything is valued in money you are going to have a very miserable time" (Cameron, 2010b).

3.3 Market Value of Wellbeing Policies

A system for measuring social cost benefit analysis was developed by the UK government's Treasury. First published in 2003 and updated in 2011, The Green Book sets out HM Treasury's guidance for central government on the appraisal of policies, programmes and projects, with the statement that: "The government is committed to improving the way that wellbeing and social impacts are incorporated into policy decisions" (2011, p.5). From 2011 this guidance was updated to include two techniques for the valuation of non-market impacts: the stated preference method, which makes use of questionnaires to estimate "people's willingness to pay for, or willingness to accept"; the other is the revealed preference approach which "observes people's behaviour in related markets". The idea behind this is that economic methods can be used to estimate the life satisfaction provided by non-market goods (a good or service not traded on the market including public goods, health, employment and marriage). The estimation of life satisfaction is then converted into a monetary figure, that is, economists seek to monetise the impact of a policy by looking at the impact it has on 'utility' (HM Treasury, 2011). A Social Impacts Task Force was set up in 2010 (Harper and Price, 2011) that brought together analysts from across Whitehall to work on the scope and quality of wellbeing analysis in government departments, and to assess the social impact of policies. For example, the DWP and the Cabinet Office produced a working paper on how to put a financial value on volunteering and unpaid care (Fujiwara, Oroyemi and McKinnon, 2013). It would seem that,

under the guise of compassionate conservatism, we find evidence of the pervasiveness of the market. As Cooper (2008) has noted, the public sector is just one component of the national "business plan" where health and welfare "commodities" are valued as much for their export and earning potentials as they are for their potential to benefit the population.

Placing a market value on public goods is an indication of the extent that the marketisation of social life has achieved the status of common sense. Pre-dating the 2008 banking crash and subsequent economic impacts, and also the UK government's policy on wellbeing, the political scientist Wendy Brown (2005) had argued that, in the economic thinking of neoliberalism, we see the reduction of all human life to rational transactions: neoliberal political rationality emerges as a mode of governance which encompasses, though is not limited to, the state. This form of governance, when deployed, "reaches from the soul of the citizen subject to education practice to practice of empire" and involves the extension and dissemination of market values to all institutions and social actions (Brown, 2005, p.39). In these terms, Brown asserts, the human being is configured as homo economicus and all dimensions of human life are viewed in terms of market rationality.

According to Brown, not only does neoliberalism assume that all aspects of social, cultural and political life can be reduced to a calculus, it actively develops institutional practices for its implementation. Despite the state providing the apparatus for this calculus it remains the market that is the organising and regulative principle of both state and society, with the individual seen as an entrepreneurial actor in every sphere of life. Just as with Cameron's vision for individuals in the UK becoming "authors of their own destiny", citizens under the neoliberal construct are morally obligated to manage their own lives with a rational deliberation of costs, benefits and consequences. A "mismanaged life" for the neoliberal, Brown argued, is one in which the individual has failed to navigate the impediments to prosperity (Brown, 2005). There is a deeply held notion of the self as a project that is viewed both as social norm and cultural obligation (Elliott and Lemert, 2006).

I would suggest that the rhetoric of wellbeing has been appropriated from the language of therapy to justify huge spending cuts and the dismantling of the welfare state. When used in political contexts the wellbeing narrative serves as a counterweight to the excesses of capitalism, a new moral economy which puts people's aspirations central to policy making promises (White 2015). Welfare can then be seen through the lens of mental health rather than material prosperity. In the year that followed David Cameron's announcement regarding the

measurement of the nation's wellbeing, the UK coalition government had begun to implement a programme of cuts in public spending. The government's focus was now on austerity. Austerity measures would not create conditions conducive to the improvement of the nation's wellbeing.

Writing in 2007, Rustin provided a critique of the proposition under New Labour that wellbeing should be measured, suggesting that it was merely a ruse to divert the public's attention away from pro-market policies. Cameron persevered with this project, so Rustin's concerns continued to apply. Rustin argues that there would be considerable difficulties in replacing the one-dimensional goal of measuring economic growth with a multi-dimensional concept of wellbeing because it fails to acknowledge the system in which we find ourselves. Our current economic system, he notes, means that there is a tendency to equate greater purchasing power with more choice and opportunity for individuals. He concludes that the proposals by New Labour in 2007 may have had a kernel of good intention but ultimately served to "distract our attention from the 'main line' of pro market policies that are exacerbating the deep problems which such 'micro solutions' attempt to cure" (Rustin, 2007, p.11). The global financial crash and the subsequent implementation of austerity measures in the UK meant that David Cameron's modernizing agenda for the Conservative party was superseded by narratives of deficit reduction and spending cuts. I will now examine in more detail how the wellbeing narrative can shift, dependent on the particular political focus at any one time.

3.4 Positive Psychology and Character Strengths: Resilience as a Key Component of Flourishing

From the perspective of positive psychology, building one's character strengths can enable the cultivation of greater resilience. The Penn Positive Psychology Center, of which Martin Seligman is a Director, offers resilience programmes, PERMA © workshops and training programmes that offer to help one build resilience, wellbeing and optimism. According to the positive psychologist Peterson (2006) resilient people are mentally healthy and are better able to "thrive in adversity" (p.239). The ubiquitous nature of resiliency discourse means that both those in the caring professions and in the military are being offered training on how to be resilient (O'Malley 2010, Grant and Kinman 2013). In educational settings we also find resilience is a keyword, as I will go on to discuss. In this context, flourishing is more akin to ensuring that individuals attain the correct moral code and virtues for a market driven society.

To return however, to positive psychology, it would seem that the key theme of resilience ties in with this call for the building of one's character strengths. To be more resilient one needs to identify and then utilise one's character strengths and this can help to drive the 'victor mentality'. The victor mentality stands in contrast to the so-called victim mentality which according to Cavenaugh et al. (2000) is the propensity, when faced with a problem, to view this as an attack on the self, something that is happening to the individual, beyond their control, which is preventing them from moving forward. Advocates of resilience building techniques argue that not only can individuals teach themselves to be resilient but in doing so they are enabled to 'achieve at the highest levels at work, to have fulfilling and loving relationships, and to raise healthy, happy and successful children' (Reivich and Shatte 2003 p.4). The narrative that calls for the building of character strengths and resilience has proved useful for the neoliberal project of state reduction in that the methods of positive psychology have been mobilised to further embed the workfare state, whereby welfare and public support are linked to work activity (Betram 2019)

The concept of emotional resilience has become a key construct in the recent revival of the discourse of character which is setting out to define socially desirable behaviours and emotional competencies (Ecclestone 2012). The resiliency discourse can be seen in the political and social policy arena, academia and in popular media narratives. Education is cited as a key factor in the building of resilience, with the school setting seen as providing the structure and opportunity for individuals to learn skills and build talents which all contribute to a sense of resiliency. An article for the magazine *Scholastic Instructor* (Fink 2013), an American publication for teachers, shows an image of a child bedecked in full cowboy outfit under the heading "*True Grit*". The article offers tips for promoting strengths, perseverance and resilience in students. In his first speech as Education Secretary in Teresa May's government, Damian Hinds (2018) declared that schools should teach children resilience to help them in the workplace. Resilience, in Hind's view, could be taught through sport and public speaking. Character, resilience and workplace skills are vital, he suggested, not only in terms of what the individual can achieve in life, but also in terms of a thriving economy.

In the summer of 2011 over a five-day period, rioting broke out, largely by young people, in various town centres across England. A panel established to investigate the causes of these riots outlined preventative measures with the aim to stop such riots occurring again (After the Riots 2012). The report suggests that "parents and schools ensure children develop the values, skills and character to make the right choices at crucial moments" (p,6). The panel lists resilience, self-discipline, application, and the ability to defer gratification as the attributes that form character, adding that this is what employers want to see in potential recruits. The

panel advised that schools should be required to develop and publish policies on building character, Ofsted (school inspectorate) should then review character building measures in schools and primary schools should undertake regular assessments of pupils' 'strength of character' (After the Riots 2012, p.7). Espoused by think tanks, taught in schools and incorporated into government policy documents, character has become a prevalent theme; there has been an increased interest in character and virtues as an area of academic interest and also social policy. In a speech made in 2018 by the then Education Secretary, Damian Hinds stated that schools should be teaching children resilience to help them in the workplace (Hinds 2018). He said;

> "Now, until I became the Education Secretary, I was the Minister for Employment and in that role I also heard a lot from businesses about the importance of workplace skills, sometimes called 'employability skills'. Sometimes, by the way, also called 'soft skills' but I would suggest to you, ladies and gentlemen, there is nothing soft about these skills. The hard reality of soft skills is that actually these things around the workplace and these things around character and resilience are important for what anybody can achieve in life, as well as for the success of our economies. They're not exactly the same thing, character and workplace skills, but there obviously is some overlap" (Hinds 2018).

Character, resilience and workplace skills are vital, Hinds suggested, for individual achievement and a thriving economy. Damian Hinds propounding character resilience and wellbeing was not new as one of his predecessors, Nicky Morgan, who has written a book, *Taught not Caught: Educating for the 21st Century* (Morgan 2017), on the subject, incorporated character building into education policy during her tenure as education secretary. Prior to coming into power, David Cameron too had outlined his aim to focus on character building education for schools. The Department for Education strategy 2015-2020 states "As well as mastering the fundamentals - literacy and numeracy - and studying an academic core, all young people also need the skills and character to succeed academically, having a fulfilling career and make a positive contribution to British society." (P.9 2016). The document notes that character traits such as curiosity, integrity and persistence are often overlooked because they are difficult to measure: "But we can all recognise when a young person has these broader qualities' (p,9). The proposal was that the Department for Education would help schools to develop "happy and resilient individuals". In December 2014 the then Secretary of State for Education Nicky

Morgan announced that the government would spend £3.5 million on helping schools to teach grit, character and resilience to school pupils. Academic learning was to be set on a par with character education. By October 2017, with a new Secretary of State, Justine Greening, in post, Morgan's character-building project had been replaced by an 'Essential Life Skills programme' (Greening 2017) which would be restricted to 12 so-called opportunity areas. The essential life skills programme emphasised the development of skills such as resilience, emotional wellbeing and employability.

3.5 Teaching Character

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues has been established at the University of Birmingham. The idea that character can be taught has moved from being something practiced in the private school setting, such as the work of Anthony Seldon at Wellington college, to being established in some academy schools such as Kings Langley in Hertfordshire. Contemporary initiatives around character education are explicitly linked to the positive psychology movement and have strong links to the Conservative Party, as a summit held in 2013 on positive psychology demonstrated (White 2016). The conference was held at the Jubilee Centre and the organisers were Martin Seligman and James O'Shaughnessy who was David Cameron's advisor on the Wellbeing Index.

Following the riots that took place in England in the summer of 2011, Professor of Education and Director of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, James Arthur, claimed that British society had "lost God" as the "chief overseer" of behaviour. Therefore, it would be necessary to bring in lessons on virtue in order to replace traditional morality which he thought had been lost; "morals might be reintroduced by an aggressive programme of character education" (Arthur 2011). The current notion of psychological wellbeing encompasses an extensive set of constructs including resilience, stoicism and optimistic outlook (Ecclestone 2012). Professor of Education, Ecclestone suggests that "the revival of an old discourse of character incorporates concerns with morals and virtues within a psychological depiction that embraces all the constructs of wellbeing within a more inclusive set of capabilities; and hopes to find ways to measure them (Ecclestone 2012: 464). There are advocates on the liberal left who value a more communitarian view of a good society. However much of the interest in character education in the UK is more often based on psychologising moral dimensions to wellbeing and character "in a social project that alms to engineer them through state sponsored behaviour training " (Ecclestone 2012: 465).

The concept of character is at risk of being a rather nebulous idea where a particular desirable trait may be emphasised depending on who is defining what character means. Nussbaum (2011) comments that some of the definitions of character offered by positive psychology pay little attention to the philosophical arguments but tend to conflate a number of concepts such as happiness, pleasure, thriving, satisfaction flow, flourishing and resilience. To produce a taxonomy of character such as Seligman's PERMA is therefore problematic. Some would argue that it is impossible to even examine individual character traits without taking into account social contexts. Harman (1999, 2000) and Doris (2002) for example have suggested that situation and context are paramount when studying behaviour. It is not possible therefore, in their view, to define normative, global character traits. Nevertheless, systematic guides on how to live one's life and to manage one's emotions prove popular.

Rather than define what is universally true about humanity, references to character, reveal the human values that produce a particular kind of person and society (Smagorinsky and Taxel 2006).The dominant narrative emerging from UK education policy documents, think tanks and popular culture is a version of character that places a heavy burden on the individual to create their own successful outcomes in the labour market and cultivate their own human capital. This is in tune with a positive psychology concerned with a perceived need for a younger generation to be more resilient and build a strength of character. To be required to adhere to a particular version of values means that one may be required to accept the values of a society and its institutions that are actually part of the process that is producing or perpetuating injustices such as inequality or poverty (Young 2011).

Allen and Bull's (2018) network ethnography looked at UK character education policy in order to identify policy formation and influence. Their findings identified that significant financial and ideological influence came from the John Templeton Foundation. The JTF has provided significant sums of money to higher education in order to establish an evidence base for character education and third sector organisations with a particular interest in promoting character education. The key point of their research, Allen and Bull argue, is to raise questions about who is informing UK government policy and how. Their findings suggest that, in the area of character education policy, significant funders and influencers come from a very narrow socio-economic group who can "mobilise their capital and privilege to shape the political agenda" (Allen and Bull 2018, p.453).

An emphasis on resilience in an educational system can all too often become about teaching the most economically disadvantaged children to conform to a particular set of desired social norms about what achievement should look like (Martineau 1991). More widely, the

discourse of resilience should be recognised in structural terms as part of the resolution of the crisis neoliberalism faces during times of global economic crisis. According to Oliver Davis (2016), the burden of responsibility is placed on the individual who needs to weather the storms of economic stress as just something we must all expect to face and endure from time to time. The resiliency discourse, Davis argues, is part of the very resiliency of neoliberalism itself. The discourse of resilience becomes embedded neoliberalism, argues Joseph (2013). Rather than a turn to character, Taylor (2018) notes it is a return to character as it is reminiscent of nineteenth century discourses on character and morality. People deemed of being of good character were those who had an eye to the future and were provident and thrifty in their habits.

3.6 Masculinised View of Character

Burman (2018) argues that there has been a reformulation of how emotions are perceived, a move away from "their 'soft' culturally feminised associations to become 'hard and tough', and abstracted from relationship and (socio-political) context (Burman 2018, p. 416). As a result, she suggests, the way in which character is defined is often through more masculinized ideas of human emotions. Intrinsic to character education policy are questions of ethics and behaviour, academic achievement, emotional regulation and wealth creation (Burman 2018). There have always been competing ideals of manhood, fluid in nature and often cyclical. Masculine ideals can emerge as a product of a particular time, perhaps a time of "authoritarian relapse" or social transition (Starck and Luyt 2019). At any one historical moment, it may be that a version of masculinity becomes particularly lauded, such as masculinity being associated with physical strength and self-reliance. Instilled mostly through the public school system, this version of manhood is associated with physical fitness, the suppression of emotion and courage (Segal 1990).

English nineteenth century codes of masculinity emerged as a result of social changes, a commitment to free market economics, the work ethic and the establishing of an entrepreneurial society (Tosh 2005). As Tosh (2005) notes, however, the hegemony ideal of bourgeois masculinity was well beyond the attainment for many labouring men; he writes "that the labouring poor were routinely damned for shirking and skiving, for wife-beating, and for assaulting each other in public places, was partly a middle-class way of confirming their own identity" (Tosh 2005, p. 342). Writing in the 1990s but still pertinent for today, Lynn Segal's observations that modern Western life, with an emphasis on competitiveness and individualism: "exacerbates the gulf between what is seen as the feminine world of love and

caring and the masculine world of the market-place - wherever women and men may individually find themselves" (Segal 1990, p. 309). The power of a dominant masculine ideal, argues Segal, comes not from any intrinsic characteristic of individuals, but from the social meanings attached to these ideals derived from their supposed superiority to that which they are not, that is masculine is not to be feminine (Segal 1990).

3.7 A Nuanced View of Character

Narrowly defined, monocultural definitions of character may negate a more inclusive, broader recognition of human characteristics. Failure to take into account cultural identity is to make the promotion of welfare or wellbeing less effective. Conceptions of virtue or character will, to a certain extent, be culturally bound. Fowers and Davidov (2006) proposed that, for example, "embracing cultural differences" requires strength of character, they term this "openness to the other" (p.584). They define this openness as being motivated to be respectful to the other and to take an interest in them. They argue that, from a virtue ethics point of view, the desire to act well towards the other stems from a vision of the world that features inclusion, social justice, affirmation, reduction of prejudice and oppression, mutual understanding and cultural sensitivity. Rather than simply following rules, this openness, flexibility and sensitivity as character strengths means an ability to apply practical wisdom. Moral language will differ, depending on cultural settings for example. This necessitates a way of educating that will encourage critical thinking, an understanding of complexity, openness and tolerance of ambiguity (Smagorinksy and Taxel 2005).

I will go on to argue that, in an age of bewilderment and uncertainty, it is perhaps unsurprising that people seek perspectives which seem to offer greater certainty and an air of mastery over their emotional lives. Christopher Bollas has described what he calls 'psychic flight' (Bollas 2015, p. 542). This concept is useful when examining the current trend for providing taxonomies of character or delineating educational programmes on how to build character. When faced with the complexities and contradictions of an ever-changing world there can be a tendency to seek reassurance in a set guiding principles, a blueprint on how to live, or perhaps survive when faced with an overwhelming sense that one cannot influence the world around one. Bollas contends:

> "Now there is a new axiom: the solution to the problem of mental life
> is to follow a programme that provides action guidance ... In subtle
> ways we may observe a shift in some of our patients, away from the

merit of the unknowable productiveness of unconscious thinking towards the value of knowable remedies that can be put in to effect immediately; This type of operational thinking seeks cognitive analogies to the ingestion of medication that will be immediately effective" (Bollas 2015, p. 542).

This is symptomatic, I would argue, of the conjuncture I described earlier where there is a denial of dependency (Dartington 2009) and an inability to acknowledge the social causations of mental ill health (Fisher 2009). Flourishing or wellbeing is best achieved, under these circumstances, through the neoliberal ideals of entrepreneurial freedom and market transactions (Harvey 2005) What is absent, suppressed and denied in the account of flourishing derived through notions of strength of character and resilience, is a tolerance of the complexities of human life. Space is denied for the consideration of a more social explanation of flourishing. In other words, one should not be able to flourish at the expense of another person, beyond the pursuit of one's own moral good. Flourishing can be seen more broadly as a worthwhile pursuit only if it is considered as part of an inclusive social collectivity. Psychoanalysis cannot offer a formulaic guide on how to be resilient, or what one's character strengths must be in order to flourish. As Cooper and Lousada put it:

"Psychoanalysis discloses both the relative stability and recalcitrance to change of mental life, and the fluid, mutating, oscillating and slippery nature of what we call 'psychic structures', like the stable patterns of social life we call structures, as clinicians we would note that the individual character or patterns of enduring self-experience are continually produced and reproduced by psychic activity" (Cooper and Lousada 2005, p.9).

What is thought of as 'good character' is open to interpretation, but to dismiss character education out of hand perhaps means that an opportunity is missed for considering whether schools should see flourishing as a desirable outcome of the educational system rather than just producing children that are good at taking tests. As a school governor myself, I have been required to be a part of a whole school development of the school's core values and motto. This made me think even more about whether character education should indeed be an element of schooling. Whilst I share the concerns outlined above of a particularly authoritarian version of what character means, I do think that there is a place for schools to help children engage with, as Smagorinsky and Taxel (2006) put it: "real questions about how to live in the most

emotionally satisfying and socially responsible lives in relation to others" (p, 346). A more nuanced understanding of human character could be useful; an understanding that takes into account that the satisfaction of basic human needs is a prerequisite for the acquisition of good character. An alternative definition of character can be one that is more outward looking and demonstrates an outward expression of goodwill. Philosopher and honorary senior research fellow at the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, Curren (2017) recognises a need for a more nuanced understanding of character. He says, "to be virtuously motivated is to be appropriately responsive to what is valuable, the intrinsic value of persons, other sentient beings, their good attributes, their well-being or flourishing, and the various things that are necessary and conducive to flourishing" (p,5). He argues that the promotion of good character is best achieved in a needs supportive learning environment that enables children to experience progress in living well.

Writing in the 1930s, the psychoanalyst Sandor Ferenczi identified what he called 'the wise baby phenomenon' (Ferenczi 1933). The 'wise baby' who through trauma is suddenly made to mature, more so than their peers. Mental health and trauma are not readily acknowledged in the character strengths model; this can lead to misunderstandings about students behaviour and an assumption that they are trouble making or lacking in character (Smagorinsky and Taxel 2006). In their clinic experience as child psychotherapists, Lisa Millar and Margaret Rustin (2009) point out that what makes children unhappy is when they are required to "carry loads that are beyond their strength". When faced with painful experiences, children need adults to show that these experiences can be coped with, they need to be protected from being "weighed down with anxieties"; this then "leaves room for happiness and ordinary manageable unhappiness" (Millar and Rustin, 2009, p.31).

To teach a child to be resilient can help children to draw on their own resources, develop coping skills and a sense of perseverance; to embrace failures and learn from them without becoming demoralised. From a psychoanalytic point of view resilience is comprised of good early object relations, basic trust and an ability to self-reflect (Meszaros 2014). Good early object reactions are fundamental therefore for human flourishing and so too is a person's ability to connect with others. Resilience and character development therefore, can form part of the psycho-social processes involved in healthy development. Psychoanalytic psychotherapist Julia Vellacott (2007) reminds us that the true meaning of resilience is not about absolute strength. It is more akin to a tree that bends in the wind but does not break.

A holistic view of social and emotional wellbeing would need to take into account multiple factors that either promote or impede its development in young people (Ayoube and

Swartz 2014). Research into childhood poverty (Evans 2004) demonstrates the accumulation of environmental risks faced by children of low-income families compared to more economically advantaged children. They are more likely to face family turmoil, instability and chaotic life styles. Their lived environment may be more affected by crime, be overcrowded and be more affected by pollution. Families in these circumstances may also find it harder to support their children in school and have less social support themselves. The cumulative effects of these multiple risk factors are potentially harmful to the socio-emotional and cognitive wellbeing of children which will extend into adulthood. Research on resilience (Luther et al. 2000), for example, highlights the integral role of secure attachments for the fostering of resilient children. However, environmental pressures as described above, may compromise the ability of care givers to be as sensitive and responsive to the child's needs. Chu and Lieberman (2010) find that children from 0-5 are exposed to a disproportionally increased amount of potentially traumatic events compared to older children. Traumatic events when experienced at this age may therefore impede a child's ability to 'bounce back'. However, research by epidemiologists (Bartley 2006) finds that, whilst it is important to help build strengths and resilience through nurturing familial and community relationships, this will never really counteract the adverse effects of poverty and can result in blaming the victim for circumstances in which they find themselves. Flourishing, under circumstances of structural injustice, is severely curtailed.

Having explored the ways in which positive psychology has been influential in UK social policy and political discourse I now want to consider why positive psychology has an appeal beyond the political realm.

3.8 Positive Psychology in an Age of Bewilderment

> "We might think of the early 21st century as the Age of Bewilderment... if we cannot construct good dreams for ourselves, families, regions, nations and the world; if we therefore cannot construct the future as mental object, collecting those dreams and utilizing them for vital matrices that connect citizens of all nations in a meaningful progression, then as adaptive creatures we have turned to new strategies in order to tread water" (Bollas 2015, p. 548).

There is an experience globally of increased polarisation of wealth and material resources which manifests as an era of fluid mobility and uncertainty. In addition there is diminishing social support yet increased pressure from expectations placed upon the self. Such

times seem mainly to engender a sense of despair. It is perhaps not unreasonable then that a desire for happiness and wellbeing "persists paradoxically as a reasonable expectation" (McCleod and Wright 2009 p.136). What brought my attention to positive psychology in the first instance was the vehement rejection of Freud and psychoanalysis by the positive psychologist Martin Seligman. He has described Freud's work as a "rotten to the core doctrine" (Seligman 2002, p.xi), as being "empirically wrong" and a "political disaster" (2011). For Seligman, psychoanalysis serves only to understand people as being consumed by unresolved conflicts from childhood, dictated to by childhood trauma (2002). My interest in psychoanalysis in the context of this thesis is because of Martin Seligman's forceful rejection of psychoanalysis as a useful body of knowledge. I wanted to know why this was the case, but more than that I was interested not to oppose positive psychology with psychoanalysis, but to first take a psychoanalytic lens to positive psychology and then to offer psychoanalytic ideas as an alternative narrative in a discussion about human wellbeing. Freud strongly advised against psychoanalysis for polemical use. In a clinical setting, Freud warns the analyst against employing a polemical stance because this always implies a situation of superior and subordinate. The analyst in these circumstances must not be surprised if the analysand, in turn, makes use of a polemical stance against the analyst. Outside the clinic too, Freud continues, taking a polemical stance in defence of psychoanalysis will serve only to call forth similar resistances disguised as intellectual rejection. The introduction of a new psychological theory is often like launching a new social movement and Holland (1977) suggests that this is why it has the potential to be polemical because the new theory is as much concerned to reject earlier models as to establish new ones, he says "there is nothing more revelatory … than the ideas, cultural values or schools of thought [it] chooses to react against" (p.19).

In a letter to Marie Bonaparte, Freud noted: "The moment a man questions the meaning and value of life, he is sick, since objectively neither has any existence" (Freud et al., 1978; p.272). Now it seems a whole strand of psychology is dedicated to doing just that, with wide-ranging influence from economics to government policy, exemplified by proposals to measure happiness and wellbeing in the UK. In the light of Freud's observation, one must wonder whether the emergence of positive psychology is, perhaps, an indication of distress from the society that is Western, late modern capitalism. Drawing on Zygmunt Bauman's concept of liquid modernity, Young (2007) describes the experience of late modernity forming around three axes: "... the disembededness of everyday life, the awareness of a pluralism of values, and an individualism which presents the achievement of self realisation as an ideal" (Young, 2007, p.2). For Young, the presentation of self realisation as an ideal contributes to the idea

that there are great potentialities for human flexibility and reinvention but, he goes on to note, that the side effects of this are "ontological insecurity" and a "precariousness of being" (Young, 2007, p.3).

The allure of positive psychology is perhaps symptomatic of a society that devalues experiences of interiority and depth. The psychoanalyst David Bell (2011) talks about the horizontalisation of experience in a culture where the rationale of the market has penetrated all spheres of life and we have lost a sense of verticality. The so-called post-modern condition has often been characterised as lacking in depth and meaning, "a perpetual present, without depth, definition or secure identity" (Jameson 1985, p.119). Emerging from this, Bauman (2000, 2003, 2005) describes a liquid modernity in which we find ourselves in a constantly shifting sea of choices, opportunities and risks. Drawing on Milan Kundera's The *Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984), Bauman observes people existing in a way that makes them seem perpetually light. In the process of self-enhancement they can draw on a whole range of identities, flitting from one idea to the next. But this process of self-invention cannot be done without errors, doubts and re-workings: life becomes a series of unending self-focused pursuits devoid of substance.

The striving to achieve emotional wellbeing presented by the positive psychologists gives the illusion of being able to become whole, conflict free, happy selves; given the techniques of self-management we are induced to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and at the end we can be consoled by the promise of a unified self (Yates 2011). We are encouraged to desire the impossibility of the perfect self, rooted in a market-driven consumerist society. Neoliberal economics relies on the image of the autarkic self, the self-sufficient individual who alone can master the whole of their lives, driven by a capacity to act on themselves (Beck 1992). Self-fulfilment becomes defined by a search for happiness and life value is then understood in terms of measuring our degree of life satisfaction (Smail 1998). Positive psychology offers a sense of order, a way in which daily life can be structured in order to avoid panic and anxiety, providing reassurances in an often unstable world.

To be able to identify, categorise and then work on positive emotions offers an opportunity to bring a semblance of order to daily life, to avoid panic and a sense of chaos. I suggest that positive psychology may serve this function, perhaps a need to escape may be a necessary condition in order to survive. The scientific rationality of positive psychology is perhaps a seductive solution to the uncertainties of late modernity. The consumer of positive psychology is offered a psychic retreat. Steiner (1993) describes the moment in an analysis when meaningful contact between patient and analyst is experienced as threatening and the

patient retreats psychically into a place of peace and protection. These retreats become problematic, however, when they become habitual, resulting in stagnation, withdrawal and isolation. The lure of positive psychology is perhaps understandable in a world characterised by change and uncertainty and all the anxiety that can instil. A psychology that offers a way to live a good life is very appealing. Narcissism and the retreat into oceanic oneness is where we tend to go as the ultimate sanctuary in life; indeed, "we never fully give up on the infantile illusion of omnipotence and of exclusive possession of another, which are, at the start of life, the only psychological means at the baby's disposal for coping with the brute fact of its vulnerability" (Richards, 1989, p.19). But at what cost? Positivity, happiness and self actualisation are given privileged attention whilst anxiety, ill health and dependency are spilt off and disavowed. The injunction to be a fully realised individual becomes a burden as we become solely responsible for the realisation of our dreams and aspirations; however, "in seeking to eliminate pain, we suffer from not being able to suffer" (Bruckner 2000, p.4).

Berlant (2006, 2011) argues that the post-war social democratic settlement seen in the United States and Europe promised that, as long as the economy continued to grow, everyone would have the opportunity to flourish. She describes this as a 'cruel optimism' whereby something you desire, for example, the fantasy of the 'good life' becomes an idealised version that is unattainable and is actually an obstacle to one's ability to flourish. Despite the weight of evidence that neoliberal societies cannot be counted on to enable people to flourish, fantasies remain of upward mobility, equality, job security and durable intimacy. Whilst one clings to these fantasies there is a sense of optimism but what is cruel about that, according to Berlant (2011) is when one experiences the blow of discovering that the world can no longer sustain one's organising fantasies of the good life. Indeed, the very concept of what a 'good-life' may look like is actually in a state of crisis. With the rise of a 'precarious public sphere' people are struggling to imagine new 'good life' genres and structures. Instead people are maintaining attachments to lost fantasy ideals just to make it through day-to-day life (Berlant 2006, 2011).

With an intense focus on the design of the perfect self, positive psychology appeals to one's instinct for self-preservation in a world that can feel threatening and confusing. In a neoliberal society where consumerism is all pervasive, a consumerist spirit has permeated to the very design of the self. We lapse into magical thinking, believing that we can impact reality by wishing or willpower and thereby gaining a belief that the self is all powerful and can change external realities. Wacquant's (2012, 2013) definition of neoliberalism is particularly useful here. He argues that the latter is not about the state *or* the market as instead it is about the state *and the* market. It is the new way of the world, active in the remaking and redeployment of the

state "as core agency that actively fabricates the subjectivities, social relations and collective representations suited to making the fiction of markets real and conceptual" (Wacquant 2012: 68). As he goes onto say, "neoliberalism is not merely destructive of rules, institutions and rights. It is also productive of certain kinds of social relations, certain ways of living, certain subjectivities" (Wacquant 2013" x). What constitutes wellbeing, is subject to conflicting conceptions about what form the good life takes and what enables people to flourish. Into the contested arena debating what constitutes the good life comes positive psychology and the related discipline, behavioural economics, which share a common belief that psychology can offer more to our understanding of human nature than just about when things go wrong. The language of wellness and wellbeing has been colonised by those on the right of the political spectrum. It has become an ideology whereby citizens are persuaded that they are sick or unhappy and that it is up to the individual to work on self-improvement. A meaningful existence can be achieved, we are told, if we maintain a positive outlook. In an uncertain world with diminishing social support this can feel very reassuring and give one a sense of being in control. In the chapter that follows, I will look in more depth at how the language of wellbeing, underpinned by the discourse of the neoliberal entrapreneurial spirit has come to shape welfare policy in the UK.

Chapter 4: The Politics of Flourishing

4.1 Flourishing and Welfare

The concept of welfare pertaining to human flourishing has been reformulated to be workfare, a manifestation of the neoliberal entrepreneurial spirit. I now examine the complex and contested terrain of the word welfare; a word that I think has become dulled by usage, and worse, has become tainted as its meaning has changed over time and been imbued with powerful political and cultural connotations. Raymond Williams (1976) wrote that meanings of significant words are shaped by a particular social class, and that meanings are often intrinsically linked in complex ways. For example, he noted that "charity" became a "compromised word"; once it was a sign of love and compassion for others but it became associated with "deserving and undeserving poor" and a reward for good social conduct (p. 54). He noted that governments then chose to use the term welfare benefits rather than charity to distinguish this as a right rather than charitable support. The political theorist Michael Freeden (1999) has said that, in the past, the concept of 'welfare' in socialist thought was seen as having the ethical end of optimising human creativity and eliminating alienation. The role of 'welfare' in this context pertained to an earlier notion of human flourishing and wellbeing. The foundations of the welfare state in the UK were laid by the Beveridge Report of 1942. A system whereby the state undertook to protect the health and wellbeing of its citizens, especially those in financial need.

I will look in more detail at the ways in which the current discourse around personal wellbeing, as espoused by positive psychology, places the locus of responsibility firmly on the individual. The word welfare has now also become compromised, and this has had an impact on how welfare is thought about in social policy terms.

Following the global financial crisis of 2007-2008, the Conservative-led coalition government that came to power in 2010 initiated a comprehensive programme of austerity measures. They argued that this was necessary in order to reduce the UK budget deficit, particularly by reducing public sector spending (Newman and Clark 2012, Hall, Massey and Rustin 2013, 2015, Bramall 2013, Seymour 2014, O'Hara 2015, Ryan 2019). Seymour (2014) defines austerity much more broadly, beyond an economic strategy implemented in response to an economic crisis. Seymour argues that austerity gives a political name to the process by which capitalism is evolving. Processes such as the rebalancing of the economy away from consumption and towards investment, increased inequality, precarity and the reorganization of

the welfare state from welfarist to punitive. Rustin notes; "a besetting fault - indeed pathology - of contemporary capitalist societies is that in their relentless advocacy of individual freedom, gratification and possessiveness, they undermine the very social conditions which make its exercise, for the most people possible" (Rustin 2013, p.38). The welfare state, established at a stage of social democratic settlement, was set up to respond to the various phases of human dependency, birth, ill health, old age for example. However, as Rustin points out, caring professions that respond to human need are, under neoliberal capitalism, "at risk of being pushed to the margin by reframings of organisational and personal tasks in terms of economic gain, market advantage, profit seeking and compliance with instructions and regulations …" (Rustin 2013, p. 41). As a result, the quality of human relationships, so fundamental to individual and societal wellbeing, is diminished.

Cooper and Lousada (2005) make an important, in my view, distinction between deep and shallow welfare. When welfare is thought of only as the provision of services this is a shallow understanding of what welfare means. A deeper conception of welfare would take into consideration the relationships formed. The prospect, however, of a deeply engaged welfare can bring forth feelings of fear and hatred of dependency. There is a constellation of social anxieties, they suggest, which inform the shaping of social policy. What results is a shallow conception and practice of social welfare. The socio-economic drivers behind welfare policy are focused on supply side measures. The aim is to fulfill a need for labour for a market driven economy.

In the UK, all welfare to work programmes for the unemployed, lone parents and disabled people are to be replaced by one mandatory programme for people on 'out of work' benefits, to be known as Universal Credit. There are benefit sanctions for those who are deemed to have refused job offers or failed to comply with a complex set of regulations. These sanctions, combined with the politics of austerity, have exacerbated levels of mental distress (Wickham et al. 2020). This is combined with the demonisation of those who are entitled to benefits and a marked reduction in those entitlements. The increase in mental distress has led to these times being called the new age of anxiety (Orton 2011). Insecurity is now structurally pervasive in Britain today. Orton describes an 'on your own' approach which reinforces a heightened sense of anxiety (Orton 2011, p. 7). As Orton notes; "our lives have become piecemeal, disjointed and inconsequential rather than rounded, flourishing and fulfilled." (Orton 2011, p. 7). It is in the world of work where we see the age of insecurity and anxiety most in evidence, with zero hours contracts, lack of job security and precarity. Paid employment is no longer a means to necessarily feel financially secure. Care is no longer seen

as a collective responsibility but can be dealt with at arm's length through charity or philanthropy (Orton 2011).

4.2 Welfare: Driver of Economic Growth or Safety Net?

As Prime Minister in 2011, David Cameron made a speech on the Welfare Reform Bill (Cameron 2011), a bill which he described as "the most ambitious, fundamental and radical changes to the welfare system since it began". The aim, Cameron stated, was to "make work pay". In other words, ensure that being employed was always going to be more financially viable than being in receipt of welfare benefits and also to provide greater support to those seeking work, or trying to stay in work. This was necessary Cameron said, "to get to grips with the cost of welfare". The key theme of his speech, he notes, is "social responsibility". Whilst governments have a responsibility to provide for those in the most need, those in receipt of welfare have responsibility too. He argues "Yes, there are those who, with no regret or remorse, intentionally rip off the system - and that makes hard-working people, including many on low incomes who pay their taxes, rightly angry". The fault lies in the system, he continues, a system that has created a "benefit culture" which actually encourages people to act irresponsibly or traps them in dependency. Tougher sanctions would be introduced to put responsibility back into the welfare system. Cameron proposed to end what he calls "sick-note culture" by reviewing sickness absence and improve health and wellbeing at work. The welfare system needed to change, according to Cameron, because it should be a driver of economic growth and not just a safety net. With the help of training and confidence boosting people should be helped back into work (Cameron 2011).

Credited by David Cameron in his 2011 speech on welfare reform is Iain Duncan Smith. When Secretary of State for the Department of Work and Pensions he was a driver of welfare reform for the Conservative party, he set out his policy vision and stated that work is good for our mental health. To flourish, in this instance, is firmly linked to the idea that one must work. On 24 August 2015, Iain Duncan Smith delivered a speech on his vision for welfare reform to an event jointly hosted by a (right wing) think tank, Reform, and Barclays Bank. The press were not invited. Duncan Smith opened the speech by saying that that the guiding principle for the Conservative party agenda for welfare reform has been to "place work at the heart of everything we do" (Duncan Smith 2015) In that speech he is concerned that benefit recipients become "trapped and isolated" and he wants to enable them to move from "dependence to independence". He draws on what he says is growing evidence that demonstrates that being in

work helps to keep people healthy and, what is more, it can speed up the recovery if someone falls ill. He states that "work is more than just salaries, tax numbers and statistics … it is what shapes us and helps us develop. In short, it is about self-esteem, self-confidence and self-worth. Work is good for health" (Duncan Smith 2015).

The coalition agreement, drawn up following the formation of a Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government in May 2010, made a bold statement of intent regarding their inclusion of behavioural economic and psychological techniques and insights when forming policy.

> "There has been an assumption that central government can only change people's behaviour through rules and regulations. Our government will be a much smarter one, shunning the bureaucratic levers of the past and finding intelligent ways to encourage, support and enable people to make better choices for themselves." (Cameron and Clegg, 2010, p.7)

The Conservatives' plan to incorporate findings from behavioural economics and positive psychology had already been outlined prior to the 2010 election (Cameron 2010, Osborne and Thaler 2012). The methods and findings seemed to resonate with a long held Conservative philosophy that policies are most effective when they are congruent with human nature. From this perspective, there is a recognition that people do not always act rationally, and that this will have a direct impact when trying to implement government policy. In 2010 the UK coalition government, under the auspices of the Cabinet Office, formed the Behavioural Insights Team (2010), informally dubbed the 'nudge unit' (Halpern 2015). Under the directorship of Dr David Halpern, this small team was given the remit of finding ways of encouraging and enabling people to 'make better choices for themselves' (Halpern and Service 2014, p.6). They drew insight from psychology and behavioural economics and applied these to policy making. One of the biggest projects for the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) was working with the Department of Work and Pensions to support people in getting back to work. As Halpern notes, the project was to "get people back to work faster, without addressing their formal skills or what was happening on the labour market, with a few BI inspired tweaks to the process" (Halpern 2015, p.198). One aim of this is project was to help job seekers with their wellbeing and resilience. Job seekers still looking for work after eight weeks were offered workshops in expressive writing and strengths identification (BIT Staff 2012).

In the study backed by the Wellcome Trust, Freidii and Stearn (2015) examined how psychology was being deployed by the government, in their welfare reform program, as a form of psycho-policy. Drawing on policy analysis as well as personal testimony, the authors found what they described as examples of psychological conditioning. In what can be seen as the application of the positive psychological methods, people in receipt of benefits and seeking employment were sent repeated motivational text and email messages and were required to attend self-help seminars. One's attitude to work, how one thinks and feels about employment, has become very much part of the conditionality of benefit claims and judgements about entitlement. Whilst a 'jobseeker' maybe out of work there is still 'work' to be done on the self to improve one's attitudes to employment and therefore increase one's employability; essentially the jobseeker is a commodity who must learn how to market themselves. In order to claim Universal Credit, there is a requirement to sign a Claimant Commitment so that Job Centre staff are able to check the claimant's behaviour against a checklist of work-related requirements. The application of positive psychology and CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) techniques is perfectly suited to policymakers who value quantification and standardisation, in other words, the neoliberal economic and political project. In order to flourish then, one must work on the self to achieve valued characteristics such as confidence, optimism, aspiration and self-efficacy. Such attributes can increase one's marketability with the aim of achieving employment. Fisher (2009) proposes the notion of *Capitalist Realism* to convey the pervasiveness of the belief that there is no alternative to capitalist ideology. Mental health, he suggests, is an *aporia* in capitalist realism, mental illness is considered an individual problem and the ruling ontology does not allow the consideration of a social causation of mental ill health. Positive psychology extends this locus of responsibility: our wellbeing is also devoid of social causation, becoming instead a set of tasks to be worked through "a daily undertaking in which the individual produces positive emotional states just as a fitness guru might shape a desired muscle group" (Binkley 2011: 391).

4.3 From Welfare to Workfare

There has been a systematic move in the UK to transform unemployment and poverty into individual pathologies. Punitive measures, such as benefit sanctions, are being presented as new and innovative solutions to address what has been described as Britain's broken society (Wiggan 2012). Economic instability has provided an opportunity for a neoliberal vision of welfare to be imposed and there has been a distinct shift away from Welfare onto Workfare.

Key to this has been an emphasis on behavioural explanations for social problems and an assertion that state interventions have been a failure. This has allowed for a narrative to dominate which favours the smaller state and the market reorganisation of public services (Wiggan 2012). It is suggested that there has been a dramatic shift from a Keynesian Welfare National State to a Schumpeterian Workfare Post-national Regime (Jessop 1993). The aims of the Schumpeterian Workfare Regime are to foster entrepreneurship, to sustain long-term economic growth and to subordinate social policy to the needs of labour market flexibility and competitiveness (Jessop 1993).

The meaning of welfare, how the term is interpreted, is most often underpinned by fundamental philosophical beliefs and how the world works. As such these will have a significant impact on policy making and implementation. Broadly speaking, it is possible to identify two contrasting standpoints: the liberal orientation, or the egalitarian orientation. The egalitarian rationale for welfare is essentially that it is right in a society to protect the vulnerable, children, the elderly, the poor and people with disabilities. Such a standpoint recognises that there may be inherent inequality in a society and seeks ways to ameliorate it. As a collective contract between all members of the society, the welfare state was set up in the 1940's to ensure that all of its members would have a chance to make a useful contribution and to 'flourish' through a fairer distribution of wealth (Hall and O'Shea 2015 p.14). In contrast, there is the liberal or individualist orientation. Here, human relations are based on self-interest and competitiveness. Unlike the collectivist approach of the egalitarians, the liberal view asserts the significance of the autonomous individual responsible for their own welfare. The use of the word 'welfare' tends to come with a moral undertone because at its heart it is not just about how we live, but also about how we think others should live.

In many respects the term 'welfare' has fallen out of favour, with concepts such as wellbeing and happiness coming to the fore. Welfare has become the signifier for 'character', whereby those in receipt of welfare are deemed to lack sufficient moral fibre to support themselves by their own endeavours (Daly 2011). According to Daly (2011) the case made for welfare has diminished in academic circles, as the concept no longer seems to feature in recent scholarship. She suggests that this is because this concept appears to belong to an earlier stage of societal development. Welfare does not fit in a richer society that has been organised in a more individualised way with a focus on self-fulfilment. Positive psychology, Daly suggests, has been particularly instrumental in the shift away from welfare and onto concepts such as wellbeing, happiness and flourishing. With the implementation of the government's measures to place psychological wellbeing professionals at job centres, the narrative that says

unemployment is evidence both of psychological and personal failure becomes solidified, a stratified deposit if you will.

Applied psychological methods are being used here to establish some form of scientific validation for the neoliberal view that achieving the status of paid working citizen is the pinnacle of human experience. The solution to poverty is to be in work, and this is used for the justification of the reduction of the social safety net of the welfare state. Benefits provision is no longer viewed as a respectable earned entitlement. Instead welfare is closely associated with dependency, or a 'something for nothing' culture (Duncan Smith 2013). Harsher more punitive measures are meted out to claimants who are not deemed to be complying with the new requirements. Freedom of the market economy is promoted on the one hand, whilst a punitive policy regime is established for marginal groups on the other (Wacquant 2009). More often it is those farthest from the labour market such as people with long-term ill-health, people with disabilities or lone parents, who are much harder to assist using these methods of increasing a person's employability. As Peck notes in his critical analysis of Workfare States "stripped down to its labour-regulatory essence, workfare is not about creating jobs for people that don't have them: it is about creating workers for jobs that nobody wants …. it is seeking to make social bodies for the new economy. Flexible, self-reliant and self-disciplining" (Peck 2001, p.6).

Disavowal of social realities can be seen in the current neoliberal ideology of self-sufficiency, through the denial of dependence and inter dependence. Since the 1970s, there has been an emergence of an enterprise culture in Anglo-American Western society which has been characterised by a distinct move towards the formation of a neoliberal model of the entrepreneurial self, based on the ethical construct of self-reliance (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2011; Burchell et al 1991; Burchell 1996; Elliott and Lemert 2006; Rose 1999, 2007). Thus, as Giddens (1991) argues, the contemporary era of Western society can be defined as having an unprecedented preoccupation with the 'self'. The 'self' travels from past to future through a process of continuous actualisation (Giddens 1991). As Foucault (1986) contends, there is an ethical obligation to care for oneself. This takes the form however of an endless constructing of identities, a focus on what we do rather than on what we are. Foucault argues that the subject is simultaneously governed by others yet also the governor of themselves, the subject becomes the entrepreneur of themselves. Neoliberalism is constructed through the practices of everyday life, it speaks and acts through our language, our decisions and our social relations and ultimately sets the social and cultural limits around what it means to care for the self (Peck and Tickell 2002). Yates (2015) notes that a focus on emotional wellbeing in social policy emerged

in a pre-austerity era. The notion of resilience now seems more fitting in an age where the advice is to take steps to protect oneself against whatever might befall us, it is necessary to be able to withstand the risks faced in contemporary life. However, vulnerable aspects of the self are then projected onto the 'other' such as the benefit claimant who must then "carry the shame of a system in which the ethos of success and self-promotion is all-pervading" (Yates, 2015, p.10).

The Centre for Social Justice, a think tank established in 2004 by Iain Duncan-Smith one of the architects of the Coalition's welfare reforms published a report in 2013 entitled *Maxed Out*. This report focused on the rise in personal debt, they were concerned that the most vulnerable in society were sliding further into debt, many of whom were just trying to cover the costs of daily essentials or even household bills. The report acknowledged that low and irregular incomes were a major contributory cause in this rise in personal debt and that this not only has severe financial implications but also "more wide-ranging impacts on people's mental health, family stability and ability to work" (Centre for Social Justice 2013, p.25). The United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty, Professor Philip Alston visited the UK in 2018. He wanted to see the effects of poverty for himself and spent two weeks visiting various places in the UK, including Jaywick in Essex (an area I discuss in my third case study). 1/5th of the UK population are living in poverty and of those, 1.5 million are classed as destitute. In his report Alston (2019) noted; "evidence points to the conclusion that the driving force has not been economic but rather a commitment to achieving radical social re-engineering" (p.2). He continues:

> "British compassion for those who are suffering has been replaced by a punitive, mean-spirited, and often callous approach, apparently designed to instill discipline where it is least useful, to impose rigid order on the lives of those least capable of coping with today's world, and elevating the goal of enforcing blind compliance over a genuine concern to improve the wellbeing of those at the lowest level of British society" (p.3)

4.4 Wellbeing and the Therapy Culture Debate

I suggest that a language of therapy, that focuses on self-fulfilment, has been appropriated into this ideological plan as servant to neoliberal values. It is to this that I now turn. As I have discussed in relation to the current conjuncture, there has been an ongoing debate amongst cultural analysts about the absorption of the language of therapy into

everyday life and an associated preoccupation with the self (Lasch 1991; Reiff 1966; Sennett 1986). The proposal to measure the nation's wellbeing, in conjunction with the policy to calculate the value of non-market goods, is an example of the neoliberal desire to configure us as homo economicus. At the heart of neoliberal economics one can see what Beck (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2011, p.xxi) define as the "autarkic human self", which is a vision of the individual alone is the master of his or her life. The ethics of the market place have invaded economic and political thinking with the key maxims of public life being competition, cost effectiveness and the creation of wealth. The individual is isolated, yet supposedly self-sufficient, there to serve the demands and purposes of western capitalism. According to Cooper, as the state retreats from direct service provision, it still retains an inclination to govern but this takes the form of "governance" or "governing yet not governing" (Cooper, 2008, p.33) as it establishes ways to audit, to measure and to define standards. Contemporary social policy, Cooper says, "is distinctive for the manner in which it aims to penetrate to the heart of how individuals function in a search for reconstruction of our civic identities" (Cooper, 2008, p.36).

The model of wellbeing promoted by David Cameron was intrinsically linked to a version of wellbeing propounded by neoliberal ideals predominant in the USA and UK. At stake here is that, if unchallenged, the prevailing view of wellbeing will be underpinned by a perception that it is up to the individual to choose and design his or her own wellbeing. That construction of wellbeing will only be acceptable if it is compatible with the systematic requirements of western capitalism (Hartmut, 1998). Wellbeing, in this instance, as Rieff (1966) had described, becomes an end in itself. Under such constraints there is a tendency for uncritical acceptance of certain 'givens' such as 'freedom of choice' to form a key constituent of wellbeing; the notion of 'choice' being concomitant with an economic account of wellbeing that is about maximising one's utility (Carlisle and Hanlon, 2007). The usefulness of exploring such concepts as wellbeing is that it captures and reproduces important social norms, notably in a consumer society, where wellbeing emerges as a normative obligation and wellbeing practices are frequently consumerist in character (Sointu, 2005). The individual is able to 'consume' wellbeing from a range of options from self-help books to life coaches. In an individualised consumerist society, failures to achieve wellbeing are perceived as personal negligence. This question arises: is a consumer-based ideal of wellbeing characteristic of an individualistic psychology, a psychology which stands accused of creating the very ills that it sets out to heal (Illouz, 2008). Indeed, materialism and individualism have been shown to be

detrimental to health with increased levels of anxiety, anger, isolation and alienation (Eckersley, 2006). Significantly, these ailments are 'contagious' and "few denizens of the liquid modern society of consumers are fully immune" (Bauman, 2008, p.27). The discourse of the therapeutic has permeated our family, social, business and political lives to the extent that it is difficult to isolate it from other dominant cultural codes, such as economic liberalism, which organise selfhood (Illouz, 2008). 'Wellbeing', arising from that therapeutic language, is a complex and contested concept which Carlisle and Hanlon (2007) suggest falls into four main discourses: scientific, popular, critical and environmental. Multiple terms are mobilised to define wellbeing ranging from positive emotions, positive feelings, positive affects, life satisfaction and happiness but it is the equation of 'wellbeing' with 'happiness' that has particularly influenced media presentations of wellbeing policy, while political rhetoric, debate and policy making links wellbeing to personal control and choice.

I argue that the wellbeing narrative used by David Cameron is emblematic of a version of self-help therapy culture that comes to us in the bite sized chunks of daily affirmations, positive thinking manuals and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), which is more akin to the consumer culture of late capitalism with notions of self-development and fulfilment. As Yates (2011) has pointed out, the goal of emotional wellbeing has become a consoling promise of a happy and unified self. The underlying discourse articulates neoliberal, pro-market values. The measurement of wellbeing, as has been discussed, is a version of governance as outlined by Brown (2005) in which human life is reduced to rational transactions with an invasion of the market into all institutions and social actions. What results is an unlinking of the individual from their social contexts (Layton, 2006a, 2006b) and a society in a state of defence (Peltz, 2007).

The psychoanalyst Lynne Layton (2007) says that in contemporary US culture, vulnerability and dependence have been rendered shameful. This is largely because consecutive governments have abdicated responsibility for their most vulnerable citizens. She states, "the ethos that global capitalism and both neo-conservative and neoliberal ideologies have promoted since the late 1970's is an ethos of save your own skin" (Layton 2007, p.153). Layton, Gutwill and Hollander (2006) speak of a traumatogenic environment in which group physical safety, feelings of social security and symbolic capabilities come under attack. The consequence of whole groups losing the capacity to care has major societal consequences, argues Hollway (2006). A culture imbued with vengeance and hate develops, only to reproduce the kind of conditions which hinder the development of the capacity to care in the first place.

Furthermore, we lose the collective "citizenly care" which Hollway suggests "provides a bulwark against political corruption, unbridled market forces or religious fundamentalism" (Hollway 2006, p.2).

4.5 Lack of a Containing Function of Government

There is no longer a political will to provide a shared vision of creating a better society as instead there is a pervasive belief that it is better to improve one's own position within an existing society. Despite significantly increased levels of wealth and comfort there has been a simultaneous increase in global inequality and a corresponding rise in the levels of mental and emotional suffering (Dorling 2010, Wilkinson and Pickett 2010). Without the provision of social containers, by this I mean institutions of consistent social provision that are democratically maintained, members of a society can feel traumatised much as a child would had they been abandoned (Peltz 2007). According to the psychoanalyst David Bell (1996), there are powerful unconscious forces at work in the attacks on the welfare state. The primacy of the market and extreme individualism can offer a certain bewitching attraction for many who support it through identification with it, or by submission to it. Bell says that whilst this submission is often masochistic, it can also be derived from despair. The passive submission to the change in cultural attitude to welfare, may appeal to a primitive part of us which sees illness as weakness. Problems arise here for a populace who have succumbed to omnipotence in which there is a sense that they can learn nothing new because they already know everything. Bell describes this as an 'archaic morality' (p. 52), dominated by thoughts of blame and accusation. There is no room to think about alternative views of the welfare state when this occurs.

The philosopher, Martha Nussbaum (2003) has suggested that far from Seligman's proposition that people should and could be enabled to be happier, people should in fact be a lot sadder. Whilst Nussbaum refers mainly to American society, she argues that that people have become immune to the suffering of others. This argument can be extended to Europe and the UK where the values of neoliberalism shape the experience of the self in everyday life. One can experience an uncomfortable awareness of one's own vulnerability with a tendency to locate it in other people. Bell (2010) argues that the problem with this projective system is that it has a drive of its own which gathers momentum, creating a contempt and sowing the seeds for destructive social processes, such as prejudice. In this kind of non-thinking the world, the value system collapses into simple binary categories such as 'us and them' (Bell 2010) or for

example, the 'skiver, a term used to animate 'ideas of welfare dependency' (Jensen 2014), versus the 'striver' seen clearly in this speech made by the then chancellor George Osborne:

> "Where is the fairness, we ask, for the shift-worker, leaving home in the dark hours of the early morning, who looks up at the closed blinds of their next door neighbour sleeping off a life on benefits?" (Conservative Party Conference October 2013).

The boundaries between the structures of politics, civic society and popular culture are increasingly fluid. This shapes political culture, necessitating analysis of how social policy is implemented and both shapes and is indeed *shaped by* public opinion. Meanings have social influence, political consequences and cultural power. Power is not just exerted by force but also by the establishing of certain ideas and meanings in a hegemonic position which can be characterised as common sense (Gramsci 1971, Lehtonen 2000). The defining elements of a particular concept are often presented as being the most valid version by those in a position of power. However, there is a relationship between the presenters of this dominant meaning and their audience. They share in the formation of a particular narrative. The move to understand welfare in negative terms has a processual and stratified quality established over time. This has allowed for the presentation and acceptance of the new terminology of workfare

The denial of dependence "severely undermines the solidaristic ties upon which the idea of common welfare rests. Except for the super-rich we all potentially depend heavily upon a framework of common care. And yet a narcissistic culture is one which, perhaps particularly in men, supports omniscient feelings of invulnerability, that fate will show its hand to others but not to me" (Hoggett 2000, pp.168-169). The 'skiver/striver' narrative as mentioned above has very real impact. The campaign and advice service for families with children who have a disability which is called *Contact A Family*, has undertaken a survey every two years since 2008 to find out how families have been affected by the economic downturn. They found that of those asked, 83% said that they were going without something in order to make ends meet, with 31% of those saying that they would regularly go without food themselves in order to feed the rest of their family. At the start of the economic downturn in 2008, *Contact A Family* found that 47% of survey respondents envisaged that their financial situation would worsen over the next twelve months. Their survey of 2014 revealed that this figure had actually risen to 60%, with many families saying that they faced a very precarious financial future. Changes made by the then coalition government since 2010 meant that 33% of respondents were worse off, many

of them by as much as £30 per week. Most significantly, the increased stigma relating to claiming benefits meant that many families were not even making a claim; others reported receiving verbal insults from family or friends because they did make a claim for their child (*Contact A Family* 2015).

In a report commissioned by the charity Turn2Us, the University of Kent investigated *Benefits Stigma in Britain* (2012). Significantly, they found that the UK public greatly over-estimated the numbers of people who made false benefit claims. Public opinion also showed that benefits claimants were seen as less deserving that they were twenty years ago. Negative stories in the media were linked to this stigma and belief that there were high levels of fraud. Focus groups contributing to this study which reported a clear negative impact on feelings of self-worth because of the prevalence of a stigmatising narrative around benefits. The rise in the use of the term 'scrounger' had had a real impact on how people felt about needing to claim. The report looked at trends over time which appeared to indicate that stigma had played a role in the non-take-up of benefits. This means that welfare reforms have been taking place that appear to have public consent. Stuart Hall noted, under the "chimera of compassionate conservatism" the coalition government used the banking crisis as an alibi while they "seized the opportunity to launch the most radical, far-reaching and irreversible social revolution since the war" (Hall, 2011, p.23). Motivated by an ideology that the Conservatives had been designing since the 1970s, the neoliberal agenda will make an "irreversible transformation of UK society, caring little about the fall out (Hall, 2011a).

Honig argues that Winnicott's concept of the holding environment, a site for care, handling and holding, is instructive, because it is possible to think about public things as "constituting a kind of *democratic holding environment*, a laboratory for citizenship in which we experience lifelong attachments and play that form and re-form all of us into individuated and resilient persons capable of aggression, concern, and the self-collection" (Honig 2017, p.54 italics in the original). The problem is that the necessary conditions, not only to maintain the capacity for concern, but even to act out that concern, have been lost (Honig 2017).

Responsibility once placed upon a system for the wellbeing of its citizens now "intensifies disciplinary pressures on already ethically overburdened subjects" (Honig 2012, p.5). Honig argues we should "occupy resilience to take it from the neoliberals". The idea of resilience has something unique to offer, she suggests, in that it enables us to talk about holding environments in a democratic context. To do so is to discuss public things, or in other words,

objects of common concern. Here she means those public things that form the very infrastructure of a society or a community, be that public parks, libraries, prisons, hospitals for example. I would argue that Sure Start (the subject of my first case study in chapter six), exemplifies an object of concern that was endowed with the capacity for assisting in the transitioning of the individual to psychic maturity and individual flourishing and also to contribute to the democratic collectivity and wellbeing

The psychoanalysts Layton, Hollander and Gutwill (2006) suggest that neoliberal capitalism precipitates an increasingly traumatogenic socio-political order which fails to provide a containing experience for its members. Perhaps this failure of a suitably containing environment means that we seek containment and reassurance elsewhere, such as the self-help of positive psychology. The neoliberal citizen is condemned to live with uncertainty in a society permeated by risk (Beck (1992). Such a society can actually mean that subjects can only survive rather than thrive, or rather flourish. As Neocleous writes in *Resisting Resilience* (2013)

> "[g]ood subjects will 'survive and thrive in any situation', they will 'achieve balance' across the several insecure and part-time jobs they have, 'overcome life's hurdles' such as facing retirement without a pension to speak of, and just 'bounce back' from whatever life throws, whether it be cuts to benefits, wage freezes or global economic meltdown" (p.5).

In what Bauman (2000) describes as *liquid modernity* certain categories of human being can be deemed to be outside the realms of moral obligation or consideration. Bauman and Donskis (2013) call this adiaphoria, a kind of moral numbness or attitude of indifference to what is happening in the world, it is the casual turning away of one's ethical gaze. The function of my case studies, which follow, are a way in which as a researcher I can employ an ethical and empathic gaze to my subject.

In my case studies that now follow I will present a case study of the UK Sure Start programme initiated under the 1997- 2010 New Labour government. I argue that this had the potential to be a facilitating environment for parents and children. I suggest that the Sure Start initiative had the opportunity for transformation in terms of social policy that would have positive impacts for subsequent generations. I suggest that Sure Start was an example of the way in which the state can fulfill a containing function. Because of the ideology of austerity, this germ of a good idea had been allowed to fade. I then examine how in the UK, the welfare state has begun to lose a sense of its containing function and explore the lived realities for

people living under such circumstances. This has had the effect of actually hindering opportunities for people to flourish, except through intense competition.

Chapter 5: Method

As stated in my introduction, the central motivation of this thesis is taken from Ben Highmore's description of Raymond William's theoretical perspective:

> "We need to chart the relays of things and feelings that block the paths to our flourishing, just as we need to grasp hold of the feelings and things that can, potentially at least, offer a more hopeful future" (Highmore, 2016, p.23).

My research takes the form of four psychosocial case studies where I examine potential impediments to flourishing and also explore the possibilities for social policy which can go some way towards creating an environment conducive to flourishing and wellbeing.

My work is located in the inter-section between psychosocial, media and cultural studies. My research takes the form of examining, enquiring and experiencing. The purpose of psychosocial study here is to, in Richard's words "explore the psychic meanings and emotional resonances of some key cultural phenomena while attending to their historical and political dimensions" (Richards, 1994, p.13). I use artefacts such as archival material for the purposes of textual analysis. This method is then scaffolded by protocols from interview methods and auto ethnographic research. I considered that it was important to develop and incorporate these varying psychosocial methods into my research so that I can draw on the experience of particular political events as they are happening. This approach allows for the exploration of political dynamics in contemporary culture to see how meanings around flourishing and wellbeing are generated, disseminated and contested.

The psychosocial study of culture and society is a 'kind of criticism' which allows for the application of a 'certain sensibility' (Richards, 1994, p.23). The purpose is to locate my object of study i.e. flourishing, in frameworks of meaning. This "sensibility is characterized by a preoccupation with certain kinds of feelings and their non-obviousness in everyday life, by an interpretive method based on associations and by an awareness of (and where possible an attempt to engage with) the social contexts – historical, political, economic and so-on, which lie outside its interpretive scope" (Richards, 1994, p.23).   The first part of my thesis was informed by this interpretive method and will provided the context for my case studies which follow. Here I defined key terms, set the parameters of my subject and provided an historical contextualization for my research. The aim was to examine the contours of a given social,

political and cultural conjuncture and how that comes to bear when considering what it might mean to flourish.

The second part of my thesis is where I now seek to engage with the social contexts. My case studies or 'vantage points' (Gray 2003, p.68). will provide focus points in my analysis of what it means to flourish. Each case study is bounded by an interest in a particular issue, yet the studies are also linked together thematically and to a certain extent, flow one to the other. My case studies are a way of revealing the multi-layered complexity of the concept of flourishing.

This empirical research has an interest in the interplay between lived experience, texts or discourses and social context. I take a methodologically pluralist approach that draws on a variety of modes of interpretation. I make use of interviews and autobiographical narrative as a way of decreasing the distance that text on its own provides, by looking at the lives of real people including myself. By listening to people's stories one can begin to understand the reality of people's lived experience. I take a narrative methods approach to my research. I use qualitative unstructured interviews, there is minimal intervention by the researcher thereby allowing a narrative to flow. The interviews are then transcribed in full to identify emergent themes. My method is informed by Hollway and Jefferson (2000) who outlined 4 key principles to facilitate the production of an interviewee's narrative, as follows: the use of open ended questions, the purpose of the questions is to elicit a story, it is better to avoid using 'why' questions and during the interview one should listen carefully to the respondent and use their own words and phrasing for follow up questions rather than imposing interpretation.

I ensured that I obtained ethical approval for my research. With permission of each interviewee I recorded their words in order for me to transcribe and analyse their interviews. For reasons of privacy and confidentiality I have changed the names and identifying features of my respondents. However, I continue to use the nom de plume of "I was a JSA Claimant" in my second case study with his agreement. I also refer to Danny Sloggett in this case study; this is his real name and he requested that it be used in my research. Each of the respondents signed a consent agreement and was made aware that they could stop the interview at any time with an option to withdraw from the research process if required. Participants were thanked for their time and effort.

The method I used to transcribe was to listen via headphones to my interviews and then speak their words into dictation software which I would then re-check for accuracy. I found this to be even more revealing than transcribing straight to written form. By actually speaking the words of my respondents, I feel that I paid deeper attention to their pauses, emphasis and

intonation. This is more than just listening to a respondent, it is, on some level, experiencing a degree of emotional resonance with the spoken word. The aim was to collect narratives of experience, which would enable me to pay particular attention to the emotional qualities of social experience, and to create emotional impact in the reader. I have an interest in the lived experience and want to learn from what people have to say.

I also drew on an auto-ethnographic methodological approach to examine the Sure Start initiative. I have chosen an auto-ethnographic approach because it represents the way in which fieldwork and research can intersect with personal biography and emotions. It is a form of qualitative research in which the author is able to use self-reflection to connect an auto-biographical story to a wider cultural, political and social realm of meaning and understanding (Wakeman 2014). As such, this approach treats research as a "political, socially just and socially conscious act" (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2015, p.1). By drawing on my own experience as a campaigner and activist in my local area, who wanted to fight to keep a local Sure Start centre, I think that I am able to produce a more layered account of why I am arguing that the Sure Start initiative demonstrated a fundamental policy commitment from any government with a stated aim to enable human flourishing. My case study therefore includes vignettes telling my own story alongside the more usual artefacts and relevant literature such as policy documents and media articles. The aim is to include some evocative auto-ethnographic material to allow the reader to connect with my experiences as a researcher. I want to use it to demonstrate a lived experience, not just a subject I have read about. My personal life and research interests converged in a way that I think is worth discussing, "on the whole, auto-ethnographers don't want you to sit back as spectators; they want readers to feel and care and desire" (Bochner and Ellis 1992, p.24). I also draw on the theoretical orientation of Rosi Braidotti's concept of nomadic writing, notably writing as a cartography. Cartography is a process by which we can examine where we are now, an effort to try to understand what it means to live in the present moment in time. Taking a cartographical approach allows for a theoretically based and politically informed reading of the present and can incorporate auto biographical mapping of women's narratives. It is the political passion that sustains the process of nomadic writing as ethically accountable and empowering (Braidotti 2003, 2006).

5.1 Thematic Analysis

In order to inform my discussion, I carried out an inductive, exploratory study of my autobiographical and interview data, collected specifically for my research. Data analysis was

carried out using thematic analysis based on the conceptual framework proposed by Braun and Clark (2006). This method is used for identifying, analyzing and reporting themes within data, the purpose is to capture something important about the data in relation to the research question, by searching across the data I have gathered. The intention is to provide a rich thematic description of my data in its entirety, to examine the themes arising from all my case study material.

The transcript of the interview is a text like any other which needs close reading and judgement, it is an interpretive act (Braun and Clark 2006). Embedded in each transcript there will be interesting emergent themes pertinent to the research topic (Seidman 2013). Through the research process one finds connective threads between the narratives. The analysis of the interview data begins with the interview itself, as questions emerge as the participant tells their story. As I transcribed I began to make links and connections, taking note of Seidman's (2013) advice to approach the transcript with an open attitude when seeking what emerges as important to the text. I would then mark the text when something caught my attention. I then examined my interviews for common experiences or recurring themes. Whilst individuals may have very different experiences there may be commonalities which may point to what Clarke (2002) termed a "communal voyage" through a particular experience.

Once transcribed, I then read and re-read the data producing notes as I read, I am then able to produce a mind-map of the key patterns arising from each interview, whilst also noting any parts of the interviews that may depart from any dominant narratives. This enabled me to review and refine my data.

5.2 Structures of Feeling

My bricolage method of theoretical investigation, interview and autoethnography is applied in order to examine ways of thinking vying to emerge at any one time. Ways of thinking, or to use Raymond Williams term 'structures of feeling' (1977) can be found in official discourse, government policy, popular responses to official discourse and policy, and also in its appropriation in literary and other cultural texts. Examining structures of feeling is about the quality of social experience, the lived presence 'what fuels our enthusiasm or enhances our wellbeing' (Sharma and Tygstrup, 2015, p.1). This is undertaken to obtain a deep understanding of the way we live now, exploring the participants' perspective on culture, not only what was said or what was done, but what did it feel like to be there (Sharma and Tygstrup 2015). The emotional themes and resonances evoked in my research interviews and

autoethnography can allow for a certain degree of purchase on amorphous collective conditions, as Anderson (2016) notes, structures of feeling are often experienced nebulously, 'not recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic and even solitary" (Anderson, 2016, p.132).

5.3 Psychoanalysis as Theoretical Procedure

I am informed by the clinical application of psychoanalysis as a theoretical procedure as defined by Highmore (2007, 2008), in which methodology takes the form of attention or processual awareness. Highmore has suggested that applying this form of attention to the study of an aspect of culture allows the potential for the researcher as listener to pick up on a voice in the narrative that may otherwise go unheard. This does not mean that the listener must be a passive recipient of the narrative, but they employ a form of "distracted attention attuned and attuning itself to the speech of another" (Highmore 2007, p.96). This is the use of psychoanalysis as an interpretive strategy in order to explore, in Cooper's words, what is "absent", "suppressed" or "denied" (Cooper 2009, p.170).

Psychoanalysis is used in two ways in this thesis. Firstly, to examine and critique an existing discourse and secondly to demonstrate the strengths of psychoanalytic concepts as an alternative discourse. My research belongs to the field of psychoanalytic studies with psychoanalysis as a mode of enquiry into culture and society. My methodology is interdisciplinary in form, drawing on psychoanalytically informed psychosocial studies, cultural studies, and critical theory.

Concerns have been raised both within academia and clinical practice regarding the application of psychoanalytic theory in fields such as media and cultural studies or the social sciences. Such concerns centre around the notion that clinical terms should not move outside the clinical setting into areas where they are open to misuse (Frosh and Baraister 2008). However, as Bainbridge et al (2007) remind us, beginning with Freud himself, psychoanalysis has always been used 'beyond the consulting room' to explore history, culture and the affective experience of everyday life. I drew from a particular version of psychosocial studies which had proved influential to my academic research, as I will now discuss.

5.4 Psychosocial Studies and Psychoanalysis in the Political Sphere

As a student from the Psychosocial Studies department of the University of East London (UEL) in the early 1990s, I was struck by the potential value of psychoanalysis in the

political sphere. The work of the Tavistock Institute in the post-war period can perhaps be seen as a starting point of something called 'psychosocial' (Walkerdine 2008). Here, post-Kleinian and group psychoanalysis were applied to social problems. Institutionally, Psychosocial Studies has evolved as a discipline over time to become a diverse and pluralist subject. However, its formative years took place at the University of East London in the 1980s where academics such as Michael Rustin envisioned a place for psychoanalysis in sociological study (Walkerdine 2008). This blending of the psychoanalytic with the social can be traced back to the Tavistock Clinic in the post war period where the principals of Kleinian, post-Kleinian and group analysis were drawn upon to examine and understand social problems. A notable example would be the work of Isabel Menzies Lyth (1959) and her seminal work on anxiety experienced by nursing staff in a general hospital. This type of psychosocial approach was often articulated in terms of how psychoanalytic ideas may be applied to the understanding of issues such as racism, identity, and problems of societal change. Richards's (1989) statement encapsulates this view "A major contribution of psychoanalytic thinking to the public sphere seems to lie ... in the critical scrutiny of political passions and in the considered extrapolation of psychoanalytic values beyond the consulting room." (Richards, 1989, p. 3).

In addition to these applications, I noticed that several academics in the field, such as Rustin (1991, 2001), Hoggett (1992) and Richards (1989, 2007) were suggesting that there was potential in a particular version of psychoanalysis, broadly object relational, that may be able to offer a useful political narrative. In a collection of essays edited by Richards (1989) on psychoanalysis and politics, a pertinent theme arising from the politics of the time was "the question of the moral condition of Thatcherite Britain" (Richards 1989, p.1). This collection had arisen as a result of a conference held in collaboration between North East London Polytechnic (prior to it becoming UEL) and Free Associations Books, that has a particular interest in the non-clinical aspects of psychoanalysis and related psychodynamic approaches to psychotherapy, groups, politics, institutions, media and culture. Another publication, *The Politics of Attachment: Toward a Secure Society* (Kraemer and Roberts 1996), also emerged from a collaboration, this time between clinicians at the Tavistock Clinic and academics from UEL. This collection of essays, written just prior to the New Labour electoral landslide of 1997, sought to explore the potential of developmental psychology to deepen the theoretical basis of the 'left's new project' (Hewitt 1996). This UEL influence has enabled me to explore aspects of the psychoanalytic tradition from 'outside the clinic' (Richards 1989, Rustin 1991, Frosh 2010). As Rustin (1991) notes, this can allow an exploration of the implications of psychoanalytic thinking for the neighbouring fields of social science and politics. What these

publications have in common is a left-leaning inflected analysis combined with an object relational psychoanalytic approach. What I notice above all, as I return to reading these texts that were so interesting to me as an undergraduate student, is how the key issues under discussion are still so pertinent today.

I am influenced by the work of Cooper and Lousada (2005) in their work *Borderline Welfare* in which they suggest that examining welfare policy or welfare work (such as that undertaken by a social worker) can be a portal through which the place of the human being in relation to society can be understood. Through examining narratives of wellbeing and welfare I intend to focus in on the current conjuncture and explore what it means to flourish in contemporary society.

5.5 Feminist Social Research

This vision of psychosocial studies can be seen as a feminist move by offering a space to explore a range of theories and methods; it refuses the rigidity of masculine academic boundaries associated with the old patriarchal order (Richards et.al 2009, Yates 2001). Works by Tyler (2013), Yates (2015) or Layton (2011) are all exemplars of authors who successfully draw on a diverse range of theoretical scholarship in order to examine a particular aspect of culture. In that vein, I too draw on feminist theory, media, cultural and psychosocial studies, critical theory, political philosophy and primarily psychoanalysis. All of which informed and enriched my critical, cultural analysis of positive psychology. According to Layton, the challenge for social psychoanalysis, such as in my application of psychoanalytic concepts in this thesis, is to account both for the ways that norms are internalised as well as what makes psychic resistance and challenge to social norms possible (Layton 2007).

Feminist social research has the potential to be part of the cultural and political process of shaping the social world. To do this, the research process should be about producing historically sensitive and complex analysis of the dynamics of social formations (Roseneil 2012). Drawing on the work of Hannah Arendt, Roseneil notes that as researchers we are often 'fellow sufferers' of the very conditions we are critically examining. Roseneil argues for 'criticality' whereby the researcher is tasked with critique and analysis of a given subject, yet recognises the fact that they are also sharing and living out the very conditions being studied (Roseneil 2012, Rogoff 2003). There is, therefore, a duality to the role of the researcher. Roseneil concludes; "we need more than ever, I believe, to produce feminist social research which operates in a register of criticality, with an ear to the past, and an eye to the future and

attention to the multiplicity of ways of inhabiting the present, such work is research with practical intention' (Roseneil 2012 P.130).

Barry Richards notes that one of the dangers of psychoanalytically informed research is that the conclusions drawn may be highly projective, derived from the researchers own internal world rather than accurately reflecting the external society they inhabit (Richards 1994). I acknowledge this as a limitation of my research, nevertheless, it is possible to undertake research that 'moves towards the pulsing, populated world even if it recognizes that there is no untroubled access to such a world' (Highmore, 2016, p.17).

My lived experience means that what I explore in this thesis resonates very deeply. How I look at my subject area as a researcher has to come from somewhere, as I examine texts it will be from my position and it is better to be open about my own context from the outset as it will inevitably influence the way in which I position myself and frame meaning. As Dreier (2008) points out it is not possible for the researcher to come from 'a privileged nowhere" (p.26). Psychosocial research acknowledges the specificity of the researcher, their interest in the subject matter will inevitably shape the process and product of the enquiry. It is by putting oneself, as the researcher, in the picture, that perhaps a more enriched story can unfold. There is always a 'con-text' to researching and reading texts, and it should therefore involve a degree of reflexive practice. In other words, it should take into account the situated auto biography of the researcher. This allows for the taking into account of the situatedness of the research and to pose the question 'where is it coming from?'. The interests of the researcher will inevitably inform and shape the nature of the research. From a psychosocial perspective it is important to problematize and engage critically with my position as a researcher, yet also acknowledge that it can add a further dimension to the research. "Listening to and engaging in others' stories is a gift" (Ellis 2007). Therefore, I wanted my subjects' voices to be heard. Their stories are of value and it is worth giving them the space to come alive in my thesis by citing much of what they had to say. In doing so they can be read in depth and not relegated as *appendages* to my research.

5.6 FANI Method

My method is informed by Hollway and Jefferson's (2013) free association narrative interview method (FANI). This method of interviewing seeks to 'steer interviewees away from well-worn responses dominated by readily available discourses" (Hollway 2015, p.43). The intention is to 'elicit participant's experience in a form dictated as little as possible by the

protocol of questions' (ibid.) Open ended questions are used in order to draw 'experience-near' stories that are arranged according to the interviewees' associations and meaning frames. The area of interest is defined and then questions are asked by the interviewer in whatever manner seems the most appropriate in the moment (Hollway 2015).

Psychoanalysis can offer the researcher ways of looking at their research practice and the ways in which meanings are made. Reflection, in the psychoanalytic sense, requires that one keeps an open mind and is sensitive to one's own emotional experience in the research process (Hollway 2015). The analyst's capacity for empathy whilst retaining an emotional space to think about what is going on within the interaction is a useful mode employed in ethnographic research. Fieldwork is an interpretive enterprise that will be mediated by the subjective experience of the researcher. The mental experience of the researcher will mediate their understanding of the cultural and psychological worlds of their subjects. The researcher's subjective experience will structure the research narrative because it provides the medium through which the data is gathered. McLoughlin (2003) notes the range of powerful emotions that permeated her own research and the role they played. She noted that when analysing data there may be very real emotional temptations to distort material that does not fit, or even to ignore data which challenges one's own personal values or line of argument. To be aware of this can prove fruitful for motivating further examination of one's research data.

5.7 Research and The Feminist Ethic of Care

My discussions concerning flourishing have emphasised a feminist ethics of care which is an ethical theory focusing on responsibility, social interconnectedness and collaboration (Gilligan 1982, Noddings 2013, Tronto 1993, 2013) As a result, the way I work as a researcher is also informed by an ethics of care. Branelly (2016) outlines five key principles for a researcher's ethics of care. To be attentive to those involved in the research; to have a responsibility for those involved in the research; to be competent to undertake the research; to be responsive to the participants and lastly, to show solidarity to your participants particularly when working with marginalised groups. Research ethics has multiple dimensions. There will be those required by the institution, such as informed consent and confidentiality; then there is situational ethics, whereby the researcher has a responsibility to their research participant if they ask for help or disclose something that might be harmful. Ellis (2007) adds to this a third dimension, that of relational ethics, closely linked to the ethic of care which recognises and values dignity, connectedness and mutual respect between the researcher and the researched.

Relational ethics, therefore, requires researchers to 'act from our hearts and minds, acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others, and take responsibility for actions and consequences" (Ellis 2007, p.3). Research guided by an ethic of care can allow for a sense of connection with others, not only between the researcher but between the subject and the reader.

5.8 Motherhood and the Researcher

Mose Brown and Masi De Casanova (2009) have pointed out that, despite the greater acceptance in the social sciences of reflexive analysis and the trend towards the inclusion of the researcher's subjective experiences and opinions, researchers are often still bound by conventions that discourage them from dwelling on their own impacts on the field in their written work. In the 'retellings' of their fieldwork 'there is often no place for discussing how motherhood and fieldwork combines and coexists, or for describing the mistakes and missteps that sometimes push the research in needed new directions' this can obscure the 'unevenness and serendipity involved in field research' (p. 55). In their exploration of the effects of motherhood in the field Mose Brown and Masi De Cordova (2009) take the 'lens of motherhood' to their research. They argue that motherhood can humanise the researcher in ways that are not always disclosed in academic writing, even in ethnographic research where class, race or gender identity might be discussed as integral to the research process. They note that most researchers tend to leave out motherhood as an aspect of their identity in their writing. They advise mothers who are researchers to take a reflexive approach in which one acknowledges their identity as a mother. When analysing field notes and writing up the research there is an added dimension of the effects of motherhood in the field. The 'lens of motherhood' applied to their own research "brought new direction to this self-conscious process allowing us to understand how we were shaping our field' (Brown and De Cordova 2009, p,55).

5.9 Writing, Research and Self-experience

There is an inexorable intertwining of emotion and writing "while we are of course constrained by the language we have available for daily or artful use, emotions bond themselves to words and, by extension, to their referents and thus, govern the interpretation of these words" (Brand, 1990, p.290). In *Being a Character* (1993) Christopher Bollas often uses his own self experience and life history and his own nature to investigate or argue a particular topic, in a way that he describes as being informed from within. It was Freud himself who pioneered such

an approach. In his *Interpretation of Dreams (*1900) Freud includes his own dreams as well as the dreams recounted by his patients. This forms an evolutionary dialectic that supports the construction of his theories (Bollas 1993). Nancy Chodorow (1989) reminds us that we have transferences to Freud and other analytic writers. Chodorow argues that the psychoanalytic authors we select to educate and inform our intellectual experience will, at some level, be based on our own intellectual prehistory from childhood, and our feelings about authoritative or authoritarian parents, teachers or writers. To write from a particular psychoanalytic perspective and to have concern for "psychoanalysis - in-itself" Chodorow says, goes "beyond its aptness for their/our intellectual project", she continues "we are hooked, we have fallen intellectually in love" (Chodorow 1989, p.8). What Chodorow is saying is that, in our reading and academic application of psychoanalysis, we bring something active and involved but also, as psychoanalysis is often good at showing us, to love something passionately can also bring with it ambivalence.

I became emotionally affected by my chosen subject and I think it is important to recognise the emotional investment in my research. During the research process I became a mother. One cannot help then but to read psychoanalytic writing with a heightened awareness of one's own object relations, and to seek anew much of the works I had read prior to motherhood. This is not to say that I bring something better to my reading and understanding simply by virtue of motherhood, but that I bring something different, something tangible that I did not have before. What is more, during the research and writing period, my academic work and personal life began to merge. It just so happens that my child has a disability. I was to become a subject of my own research. On the one hand, a mother seeking the very services, such as Sure Start, that I am writing about and, on the other, I became someone who needed to apply for financial support through the welfare system in order to help me care for my child. As I wrote about the diminishing provision of welfare and the increased demonisation of those in receipt of benefits, I witnessed at first hand the impact of so-called austerity politics. What began as a thesis examining positive psychology and measuring wellbeing, developed into a broader project to examine the limitations on flourishing. Ian Craib (1989) once wrote that we bring our own internal conflicts and unconscious desires to our theoretical writing; there is a counter transference at work in which we project these feelings onto the work we do. It is perhaps for this reason that the trajectory of this thesis is to find something hopeful amidst the worrying turn against collectivity, dependency and vulnerability. The drive behind my thesis then is perhaps to seek some form of reparation and hope.

PART 2: Case Studies

In the case study part of my thesis I will now bring together some of the salient themes I have been discussing throughout. The purpose is to 'chart the relays of things that block the paths to our flourishing' whilst also trying to 'grasp hold of the things that can potentially lead to a more hopeful future' (Highmore, 2016, p.23). Massey (2012) argues that the financial crash of 2007 sparked more than just a questioning of economic theories. She says that it stimulated questions about something more fundamental: 'it was about a way of being human' (Massey 2012: 70). The conjunctural or interlinking moments that I envisage occurring here are the implementation of Conservative austerity measures combined with placing responsibility for personal wellbeing solely on the individual. This has significantly affected the delivery of welfare services and provoked a widespread debate about what welfare should or could be.

This second part of my thesis is where I seek to engage with social contexts and provide focus points in my analysis of what it means to flourish. Each case study is bounded by an interest in a particular issue, yet the studies are also linked together thematically and to a certain extent, flow one to the other. My case studies are a way of revealing the multi-layered complexity of being able to live a flourishing life.

PART 2–A: Childhood – The Roots of Flourishing

I have argued that there is a place in politics to provide policies which actively contribute to the enhancement of the wellbeing of the population. My case study examines how policy interventions such as the Sure Start initiative had the potential to recognise the significance of early childhood experiences in the laying down of the foundations for future good mental health and wellbeing. The original intention behind the project was to work with parents to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of their children in order that the children may flourish. However, I show Sure Start then became subsumed into the workfare agenda which placed an emphasis on parental employment rather than the emotional wellbeing and development of the child in a facilitating environment.

PART 2–B: Flourishing in an Age of Bewilderment?

I have also looked at how the narratives of resilience and character strengths had permeated government policy, particularly in relation to education. The suggestion here is that

in order to flourish one must learn to withstand or 'bounce back' from the trials and tribulations one may face in life. One's ability to flourish is largely dependent either on good fortune or on how strength of character enables one to compete in the modern enterprise culture. There is little space to acknowledge or even try to address the structural injustices and the endemic nature of poverty and inequality. The purpose of my case studies is to explore ways of thinking, or 'structures of feeling' (Williams 1977) vying to emerge. Examining the quality of social, lived experience in order to obtain a deep understanding of the current conjuncture. Whilst structures of feeling are often experienced as 'solitary' or 'private' (Anderson 2016, p.132), my case studies show that, although individuals have different experiences, there may still be commonalities. Despite the commitment into government policy in the UK from 2010 onwards that the wellbeing of the population should be under the purview of government there has actually been a systematic removal of the containing features of society "the safety provided by 'containment' has been lost, swept away. Nothing can be relied upon in the same way any-more" Brunning and Perini 2010, p.63).

PART 2–A: Childhood – The Roots of Flourishing

Chapter 6: Childhood as the Crucible of Flourishing

"Children are the ways that the world begins again and again"
(Jordan [1977] 2016, p12).

Flourishing is assisted by factors which take place within multiple contexts; social, educational, early care and familial environments. Its complexities as a term are evident when considering how it may be applied to childhood. For example, does it mean that the child is healthy, or achieving academically, are they close to their parents, engaged in their local community, perhaps they excel at sport? (Moore and Lippmann 2005). Keyes (2003) defines flourishing as a state in which an individual feels positive emotion towards life and is functioning well psychologically and socially. Aspects of flourishing in childhood include healthy attachment relationships, curiosity and an interest in learning, expressions of joy and an ability to self-regulate after upset (Lippmann, Moore and McIntosh 2011). Moore et al. (2017) suggest that flourishing or thriving should encompass positive development in physical health, mental and emotional wellbeing, social behaviour, cognitive development and relationships. To understand that the relationship with others is significant in the child's capacity to flourish is my starting point for the consideration of psychoanalysis as an important voice when discussing what it means to flourish; at the heart of this thesis is the idea that flourishing must be considered as a mutual experience. In order to escape the individualised concept of flourishing as deployed in political psychology and beyond, it is necessary to develop a collective, relational, concept of flourishing, in which a collective, community-oriented idea of flourishing can be achieved.

CASE STUDY 1 Sure Start: Can Social Policy Facilitate Flourishing?

I now undertake a case study of the Sure Start programme, an early years policy that was introduced by the New Labour government in the 1990s. It has been described as the "jewel in the crown of public sector services and the glue that holds fragile communities together" (Whalley 2009, p.13). I argue that rather than having to create a new social policy based on a collective view of flourishing, Sure Start already provided a protoype of a social policy which recognised the importance of collectivity. Sure Start remained a touchstone policy for the

Labour Party as can be seen in the manifesto for the 2019 election, in which the party pledged to reverse the cuts to the Sure Start services since 2010 (Labour Party Manifesto 2019).

The purpose of this case study is to show how, if we had a chance to apply a more psychoanalytically informed social justice, we could have what I will call the potential for 'good enough flourishing' which will produce a sense of generativity in two ways; firstly, by enabling the individual to internalise the capacity for generativity. Secondly, a policy dedicated to the flourishing of young people so that they may continue to benefit from all that that brings is in itself a generative social policy, a policy that will continue to have an impact on generations to come.

Sure Start was potentially about an Aristotelian collective flourishing, demonstrating a commitment to societal and individual wellbeing. However, as I will show, the systematic reduction of Sure Start services demonstrates a lack of commitment by successive governments to that aim. The crux of my thesis has been to argue for an understanding of what it means to flourish, taking into account our collectivity and relationality whilst acknowledging experiences of vulnerability and dependence. Recent years have seen a focus on 'wellbeing' in social policy, as I have already discussed. I would argue that it is in this arena of social policy that a more nuanced understanding of human flourishing is necessary because at its heart, is a recognition of our dependency which is profoundly linked to the development of our capacity to care. I have suggested that what is at stake here is the very development of the capacity to care. Psychoanalysis teaches us that relationships are central to human development and growth; problems in the dev fulfilment of relationships can have profound and long-term effects. The vision of flourishingoffered by the theories and therapeutic practices of psychoanalysis is one in which humanity can embrace difference and find common solutions to problems created by modern life: "there is no such thing as man alone" (Schwartz 1999, p.283).

6.1 A Chronicle of Sure Start

In July 1998, the UK New Labour government published Modern Public Services for Britain: Investing in Reform. This was a comprehensive spending review outlining their public spending plans for 1999-2002 (HM Treasury 1998). The review stated that the government would be making the early years a top priority, they wanted to consult with parents to identify local area needs and then work with them to ensure children were confident, healthy and ready to learn once they started school. The review identified the need to fund services for children

in a more coherent way. Funding for children's services was to become a cross-departmental responsibility and subject to significant investment. This commitment to a cross-departmental responsibility for children's services, the review notes, was in order to recognise the complexity of the physical, emotional and developmental needs of the child. The review stated that the government had looked into how early intervention can help young children and prevent problems arising later in life. Early investment in childhood would make a difference to a child's lifetime opportunities and enable children to "realise their potential". The review states that services should be accessible, within "pram pushing distance" and would include childcare, primary health care, early education and play as well as support for families, "the package of services will work with parents to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of the children they serve, so that they are ready to thrive when they reach school". Whilst the word 'flourish' is not used, the word 'thrive' is - as in: thrive, to grow well, vigorously, synonymous with flourish.

Sure Start has been described by the Children and Families Select Committee as one of the most innovative and ambitious initiatives by government in the last two decades (2010), the committee stated that this policy represented a substantial investment that was based on sound evidence and should be allowed to bear fruit over the long term. When Gordon Brown became Chancellor in 1997 he handed over control of interest rates to the Bank of England. The Treasury economists who had previously held responsibility for interest rates were now left without a task, so Brown redeployed them to look at ways to break what has been described as the cycle of deprivation (Melhuish 2010). The Sure Start programme came as a direct result of this initiative. It was a new policy idea whereby early intervention in the life of a child would enable them to 'thrive' and to 'flourish' (Hannon and Fox 2005, p.7). "The aim of Sure Start is to work with parents and children to promote the physical, intellectual, social, emotional development of children - particularly those who are disadvantaged - to make sure they are ready to thrive when they go to school" (Glass 1998, p.258). Sure Start "celebrated young children as the future of communities" and parents were to be valued as "custodians of future generations" (Anning and Ball, 2008, p.41).

The underpinning theoretical model was Bronfenbrenner's 1979, ecological model of child development (cited in Anning and Hall 2008). He argued for the importance of the "recognition that environmental events and conditions outside any immediate setting containing the person can have a profound influence on behaviour and development within that setting" (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p.18). He emphasised the active role people play in shaping their environment: "a growing, dynamic entity that progressively moves into and restructures

the milieu in which it resides" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.21). He believed that the "interaction between a person and an environment is viewed as two dimensional, that it is characterised by reciprocity" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.22). His model viewed the child as being nested in a family which was then nested within a community. He uses the analogy of the Russian doll to describe the place of the child within the layers and structures around them. Bronfenbrenner was a developmental psychologist who worked on the planning of the Head Start (a precursor to the Sure Start initiative) programme in America. He suggested that it was about how the environment is perceived rather than how it objectively exists in reality. His approach to developmental research was not to focus on the child but the people surrounding the child and their reciprocal interactions and to investigate the child's perceptions of their environment rather than make assumptions. There are different levels of environmental influence that affect children's development from immediate family to localised institutions and then wider cultural forces. Bronfenbrenner's approach is important because it acknowledged that parent and child interactions were embedded in a larger social structure formed of community, society, politics and economics. Although Bronfenbenner makes no reference to Winnicott, there are striking similarities to Winnicott's "there is no such thing as the baby" which shows how interconnected the infant is with their external environment offered by their caregivers. Public policy, stated Bronfenbrenner, "has the power to affect the wellbeing and development of human beings by determining the conditions of their lives" (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. xiv). The Sure Start initiative took Bronfenbrenner's holistic approach to raising the life chances of young children as its starting point (Anning and Hall 2008).

From its inception, Sure Start was founded on the understanding that it is communities that should be the target of intervention and not just the child and their family. Each Sure Start initiative was to be area based. There was a breadth of vision: it was to encompass health, education, social welfare and community development and was a policy announcement that made researchers and practitioners "sit up and take notice" (Hannon and Fox 2005, p.3). By mid 2004 there were 524 Sure Start programmes rolled out in the UK and this had exceeded the original target set from the outset. Sure Start services were given a high degree of autonomy with an expectation that service development would be based on the needs of the particular community. However, there were four main objectives shared by all Sure Start programmes: improving social and emotional development; improving health; improving children's ability to learn; and strengthening families and communities. Each service was tasked with the provision of core services of outreach and home visiting to families, offering support where needed, the provision of learning and play experiences, access to health care advice and

support, and support for families with children who have additional needs. Importantly, Sure Start would be available to all families with young children rather than targeting those deemed to be in need, thereby being as inclusive as possible (Sylva et al. 2015). Prior to 1997 providers of early years care received little funding and very little attention as most of the focus from government was on the school system. Sure Start's value was its recognition of the demands placed on parents, and mothers in particular, to provide a facilitating environment, offering an extension of the home environment as a place in which the child can play, explore and develop.

Sure Start Local Programmes were structured around an ethics of care approach combined with a community empowerment approach which highlights the importance of individuals pursuing deferent routes to empowerment. Such an approach intends to foster diversity, community links, solidarity and a sense of belonging (Williams 2004, 2008). When of high quality, programmes such as Sure Start can have significant positive effects on a child's social-emotional development (Ayoube and Swartz 2014). The Sure Start policy was based on an understanding of the vital importance of establishing a stabilising, harmonious and facilitating environment for the benefit of future long term good mental health for all. Williams (2008) notes, that this ethic creates a tension with policies in education and social security when they are informed by a social investment model. The social investment model considers education and employment to be the most important buffers against poverty. Successful Sure Start Local Programmes "framed their ethos in broader terms where education and skills enhanced emotional, physical, creative and democratic capabilities" (Williams 2008, p.61). This was important, Williams argues, because it embodied a universal approach to enhance the happiness, wellbeing and futures of children. However, as I go on to discuss, these tensions between the desire to enable children to thrive in a facilitating environment and the investment model which focused on education and future employment would have a profound impact on what was to become of the Sure Start initiative in the long term.

6.2 The Trajectory of Sure Start

Rather than a novelty or "headline grabbing" policy announcement, Sure Start policy offered something more substantial and sustained (Hannon and Fox 2005, p.7). The implementation of the Sure Start policy was initially strongly supported by government and was very much seen as a plan for the long term. The initiative had its precursor in the Head Start programme established in America in 1965 but was the first implementation of UK government policy to make a sustained effort to focus on pre-school children. It was born of a

recognition that the early years in life are very significant for child development and the vulnerability to negative environmental influence. Although this had been recognised for decades by psychoanalysts, psychologists and those working in education, it was the first time that economists had taken an interest (Welshman 2010). The ambition for Sure Start was for long term social change, evidence of this would be improvements to children's wellbeing and the family's quality of life.

The local programmes established initially varied according to the needs of the community but they were essentially a range of integrated services formed of early education, childcare, health and family support. The local programmes were run by partnerships between voluntary organisations, health, and social services which meant cutting across old professional and agency boundaries. By 2003, the New Labour government decided to develop a national programme to offer a universal, mainstream service for children under 5 and their families (HM Treasury 2004). The aim was to open a total of 3,500 centres by 2010. Sure Start began as a joint project for the Department of Education and the Department of Health which reflected its holistic approach to child development. By 2005 however, Sure Start centres were to be redefined as Children's Centres. Although the original concept for Sure Start had been about nurture, Eisenstadt (2011) identifies the complexity in defining what Sure Start was because, depending on who was the minister in charge or what government department was wanting input at any given time, the emphasis on the perceived role of Sure Start was liable to change. Thus, whilst for some the purpose was education, for others it was health and social care and for others it was employability, whilst others still thought the emphasis should be on community development. According to Einsenstadt, there were differing views held by staff; some centres embraced the opportunity to assist people into employment whilst many others thought the focus should be about improving the health and wellbeing of the children and families that use their services.

Government initiatives and policies such as Sure Start positioned children at the forefront of the social investment state. This represents a future oriented mode of citizenship (Lister 2006), with a focus on paid work as the ultimate achievement. A future oriented social investment state, in which the children are the workforce to be, signified a shift away from Labour's social democratic concern with equality into an emphasis on equality of life chances and lifelong opportunity (Lister 2006). Childcare and education policies under New Labour very much typified the social investment state (Giddens 1998, p.117) as an alternative to the traditional welfare state. The 2004 review of Sure Start (HM Treasury) saw a subtle shift in emphasis, away from providing every child with an opportunity for the best start in life and

onto the provision of good quality childcare and early education which would enable parents to work or seek employment (Welshman 2010). Sure Start had a new "target" to help with the reduction of the number of children living in households where no one is working. Cross-departmental responsibility between the Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Work and Pensions "reflects the cross-cutting role that Sure Start plays in child development and helping parents into work" and reflects the role the initiative has in "welfare to work" (HM Treasury 2004). With the shift in emphasis to the employability agenda, Sure Start became rebranded as Children's Centres and was subsumed into the Department for Work and Pensions. So Sure Start became an element of the government's welfare to work agenda which I have discussed previously.

The move of responsibility for Sure Start away from the Department of Health demonstrated a clear shift in emphasis and purpose to the initiative. "Captured by the employability agenda" (Eisenstadt 2011, p. 46), no longer was there a concerted focus on child development, the emphasis now was on childcare. The ambitious Sure Start project, rather than being developed and embraced, had been co-opted into the workfare agenda. It is the founder of the early Sure Start initiative who, perhaps, had the greatest concern for the direction of Sure Start. Norman Glass was one of the economists redeployed to examine the cycle of deprivation. He became concerned that what was once a programme with a child-centred focus was in danger of turning into a "New Deal for toddlers" captured by the "employability agenda" (Glass 2005). He feared that Sure Start had become the victim of underfunding and over-rapid expansion, with the result that it had "drifted off into being a pious wish at best and a brand name at worst"; a process that had transformed one of the government's most popular achievements into a focus of "recriminations and regrets" (Glass 2007, p.2).

The late Tessa Jowell, former minister in the Labour government, had been extremely instrumental in bringing the Sure Start policy to fruition. She was deeply concerned however, by her own government's move to make Sure Start more about childcare and the employability of parents. She said

> "Nobody got the bull's eye that Sure Start was originally intended to be about nurture. Because the focus moved from babies to 2-5 year olds it became childcare and education. And then the best way to deal with poverty of these mums was to get them out to work. Bingo! You have completely recast it from this very precious early concept of nurture to an arm of the welfare-to-work strategies" (Jowell interviewed by Eisenstadt 2011, p.50).

The social investment state views children as 'becomings' rather than 'beings' (Lister 2006, p.1) children represent citizen workers of the future. In a trend that began under New Labour, it is good parenting that has become a site for social renewal (Jensen and Tyler 2012, Dermott 2012). There is an emotional complexity at the heart of the Sure Start idea. Women are increasingly constituted as first and foremost workers rather than mothers. Whilst the experience of being in paid work is a common one for many women, Rachel Thomson (2011) in *Making Motherhood Work* finds that this can also be deeply divisive. Some experience being in work as part of a self-actualising career trajectory, whilst others are caught in the precarity of the low-pay, no-pay cycle. Woman are disproportionately making up what Standing (2011) calls 'the precariat', or class of people existing without a sense of security and predictability. With the emergence of austerity politics in the UK since 2010, it is parents too that must become 'austere' with good parenting seen as the solution to the social impact of the reduction of the welfare state (Jensen and Tyler 2012). This precarity is particularly prevalent in women's working lives; as Power (2009) identifies, there has been a proliferation of job agencies specifically aimed at women, agencies with "pink tinged logos" and "girly names" (p.19).

Women, particularly young women, found themselves at the forefront of the welfare to workfare agenda argues (McRobbie 2008). Mothers, in particular, are placed in the double bind of responsibility to work for the sake of their own wellbeing and flourishing and yet carry the burden of creating the responsible citizens of the future, with paid work seen as the primary obligation of citizenship. If women were once central to the purposes of the welfare state (Wilson 1977) now they are central to the precarious nature of the workfare state.

6.3 Closure of Sure Start Centres

Evaluation reports showed the benefits of Sure Start in terms of increased engagement with services, enhanced developmentally facilitative parenting, and increasingly socially competent children (House of Commons 2010). Since 2010, with the onset of austerity under the Coalition Government and subsequent Conservative government, despite the benefits being shown, Sure Start Children's Centres have increasingly faced cuts, not just in funding and services, but the closure of centres altogether. Prime Minister at the time, David Cameron even received opposition from his own mother because of the proposed cuts to the children's centre in her local area of Oxfordshire where she worked as a volunteer (Anon *The Guardian* 2016, Johnston 2016). The most significant changes to Sure Start since 2010 have been in terms of funding. In 2011 the Coalition government removed the ring fencing from Sure Start funding.

They introduced an Early Intervention Grant scheme which soon merged with what they called the Business Rates Retention Scheme (the amount of money local authorities can retain from their collection of local business rates). They also introduced new "core purposes" (DofE 2013) which focused on 'outcomes' for children based on "evidence-based interventions." In 2015 Lord Nash, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of state for schools responded to a question in the House of Commons about what the government was doing to prevent the closure of Sure Start centres. His response:

> "It is up to local authorities to decide how to organise and commission services from children's centres in their areas. They are best placed to understand local needs and the different ways they can be supported locally. Local authorities must demonstrate that they have devised ways to ensure that services continue" (PQ HL275, 10 June 2015).

Local government spending fell significantly since 2010, particularly in deprived areas. The scale and the intensity of the cuts have been unprecedented; despite increased demand for services, local authorities are expected to do far more but with less. Central government funding for local government fell by nearly 50% between 2010/11 and 2017/18 and is predicted to fall by over 56% by 2019/20 (Women's Budget Group, 2019).

As the Prime Minister of the day David Cameron announced the Life Chances Strategy (Cameron 2016) which was to feature an expansion of parenting provision and the introduction of vouchers to pay for parenting classes. He stated his commitment to the free market: "by far the best tool ever invented for generating prosperity and improving living standards". Despite improvements to society and the economy through free markets, however, "some people get left behind" because "they haven't been equipped to make the most of the opportunities presented to them". In Cameron's view, the solution to defeating poverty was by managing the economy responsibly. Yet for him, it was the family that must be the primary focus for governments, states: "strengthening families is at the heart of our agenda". In this speech Cameron spoke about the significance of a child's early years "destinies can be altered for good or ill in this window of opportunity". He states, "I believe if we are going to extend life chances in our country it is time to begin talking properly about parenting and babies and reinforcing what a huge choice having a child is in the first place, as well as what a big responsibility parents face in getting these early years right". As a result of the referendum for Britain to leave the EU, the Life Chances Strategy was "shelved" (Puffett 2016). The Conservative Party

election manifesto of 2017 made no mention of the proposed review, or of Sure Start (The Conservative Party 2017). At the time of writing, 631 of the 3,000 centres have been lost.

The responsibility for the wellbeing of children in the early years has been placed in the hands of local government with central government seemingly taking an arms-length approach. The ideological structures behind poverty reduction have been played out through the ways in which children's services have been viewed under New Labour and then under the Coalition government. New Labour's state interventionist approach was to focus on people working their way out of poverty yet with state help through public services. Free market ideology eschews the state, it is only through wealth creation that poverty will be eradicated. In the section that follows I want to draw on my own personal experience of being a user of Sure Start services which came under the threat of closure.

6.4 The Current Fate of Sure Start

Extract from my personal journal (February 2018):

> *Children and adults alike hold their teddy bears aloft behind a phalanx of banners with the words 'Children's Centres are a bear necessity'. The press are here and photos are taken. A few of us are interviewed for local radio and television. Cuts in children's services are really starting to bite now in West Somerset. A few days later I get a phone call from a support services professional. This person is involved with my family and I know from what they are saying that there would be repercussions for them if I were to divulge what they were telling me and to name them. She admits that her promise to engage as soon as possible on an issue for our family will now be subject to delay. The local authority has informed this team that there is to be a review of their service; reading between the lines, my caller is implying that this basically means job cuts and a reduction in services. The local authority has informed their staff that the internal consultation process about how they deliver services must be at the top of the agenda for all staff members, over and above any current case load they may have. My caller tells me that this is at present confidential but they feel that it is unethical not to be telling the families involved about changes that will affect them. 'The consultation takes precedence' they explain.*

I visited our local Children's Centre more than once a week. It had been a beacon in an impoverished rural community, a centre that had been hard fought for by its advocates in the area. The building represents such possibility and hope, there are signs of the desire to look holistically at the health, education and wellbeing of young children. For example, there is a medical room, dentists' room, room for counselling, rooms for play, courses, education and even a well-equipped kitchen, resources to work with the whole child and family in terms of health, early learning, emotional support. But the service has been cut to the bone, with many of the group sessions gone and the dentist and medical rooms are unused. A thriving but privately run nursery attached to this children's centre brings an aliveness to the building that would otherwise on many occasions just be closed and potentially at risk of permanent closure. Many of the sessions offered to families, such as a stay and play session which provided time for the children to play and an opportunity for parents, mostly mothers, to socialise, have disappeared. The expectation was that parents themselves would offer to run the sessions. There are some wonderful play group sessions provided, in other venues, by volunteers from the local churches. These fill a much-needed gap in the opportunities offered for pre-school children and their care givers, however, they miss out on the additional support that had been available under Sure Start from experienced, trained and qualified staff. The very essence of being able to see the child in a setting that encompassed health and social care has gone.

In 2017, Somerset County Council initiated a consultation process to discuss the future of their children's centres. Despite significant opposition from the public who were concerned about a reduction in service, the council proposed that they would de-designate as Sure Start 16 of their 24 children's centres. The eight remaining centres would become something they termed family centres, a kind of hub for accessing a range of children's services. The implication of de-designating a service from one titled 'Sure Start' is that the centre no longer has to provide detailed records or detailed improvement plans. It has no longer to meet the statutory requirements of a Sure Start centre. In other words, this is a method by which children's centres cease to exist. What has to be taken into account here is that the proposed de-designation of a centre like the one I am writing about in Minehead, West Somerset, means that parents and carers will be required to travel nearly ten miles in order to access a family centre or hub. With ever diminishing bus links and no rail service this really is way beyond the original aim of having a children's centre just a pram push away. From a personal point of view I felt a deep sense of hopelessness, a sadness that the campaign had failed. I was also deeply troubled by the fact that although many in the wider community had joined the campaign, very few of the existing service users had added their voice to calls to keep the centre open. I had a

real sense of frustration about what seemed to me to be apathy. In reality though, this disengagement was perhaps symptomatic of the sense of inevitability, the acceptance that there is no hope and therefore no need to intervene to prevent injustice so characteristic of the current conjuncture (Fisher 2009).

6.5 Social Mobility, Social Injustice: Why Sure Start Was Needed in West Somerset

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission published its social mobility index in 2016. The report's aim was to set out the differences between where children grow up and the chances they have of doing well in adult life. The report identified West Somerset as the worst performing area for social mobility. This means that the children raised in this area are significantly disadvantaged in terms of achieving good educational outcomes in school and are likely to do less well in adulthood than those in the rest of the country. The publication of this report drew some media attention to West Somerset, a rare occurrence for this largely rural area, not known for drawing attention to itself. Steven Morris (2017) writing for *The Guardian* observes the 'picturesque' town of Minehead where the 'lovely views disguise the lack of opportunities in coastal towns (like this), where many teenagers feel stuck without any prospects for change'. Despite the flagging up of the issues faced by the young people of West Somerset, austerity measures continued to impact on this community. The local college, which once offered agricultural courses on its own farm unit, a hair and beauty salon, and its own children's nursery, all providing much needed vocational training, soon transferred these courses to the town of Bridgwater nearly 30 miles away. The local authority also continued to press on with the proposals to streamline (reduce) children's centre services. With a genuine concern for the wellbeing of West Somerset children many volunteers, including myself stepped in to fill the gaping hole left when services began to close. Many of us continued to challenge the local authority about their proposals with a campaign of letter writing, meeting the local MP, protests, petitions and speaking at County Council meetings. An article by Jayanetti and Savage (2018) for *The Observer* included a short interview with me. They had been made aware of a radio interview I had given to the local BBC station, in which I had tried to highlight the issues faced in West Somerset and the consequences that were likely to arise if a key children's centre was lost. I used this opportunity to explain that parents and carers like myself were, all too often, having to step in and provide support and services as council services dwindled.

The Sutton Trust, a foundation that seeks to improve social mobility throughout the UK through evidence-based programmes and policy advocacy, conducted a report into the effects that service cuts were having on the Sure Start programme. They described a service that had been "hollowed out - much more thinly spread". They concluded that service reductions had been far greater than had been expected. The report concluded that the dramatic changes to Sure Start since its inception had "taken it a long way from what began as a flagship national programme" (Smith, Sylva, Sammons, Smith and Omonigho 2018, p.5). By June 2015, the idea that children's services should be a government cross-departmental responsibility had been completely eradicated. In a response to a parliamentary question asking what the government was doing to prevent the closure of Sure Start centres, Lord Nash the parliamentary under Secretary of State for schools responded "it is up to local authorities to organise and commission services from children's centres in their area" (House of Commons briefing paper, 2017).

In 2007, UNICEF produced its first ever report card examining the 21 wealthiest countries in relation to childhood wellbeing. The UK was placed at the bottom of that table. The follow up report of 2013 (which saw an increase in countries examined from 21 to 29) showed that whilst the UK had moved up the table it was still only ranked at 16th. In 2006 The Children's Society commissioned an inquiry to evaluate the state of childhood in Britain. This inquiry identified excessive individualism, accompanied by a reduced sense of belonging and connection to one's community, an excess of educational competitiveness, income inequality and premature sexualisation as fundamental factors in the lack of childhood wellbeing. A key recommendation from that report was that governments should put the wellbeing of children at the heart of public policy. All policy areas should be viewed through the prism of childhood wellbeing. By 2017 however, in The Good Childhood Report (2017) there was evidence to show that the impact of government cuts was having a serious effect on childhood wellbeing. Many children in the UK were found to be facing multiple disadvantages, from neglect, abuse, crime, family breakdown, poverty. The report indicated that the government and local authorities were not providing adequate funding to address the scale of demand on children's services.

6.6 Problematising Sure Start

Perhaps with his tongue in his cheek, Norman Glass described the early Sure Start programme as anarcho-syndicalist. This is significant, in my view, as to why Sure Start was so

revolutionary but also why, under current neoliberal conditions, it was always destined to be allowed to fail. The importance of the early Sure Start programmes was, according to Glass, that they were embedded in the very local community which they served. In order for them to take root they had to involve local people fully in their design, development, implementation and management. What they could not be were quick fixes, imposed from without by "middle class social engineers" (Glass 2005). A 2008 study of Sure Start showed where there had been barriers to greater service user involvement (Pemberton and Mason 2009) Notably, lack of time to build trust, implement ideas and lack of awareness about opportunities to participate were significant factors. In addition, the economic/education agenda which had become increasingly prevalent, had a detrimental effect on user motivation to become involved in shaping the services. Public investment programmes such as Sure Start are considered on the basis of the expectation of a calculable return and the delivery of certain outcomes. They simply become services offering a technical solution to the damages caused by a free market economy. The interventions offered are a form of social engineering to enable the modern nation state to compete in an enterprise economy (Moss and Petrie 2002).

I would suggest that Sure Start had the potential to be an excellent example of the welfare society in action. The welfare society, as opposed to the welfare state suggests that the state provides the overarching fiscal and social policy, but the actual model of welfare that is used gives primacy to the organisations and networks of civil society (Hoggett 2000). Sure Start was found to generate new networks of mutual support for parents and family members (NESS 2001, Tunstill et al. 2004). A report for the National Evaluation of Sure Start (Williams and Churchill, 2006) found substantial evidence that parents felt more empowered through engaging with Sure Start services. This sense of empowerment was felt both at an individual level and as a collective. The report indicated that empowerment experienced at a community level meant developing a positive community identity, gaining a voice, having a say and even taking action to improve and support the local community. For this sense of community empowerment to function, the ethos of the local Sure Start had to connect to the local context, tailored knowledgeably and sensitively to the community's needs. To return to the work of Shah and Marks (2004) as discussed in the literature review, their manifesto for wellbeing emphasised the importance of a social dimension to wellbeing. A vital component of wellbeing or flourishing is a sense of belonging to a community. An entity like Sure Start had the scope to be a collective space where the community could experience a sense of inclusion, a sense of ownership of a community resource.

There was a tension between the rhetoric of local empowerment and the realities of central government control. The aim was to reshape services making them more responsive to local demographics (Anning and Hall 2008). As I have already noted, Sure Start was originally intended to be a service for all families and not just for those deemed to be most in need, thereby ensuring that the service was as inclusive as possible. It was based on the principle of universalism, from each according to ability, to each according to need, albeit a New Labour version, progressive universalism, which specifies support for all, but more support for those who need it most (HM Treasury and Department for Education and Skills 2005). To target services for those only deemed to be in the most need was to lose even the idea of progressive universalism, where social inclusion is viewed in terms of solidarity. To view society in terms of solidarity is to understand that most people are part of complex social relationships based on families, communities, work, education and so on, often intertwined with government provision; such networks are based on mutual responsibility and support. How a society understands children and childhood, and how public provision for them is constructed, involves political and ethical choices. Different ways of thinking about children produce different services for children and different kinds of childhood (Moss and Petrie 2002).

The emergent community based, bottom up collectivity of Sure Start, as we have seen, was short lived. Gilbert (2013) has argued that it is very difficult under current neoliberal conditions for people to imagine belonging to an effective group that is non-vertical in form. Non-vertical groupings, he says, are viewed as pathological collectivity. I would argue that this is why it is so hard to envisage or sustain a community-based vision for the development of a capacity to care which would allow for a relational wellbeing. There was a moment of potential that could not be sustained, a narcissistic deadness in thinking, an inability to look forward which means that we struggle to give birth to new ideas. I have argued that there has been a worrying reduction in the capacity to care. This will have a profound effect on fundamental social relations with an impact that will be felt globally. A pathological form of narcissism is being perpetuated in which our capacity to show concern for others is negated. In the reformulation of welfare it has become a form of common sense that to fare well, one must take full responsibility for one's own wellbeing. The primary method by which that is achieved is understood to be through paid employment. The understanding of welfare pertaining to human flourishing and wellbeing has been lost. Neoliberalism normalises a "growth first" approach whereby social welfare concerns can only be addressed after growth in the economy and when jobs and investment have been secured (Peck and Tickell 2012 p.384)

How a society understands children and childhood, and how public provision for them is constructed, involves political and ethical choices. Different ways of thinking about children produce different services for children and different kinds of childhood (Moss and Petrie 2002). Privileging a particular perspective means that early childhood becomes inscribed with particular assumptions. These assumptions are about a society based on the desire for certainty, mastery and universality. The purpose then of childhood education is to ensue social regulation and economic success. The young child is "construed as a redemptive agent who can be programmed to become the future solution to our current problems" (Dahlberg and Moss 2005, p.vii)

Under current social conditions in the UK it would be difficult to extricate the link between child care and the maternal. This is significant because it is arguably one of the primary reasons why the Sure Start initiative has not become the cornerstone of social policy on welfare that it could have been. The policy offered an all too feminine understanding of the need for unconditional care for both child and care giver. As well as a recognition of our vulnerability there was also a hopefulness about offering all children a firm basis for emotional health and a capacity for growth and development. However, the dominant new paternalist narrative emerges from a political rhetoric which began in the Thatcher/Reagan era in which a set of dichotomies was constructed, placing the welfare state, socialism, femininity and dependence in opposition to a privileged notion of free market, laissez faire values, austerity, masculinity and independence (Hall 1998). As I noted previously, emotional realities are routinely sanitised from the policy making process and the subjects of policy making decisions are denied true recognition (Simmonds 2008, Cooper 2009). Sure Start could only be viewed through the lens of the neoliberal construct of the entrepreneurial self, with paid work being the only valued role worthy of human endeavour.

There have been recent calls for the return of Sure Start Policy, notably in the Labour Party manifesto for the 2019 election. The party not only pledged to reverse the cuts to Sure Start made since 2010, but they also proposed Sure Start Plus. The ambition was to create a universal service available to all communities with a particular emphasis on early years provision (Labour Party 2019). Thus, I would agree that there is still potential for Sure Start to be revived as a social policy, albeit by staying true to the original focus on child development and the facilitating environment, and in doing so it would show a government's real commitment to enabling its citizens to flourish.

6.7 How Could a Psychoanalytic Approach to Human Flourishing Work in Practice? The potential of Sure Start as a Facilitating Environment

As outlined in the literature review, Iris Marion Young's (2011) 'social connection' model accepts the world as interconnected. As such, she argues that there is a shared responsibility by citizens and institutions to rectify social injustice. Her model reaches beyond the post-Rawlsian focus on individual responsibility. Rather than a moral responsibility, Young's model generates a political responsibility when she writes, "what I mean by 'politics' here is public communicative engagement with others for the sake of organising our relationships and co-ordinating our actions most justly" (Young, 2011, p.12). Rustin (2015) argues that a psychoanalytically informed perspective means that a significant measure of value, and indeed of the wellbeing of a society, should lie in the qualities of relationships which are available to individuals at each stage of their life course. The journey from dependence to independence is one in which the individual and the environment become interdependent; the arrival of independence, Winnicott reminds us, comes with a "built-in social sense" (Winnicott (1963) [2007], p.84). He makes clear that the value of this understanding of the profound link between the individual and the environment allows for the simultaneous study and discussion of both the personal and the environmental (the psychosocial if you will). What is key here about Winnicott's assertion is that the full maturity of an individual is not possible in an "immature or ill social setting" (Winnicott [2007] (1963), p.84).

In the literature review I referred to the work of Hetan Shah and Nick Marks from the New Economics Foundation. In their *Manifesto for Wellbeing* (2004) they argued that there should be a refocus of attention away from the idea that increasing economic growth is the only way to enhance a population's wellbeing. Their definition of wellbeing incorporates two personal dimensions, life satisfaction and personal development as indicators of wellbeing. Their manifesto also includes a social dimension to their definition. Here, wellbeing is evaluated according to how one feels about having a sense of belonging to a community and also to what extent one is able to feel positive towards others and feel able to contribute in a pro-social positive way to society. Shah and Marks express concern that a society devoted solely to increasing living standards will be to the detriment of fostering and building relationships and that this reductionist approach has very negative implications for wellbeing.

6.8 Flourishing as a Mutual Experience

Shah and Marks's definition of wellbeing is useful because it encompasses a broader understanding where individual wellbeing is given parity with community wellbeing. They argue that a key aim for government should be to provide a flourishing society. To achieve this goal, Shah and Marks offer a number of ways in which politics could work to actively promote wellbeing. Importantly for this thesis is that one area that governments should invest in, is the early childhood years. Reading Shah and Marks's definition of flourishing and their highlighting of the importance of social policy and investment for the early years struck a chord with me as a researcher with an interest in psychoanalysis, notably object relational psychoanalysis. I would argue that psychoanalysis has much to contribute towards an understanding of both individual and societal flourishing, particularly, in terms of evidence-based social policy making and practice for early years health, care, support and education. The establishment of an early, stabilising, harmonious and facilitating environment can have long term positive implications for good mental health and wellbeing (Alizade 2010). The basis for mental health is being actively laid down in infancy but the healthy individual is made up of a complexity of "fears, conflicted feelings, doubts, frustrations, as much as by the positive features" (Winnicott [1976] 1986, p,27).

This case study makes a timely call for the recognition of flourishing as a mutual experience. I have also argued that the Sure Start initiative had the potential to learn a great deal from psychoanalysis. The origins of Sure Start from Bronfenbrenners work (1979) bears a remarkable similarity in tone to the object relational theories of Winnicott. Object relations theory recognises the continuous oscillations between the inner and the outer world and brings together the individual and society; in doing so it has "transcended the crippling antithesis of individual and social" (Rustin 1991, p.15). British psychoanalysts in post war Britain, such as Donald Winnicott and Marion Milner, had hands-on experience of working in hospital and child guidance settings and actively saw themselves working to rebuild an inclusive society where the best care, education and support would be available to all (Pajaczkowska 2007). The early welfare state was formed around the idea that we are all interdependent and consequently must share responsibility for one another. The conceptualisation of welfare was seen as having the ethical end of optimising human creativity and eliminating extremes of inequality; the role of welfare in this context was understood in terms of human flourishing and wellbeing (Freeden 1999).

Winnicott was devoted to promoting the importance of environmental provision for healthy growth and development. Through examples of his clinical work, he was able to discuss the impacts on children and further on into adulthood when failings in their environment had occurred. The implication of psychoanalytic theories such as Winnicott's, therefore, is that there is a social responsibility to provide the conditions for optimal psychic development (Peltz 2007). The significance of a facilitating environment - as modelled on the first relationship with the mother? is that it can provide the conditions for the child's emergent, spontaneous and creative expression in conjunction with a developing moral sense based on the capacity for concern. The encouragement of reparative and constructive activity will have long term benefits not only for the child but as a contribution to wider humanity.

Winnicott suggests nursery is an extension upwards of the family rather than downwards from the primary school:

> "in nursery school education provision is made for that which is intermediate between the dream and the real; notably play is respected in a positive way, and stories and drawings and music are employed. It is especially in this field that the nursery school can give enrichment and can help the child to find a working relationship between ideas that are free and behaviour that needs to become group related" (Winnicott 1964, p.193).

Crucially, this forms the very basis of the present and future wellbeing of the child and, of equal significance, as a co-created transformational experience a connecting and caring relationship is likely to have a benefit to care givers' wellbeing (Alcock 2013). As the child moves beyond the (m)other child dyad and into the social setting such as nursery or playgroup a more complex relational system develops (Alcock 2013). Here young children can "live an experience together, in a secure holding environment" (Winnicott 1945, p.141).

Given a good enough holding and enabling environment a dialectical process occurs in which the child and care giver co-create a secure space where the child can simply be. It is in this space that the child can develop towards independence. "There is now the understanding that in infancy and childhood is laid down the basis for mental health, and eventually for maturity in terms of the adult who can identify with society without loss of a sense of self-importance" (Winnicott 1965, p.185). An environment that is not good enough is characterised by a sense of chaos and an ultimate feeling of futility. The person will be unable to deal effectively with the inherent difficulties of life but also and most importantly here, in

accordance with this thesis, the infant does not develop an ability to deal with or enjoy life's satisfactions.

Jensen's (2013) examination of public policy in relation to parenting is valid here as a potential pitfall when emphasising the importance of the good enough environment in the early years. An over emphasis, she warns, on parenting style or lack thereof, may negate the need to look at other factors impacting on the early years of a child's life, most notably the unequal distribution of wealth. One must be wary, when making my line of argument in this thesis regarding the significance of our early relationships between parent/caregiver and child, that we do not, as Jensen (2013) puts it, "fetishise' the first five years of a child's life as a 'make or break period for later successes and failure" (p.2). The notion of good enough parenting, Jensen argues, has become increasingly politicised. Her not insignificant concern is that, in public policy and popular culture debates, the issues around resources, or lack thereof, and economic inequality have been eschewed in favour of "more abstract notions of parental engagement and warmth" (Jensen 2013, p.2). This allows for a political and cultural narrative that ignores the negative impact of the unequal distribution of capital on family life and instead suggests that the lost ability to parent well is to blame. The primary concern recent governments have had about early childhood is that the failure in early years has "profound economic consequences" (Allen 2011). But the so-called failings are largely placed at the parents' door so a proposed solution, for example, would be a national parenting scheme funded by private finance to ensure we produce "socially and emotionally capable people' who are 'more productive better educated, tax paying citizens" (Allen 2011). The idea of the state as a parental figure who can provide a remedy for society's ills through the provision of health, education and welfare services may be an illusion. Rebecca Bramall (2013) examines the conflicted meanings of austerity, from austerity chic to anti-austerity. She suggests that for many on the left who continue to defend the collective settlement, and I recognise my work here is an example of this, an element of 'cruel optimism' exists. There is a failure to recognise, Bramall argues, that the 'good-life' model of the post-war era was a "sacrificial model, in that it expanded a fantasy but demanded instrumental productivity" (Bramall 2013, p.96). I accept that one must recognise our investment in this fantasy and agree that the task is to elaborate alternatives. However, it may be necessary to extract what was considered to be 'good enough' in the post-war settlement in order to provide a foundation for any alternative in the contemporary moment.

Although written about a 1950s childhood, the autobiographical work of Carolyn Steedman (1989) captures the essence of ambivalent and complex feelings toward the welfare

state that I think still holds true today. She recalls a visit from a health visitor who was very critical of Steedman's mother and the conditions in which she was raising her young daughter (p. 2). Steedman recalls that this was a defining moment for her, she vowed that she would never allow someone to talk to her in the way the health visitor had spoken to her mother. Yet Steedman's writing shows too her gratitude for a welfare state's beneficial intervention in her life

> "I think I would be a very different person now if orange juice and milk and dinners at school hadn't told me, in a covert way, that I had a right to exist, was worth something" (Steedman 1982, p. 22).

This can help in an understanding of why some people feel it is necessary to critique the welfare state whilst simultaneously needing support from it. It is also an exemplar of the sense of containment a welfare state can offer.

As mentioned above, Winnicott's point that the nursery should be seen as an extension upwards from the family is of interest. The thought here is of the potential co-created transformational experiences, Alcock (2013) suggests can occur in this setting. I suggest that this is something that can be explored further, I draw on Christopher Bollas's discussions on the transformational object in order to think about what Sure Start represents for some. Indeed, I would consider that perhaps in my defence against the closure of my local centre, I too imbued Sure Start with the qualities of a transformational object. The transformational object, according to Bollas (2011) stems from our early relationship with our care giver, usually the mother. By interacting with the child and helping in their development, the child's internal and external environment is transformed. At a level beyond awareness is a memory of that transformational experience, this lies behind the need for experiences that promise transformation. In adulthood, these experiences could be the quest for a new job, house or partner or the involvement with a political cause, or the following of a religious faith. Bollas notes;

> "the search for a transformational object may generate hope, even a sense of confidence and vision, but although it seems grounded in the future tense, in finding something in the future to transform the present it is object-seeking that recurrently enacts a pre-verbal ego memeory" (Bollas, 2011, p.2)

In my introduction to this case study, I identified Sure Start as a touchstone, or rather a transformational object for the UK Labour Party. There is something about being able to cite Sure Start as a significant achievement of a Labour government which can be seen as a way of generating hope and a sense of confidence and vision. Former care worker and trade union representative, Angela Rayner, became the Labour MP for Ashton-under-Lyne in the 2015 election and was re-elected in 2019. Having left school at 16 to have her first child she was not able at that time to obtain any qualifications. Later in life she returned to college to achieve qualifications in social care. In this extract from her speech during the 2019 election campaign, it is possible to get a sense of Sure Start as a transformational object for the Labour Party; "Investment in the early years can transform the lives of children and their families across the country. Just as the last Labour government transformed mine" (Rayner 2019). Not only is she indicating that the policy had the potential to transform the lives of children and families, she indicates that she herself had experienced transformation as a result of Labour government policies. Writing in *The Guardian* (Rayner 2017) the MP explained how Sure Start had 'changed her life'. She explains that as a young mother she was feeling like a failure, she was sent on a parenting course. She recalled 'I went to my local Sure Start Centre where they put me on a parenting course. I learned things that might seem simple – that it was important to love and hug your child, and to read to them. That might seem obvious, but it wasn't to me at the time. If I hadn't had access to the vital support of my local Sure Start centre, I would never have had the help I - and my son - needed (Rayner 2017).

With the idea in mind that Sure Start has the potential to be a transformational object, I will now consider a potential way Sure Start could be reclaimed, returning it to its ethics of care origins that allow for a better recognition of the structural injustices people may face and how an ethics of care may enable people to make change for the better in terms of individual and community flourishing and wellbeing.

6.9 The Maison Vertes "a place where psychoanalysis is alive'" (Canu 2009, p.153)

There is criticism from some positive psychologists (Seligman 2011) that psychoanalysis only focuses on the problems experienced in life. I want to show how psychoanalytic ideas can be used for the prevention of mental ill health, and promotion of mental health. Here, one can cite Moss and Petrie (2002) who suggest a different possibility for the public provisions for children. Stemming from an ethics of care approach, foregrounding responsibility to and recognition of the other, competence and integrity. They

propose children's spaces rather than children's services. These spaces are for "the childhood children are living in the here and now as well as creating relationships and solidarities between children, between adults and between adults and children" (p.2). To think in terms of children's spaces is to recognise that childhood is lived in a variety of settings not just a family unit. These spaces allow for children and parents to be understood as members of a community that they receive support from yet also contribute to, rather than just seen as consumers of a service. In these spaces the focus of concern becomes the child in the here and now and not just with what that child will become. This would demonstrate how important the quality of children's lives is in the present and not just what their futures will hold. Children are seen as co-constructors of knowledge. A society should not just be looking at how children go on to flourish as adults, but how they can flourish as children in the present.

Moss and Petrie do not discuss their idea of children's spaces from a psychoanalytic point of view, however, I think psychoanalysis has something useful to say about how these spaces might be facilitated. Psychoanalysis offers a theory of mental development which combines psychoanalytic theory with infant and child observations in naturalistic settings, and a recognition of the long-term benefits of early clinical intervention (Rustin and Emanuel 2010). Without the work of psychoanalytically oriented clinics such as the Tavistock in London, we may not have had such a ready acceptance of the need for secure and loving early relationships. Work undertaken in places like this will have been a direct precursor to the establishing of projects such as Sure Start. Whilst not wanting to detract in any way from the importance of the work done by those at the Tavistock clinic, I note that by its nature, this work will be reserved for those children and families who are already requiring support rather than a social project to offer a service which provides the insights of psychoanalysis to all. However, the work at the Tavistock can inform the work of people involved with children in a broader range of settings. As Margaret Rustin notes, when there is an emphasis on the value of the early relationship between the caregiver and baby, it is helpful to also think about the importance of a practical and psychological containment that a service can provide. People involved in working with the early years can draw on the expertise based on the psychoanalytic understanding of the anxieties that all babies face as they grow up. She writes; "those who work with the under-fives have the great good fortune that young children are often very good at making things clear if we look and listen closely enough" (Rustin 2017, p.160). The skills that can be gleaned from work such as that undertaken at the Tavistock therefore are those of observation and thinking about young children's play.

An example of psychoanalysis in action in this form of social project can be seen in the Maison Vertes created by Françoise Dolto in France in 1979. Although acclaimed around the world she is little known in the UK (Hall 2009). In addition to being curative, psychoanalysis, according to Dolto's work, could be a means of enlightening educational theory and help make children's affective development easier (Dollander and deTychey 2004). Like Winnicott, Dolto was also a paediatrician as well as a psychoanalyst and she too was very well known in France for her broadcasts on parenting. The idea of the Maison Vertes was that they would be places where parents and children could come together, enabling the child to play freely whilst both parent and child had a break from the home environment and from being alone together. They were neither day care, nor a play groups and they were not clinics either. They were places for parents and children to come and meet friends, offering a stable and safe social environment for exploring with others the rules and enjoyment of joining in with society and of social engagement. The space provided is welcoming, non-structured and non-bureaucratic (Paglia 2016). They were run by multi-disciplinary teams, for example social workers and psychoanalysts, who were there to facilitate, rather than prescribe a set regimen of activity. Since the first one in France there are now Maison Vertes across France, Europe and Latin America and one in the UK (Paglia 2016). The aim was prevention rather than cure. The importance of Dolto's psychoanalytic ideas are that they emphasised that, from birth, the child should be recognised as a person (Hall, Hivernel and Morgan 2009). When Dolto wrote about her motivation to work with children she explained:

> "And I used to wonder, having once been small and having grown up, how people could be so strange since they had been children. And I said to myself; 'when I am big, I'll try to remember what it's like to be small" (Dolto 1966, p.43).

Why am I drawn to the concept of the Maison Vertes? Because, as Bunyard (2013) points out, they were informal sites of psychoanalytic intervention but, more important than that, they can be likened to "collective environment – a dynamic social and physical structure – designed to provide successive transitional encounters – a safe preparation for the child to experience the subsequent parting and independence that was inevitable to his lot" (p.84). This was not to teach a child about separation, it was for the child to learn that they always had the (m)other with them, inside them (Canu 2009). What Dolto provided was something Freud had not, "a public demonstration of the cultural need for psychoanalytic understanding to inform

cultural life, particularly in relation to early childhood" (Bunyard 2013, p.85). The parent and child "discover their reality much more easily through sharing time in social space with others, who are similar but different to them" (Canu 2009, p.6).

6.10 Generativity and Flourishing

As I discussed in my literature review, in order to flourish one must be generative, a life lived to the fullest, with robust emotional engagement, showing wholehearted care and concern not only for the self and loved ones but for the wider community (Snow 2015). Generativity is an other- regarding desire that expresses a commitment to future generations, it is about investing something good that will outlive the self. A flourishing person experiences psychological wellbeing, a generative person in addition to this sense of wellbeing sees something in themselves that is worth handing on to future generations. Bollas argues that each generation has its own collective 'generational consciousness'. The latter refers to the way in which a generation can objectify its place in historical time and mark its particular contribution to social culture (Bollas 1992). Each generation selects objects, persons and events which provide meaning to the identity of that generation; this is generationally defining. Generations also have the capacity to pass on important objects which may have a significant effect for future generations. I would argue that social policy can have the capacity to be a symbolic gift to the next generation. In 1998, Sure Start had the opportunity to be such a policy. It was rich with potential but was hindered from the beginning by an inability for new ideas to be contained by a traumatogenic, market driven society that can only understand new ideas through the lens of neoliberalism.

The intention is to help all children to flourish but also to have the capacity to care for others and, in doing so, to acknowledge the unfairness and inequality faced by many and thus to feel angered by this and to want to challenge it rather than to be subsumed by it. Sure Start, arguably had the potential to be such a facilitating environment had it been allowed to thrive. A generative ethic of care first considers the effects on and for the next generation. The Sure Start policy not only represented a generative policy in that it is a social policy gift from one generation to another, it also provided the basis in early childhood for future generativity itself.

PART 2-B: Flourishing in an Age of Bewilderment?

The following three case studies are separate but intrinsically linked, I have interviewed people who find themselves at the sharp end of the current conjuncture. A conjuncture characterised by inequality, austerity and the diminishing welfare state. In these circumstances, negative representations of poverty become politically expedient. The personal stories I convey here are often ones of survival through times of abject despair. The stories also demonstrate powerlessness to flourish in terms of the neoliberal model, which emphasises taking responsibility for oneself; thriving in adversity and in the absence of a more relational psychoanalytic understanding with an emphasis on the need for a containing environment conducive to emotional and psychic growth. My interviewees start with a blogger and campaigner who has direct experience of the workfare programme in the UK. His story is one of being brought to utter despair whilst finding himself needing to claim Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and subsequently finding his voice and using social media to tell his story and that of others facing the often harsh realities of the UK welfare system. I then spoke with a work coach who has had over 40 years' experience of working in a job centre. In his interview he is able to talk about what it is like on the other side of the desk when he is responsible for administering government policy on the front line.

My focus then turns to an exploration of what has been dubbed 'poverty-porn' television, a genre that has allowed for the sustaining of a narrative which divides the so-called deserving and un-deserving poor. This has proved useful in generating support for the implementation of austerity measures by the UK government. I interviewed a participant from one such programme and have taken a nuanced, although not uncritical look at the programme in which he took part. Finally I will return to a theme that briefly emerged in my Sure Start chapter about the complexities faced by people living in a coastal town in the UK. I am interested in the Janus faced nature of Seaside living in the UK. On the one hand there is the emotional resonance of a therapeutic landscape with all its promise of the health and vitality, but yet the lived experience for many is one of hardship and a sense that they are at the 'end of the line'.

The aim in these case studies is to listen to the experience of others. I interview people who either live or work in a coastal town. Commonalities emerge through the process of analysing each interview, or as Clarke (2002) put it, themes emerge suggesting a 'common voyage' through social experience. In doing so I am able to recognise that there are both common and individual experiences of social phenomena. As a researcher I am interested in

the lived experience of the issues I have been addressing in the thesis. I hope that what I bring to my research is an empathic gaze. In my chapter on the Sure Start initiative I drew on my own autobiographical experience. These interviews are not meant to be representative but are a way of mobilising qualitative data to examine the rich narratives of personal life experiences. I take a narrative approach whereby my focus is on the interviewee's story, my role is to listen well. I wanted to hear from people who have been directly impacted by the recent changes to the welfare state that I have discussed in my literature review. I wanted to hear first-hand about their experience, to let them tell their story. I wanted a first-hand account and so the purpose of my interviews here, albeit in a limited way, is to examine in more depth a particular cultural context as told by those who participated in that cultural experience. My interviewees have their own unique stories to tell, but their commonalities of experience go some way to give a sense of how hard it is to truly flourish under present socio-economic and political conditions in the UK.

The commonalities I identified in my case study material are as follows; nostalgia; anxiety; loss of hope disavowal of inequality; all of which point towards the problems of lack of containment; decline in the capacity for concern and the traumatogenic environment which are problematic to human flourishing.

Chapter 7: Flourishing and the Neoliberal Entrepreneurial Spirit

CASE STUDY 2: Can a Workfare State Enable Flourishing?

In Chapter 5 I have examined the complex and contested terrain of the word welfare; a word that I suggested has become dulled by usage and, worse, has become tainted as its meaning has changed over time and been imbued with powerful political and cultural connotations. The concept of *welfare* pertaining to human flourishing has been reformulated to become *workfare*, a manifestation of the neoliberal entrepreneurial spirit. In this case study I take a psychosocial approach to examine how social welfare is perceived in the public sphere. The purpose of this case study is to show the shift that has taken place in welfare policy where there has been a distinct move away from any understanding of welfare as having a part to play in how a population may flourish. Instead, the emphasis is on workfare. It demonstrates the tension that is felt by the neoliberal subject being expected to flourish, take responsibility for oneself, and to thrive in the face of adversity yet without the containing function of a welfare state.

7.1 I was a JSA Claimant: Surviving not Flourishing

I wanted to speak to someone with first-hand experience of unemployment and the benefits system under the changes I have already discussed. My interviewee is known on Twitter as "I Was a JSA Claimant" and, to respect his anonymity, I have removed any location-identifying information from the interview and will only refer to him by his Twitter handle. I Was a JSA Claimant is a blogger and campaigner on issues of welfare reform, sanctions, austerity and homelessness. He has nearly 40,000 followers on Twitter and can have a post reach of around one million. I asked him to tell me his story of how, at first, he began to talk about his own experience of being unemployed, workfare programmes and benefit sanctions, and this led to him becoming an outspoken campaigner giving a voice to many other people in similar situations to himself but who may otherwise have gone completely unheard. My interviewee's story is one of a system that seems to offer support and advice, training opportunities and a chance to gain workplace skills. In reality, there is a sense of confusion and stress, severe financial hardship and seemingly arbitrary decision making on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). What this particular experience indicates is the fractured relationships that can occur when personal need is seen in terms of economic gain,

market advantage, profit seeking and a compliance with instructions and regulations, thereby having an adverse effect on wellbeing (Rustin 2013).

7.2 I was a JSA Claimant: Telling His Story

Having been an employed person for over twenty years I Was a JSA Claimant was made redundant. He moved back to his home town, worked for a while through an agency but, when that work dried up, he found himself needing to sign on for work at the Job Centre and claim Job Seekers Allowance. He was assigned an advisor, who suggested he undertook a volunteering role. He found a voluntary role with a housing association undertaking a service review. Upon completion he returned to the job centre and informed his advisor that he had taken part in this voluntary role and his advisor seemed pleased: 'that's great' she told him. However, by the end of the week there was no money in his account; he called his advisor who told him that he had been sanctioned, this means that he had been penalised for not meeting the criteria for claiming Job Seekers Allowance. The reason for this sanction, the advisor informed him, was that the volunteering he had done too closely matched his previous employment skills so he should have been in paid work. At this point my interviewee says that he was unaware that sanctions could be imposed, he wasn't sure what to do or for how long he would be sanctioned. In addition, he was warned that if he did not continue with his job searches there would be further sanctions. During this sanction period I Was a JSA Claimant found himself accruing debt as he was unable to cover the regular direct debits leaving his account. In the end the decision was not to uphold the sanction but it took him around 6-8 weeks to catch up with his bills and debts.

A new opportunity was then offered. The DWP is keen to help people set up their own small business, job seekers can gain training and advice and there is the potential to be supported with a financial grant to get themselves set up. My interviewee was keen; he recalled a fond childhood experience of making Welsh cakes with his grandfather. This inspired him to want to set up a market stall making and selling a whole variety of artisan Welsh cakes. He embarked on a two-week training course in a college in a nearby town. Upon completion however, and despite finding the course very helpful, he returned to the job centre only to discover that there is was problem.

> "So, I go back to the job centre after the course has finished and I was
> told that I had a new job centre advisor so I had been moved. I sat
> down and the woman's demeanour from the off-set was very different

to the woman that I had had before and I knew that there was a problem. You know how you can just feel it. She didn't even have to speak."

He was asked why he had not been doing the required 35 hours per week job search. He explained to the advisor that he had been told to write down that he had been on a training course, at which point she left to speak to his previous advisor. Upon return she informed him that he should have been doing his job search as well as his training because the course was not one recognised by the DWP. He was then told that he should be applying for jobs within a certain criteria, coded to show which ones were deemed suitable to his skills set. He had been an administrator so the codes assigned to him included one for SAGE accounting. The problem was that he had never used this before:

> "And she gave me these jobs and I said I can't do them I don't have the sufficient skills on SAGE, you know, it is quite a sophisticated piece of software. You have to have specific knowledge, she said well you know it is on your code so you should apply for it. This conversation carried on and at this point it is becoming quite a difficult conversation and she said I am surprised that you have not seen these jobs before and I said well I don't normally look over the weekend, I try to keep the weekends for myself so I can spend them with friends and family, you need that separation and switch your brain off. She said no, job seekers should be looking every day for 5 hours a day. If you are not looking over the weekend then I can refer you for a benefits sanction ...... so anyway, that was the end of that appointment. I go home and I am terrified about what is going on over the next few days."

In the lead up to the Christmas period that year, I Was a JSA Claimant found himself sanctioned again. He phoned the benefit hotline for help and was told to phone the job centre, who, in turn told him to phone the benefits hotline, he felt like he was not getting any help at all. His money was rapidly running out and then his electricity was turned off because he did not have enough money to top up his key meter. He could not heat his flat and the food in his freezer, which he had been topping up a little week by week for the Christmas period, was now rapidly defrosting. The Citizens Advice suggested that he apply for a hardship payment: "so I went to the job centre and I said I have been told that I can claim hardship payment. And they said oh no, you can't apply for hardship at this stage you have to wait for a decision, and at this point they had not made a decision".

The containing environment is not limited to the family sphere but, more broadly, can encapsulate the social and political arena. Problems arise when that containing environment fragments and fails. It is worse, however, when the that failure manifests as an active assault on human need, as can be seen here throughout my interviewee's story. As I listened to my interviewee I had the very real sense that he felt at the mercy of the job centre, I asked if that was how it felt to him:

> "Absolutely. And this is the thing that I hear again and again. You are absolutely at their mercy. And if you see people on social media saying that they have lost control, they feel isolated as a result and stressed."

He went in again to see his advisor, she did not really make eye contact with him, kept her head down and looked mainly at her computer screen. This made me wonder how she was feeling at this point although it is not appropriate to speculate, but one wonders how the job centre staff cope on a daily basis with people who are probably feeling desperate and even angry. My interviewee was running out of food, the local food bank at this time was relatively new and only open for a short window of time one morning a week. He was resourceful though and attended a work placement scheme or job club each day. He used to go once a week as it is a requirement for receiving JSA and a chance to undertake job searches. At this point he started to go every day so that at least he could get a hot drink and some fruit from their fruit bowl. It was now close to Christmas and these facilities would be closing down for the festive period. By the end of the week he had completely run out of food. He experienced health problems that he had not imagined; lack of food had caused him to have diarrhoea, he soon ran out of toilet paper and resorted to cutting up tea towels and then washing them in the bath to re-use. There is such a sense of a loss of dignity and he felt unable to tell friends and family what he was going through. He had no money on his phone and felt unable to contact his family; he does not have a particularly close relationship with them, although at this time of year he would usually see them, but he could not afford to travel to them. The Christmas period brought him very low indeed as he watched out of his window and saw happy people walk by, he wished for night time to come so that he could just go to bed and sleep. Recalling this was clearly very emotional for my interviewee, I asked if he wanted to stop or take a break, he said he wanted to continue.

In the days that followed, he received £20, a gift from his aunt who lives some distance away. At last he could put some money in the electricity meter, buy some food and cleaning

products, a little dignity and comfort restored. When the Christmas break was over he returned to the job centre to see his advisor, thinking his situation could not get any worse.

> "In the new year then I have to see this woman again. I did not think that she could make it any worse, but she actually did. She said that the sanction to her was an indication that I lacked a work ethic. The fact that I had been in work for twenty odd years and you know also include the years I went to university. Two jobs at some times. But she is telling me that I have no work ethic."

My interviewee told me that this was his breaking point. He returned to his flat and tried to take his own life. Found by his neighbour, he was taken to hospital. After this revelation I asked if he was ok to continue the interview, he said he was but I reassured him he could stop at any time if need be. It was shocking to hear how low he had become by this point and it was impossible not to be affected by his story as an interviewer. An indication of how the negative narrative around benefits, mental health and disability have impacted, the social worker who came to see him in hospital told him how much his suicide attempt had cost the NHS. This was when he first used a Twitter account to tell his story, using a protected identity gave him a certain freedom to speak out, even though at this stage he only had a few followers. One of his first tweets was about how a mental health professional visiting at home asked him how he was able to have a computer, he reminded her that he had not always been an unemployed person. This tweet struck a chord with many of his followers. After some considerable time, I Was a JSA Claimant was referred for Counselling, he was also recognised as being unwell and transferred onto Employment Support Allowance.

Flourishing or wellbeing is virtually impossible to achieve under conditions of poverty and oppression (Honderich 1995). However, economic liberty has become the primary aim of the state in terms of a flourishing society, with free markets considered to be the indispensable way in which flourishing will be achieved (Hanley 2016). Citizens are therefore morally obliged to manage their own lives, anyone deemed to have mismanaged their life is seen as someone who has failed to navigate the impediments to prosperity (Brown 2005). Insecurity has become structurally pervasive and an 'on your own' approach has reinforced people's sense of anxiety. Risk and uncertainty create conditions where it is only possible to survive rather than flourish.

7.3 A Lack of Containment

The implementation of austerity measures, the roll back of welfare support and cuts to public services have appeared to run contrary to any impulse to improve wellbeing. Conditions favourable to a flourishing society and individual flourishing continue to be removed. As I have suggested in my literature review and contextualization, positive psychology has been entwined with public policy. However, the social context of the individual is rarely taken into account. The focus is on the individual making personal changes to their outlook on life despite the situations they may find themselves in, such as poverty, hunger, unemployment. The 'cruel optimism' (Berlant 2011) of neoliberalism is that it promises human flourishing even though there is overwhelming evidence that for many this is unachievable due to the precarity of the day to day lived experience. The traumatogenic socio-political order (Layton, Gutwill and Hollander 2006) is unable to provide the necessary containing experience. The very relationships people depend on for wellbeing, not only close personal ones, but with those who provide professional care and support, become fractured (Rustin 2013). The welfare state in the UK no longer provides an adequate safety net and many people are struggling to meet even their most basic needs. The burden of reducing Britain's deficit is largely falling on those who needed vital support from public services and welfare; and for them there has been an increase in feelings of insecurity, being out of control, and powerlessness (Slay and Penny, 2013). Since the economic crash of 2008 and the subsequent implementation of austerity policies, rather than flourishing the UK has seen a significant increase in the prevalence of mental health problems. This has been most markedly seen in those who are out of work or affected by the instability of employment, and also those who are less educated. (Barr, Kinderman and Whitehead 2015).

I thought that my interviewee's use of social media was a way of regaining a sense of control over a situation in which he had clearly, at times, felt very powerless. I wanted to know more about why my interviewee wanted to tell his story on social media, he explained;

> "I wanted to understand what had happened to me … the politics behind it, It made me realise that I had power with my social media and I could help people by publicising their situation. I could influence and that is part of what I can do as my social media grows and I realised I had quite a few journalists that were following me and that I could target them with specific stories that I wanted to share. I have gone from a position where I have had all my power stripped from me but

through my social media I can sort of start to grow it back if you see what I mean."

As a result of his campaigning on social media, I Was a JSA Claimant now has the opportunity to assist Unite the Union in their efforts to raise awareness of the impact of benefit sanctions, the problems with the new Universal Credit system, and welfare reform. He has also assisted in the development of a working document for the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union on welfare policy. What I hear in his story is someone who felt completely disempowered through circumstances not of their own making, who then saw a way of regaining a sense of power by telling their own story and tweeting about their experiences. He then arrived at a point at which he is enabling other people to tell their stories too. Through this process he has also met with members of the PCS union who actually work at the DWP, he says:

> "I was seeing people from the DWP in a different light, they had been the people I was angry with for sanctioning me, but although they can be criticised for not speaking out sooner, I realised that my relationship with them had to change we have to work together if we are going to effect change. I have privilege on social media because I can help to make change."

7.4 The Job Centre Work Coach

I was interested to gain an insight into what it may have been like on the other side of the desk to someone in a similar situation to I Was a JSA Claimant. I interviewed Stewart and began by asking him to tell me about how he started working in the job centre when he moved from London to Dorset.

> "It's always bad this (laughs) well, I have worked with the DWP and its forebears right back to the DHSS for 41 years God help us! As has been pointed out before, you get shorter time for murder (laughs) ……
> I came down as a pensions officer it was either that or on the front line of your unemployment benefit. I declined that (laughs). After about three or four years though they cut down on the numbers in the pension service because it was quite a new service, a new idea. When it came out, Service staff properly, it was like a shining example of how an office should be. It was brilliant, not much work pressure, the people that work there loved it and the claimants loved it. You had time to

explain to them about the claims such as attendance allowance or DLA. Of course this is working so well so they thought they would cut it, so they did. I was surplus to requirements so I basically ended up as a JSA advisor but we are commonly now known as Work Coach and that's where I've been for the last all - shit - 17 years I've been a work coach."

I wondered about the use of the term 'Work coach' to describe his role, I was interested to know more about his job title. If it had changed over time and what that signified about how he was expected to work. Initially he had been called a job advisor.

"It was called job advisor then or JSA advisor. So we were much more involved in advising, so we knew a lot about benefits and were quite involved in an intense effort to refer people to a specific job and we had our own sort of government job-finding service on our computers rather than it being private. It was flogged off some years ago (to a private company) they now do it. It's crap but then in the old days we used to have the slips in the slots and you just pick them out but we ended up with computers and all that bollocks we have now."

He told me about how he felt the experience of working in a job centre had become increasingly more stressful for the staff.

"The stress levels are unbelievable to be honest there is not a week goes by without someone losing it at the front desk and some of my colleagues have got the empathic interviewing skills of a small newt which is not high (laughs). You know some of the things I hear and I just think shut the fuck up. So to a lot of my customers I just say to them just behave reasonably and you'll be fine, I do not sanction people unless you are really taking the piss out of me. I do use those words I know I shouldn't do."

I was struck by what he had said about the lack of empathy in some of his co-workers and asked him why he thought this was the case.

"They've just got no idea, they try and sort of be hypercritical – 'you've got to do this, you've got to do that' is not the way we are meant to be interviewing and it is not effective and what it does is wind people up and create potentially violent situations when none needed to have

happened. If you have just been a little bit you know as in 'I am sorry about this I don't make the rules up, this is what you need to do to avoid getting into trouble', explain it in those sort of terms, in language that people can understand rather than talking nobby language and long words."

I was interested in why he thought his co-workers used "nobby language and long words". It suggests that using language in this way meant there could be a degree of distance created between the job centre work coach and the job seeker.

"The problem is it is very easy to become, not brutalised but immunised, not to see people as individuals, desperate people, and start seeing them as problems stopping you getting your daily work done so you're not meeting targets because this idiot isn't going for a job. The fact that they might have Alzheimer's - no not that one the syndrome autism, autism spectrum - or the fact that they might be incapable, some people really cannot get on a computer, some people cannot read but some people can be quite contemptible, saying these people are stupid without actually seeing why or trying to understand. You see the thing is when I first came here I didn't know hardly anyone all, so I used to spend many of my nights and weekends in a local pub with all the bikers (laughs) and to be honest you are not going to get on with them if you use highfalutin words and airs and graces because you would get your arse kicked in."

I felt that what he was saying here was that that this enabled him to 'speak human' to the people that he met with during the course of his work.

"Yes that's exactly it. So I might even run into the people in the pub who I would've seen in the job centre and it would be like 'hello mate' and if I saw someone, to be honest, who is doing a bit of time behind the bar cash in hand or collecting the bottles up for a few sovs, there is no way that I was going to turn them in. It's just not ethical in my view, it's just human. Of course, sometimes if people phoned in and they were dobbing someone in there wasn't a lot you could do about it except perhaps delay it a little while before you reported it. But I think I had five or six, they call them PIPs, performance improvement plans, basically I was whacked with disciplinary action five years out of six for refusing to do sanctions. I think some of my colleagues are brutal to be honest. Some of them have got absolutely no idea, they have no people skills. You can teach, to an extent, people skills but there is the

> degree to which you have to have the materials to work with first and some people can't do it. They just have no idea, it's almost bullying and I have seen bullying in that place. The staff survey showed a consistently high level of staff themselves feeling bullied by management and it freaks out the higher-ups because they like the figures to look good."

I wanted to know more about what he was describing as a bullying culture. From his responses, there was a real sense of the external pressure of implementing welfare reform on the ground. With an ever-evolving IT system and targets being imposed on the work coaches to see that job seekers were in work as soon as possible and to an agreed timeline, with 'favouritism' shown to those job coaches who were meeting their targets. The job centre itself would then be compared to other job centres nationally. I asked if this data would take into account the particular circumstances of the location of the job centre.

> "Oh god yes, we were compared but by no means will they take into account what we would face in this area where there is an unusually high level of zero hours contracts and seasonal work, that was never taken into account …"

The ability for the work coaches to meet their objectives was then further impacted by the lack of time and the sheer amount of job seekers. This not only put pressure on the work coaches themselves but meant that, in Stewart's view, there was no place or time to actually be able to give advice to people in an effective was as had been done in the past.

I wondered whether, in the change of job title from advisor to coach, if there was still a place for giving advice as part of his job role;

> "Well yes, for a lot of people that come to us it isn't really explained what is going on. So I spend a lot of time actually trying to explain this is roughly how it works. There is no real time in the system built in to do that, so if you do that you do it at the expense of referring onto a job. It has parts that are interesting, that are okay in some ways but then it's got bits that completely savage … people end up just eaking out what they've got coming in. It's like, how did Bilbo Baggins put it, it's like butter spread on too much toast."

He explains that the job advisers used to take on special advisor roles, they would take the lead on for example, domestic violence issues or homelessness. Over time this had given way to work coaches being expected to be generalist and able to work with all job seekers. Stewart was pleased to see that this was now returning as a way of working with people, he thought this would be a great improvement for users of the service. Enabling job centre staff to look at the broader social problems that many job seekers were facing. His interview showed how, in his small way, he would perhaps transgress the system, to find ways round what could perhaps be viewed as harsh penalties if job seekers failed to complete the expected tasks that were conditional for receipt of their benefit support.

I wanted to know if he thought there was a recognition that joblessness is not simply a factor of that there isn't the work out there.

> "There's always been that but in the past it got tracked into ESA (Employment Support Allowance) rather, but now everything has merged into Universal Credit. But the trouble is they've still got that bloody work capability assessment, so you have got people that you know are not fully capable of work but they have been found capable of limited work or capable of work completely by their work assessment. So you end up, you still have to see them weekly or fortnightly but you know darn well they're not going to get a job and if you are sensible about it you just have a chat with them and keep them at two weeks rather than trying to do an intensive course with them. And the fact remains that the ones that we do see weekly often end up getting a job just to get away from us. But how long for and what the quality of that job is, who knows. And at the moment we are still told that we're fully staffed but you are lucky really if we get to see people every two weeks let alone every week. We are meant to see people in the first 13 weeks of when they started to claim, you are meant to see them weekly. After that you should see half of them weekly and the rest of them fortnightly, which is bollocks because the caseload is too high."

I asked Stewart if there were things he would like to change about the system he was working in.

> "I think Universal Credit needs to be scrapped, some of the elements can be checked but I think the actual benefit should be scrapped. The

formal five-week wait should go straightaway because it introduces people into being in debt they may have never been before, so basically you get used to being in debt. This stupid thing we've introduced when you are trying to get people into work and the amount people get is far too low, it needs re-evaluating. I am glad that there is no signing on any more, that was a complete pain in the arse but we need more discretion as Work Coaches, who we see. When some people, you set them on the path, you know that they will be gone within six months, they know what they're doing. I feel like we should be able to take you on a case-by-case basis because there others that just need so much more help, and having the specialisms, the single point of contact. In the old days we had special case officers and we should respect that. That's my feeling anyway."

I asked Stewart if he was hopeful that things would change;

"No, under this government no chance."

7.5 Decline in the Capacity to Care

"All persons need care for at least their early years. Prospects for human progress and flourishing hinge fundamentally on the care that those needing it receive, and the ethics of care stresses the moral force of this responsibility to respond to the needs of the dependent" (Held 2006, p.10).

I have argued that, with the rise of workfare and the decline in welfare there has been a significant reduction of a capacity to care in UK culture. I draw on the work of Hollway (2006) here who asserts that early failings of care, not only have a profound effect on the social relations around us but will have a ripple effect on the wider community with whole groups failing to care, thereby creating a culture of vengeance and hate.

I will consider some of the themes raised by Stewart's interview further on in these three case studies as his experience tied in with that of other people I have interviewed. For example, the lack of hope he felt, the sense of nostalgia he gave that things had been better in the past and the thought that there was a disconnect between those who made polices and those who actually have to deliver the services. However, what interested me particularly in Stewart's observations, was the sense that some of the staff lack empathy. It is important to point out that it would be wrong to generalise from this one example, I do note though, that I Was a JSA

claimant expressed similar views. I am not intending to make a decisive judgement about the lack or not of empathy in Job Centre staff, I would have thought that, as with the wider population, there will be a wide variety of responses to job seekers.

The absence of a containing function of government breeds a culture in which the need for the other and for care taking is manically denied (Peltz 2007). The acknowledgement of pain and suffering in others requires an acceptance of external reality that may induce a profound struggle with anxiety, resulting in a psychic regress to more simplistic understandings of events, often shallow and insubstantial in nature but providing protection of the self from suffering by projecting vulnerability onto others. This narcissistic satisfaction, of thinking ourselves better than others and determining that people only deserve love if they embody our own ideals and aspirations, is a failed therapeutic attempt to control one's aggression (Martin 2006).

7.6 The Value of Stories from the Margins: Potential for a Counter-narrative

The value of telling my interviewee's stories here, is that it can allow for a counter narrative of stories that 'get inside' to emerge, that can overcome the common sense narrative of the skiver, the scrounger or the benefits cheat. In the work on *Gradiva,* the story of a man who falls in love with a bas relief, the sculpted image of a woman's face, Freud (1907) writes about the novel's hero. What interests Freud is that a psychiatrist may have diagnosed the young man as a *dégèneré,* degenerate, someone who has lost the mental or moral qualities deemed acceptable and normal within a given culture. Freud praises the novel's author for not doing this, instead 'he brings us nearer to the hero to facilitate for us aesthetic sympathy with him; with the diagnosis *dègéneré,* whether or not it may be justifiable to us scientifically, the young archaeologist is at once removed farther from us, for we, readers, are, of course normal people and the measure of humanity' (Freud 1907). To treat someone as degenerate, abject, is to emphasise their otherness, to remove them from us and disallow any feeling of empathy.

The psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut said that empathy was intrinsic to the work of the psychoanalyst (1959). Yet he suggested caution when prioritising empathy as a wholly desirable emotion. Having empathic feelings for another person does not necessitate action, more than that, getting to truly know another can also mean that you know how to hurt them. How we come to know the other is way of transporting oneself into the affective world of another person, but, rather than empathy we need the idea of concern. In her work on 'transnational empathy' Caroline Pedwell (2014) problematises the concept and ethics of

empathy and argues that there is a very real potential that empathy can become a technique of discipline and regulation, when it is employed by those in a position of political and social privilege. Often the expectation of empathy is the ability to accurately conceptualise the feelings of another. The focus becomes more on how one achieves an ability to put oneself in the shoes of another, a narrow focus and individualistic project which fails then to tackle wider social inequalities.

Pedwell studied empathy in terms of transnational, cross-cultural politics, but I think her work is important when looking at the issue of UK poverty. I share her concern that an emphasis on the need for empathy actually forecloses any ideas that there may be a need for alternatives to the current geo-political structure of global capitalism. Empathy may well bring about a food bank or soup kitchen initiative, valuable resources for those experiencing poverty, but this will not do enough to bring about the restructuring of a society to eradicate such inequality. Pedwell's solution is to reconsider empathy as a set of transitional processes that involves conflict, negotiation and imagination. To that I would add that, rather than empathy, what we need to foster is a capacity for concern. Rather than feeling what another feels, concern is caring about the welfare of others. Whilst these are not mutually exclusive, indeed empathy and concern may go hand in hand, one does not necessitate the other. Furthermore, according to research by Jordan, Amir and Bloom (2016) empathy and concern can motivate different behaviours. They found that concern for others is more likely to be a predictor of pro-social action whereas empathy could not be such a predictor. They concluded that empathy plays a much more limited role in morality and moral decision making than may have been initially thought. The psychoanalytic concept of the capacity for concern is about the ability to care or to mind, to accept and to take responsibility. It recognises the other as a whole, established unit (Winnicott 1965). It is not enough to see the otherness of that person, but that we also see the *sameness of the other in ourselves.* To really listen to another person's story requires humility and a recognition that one only has one vantage point and truth. It is perhaps the moments of not knowing, a need for inquiry, where discoveries are made (Schwaber 2010). The capacity for concern is the foundation for morality and ethics in adult life and part of maturity and health, in other words part of human flourishing. As Norbert Elias wrote in T*he Civilising Process;* "the coexistence of people, the intertwining of their intentions and plans, the bonds they place on each other, all these, far from destroying individuality, provide the medium in which it can develop" (Elias, 1994 [1939] p.356).

I will now explore in more depth a factor that may have contributed to negative views of people who are in need of the benefit system, which can be found through the portrayal of benefit recipients on UK television.

Chapter 8 The Ideology of Workfare: How Does It 'Get Inside'?

CASE STUDY 3: Has "Poverty Porn" Contributed to a Decline in the Capacity for Concern?

The challenge when applying psychoanalytic ideas to society is to be able to account both for the ways that norms are internalised as well as what makes psychic resistance and challenge to social norms possible (Layton 2007). I now examine what has been dubbed 'poverty-porn' television, programmes about poverty and poor people that do not address the issues behind the poverty but present it as a form of entertainment. Since the 2008 financial crisis, such programmes have been commissioned by a variety of channels.

I present this case study as a way of trying to understand how there has been a decline in the capacity for concern. One way to investigate this decline is to look at ways in which politicians have gained support for recent welfare reforms. Support for policies is often gained by politicians seeming to speak as though they are firmly in tune with popular thinking, government policy is then given legitimacy by popular support. However, this support does not require a sophisticated argument with any depth of thought (Hall and O'Shea, 2013).

So called 'poverty porn' television has served to embed new forms of common sense thinking about welfare. Drawing on the work of Bourdieu (1972) who coined the term 'doxa' to describe how aspects of the social world are made to appear self-evident and in no need of interpretation, Jensen (2014) considers how consent for this common sense is animated through this genre of television programmes which appear to be 'spontaneous' but are, in truth, highly edited. Doxa refers to the learned fundamental deep-founded, unconscious beliefs and values which are taken as self-evident. The overarching narrative of these programmes is the connection between welfare recipients and moral laxity, greed and criminality. What results, Jensen argues, is a flattening effect on public discourse, there is no space here for alternative perspectives and discussions and it is indicative of how the social democratic model of social security has been "corroded under neoliberalism" (Jensen 2014 1:2). The rhetoric of the scrounger, akin to earlier formations of the undeserving poor, is rarely contested, is persistent and is permissible. All the while, negative traits such as idleness, selfishness and failure can be attributed to the underserving poor, whereas "the socially cooperative, socially mobile and culturally integrated majority are free to move unfettered, and with their own values unexamined" (Nunn and Biressi 2009, p. 115). The genre known as 'poverty porn' has allowed

the sustaining of a narrative which divides the so-called deserving and undeserving poor. This has proved useful in generating support for the implementation of austerity measures by recent UK governments. Poverty porn serves an ideological function whereby welfare reform seems unquestionable.

The negative representation of poverty on UK television in recent times has been politically expedient. Generally, programmes are packaged in distinct easily identifiable genres, be that sport, documentary, soap or, in this case study, reality television. Ideas, narratives and images are packaged up in easily digested forms. This provides a sense of familiarity and stability for the viewer in a world of uncertainty (Ellis 2000). Through a process of witnessing, the audience is confronted by the realities of everyday life but in ways that can both involve and yet distance the viewer (Ellis 2000). With this sense of distance in mind the typical programme about people on benefits offers a narrative of shame, an opportunity to sit in judgment over the people on screen. However, I wondered if these programmes can also offer an opportunity for the viewer to share a sense of empathy with the characters on screen? Is empathy even an appropriate response? I will look at these questions in more detail later in this chapter.

The term 'welfare' is used as a synonym for wellbeing, signifying health, happiness and fortune of a person or group: a word most commonly associated with state provision to protect the health and wellbeing of its citizens particularly those in financial hardship. In recent times the use of the word welfare tends to come with a moral undertone, at its heart it is not just about how a person lives, but how a person should live. Initially the welfare state was established to ensure that all members could make a useful contribution to society and flourish through a fairer distribution of wealth. To reiterate, a shift has taken place to a workfare state which fosters entrepreneurship, focuses on personal responsibility and economic growth and in which social policy is subordinate to the needs of the labour market. The political narrative of anti-welfarism has been frequently supported by certain aspects of the media where a moralistic framing of a narrative around welfare has taken place. This is particularly evident in the trend for television programmes looking at the lives of people in receipt of benefits, which has served to embed new forms of common sense thinking about welfare and an unquestionable need for welfare reform. I wanted to take a closer look at how this type of programme functions. Often it is voyeuristic entertainment with the viewer in a position to pass judgement on the benefit 'scrounger' who makes inappropriate purchases with their benefit money, for example large screen TVs or tattoos.

8.1 Anti-Welfare

The 2008 financial crisis began as a problem of economics but was reworked through ideology to re-allocate the blame for the crisis and who should shoulder the responsibility for its resolution (Newman and Clark 2012). One form that this reworking has taken is through both television and print media. The political narrative of anti-welfarism is frequently supported in the media which enables the production and reproduction of anti-welfare ways of thinking. Rather than seen as a public good, the notion of social security in the UK has become more often associated with negative connotations (Mooney 2011). This is exemplified in this exchange documented in *Hansard* (2014) in the House of Commons between the Conservative MP for Shipley, Philip Davies and the then Secretary of State for the Department of Work and Pensions, Iain Duncan-Smith:

> Philip Davies: "Has the Secretary of State managed to watch programmes such as *Benefits Street* and *On Benefits and Proud*? If so, has he, like me, been struck by the number of people on them who manage to combine complaining about welfare reform with being able to afford to buy copious amounts of cigarettes, have lots of tattoos, and watch Sky TV on the obligatory widescreen television? Does he understand the concerns and irritation of many people who go to work every day and pay their taxes but cannot afford these kind of luxuries?"
>
> Secretary of State: "My hon. Friend: Many people are shocked by what they see. That is why the public back our welfare reform package, which will get more people back to work and end these abuses. All these abuses date back to the last Government, who had massive spending and trapped people in benefit dependency."

There has been a significant decline in solidarity with the unemployed, the poor and with the disabled. Public opinion is vital when justifying changes to the welfare system. It has been suggested that there has been an increase in what has been described as the bourgeois gaze (Skeggs and Wood 2012) where a moralistic framing of a narrative takes place, notably in television programmes and in the print media, in which working class participants are compared with the middle classes and found lacking (Fisher 2014). Ways in which this framing has taken place can be seen in the recent trend for television programmes focusing on those in receipt of benefits. I interviewed a participant from once such programme and have taken a nuanced, although not uncritical look at the programme in which he took part. My intention has been to apply a different sort of gaze to the participants in 'poverty porn' television, one of empathy.

8.2 Benefits By the Sea - Jaywick

In order to examine how this type of programme functions I chose to look at *Benefits by the Sea: Jaywick* (Spungold TV for Chanel 5, 2015-2016). Rather than the recycled narrative of previous portrayals of Jaywick (the most deprived area in England) as a 'drain on the welfare state' so often seen in programmes of this type, I watched something altogether more sympathetic to Jaywick's inhabitants. Whilst it is important to note that the programme did little to tackle or address the structural issues causing such poverty, it nevertheless portrayed a certain resiliency of community spirit. I take a nuanced, although not uncritical, look at this television series and suggest that in a small way, it contributes to 'bridging the empathy gap' (Jo 2013) telling the story of life in poverty in a way that statistics and data often cannot. To take an ethical stance when making, participating and viewing a programme is possible and can perhaps go some way towards contributing to a genre of television programme that has the capacity to care whereby an opportunity is taken to help audiences make sense of the complexities of the everyday (Silverstone 2002).

Through my analysis of the programme's content, exploration of what has happened since the series aired and my interview with one of the programme's participants, I hope to show a different aspect to so-called poverty porn television through a discussion about place attachment and community resiliency (Faulkner and Brown 2018).

Life on the Dole: Jaywick preceded *Benefits by the Sea* and was one such programme that expressed the narrative of the deserving and undeserving poor; as the tone of the opening narrative suggests; "*why work when you can live on benefits?*" continuing with "*In Benefits Britain the biggest drain on the welfare state comes in the Essex town of Jaywick.*" (Channel 5 Broadcasting 2014-2015) The camera homes in on dilapidated houses and a large fire burning in the street. The voiceover is keen to highlight just how much one family they show receives in benefits per month, particularly as one of the children has a disability. After competing their weekly shop, they get a taxi home, the implication from the voice over being that this is somehow profligate rather than a necessity with heavy shopping in an area with poor transport links. The family's home in this context is not just their home but a "benefits bungalow" in which their mother cooks up a "benefits style feast" consisting of tinned hotdogs and spaghetti.

8.3 Poverty Porn and Social Stigma

This mediatised version of welfare is devoid of any connotation that implies a collectivity of wellbeing. So-called 'poverty porn' is about making entertainment out of people in crisis. Frequently the stories told are of benefits recipients making so-called inappropriate purchases such as large screen televisions or numerous tattoos. This neoliberal framing of poverty on television has generated support for an acquiescence in austerity and has contributed to the neoliberal shift from welfare to sanctions and punishment. Documenting a shift in presentation, Barton and Davis (2016) show how the earlier construction of these programmes was voyeuristic altruism. Here, celebrities would visit an impoverished area to see how people were living, a genre which looked very much like benefits tourism. Over time the emphasis hardened, a focus on participants who were unashamed or unapologetic about their perceived laziness or profligacy at the tax payers expense. The purpose of such shows was to use shame and humiliation, the poor person is always inadequate, held up for scrutiny and found wanting. The effect of this style of programme making means that those who do need support have been relegated to the status of 'other', a denial is taking place that at some stage in our lives we could all be that 'other'.

The power of an ideology is when it reaches one at an unconscious level to the point when people become unaware that they are speaking the language of neoliberalism at all. What results is people becoming subjected to the discourse of neoliberalism without knowing where it came from and what it left out (Hall 2012). Language such as this conveys a particular message, without even having to use the terms 'skiver' and 'striver'. The implication is there, tapping into the listener at an unconscious level; the split between the 'good' and the 'bad', those that create the wealth and those that merely take it away, and that there has been an active choice to be in one group or the other. Freud (1930) termed, "the narcissism of small differences" whereby the negative feelings are directed towards people who resemble ourselves and pride is taken from the small differences which put space between the perceived 'them' and 'us'. This refers to a mechanism of projection where the subject projects unwanted feelings onto others and these become the basis of prejudice in all its forms. I referred to this phenomenon in my contexts chapter when discussing narcissism. To reiterate, from there, Karl Figlio (2012) noted that we do not detect difference in the other and then hate them, rather we actively create the other as a psychic reality.

The psychoanalyst Neville Symington says that people make sense of the world through 'psychic actions' (Symington 1993: 13). When meeting other people we "project ourselves into their world" or "introject them into our world" (Symington 1993, p.13). This means that we either put ourselves in the shoes of another, or we take them into our inner sense of how things are and how the world works (Syminton 1993). Tyler's (2013) account of social abjection examines how minoritised populations, such as asylum seekers, politically and economically disenfranchised young people, or people with disabilities are imagined and configured as 'revolting' (p.4). They thereby become subject to stigma, censure and control. They become "lightening conductors mobilised to do the dirty work of neoliberal governmentality" (p.9), market deregulation and welfare retrenchment. Goffman writing in 1963 on *Stigma* is still highly pertinent here. When a person is stigmatised they are treated as less than human. An ideology is created to explain the inferior nature of the stigmatised person and the danger they represent. From stigma a wide range of imperfections is then imputed.

8.4 Jaywick Fights Back – Poverty Porn or Community Resilience?

Programmes about people in receipt of benefits are a hegemonic mode by which general consent to government policy has been generated. The encoded meanings in the voice overs are blunt. At its peak, the dominant programmes of this genre were *Benefits Street* (Channel 4) and *Benefits Britain Life on the Dole* (Channel 5). I chose to look at *Benefits by the Sea: Jaywick* (Channel 5). As a resident of a coastal town for over 15 years I chose to watch *Benefits by the Sea: Jaywick (Channel 5)* as part of my case study material because I have seen at first hand, to a certain degree, through both work and personal experience, some of the complexities and social issues people may face that can be unique to UK coastal towns. Such as poverty, poor transport links, unaffordable housing, lack of job prospects. However, I found something a little different and was surprised. I was challenged by my own pre-conceptions about this genre of television.

8.5 A Brief History of Jaywick

After World War I, small communities of shacks, disused army camps and old railway carriages sprang up along Britain's south and southeast coast. These settlements became known as the plot lands; they offered Londoners the chance to escape to the coast for fresh air and sea views (Rockwood 2009). As more middle class Londoners became able to own a car, the entrepreneur property developer Frank Christopher Stedman saw an opportunity and in 1929 he sought to develop Jaywick as a resort for Londoners to own a place by the sea (Clacton and

District History Society). After World War II and the bombing of many London homes, people began to make the plot lands their permanent homes but without any proper infrastructure like roads and sanitation. Jaywick was one such plot land. In more recent times, Jaywick has been at the top of the UK government's list of most deprived areas with residents facing multiple and complex deprivations (2015).

Thistlethwait (2015) reports for *The Express* how some residents of Jaywick were dismayed by the televising of *Benefits by the Sea: Jaywick* as it had caused their house prices to plummet. The programme was filmed in the most deprived area in England where 50% of the populace are in receipt of benefits (Gentleman, 2013). An article for *The Sun* was shocked by what it saw as a the 'third world' conditions in Jaywick, a dumping ground for rubbish; here the implicit message of the article is that the rubbish is both literal and figurative, people have been using areas of Jaywick as an impromptu dump, but there is also a sense that people have been dumped there too, human detritus (Cambridge, 2018). A review by Ellen Jones for *The Independent* (2015) is worth noting here because it seems to indicate the ubiquitous nature of programmes about welfare recipients and the expectations of those who view them. Jones writes; "poverty porn is at least supposed to entertain but *Benefits by the Sea* didn't even reach that low bar." describing the programme as "Channel 5's bargain basement take on *Benefits Street*" Jones comments "these guys make the subjects of *Benefits Street* look like landed aristocracy" (Jones 2015). The producer of the show, Julian Dismore, claimed that the original title was *Jaywick Fights Back* but was changed to include benefits in the title at the request of Channel 5 because, Dismore thought, this would attract more viewers (Dismore 2017).

8.6 Jaywick Stories

The series follows the lives of a range of inhabitants of Jaywick. We meet the characters such as the ex-London 'gangster' who now lives outside his bungalow in a caravan surrounded by his cats. His bungalow is uninhabitable and he has no electricity. The temperatures are dropping, putting his life at risk. Then the father of two, too proud to ask for help to read his post so he does not realise how much rent he owes, he now faces eviction. I see people just trying to get by, to survive. I see people who care, a mother who wants the best for her daughter who aspires to get a job working in care. After a shocking incident in which her mother was threatened by a teenager carrying a knife whilst out walking her dog, her daughter takes her out to a local animal sanctuary to try to cheer her up. We meet Sarah, who at one stage had been a flautist with the Royal College of Music, is now living with her boyfriend JP in Jaywick.

She is determined to stick with a program to end her heroin dependency so that she can once again be reunited with her children who currently live with her parents. JP and Sarah are expecting another child but they will need to end their dependency on drugs and alcohol in order to keep together as a family. We are also introduced to Gaz, now severely epileptic due to his alcohol addiction which means that he drinks around 9 litres of strong cider a day. There is a child prodigy pianist who is now an alcoholic and is sleeping in one of the beach shelters on Jaywick's seafront. 18 year old Chantalle is soon to be married to Gaz's brother, she seems now to be caring for the 40 year old Gaz. She seems old beyond her years. Gaz is considering going into rehab but if he signs up to the programme he must also agree to leave Jaywick, he says "my biggest let down is loneliness". He has two sons he no longer sees and rehab could see them reunited. In an episode that is truly difficult to watch we learn that Gaz has had a seizure and died at home alone in bed. He was not discovered for a few days and the police are needed to gain entry to his home. There is a large turn-out of the community to attend his funeral; the solemnity of the funeral procession is juxtaposed to the skip of his few processions outside his former home from where the funeral cars leave.

Disco Dave is a struggling alcoholic. He manages to attend a rehab clinic and for a time we see him seek a new life in Clacton, away from Jaywick and all the temptations it holds for him. He hopes he will find work too. Finding a new place to live is problematic, it is hard to find a place to rent when so many landlords will not accept people without a regular income from work. He searches for jobs at the job centre and is disheartened to find one suitable but 'local' turned out to be Lanarkshire. After 6 weeks, Dave is unable to remain alcohol free.

Paul tells his story, he has been unemployed for over ten years, he wants to work but his skills as a builder have been greatly affected by having been electrocuted whilst at work. He tries to be self-sufficient, catching fish and tending his allotment. Once a thriving commercial fishing area, Jaywick now only has one regular fisherman who takes Paul out on a trial run but their catch for that day is not economically viable enough to support both men so Paul is paid in fish.

Viewers are introduced to kind hearted Boo whose wish is to set up a community kitchen to make sure that those in need can get a hot meal. She begins by cooking in her own tiny kitchen at home until an anonymous benefactor donates a static caravan and the community turns out to celebrate its opening.

I had the opportunity to interview for this thesis one of the memorable characters, local builder and blogger Danny Slogget who is passionate about bringing positive things to Jaywick, an area he loves. I wanted to hear about his experience of participating in the programme, why he agreed to do this, how he felt about the portrayal of Jaywick and how he felt when the programme was aired. Danny moved to Jaywick when he was 11 when his mum got work at one of the holiday camps, sadly she died when he was 14. He tells me he has been a bad boy in the past but wants to make good and to make a difference to his community. At the heart of all he does is the memory of his mother, "shine on" is his oft used phrase. He sets up the Jaywick Sands Happy Club during the course of the series, it continues to run. It is an alcohol-free youth club for adults Danny explains. We also see him set up Jaywick's Got Talent. He tells me that this could not have been done without the support of the production team at Spun Gold TV who made the programme. "I do it every year now since and I kept it for myself and I kept it for Jaywick … I know TV companies come and go, they won't help once they have stopped filming so you have to do it on your terms so you can carry on when they go." He is passionate about where he lives 'I want Jaywick to be known and to be equal, I will not quit, I will not stop until they get that Jaywick is in every person I have met. There is a Jaywick in all of us, we've all got a darkness of life" It seems to me that Danny wants to shine some light on that darkness and he succeeds.

The story of Jaywick is an ongoing one, after I had undertaken my interviews Jaywick would frequently appear in news stories. An unflattering image of a badly rundown Jaywick street was used by a pro-Trump candidate, Nick Stella, standing for congress in Illinois. The poster urged voters to vote republican to stop America returning to unemployment and recession. The image of Jaywick carried the slogan "only you can stop this from becoming a reality" (itv.com 2018). Not only were Americans being shown an image that was not even of their own country but the image itself was out of date as regeneration of the area had begun to take place. However, more significant than that was to be a visit by the UN special rapporteur on poverty Professor Philip Alston in November 2018. He was working on his examination and report on the causes of poverty and the impact of changes to social protection in recent years in the UK, such as the implementation of Universal Credit. After the programmes I discuss here had aired, regeneration projects began in Jaywick with house building and an overhaul to the neglected road system. The local authority, Tendring District Council, admitted that they had been embarrassed by the publicity. A feature on BBC's *The One Show* (2015) went to visit Jaywick, the reporter Fiona Foster described it as "a faded 1950s beauty queen

who hasn't aged very well" but she was there to cover the changes that were taking place in the area and the hopes of the local community. An £8,000 lottery grant had funded a community planner to help oversee a £7 million investment project. Paul Price, Tendring Council's corporate director told Fiona Foster that the area had been ignored for too long, by successive councils and governments; "I think it has become an embarrassment to all the councils and to central government … it's a shameful position to be in" but he said that the council was now determined to do something about it.

In an analysis of the coalition government's plans for welfare reform, Garthwaite (2011) critically reflects upon the way people receiving sickness related benefits can be labelled, portrayed and discussed within a wider rhetoric that encompasses governmental, public and media attitudes. In Garthwaite's analysis what was missing from key documents was the actual lived experience of people receiving sickness related benefits. The impact of narratives that vilify those requiring support means that their voices have been erased from the debate. I argue that this programme was able, to a certain extent, to highlight homelessness, precarity, alcoholism, drug addiction and criminality with the voice-over describing Jaywick as the place where "chaotic lives wash up" and "the closest thing to a shanty town the UK has", Jaywick has a sense of permanent impermanence. However, I see a resilience they have not learned through school, in fact several of the participants discuss their lack of school attendance and inability to read or write. I see people becoming impromptu families to people they only just know.

8.7 The Empathy Gap

Television can still have the capacity to be a source of reassurance in an anxiety provoking world, providing a link between the self and others. A complex and contradictory medium intimately woven into our everyday lives. Television also "forces us to confront fantasy, the uncanny, desire, perversion, obsession: those so-called troubles of the everyday which are represented and repressed, with in the media texts of one kind or another, and which disturb the tissue of what passes for the rational and the normal in modern society" (Silverstone 1999, p.11). But what should our relationship with the mediated other be? Silverstone suggests that the viewer should be able to recognise a moral responsibility not only for our neighbours, the people we know, but also for strangers. Media ethics would then be about a duty of care. Television's moral significance is a primary framework by which people understand the world (Silverstone 2006). Arguing for what he called *proper distance* Silverstone suggests a need for

our own mediated inner relationships to preserve the other through distance yet also acknowledge a shared identity. Audiences are actively engaged in the meaning making process and as Silverman puts it "are at work, actively engaged with the significant continuities (and continuous significance) of otherwise one way communication" (Silverstone 2002, p.18). Documentary making attempts to claim a reality and thereby claim a truth (Silverstone 2002). A programme such as *Benefits by the Sea: Jaywick* is defined as reality television, all those involved in the process from production to participant, to audience, share a degree of complicity in the narrative being told. As viewer one must not accept uncritically the partiality of representational claims given in this media format. To be complicit in a one-dimensional narrative, to accept it as a true representation can provide a sense of comfort, a sense that it must be so, and this in turn "inoculates us against the challenges of the real, and against our need ever, fully to take responsibility for the other" (Silverstone 2001, p.21). The viewer is not called upon to take action, to do anything to tackle structural issues or challenge the status quo. Viewing the programme requires no real-world action from the viewer who can be engaged in a "collusive illusion"; simply observing the other in crisis engages one in a "collusive illusion" that one is somehow sufficiently engaged with them in their crisis (Silverstone 2002, p. 22). This brings me to a theme that I have discussed in my literature review, the capacity to care. Silverman argues that what is needed in the mediation of everyday life is the capacity to care. All forms of media have the opportunity to help audiences make sense of the complexities of the everyday, an ethical media world is possible. Exploring the psychosocial dimensions of poverty, Jo (2013) suggests that the relationship between shame and poverty is disempowering. Shame is likely to decrease the empathy gap between the shamer and the shamed and yet it can also bridge the empathy gap allowing for the non-poor to develop an understanding around the complex issues faced by those in poverty, potentially reducing negative judgements. Jo argues that the emotional side of poverty has to be addressed in order to gain an understanding of the day to day impact it has on the lives of those affected. Beyond news coverage or statistical data there needs to be a proper contextualisation of poverty and the emotional impact that it has, on a social level there is a 'need to establish a bridge of empathy' between those in poverty and those not (Jo 2013, p.516).

To watch reality television involves constructing in one's mind a particular world view. I am troubled by such a genre and concerned that it serves only as a voyeuristic pastime where one can sit in the comfort of home, observing the precarious and unstable lives of other people, disconnected and at arm's length. And so perhaps Danny hit on something important here; is

there a bit of Jaywick in us all as he suggests? One can watch benefits television to feel better about oneself, passing judgement we feel safe in the knowledge that we would not become like this, but perhaps, at some deeper, inaccessible level we fear that we will.

Chapter 9: Benefits of the Sea

CASE STUDY 4: Seeking Wellbeing and Flourishing in a UK Coastal Town

The connective threads of my case study data thus far are: the lack of containing safety offered by the welfare state, as seen in the reduction of Sure Start services. Sure Start, I have argued, had the potential to be a social policy that, in practical terms, demonstrated a real commitment by UK government to the flourishing and wellbeing of UK citizens. This lack of containing safety is then connected with the onset of austerity measures in the UK combined with the link made between wellbeing and paid employment, as shown in my data on recent changes to welfare provision. Such changes have been given some legitimacy through the ubiquity of so-called poverty porn television programmes (as I have discussed in Chapter eight). Taken together, what is evidenced here is that, despite the incorporation of wellbeing into UK social policy, the current conjuncture is not conducive to human flourishing. I was interested that both my Sure Start case study and then my discussions around Jaywick were connected by location, that of UK coastal towns. I was struck by the paradoxical nature of the image of the coast. Whilst on the one hand, such locations can be associated with health, vitality, wellbeing, or to be more precise, flourishing; yet on the other hand, coastal towns in the UK are often areas of deprivation and isolation, factors which may well be a hinderance to flourishing. I wanted to be able to look further at these connective threads. I chose to explore in more depth the fantasies and realities of living in a UK coastal town.

I focus now on Weymouth and Portland, a coastal town and a tied island forming the southernmost point of the county of Dorset, England. An area that has seen highs and lows in terms of fortune over its long history. It has been suggested that the coast may be a "protective zone" for wellbeing as living by the sea can have positive implications for mental health. Research found that those living within half a mile of the coast were less likely to suffer with mental health problems such as anxiety and depression (Garnett et al, 2019). An interest in "blue health" (Garnett et al, 2019, p.1), or the link between the natural environment and psychological wellbeing, has a long history as I will go on to discuss. My interest in UK coastal towns has been interwoven throughout this thesis, from my recollections of the fight to try and keep a Sure Start centre open in the Somerset coastal town of Minehead, then to my consideration of Jaywick on the Essex coast and its representation on screen. This interest stems from my personal experience: although I was born and raised in a London suburb I have since

spent a number of years living in two coastal areas: Minehead, as I have already mentioned and now Weymouth. What strikes me profoundly is the cultural and emotional significance that seaside towns in the UK hold, the beauty so often found in the natural surroundings and the evocation of childhood holidays by the sea that seems to draw people to the coast. Yet, often set away from the beauty of the coast, unseen perhaps by holiday makers, are the pockets of deeply felt social isolation, inequality, deprivation and a sense of being left behind. I will suggest that coastal areas in the UK can be therapeutic environments in which individuals and communities are able to flourish. However without the containing environment of social and community structures and resources, and without a real commitment to address social injustice, the ability to flourish by the coast will be limited to those with the socio-economic resources to do so.

I will begin by outlining some of the historical connections Weymouth has to health and wellbeing. I then examine relevant data about the area in terms of social mobility and deprivation. I then present key themes from my interviews with a range of interviewees from the local area who in some way have long-standing connections with the social structures that contribute to a welfare society and enable the harmony and flourishing of its citizens, as I have outlined above.

9.1 Weymouth and Portland: Health, Wellbeing and Flourishing from Past to Present

On the Esplanade at Weymouth, a seaside town on the south coast of England, there sits an unusual spectacle. It is a replica of a bathing machine used by King George III, who visited Weymouth regularly, believing that the waters there had healing properties. The king suffered from long bouts of ill health; it is now known that he had a condition called porphyria, but at the time it was widely thought that he was mad. Even after his recovery, his doctors were worried that he might relapse. It was at this time that sea bathing, and even the drinking of seawater was being recommended by physicians as an aid to good health. He first used such a bathing machine in 1789 on a visit to the town and the Royal Family regularly spent the summer in Weymouth up until 1805. A medic at the time described Weymouth in glowing terms;

> "Weymouth of late years had been much frequented for its commodious sea-bathing, which it furnishes, in a manner superior to any other in the Kingdom. The general tranquility of the bay, the clearness of the water, the softness, and almost imperceptible descent of its shore, are so favourable for the purpose of bathing, even to the most timorous and debilitated, that I do not wonder at its being the

resort of many people of first distinction." (Cited by Chedzoy, 2003, p.10).

The horse-drawn bathing machine would pull the king out to the shoreline where he would be dipped into the water by two female Royal "dippers" before returning to the machine where he would change back into his robes. Soon many of these bathing machines could be found along the seafront, indeed the bathing machines could still be used at Weymouth beach right up until World War II. This Royal visitor taking the healing waters at Weymouth popularised the idea of the health and invigoration of the sea and the sea air. Seaside towns in England became almost synonymous with health and wellbeing.

The link between Weymouth and its health promoting properties remained a key theme in guidebooks right up to the 1970s. "Seaside resorts are the creation of over 250 years of holiday making - from Georgian bathers, through the time of heavily dressed Victorian holiday makers, to the twentieth century day tripper. All have left their mark on seaside towns, and seaside towns have left their mark on us, featuring prominently in everyone's memories" (Brodie et al, 2008, p.67). However, whilst Weymouth remains a popular holiday destination, as with all UK seaside resorts it has been impacted over the years by an increase in the numbers of people who choose to holiday abroad.

9.2 Weymouth and the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics - A Town Revitalised?

Weymouth once again became a focus for health and wellbeing when in 2012 Weymouth and Portland became hosts to the sailing events for the London Olympic and Paralympic games. This revived, albeit perhaps temporarily, an interest in the area for the perceived healthy and outdoor lifestyle opportunities it had to offer. With newspaper and magazine articles at the time calling it *The Jewel of the South* (Jackman 2012) and claiming that Weymouth had "spruced itself up accordingly, in preparation for being turned into the next St Tropez" (Dyckhoff 2012). The expectation at the time in the media was that Weymouth would experience and benefit from "Olympic bounce", the games would transform Weymouth's fortunes by "throwing off its Cinderella reputation" in contrast to nearby Poole (Bloomfield 2012).

Seaside living in the UK is so often associated with health promoting qualities and an active outdoor life style. Coastal towns emerged as leisure and pleasure resorts in the 19th

century, with seaside holidaying reaching its peak in the 50s and 60s where these towns really saw their heyday with attractive public spaces, entertainment venues and a deep cultural sense that seaside living, or at least seaside visiting, enhanced personal health and wellbeing. Places can develop reputations for health and wellbeing through cultural narratives. Seaside living continues to be aspirational, particularly for retirees or for those able to afford a second home. It is often the property pages in newspapers or property magazines that are keen to highlight the many benefits that Weymouth has to offer. As this example in the *Dorset Magazine (2014)* shows "enhance both in terms of its infrastructure and property, since hosting the 2012 Olympic sailing, Weymouth is an affordable option for those seeking a coastal location" the article highlights Weymouth Georgian seafront, the post-Olympics legacy of a "greatly enhanced road system" and the opportunities for those who enjoy sailing and yachting, the article continues, "it is quite common for people from London and the Home Counties to move to Weymouth in search of a better quality of life, and who can blame them!" (Greeves 2014). Again, as this article in *The Times* (Anon 2014) notes "Weymouth, a pretty Georgian seaside resort with a sandy beach and a warm, shallow bay … has been on an upward curve since it was chosen to host the sailing". From the property pages of *The Guardian,* Dyckhoff (2012) focuses on the area during the 2012 Olympics year and highlights Weymouth's breathtaking sandy beach, seafood festival boutique hotels and picturesque harbour. In a survey of Dorset residents 90% said that the environment was an important factor in their decision to live in the area, and 34% of the area of the county is designated an "Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty" (Roberts, Dorset Council 2019).

Situated on England's Jurassic Coast, a UNESCO designated heritage site, Weymouth is indeed an area of picturesque scenery, a beautiful long sandy beach complete with Esplanade and Georgian seafront. Within the town itself there are two Royal Society for the Protection of Birds nature reserves, an extensive network of cycle paths and ample opportunities for walking. It is a popular place for sea swimmers, sailors and those who enjoy a whole variety of water sports. The harbour area was once a cross channel ferry port but it is now used by pleasure boats and private yachts. Weymouth is host to many events throughout the year such as the aforementioned seafood festival, beach volleyball competitions, Iron Man triathlons, dragon boat racing and beach motorcross. So for many, both locals and visitors alike, Weymouth provides a range of opportunities for flourishing through outdoor activities and engagement with nature.

9. 3 The Coast as a Health-enabling Place

There are good reasons for this association with the coast and health, wellbeing and flourishing which are worth noting. Physical environment may play an important role in promoting good health as MacKerron and Mourato's (2013) study on happiness found. Respondents in their study said that their happiness was increased if they were in natural environments. People place highly emotional value on coastal places and experiences to the extent that the coast can be regarded as a therapeutic landscape. Kelly (2018) for example, argues that framing the coast as a therapeutic landscape with the potential for simultaneously meeting human needs and natural needs can allow consideration of policy decision-making, not only in relation to of human health and wellbeing but also environmental issues. The presence of and engagement with therapeutic coastal landscape and the 'Blue Space' of water, is a positive indicator of wellbeing particularly through outdoor activity and pro-environmental behaviour. Humans need the sea and the sea needs humans in return argues Kelly. Physical and mental health can improve with access to green and blue spaces but equally the sea needs humans to protect and conserve it as a vital aspect of the living environment. There is a symbolic relationship Kelly suggests, between coastal environmental sustainability and individual human wellbeing.

I would like to borrow here from the work of Averill (2007) who explored the idealisation of the rural landscape in contemporary popular culture. Images of the rural landscape, he found, share a common emotional resonance which he described as giving one access to a good object. He suggests that images and portrayals of the countryside offer a psychological defence. They provide an image of soothing, of safety, a good object that resonates in the psyche of the reader. He suggests that this portrayal of the countryside offers a haven from insecurity. I suggest that images of the seaside, evoking memories of holidays past, the vitality of the sea air and the beauty of the scenery, are also very appealing particularly at a time of uncertainty and fragmentation. The imagery of the countryside, and I suggest also the coast, often evokes a place of healing and recuperation, whereby the vulnerable self finds a nurturing maternal presence on whom we can rely for goodness and love (Averill 2007). Despite the idealized images of the coast, the reality of living in such locations may, for some, highlight the tensions experienced in the modern world. The seaside envisioned as the place to flourish, to experience wellbeing, often stands in stark contrast to the life experiences of some many of the inhabitants of coastal towns in the UK where, as we can see from some of the

respondents in my interviews, the theme emerges of the coastal town being at 'the end of the line'.

Approximately 17% of the UK population live in a coastal community. There are a number of common characteristics shared by many coastal towns, including their physical isolation, levels of deprivation, stories of older people moving in while the young people move away, poor quality housing, lack of the employment opportunities and wage stagnation. Coastal towns often undergo continuous socio-demographic upheaval with an influx of people visiting the towns during holiday season. Whilst older people often look to seaside towns as retirement destinations, younger people frequently find it necessary to move away to seek employment and education opportunities elsewhere. The physical remoteness of coastal towns, the lack of investment in infrastructure combined with high levels of socio-economic deprivation, the precarious nature of employment and low wages contribute significantly to social exclusion. This in turn, threatens the wellbeing of the inhabitants of a coastal community (Ward 2015). These characteristics of a coastal community, combined with poor transport links and constraints on socio-cultural opportunities, have been associated with higher rates of poor self-esteem, poor mental health and harmful behaviours among young people (Cave 2010). The negative impacts of tourism must also be taken into account where an increase in antisocial behaviour can damage coastal community wellbeing (Cave 2010).

9.4 Weymouth and Portland: Social Inequality - An Impediment to Flourishing

Although there is a social basis to health and wellbeing, wealth maximisation is a prevalent guiding principle. Social geographer, Professor Danny Dorling, speaking at a conference organised by Weymouth and Portland Action on the Wages (WeyPAW October 2018) said; "you should have a sign up at the train station that says 'Welcome to Weymouth , the most socially divided small urban settlement on the south coast of the country". For the purposes of the conference he had been analysing the government's data and deprivation index of 2015.

In a national context, Dorset does not score highly in relation to deprivation. However, according to the government's index of national deprivation 11 local areas in Dorset are within the top 20% most deprived in the UK with 10 being in the Weymouth and Portland area of South Dorset; this rises to 13 areas when disability is taken into account as an additional factor. Six areas in Weymouth and Portland are actually in the top 10% most deprived nationally (The Indices of Deprivation, Dorset Council 2019). South Dorset itself ranks the 533rd out of 533

on the government's most recent social mobility index. Between 2007 and 2017 the local economy in Weymouth and Portland contracted by 12.9% (Corfe, 2019). Many people are affected by the issues I have been describing throughout this thesis: precarity, vulnerability and social injustice. Social exclusion is a complex and multidimensional process. It involves the lack of resources, rights, goods and services that should be available within the social system. This often means that there is an inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities available to the majority of people in society, whether in economic, cultural, political or social arenas. This affects not only the quality of life of the individual but also the cohesion of society as a whole (Levitas et al 2007).

Models of health and wellbeing often view people as separate from their environment. An eco-psychological view would allow for the consideration of a more dynamic relationship between people and place rather than simply focusing on the individual and their health or lack thereof (Stevens 2010). Wheeler et al (2012) found that good health is more prevalent the closer one lives to the sea. These effects were greater amongst more socio-economically deprived communities. They suggest that this is because of the greater opportunities available for stress reduction and increased physical activity (Wheeler et al. 2012). So-called Blue Health has been associated with better health and wellbeing for low income families, where those living 1km from the sea were less likely to experience poor mental health than those on the same income but who lived 50 km inland. Living near the coast may mitigate against health inequalities, the coast therefore, should be seen as a mental health resource (Garrett et al, 2019). Mitchell et al (2015) go as far as to suggest that if societies either cannot, or will not, reduce socio economic inequalities then research should focus on the equigenic, that is health supporting, environment. In other words, the environments in which we live, learn, work and play need to be taken into account when considering how health inequalities can be reduced.

9.5 Interviewees in Weymouth

I interviewed the following Weymouth residents in order to get some insight into living and working there, and to see what their experiences might tell me about one's ability to flourish in a coastal town.

A journalist working for the local newspaper

> Miriam was once a member of the traveller community. She had also worked for a local
> authority in their Public Relations department. She told me that she chose to retrain as

a journalist because she wanted to be able to represent marginalised communities through her journalism. She writes particularly on issues such as child poverty, social mobility and environmental issues. She also grew up in Weymouth so has a deep sense of connection to the area she writes about.

A semi-retired Social Worker

Holly has worked in a largely rural and coastal area in South Dorset since the 1980s. Her work has mostly focused on issues of child protection and she has seen many changes happen in terms of policy implementations and resource reduction over her working life.

A Youth Worker

Paul has over thirty years' experience of youth work and has long-standing connections with Weymouth. Recently, he has seen the service he helped to build have all of its local authority funding removed.

A Community Mental Health Nurse

Chris had started as a volunteer thirty years ago when unemployed; one day he decided to step into the local volunteer agency which was next to the job centre and by chance was asked if he would like to help out at the local psychiatric hospital. This led him to a career in mental health support and then a nursing degree. He now works as a community mental health nurse in a largely rural and coastal area in South Dorset.

A mother

Clare, now in her thirties and with children of her own, describes her experience of growing up in Weymouth, her fondness for the place yet also the many issues that she has faced and that, she thinks, still continue to affect many others.

As I discussed in Chapter 5 Method, the names here have been changed to protect my interviewees' privacy. They are not representative, the number of interviewees is too small for that, but I want to draw on their lived experience of dwelling or working in a UK coastal area.

9.6 Examining the Emergent Themes from my Interviews

I used thematic analysis based on the conceptual framework proposed by Braun and Clark (2006) to identify, analyse and report themes within my data. I examined my interviews for common or recurring themes, whilst also noting aspects that departed from the dominant story of the analysis. Here I will present the key themes, with examples from my interviews. These themes will then inform the discussion in chapter 10.

9.7 Coastal Towns and Isolation - 'End of the Line'

I asked Miriam, the journalist, whether she noticed particular issues that she covered that were specific to the coastal town area.

> **Miriam:** "I think, because we are at the end of the line, we tend to get forgotten. People are very aware here that people who graduate don't come back here because there are no jobs and prospects here unless you have a skill to have your own business. It adds to the mentality of "why bother, what is the point". There is also a huge problem with homelessness and all that comes with such as addiction and malnutrition."

The Social Worker, Holly also raised this issue of the area being the 'end of the line', pointing out that some people had been drawn from elsewhere to come and live by the coast with happy memories and hopes for the future:

> **Holly:** "A lot of displaced unsettled families from other areas, they feel they can leave all the bad stuff behind and settle down on the seaside because they feel they did have holiday memories from somewhere as a child or hearing people talk about it and they think they see, perhaps, a seaside town as a nice place, a fresh start. And also the seaside town where I worked, it was an area of particular deprivation but, I know this sounds like a silly thing to say because I guess all seaside towns like it, but it's the end of the line, the end of the railway line, and the end of the railway line seems to mean something as well in terms of bringing people in who have had trouble to live somewhere else perhaps. It's not always necessarily parents with children it can also be people without children who have problems but, I have heard it said before, its end of line seaside places that seem to attract."

Born and raised in the Weymouth area, Clare painted a similar picture of life in a coastal town.

Clare: "So I have lived in Weymouth since I was born. I'm 33 years old now and I have no inclination to move away, however I have a different perspective to living by the sea to most I think. I think, as a child growing up it wasn't too bad but as I reached my teens there is so very little for teenagers to do, no services for us to access. Jobs were very seasonal very far and few between. I remember being 12 and I worked in Claridges tea rooms; it's no longer there, it will be against the law now anyway due to high population of children and young adults and teenagers. Jobs were very few for the pre-school leaver age and prices were also quite high. Just basic amenities, because it's a very seasonal thing, prices would go up naturally in the summer and in the winter most places would close obviously, like the swimming pool but again that's pretty boring. They don't really do very much unless it was the summer and then it was for the people visiting. We did try to sneak into Littlesea holiday park but we always got shooed out because it was holidaymakers not locals."

This was an important factor for Clare, an issue she returned to a few times in the interview, the feeling that there were areas of her hometown that were for the tourists and not for the locals. This had a big impact on her, particularly how she felt about the beach area as it was not somewhere she chose to go very often and was very reluctant to take her children there:

Clare: "It was you know, all song and dance in the summer but when the winter was here it was kind of dusty old town that didn't really do very much. And also when the summer hit you couldn't move in Weymouth so you try to go about your day-to-day life and it was hell. So you try to avoid town and beach to the best availability what you would be stuck in hours of pedestrian traffic, you wouldn't be able to get into the shops properly because it was just horrendous because they were so many people. It's obviously not as popular now."

She went on to explain why she rarely visited the main beach area in Weymouth, like many locals, she mainly went there in the winter time for dog walking. She never took her family there and if she was to go to a beach she would opt for a smaller one along the coast that mainly locals would use;

Clare: "Yes I don't like the beach. The facilities aren't there so, as a parent, going down the beach it is terrifying because there is one lifeguard station so if you lose your child it's a long expanse to find them again. There are very limited toilets, lots of refreshments, you can

buy ice creams till they are coming out of your eyes, but you just don't feel safe because you don't know who is down the beach, you don't know who all these touristy people are, so it is not a community beach it might as well be the Costa Del Sol."

I asked her what it had been like at the time of the sailing events for the 2012 Olympics;

Clare: "Hell. I was pregnant at the time and all the roads will be dug up, all the roundabouts were being taken out. And that was a thing to Weymouth, we had loads of them and they always used to be decorated for the season and they were really quite nice, they were. So we had a bit of congestion but they worked. I remember all the hype around it. I even bought myself a bike that year because everyone told us how really busy it was going to be and, you know, it was going to be a real big input to the economy. They took out our fairy lights, which we loved, everything that kind of made Weymouth the quintessential seaside town went and we got these massive laser light things which were hideous. And actually it wasn't that big of a high when it actually came around, it wasn't that busy. There was a lot of negative publicity because of how much the Council had spent getting ready that the event and obviously we had, what's it called, Portland had lots of new homes built for the Olympics it was the Olympic Village. Consequently I actually moved into one of them and actually they weren't very good at all."

I was interested in why she felt the homes originally built for the athletes' village, were not any good, as the promise of Olympic legacy had been an important factor for the hosts of the games. It seems as though, with regard to lasting housing, the athletes' village had been really nice to look at but not necessarily suitable for family living post games.

Clare: "So I think the back bedroom was the biggest bedroom. It was absolutely enormous but it had vaulted ceiling. So, Portland being very coastal, every wind, all rain that came in it sounded like you were in a shed and half the loft space. For a family living in these homes, it would be alright if you were a couple with the spare room, but it wasn't any good as the family home."

She explained how parking was a real problem, especially for those who were council tenants as their parking spaces were set away from their house making it difficult with a young family and all the paraphernalia that involves. With few resources on Portland itself it was a long walk to any shops and you would be very reliant on a car. The gardens were uneven and got very

boggy so she found she was not outside much. Also, because the design was very open plan there was little storage space. Her recounting of how she felt about the Olympics and her home in the former athletes' village seemed to further reinforce her feeling that there was a Weymouth for tourists and visitors and one for the locals.

9.8 Nostalgia: Things Were Better in the Past

Clare, who has lived in the town all her life, spoke on a number of occasions about her fondness for the fairy lights that used to adorn the promenade at Weymouth. She also talked of an area known as Brewer's Quay in the old part of the town that had been turned into a sort of community hub or meeting place, with a cafe and small shopping centre, but which had now closed down. I commented that there was something quite reminiscent there for her when she thought about those fairy lights:

> **Clare:** "I remember when I was a child fairy lights and firework night it was that kind of even if we popped down in the car and sat on the seafront fairy lights and fireworks that we've lost that. Carnival day used to be our big thing that we've lost that. I think it's coming back but it will never be the same that used to be for the whole community. The red arrows always flew over and about three and it's all gone thanks to the funding and because we are solely reliant on tourist trade, it is gone because we are not getting the money in any more."

I asked Clare if she thought that these occasions were times when the community could reclaim their space.

> **Clare:** "Yes indeed, yeah and it was we were very lucky we had fireworks every Monday night through the summer you know. Teenagers use to be like "right, on Monday we will meet at the clock and then we'll watch the fireworks and will be home by 9 o'clock our curfew" but it was a thing to do, a place to be. Even if you didn't access the beach it was still something to do and actually I don't remember there being that much trouble, there were no police sirens going off or mass police raids. So actually, I'm imagining, I might be completely misinformed, but I think that crime, on those nights when there was something to do and community feel, it wasn't particularly high considering the amount of people that used to congregate and the amount of teens that used to be unsupervised, actually It brought the community back together which the Olympics successfully disintegrated because they took away our identity."

For Chris, the community mental health nurse, his sense that things, in his view, were better in the past came from his experience as a volunteer at his local psychiatric hospital long before he had even considered entering the nursing profession. Spending time with patients in a day centre had been particularly significant to him as he recalled the many activities that patients were able to get involved in both in the centre and wider community. Later in the interview, when I asked him about what he thought should change to make things better, he returned to the issues that had struck him as important as a volunteer.

> **Chris:** "I just think there needs to be more investment in public services, not even just mental health services. It can be social clubs anything, anything that people are go along to say that I'm not excluded because they don't work or because they've got a disability, do you know what I mean? It's like, I mean, the drama therapy, the music therapy, the things like that. It's all gone. Are you to say people that were depressed but that actually be smiling, making music together or painting together or even in a writing group where they're sharing their life stories with each other. You don't see any of that now it's all gone. You might have an OT [Occupational Therapist] on the ward and they've got time to spend with people individually and people come out of hospital and say "I didn't really see the nurses much or the doctors but the OT was brilliant" but that's because they've got the time freed up to do what I think nurses were doing years ago. So the roles have changed. I feel like we've just become management level."

Holly is a Social Worker and when we spoke she also gave the sense that there were things in the past that had been important to the social work role. Her concern was that the child was not the most paramount focus for society as a whole:

> **Holly:** "We have lost sight of the child, yes. And we have lost sight of the ordinary person being able to do something, do you know, in any small way for the child by putting the child first. You know. I mean, if you saw a disabled mother spending quite a bit of money on alcohol or something, you see some empties outside the garden gate and she's wanting help to get her children to hospital appointments. You know I expect a lot of people would just say "well she's got the money but she spent it on booze I have seen it in the recycling bin", rather than actually, because the child comes first that they think this child needs to get to the hospital appointment so I could help them. They just see

the mother - whether the mother is deserving *(she emphasises this word as if she is putting it in quotation marks)* deserving of help or not."

9.9 Nostalgia: A Response to the Precariousness of Life

A recurring theme of the interviews was that of nostalgia. Nostalgic reactions can often manifest at times of cultural upheaval and may take the form of a conserving influence, (Davis 1977) or as a refuge from turbulence (Lowenthal 1985). At a time of bewilderment and precariousness a nostalgic response can be seen as in Berlant's words: 'frightening conservatism or an insistence on modes of social care that are inconvenient to capital' (Berlant and Prosser, 2011, p.182). The nostalgia for social care structures, or public objects, can be a 'regenerative refusal to adapt to neoliberal demands for flexibility, mobility, and abjection to austerity' (Berlant and Prosser, 2011, p.182). Equally, nostalgia for public objects could mean there is a reluctance to accept necessary change. From a psychoanalytic perspective, nostalgia can be seen as an attempt to alleviate melancholic suffering (Sohn 1983). The past is imbued with special qualities and is called to mind on order to be juxtaposed with certain features of the present (Davis 1977). Nostalgia for the past is often infused with positive sentimentality, recalling a time when things were better, happier, healthier; 'a positive evocation of a lived past in the context of some negative feeling towards present or impending circumstance' (Davis, 1977 p.18). What is key to Davis's understanding of nostalgia is that it has far more to do with the present than the past 'it is present anxieties, concerns, and existential discontinuities that evoke and amplify it' (p.135).

9.10 The Complexity of People's Lives, the Repetitive Nature of Trauma

I asked Chris to tell me about the issues that he found that his patients were facing;

> **Chris:** "Well the biggest one's housing. They can be evicted for falling behind in rent or if the people that own the building have asked them to leave. A lot of people are in housing associations and people say they've waited a whole week for things, like someone from the housing association to come round and put the water on so they had no hot water. We often have to go to food banks with people just to help them eat, I've even bought a fish and chips before for some because they haven't had a meal.

The main factor we come across is loneliness. People are feeling so lonely, that's the main thing especially in a rural area and you're seeing people in small villages in the middle of nowhere where a bus might come along every two or three hours and it only goes to one place. So there's only one place they can go to they can't go anywhere else where there are train links or bus links. So loneliness is a big thing and the rehab centres are really non-existent and there are no day centres like what I'd been to as a volunteer, nothing like that and they have been places that were invaluable. They were places where people could gather together, they have a sense of belonging that kind of community spirit."

Holly was concerned that the impact of trauma on a person's life may mean that they would really struggle to attend groups that may be of help to them;

Holly: "But you know the other thing I've learnt in my career is that there can be all these wonderful groups set up, parenting groups, children centres, groups for mothers and young babies, whatever it is - but if you've been traumatised as a child in whatever way, you can't go out and feel confident about being in a group. So we often have parents coming up with all sorts of reasons and excuses as to why they don't go along to these groups. People are missing the point - they can't. So you can have a very troubled family with the whole circle of support networks around their house but, unless you're psychologically in a place to take that support and help up, they're not going to go across the road to the most wonderful group in the world."

I asked Chris if he had seen a lot of changes in the way mental health services are delivered in the time that he had been qualified nurse;

Chris: "Yeah I mean, I suppose in relation to the psychology IAPT [Improving Access to Psychological Therapies] approach and steps to wellbeing we have got to a point to now where people who might have been classified as personality disorder, what they really kind of experiencing is trauma. I think they will do away with the category of unstable personality disorder because of the negative connotations to it and also it's such an umbrella term. It's like a dustbin diagnosis, you just drop people in there but you're not really sure what they would come under. So they are now going to call it, and I think this is good opportunity to open up the resources for people in the future, but they are going to call it complex trauma. So hopefully that will open up a lot more resources in psychology for people to work with complex

trauma. At the moment they are few and far between, the people that do the counselling therapy anyway. They are not all psychologists, some are nurses but I was talking to someone the other day and he is the only therapist in that area so one man for that whole area and there are a lot people in that area that I know that need therapy so it's a resource that you can't really access, you can't. So more and more people are being asked if they can afford to go private because they could be such long waiting lists so you are starting to get a culture of "that's not my job" whereas, when I first started it was an attitude "what can I do to help?". Now I am hearing more and more that's not our job so you need to go here or you need to ring this number, because of the reconfiguration of services."

I asked Paul, from his youth work perspective, to tell me what he saw as the factors facing young people at the moment;

Paul: "Well a huge number, over 1000 in England, Youth Centres offering open access youth work have closed and thousands of the youth workers were made redundant. But we've seen a massive increase in the number of young people having problems and those problems are becoming pretty serious in terms of our society and quite public, particularly in terms of things like knife crime, but I think things like mental health and suicide are also fairly public issues and is fairly well-publicised. I think there's a bit of a crisis in mental-health including young people is in a bit of a crisis in terms of the number of people committing suicide I never certainly seen a crisis like this in terms of the number of people carrying knives and knife crime and murder. So the things, I mean clearly in my mind as a youth worker, the two things may be connected that there has been an massive reduction youth work, in youth clubs in places for young people to go to to be safe to develop and to have positive adult role models in their lives, to make friends with new people, to develop the skills that they need to cope with life and to do well, to be encouraged to be aware of issues affecting their lives…"

One of Paul's biggest concerns for the young people that came to the youth service was the impact of social media and the prevalence of mobile phones. He informs me that he has asked numerous young people if they would rather go without food for a week or their mobile phones, most of them he said, replied that they would rather go without food. His concern about the impact of phone use on the mental health of the young people coming to the service he initiated digital detox nights, people attending the service that night would agree to set aside their phones

for the night unless there was a real need. I was interested in what he observed about these nights;

> **Paul:** "The fascinating thing is that, at the end, we evaluated with young people, we put sheets on the walls. And when we recently did one of those nights it's like an open invitation to hand in the phone when they come to club: now, if you want to you can keep it. It's rarely taken up when we specifically say that we are doing a digital detox night no technology and is definitely a case of handing in your phone when you coming and you get it back at the end of the night but, in the meantime, we will have lots of fun with no technology. And we evaluate those nights when we specifically do them and, yes, so I've got on the walls and sheets flip-charts where young people have commented about how they felt the fascinating and also scary in that there was positive feedback like "I did more than I normally would", "I did more activities", "I spent more time talking to my friends", "I talk to new people that I've never talked to before", "I actually really enjoyed it", "I forgot I'd handed my phone in, I just enjoyed myself"."

Clare spoke from very real personal experience, she had been made to leave home at 16 as she and her mother did not get on, sadly at the same time her grandmother died so she found herself with no family support and homeless during her GCSE year at school. For two years she lived in a centre which supported young people in similar circumstances. At 18, upon reaching adulthood she had to leave and then 'sofa surfed' for a while, sleeping on her friends' couches. I commented that she must have felt very vulnerable.

> **Clare:** "I did, and there is no communication to the main office. So I had a violent boyfriend at the time in my room and I had no way of contacting them. So I literally picked up my intercom and shouted until somebody heard me but that shout had to go outside until someone heard me from inside the office. So actually that wasn't a good kind of organising plan. They should have been especially considering most people in that facility needed additional emotional support. We had a massive kitchen downstairs but it rarely got used. We had a massive computer room and that didn't get used very often because of the fear that someone would go in and smash it all up."

9.11 Lack of Resources

Paul's service in particular had seen a huge impact because of local authorities making budget savings and cutting services. Having worked in local authority run youth services for many years, he was faced with the council's decision that they would be cutting the youth service in the area. This was despite the fact that the service had only recently seen a funding award which had enabled them to build a new building. Paul and a number of the other workers and volunteers had fought to save the service and now ran it, albeit in a much more limited form, as a charity. I was interested because of the way Paul had begun describing the nature of his work; he conveyed a view that the youth service was an extension of the education system. He painted a picture of a more holistic way in which children learn with the youth service very much part of that. However, as time had gone on the service was more focused on helping young people in more individual way. This not only ties in here with the concern that the community was seeing a reduction in resources, but also a sense that things had been better in the past when Paul felt that he was able to work in a way that had been underpinned by a particular ethos, that youth work was about;

> **Paul:** "I've always found that definition of youth work as social education and enabling people to gain the knowledge feelings and skills necessary to meet their own and others' developmental needs, it's as good a definition of youth work as I have found."

However, he had seen a significant change in recent times, especially when still under local authority control:

> **Paul:** "It is fair to say that our work, by necessity, has become far more about targeted work with young people who have problems and issues going on in their life and young people who are excluded and struggling for one reason or another and at risk. And our work has become more based on one-to-one support than developmental group work that youth work was mostly based upon. And I am resistant to that change in various ways and I think my team of staff generally are because, to be honest, it's an argument within youth work about targeted youth work and open access youth work as it's called. So more and more funds, as more and more resources cut, local authorities that still deliver a youth work and, to be honest, over the last 20 years more and more funding has been allocated to targeted youth work rather than what used to be called generic open access youth work - available to all, turn up come in, anyone can come. More and more funds were put

into doing targeted at work with specific individuals whether they were NEET you know, not in education, employment or training, t was also work alongside the youth offending teams, or whether it was people being excluded from mainstream school, or had challenging behaviour. So yes, over the years funding has been aimed at targeted youth work and open access has seen significant reduction in funds or is now not funded at all across the country. And at the same time we have seen a massive rise in young people having a variety of problems."

From Chris's point of view, he had the feeling that resources were only put in place now if the service was at crisis point:

Chris: "You just keep hearing it's all about getting more for less. It's not sustainable and I wonder why that's not being addressed by the powers that be. It's just not sustainable, something is going to happen and it will happen I think, a major incident. This is what happens, you go through period where you might find more people are taking their lives, and it's not until something terrible happens like that that things start to change. Where you suddenly see support and other services coming out of the woodwork but it doesn't stay like that, it's always short-term, maybe a month if that where departments start to work together. But then it all starts again."

Holly, the social worker also highlighted the issue of community resources, indicating that it was not always about money but society as a whole as a resource that should play a part in how children are cared for. She had been talking about the legal frameworks within which social workers operated. I asked her whether she thought there was a tension then between what the legal frameworks say and what resources can actually cope with.

Holly: "I think there is a tension in the legal framework that is supposed to represent us as a society and how we treat children and that has never been communicated to society. So these two things, the Every Child Matters which was about lifting children from poverty and the Troubled Families initiative about reducing antisocial behaviour and basically the cost that these families put on the public purse, they never touched on any of this. But it's a child that comes first so, you know, when it comes to, for example, reducing antisocial behaviour there is nothing in the troubled families initiative about the community coming together and helping young people, like helping set up the skate park or something like that, to give them something positive to do. That

was never in either of these programmes, Every Child Matters and Troubled Families."

9.12 Things Fall Apart - Service Fragmentation

A further recurrent theme from the interviews was a view that services were becoming more fragmented, a sense that there was little joined up thinking, and a feeling that people were working in silos. This made it difficult to take a holistic approach to the users of services. As Holly said:

> **Holly:** "I think at one point, until about five years ago, there was an effective support service for schools in how to manage safeguarding issues in that the local authority had a team of advisors going out schools. All that has been dissolved because of Academy status and because of cutbacks. There was a team of about 60 now there's only one in post. So schools aren't getting specialist support any more. I also think that Health Visitors, when you think back, they are very much individuals and individual personalities. And some people really got it and gone with it and try their hardest and then referred it over when they have done lots of appropriate things, others didn't want to know. Now Health Visitors are under the local authorities they don't seem to be able to do as much and see children and families as much as they used to and being under a local authority control doesn't seem to have brought them into the fold any closer to the social workers doing the safeguarding stuff at all."

I asked Chris what he thought about the way governments showed their commitment to mental health at various times through his career:

> **Chris:** "Governments seem to just throw around figures, X million here X million there, but you've still yet to see really where things are going to improve. You just have to look at the shortage of staff and posts that aren't filled. It just seems to me it's all talk, I don't think they really want to help the NHS maintaining standards. When I first started working I used to get lots of positive feedback from people that use the service but now trust in the NHS seems to have dwindled and people have lowered their expectations and there has been a gradual decline in the standards of the service, like there used to be lots of training available but not so much now because of budgets."

Chris was working in a service that is primarily about helping people in terms of wellbeing but I wondered who helped him and his colleagues with their own wellbeing.

(A long, long pause while he thinks)

> **Chris:** "Well, things just seem to naturally take their course. We all informally help each other. It's strange because what I'm hearing at the moment from colleagues that worked there for a long time is that we are kind of our own worst enemies. I can't remember quite how she put it, that basically we are all still covering all the work that is given to us, even with the increase in referrals we're still getting the work done, trying do what we can and by the end of the day we've tried to see everyone down everything. In a way we are our own worst enemies because the management don't think well these guys they can do this so they're not worried about replacing staff. There is just an expectation on us as nurses and doctors that we will maintain a high standard of service of care and support. There is no means by which we can back off from people when they're saying they want to take their own lives so you have to prioritise on your caseload. I mean staff meetings we don't really have those, not that many anyway. Other departments seem to have away-days. We talked about this so many times that we never go on any … I think we just feel like we're the hamster in the wheel just spinning round and round around eventually one of us gets off and the next hamster gets on then we start running around again. I do get supervision, it does help me but quite often it's not proper clinical supervision it's more just moaning about what's happening (laughs) but I have things on my chest that I wanted to get off, issues were very long term so I thought I could talk to her on a personal level but I don't, here is my support for the staff, to be honest but we kind of support each other."

The reduction of services and its damaging impact was also discussed by Paul. For example, he described how he felt that reduction in services elsewhere had meant that other services found themselves stepping in;

> **Paul:** "I've described youth workers being educational, developmental and preventative and those are the three words that I like to use to describe youth work - educational, developmental and preventative. But the 20 years, particularly in the last 10 years with the

massive cuts to youth service budgets, local authority budgets, and the closure over 1000 youth clubs, whatever money there is for delivering youth work is more put towards targeted work which has tended to be work based on the deficit model of young people, people already having problems, less and less work with young people in preventative way, more and more young people having problems, youth workers being used essentially as social workers."

9.13 Disavowal of Inequality

The UK has experienced the reinvigoration of government policies which increasingly blamed the poor for their poverty and lack of social mobility. Their lack of social advancement is blamed on their various habits, behaviours and other psychological characteristics, whilst denying the effect of exploitation and structural inequalities. Rather than trying to make sense of inequality it is more often disavowed, as Ryan notes in her study on class and psychoanalysis, such disavowals of poverty and inequality can be seen in the examples such as the renaming of poor families as 'troubled'. Walkerdine (2015) argues that the history of blame and pathologising the poor has blocked understanding of complex histories of suffering. When institutions of social support fail to protect individuals and communities they can create a traumatic stress which interferes with the individual ability to develop safe object relations with the social environment (Hernandez de Tubert 2006). As I have already discussed, taking a psychoanalytic perspective helps us to recognise that the inability for the social system to ensure even the most basic human rights and protections to all individuals parallels the lack of containment in the parent child relationship where the basic needs of a child are not fulfilled (Bion 1959, Layton 2006, Peltz 2007)When a social system fails to contain, nurture and care for members of its community this can generate trauma which can be likened to the experience of failed caregiving by a parent figure. Such a lack of care is often seen through lack of assistance and compassion towards minority groups, those in poverty and victims of economic crisis for example. A society which honours the commitment to care and protect all its members can be a great source of vitality and hope. When it does not however it brings despair (Hernandez de Tubert 2006).

In an examination of the causes and effects of severe and multiple disadvantage the Lankelly Chase Foundation (2015) describes the categorisation of people in separate boxes defined by single issues. Four example a person may take drugs or alcohol in order to deal with trauma, perhaps they then turn to offending and, in the process, lose their home and could end

up in the prison system. However, each issue identified here would trigger a different response from the various statutory and voluntary agencies that could be involved in the support of that individual. This variety of issues can also trigger different attitudes in response from the public, the media, academics and policymakers. What results is fragmentation. Very much an emergent theme from my interviews was a sense that many departments in health and social care were working in silos, without the sufficient joined up working that would enable person or family centred work which would take into account multiple factors and look at the person holistically. In his book *Managing Vulnerability* (2010), Dartington considers why this fragmentation in services is occurring. He wonders if this fragmentation is symbolic of the sense that the task for society is too difficult when thinking about how to care for people in times of dependency. The restructuring of health and care services maybe both useful and destructive in equal measure, but what Dartington points out is that the question should be why has this restructuring been deemed necessary for the survival of the UK economy? He notes: "I suggest that the needs of vulnerable people are so all consuming that they threatened to be overwhelming to the rest of society" (2010, p. 214). What happens therefore is that the most vulnerable members of society become the containers for the anxieties of those who hold much more power than themselves. In thinking about societal dynamics, it is necessary to explore these underlying anxieties and a potential fear aroused for those who have the most social, psychological and economic comforts by those who are the most disadvantaged in society; are they "afraid of losing their sense of personal security if they take notice of the needs of the unenterprising in enterprise culture" (Dartington 2010, p. 214)

9.14 Disconnect Between Those in Power and Those on the Ground

I noticed that several of my respondents spoke about how those that brought in new polices, notably the government, felt to them to be too far removed from what was actually needed for individuals and communities. A similar view had emerged when I spoke with Stewart, the Job Centre Work Coach in my interview in Chapter 7. Here is Holly talking about her experience implementing government policy for social work practice:

> **Holly:**   "When the Troubled Families initiative set up it was £4000 per family to focus on behaviour, not going to school, parents getting into work. It was made quite, quite clear that the local authority social work department have no hand in it at all, they would get no money from this project whatsoever. And it turned out that they chose families

we never quite knew how they chose them, they had a list families that they had chosen that was encrypted on emails and just sent to senior managers. I think possibly one of the common denominator factors were the parents, they work in paid employment and there might have been poor school attendance but the people that administer the scheme locally never came to us to say have you got any families that would fit this game, never. So there was a big mismatch there between what the government were trying to do with the Troubled Families initiative and actually starting to look at what was already out there. There was no strategic thinking behind it or acknowledgement that there were already people out there trying to do this work so let's get together with them pick their brains, get some ideas off them. Okay it's a project, we don't want to get sucked into the work they're doing but we've got valuable information that we can kick off with."

When listening to Holly I got the sense that she felt there was lack of joined up thinking, and that there had been a selective approach in the way families had been chosen for targeted work.

Holly: "I think at the time it was more than that. I think that we felt that the government just thought we were really rubbish at what we did and that they would just come in and sort it."

I asked Chris what he thought needed to change for mental health services:

Chris: "Well, I would like more buildings built and more therapists specialising in trauma, that would be good, more drug and alcohol units. We used to have what we called dual diagnosis - something we would help people with all those years ago where someone will have a primary diagnosis, say of depression or bipolar, but in conjunction with that they take alcohol or illicit substances. So all those units have gone, those departments don't exist any more, they used to have dual diagnosis nurses that was specially trained in that but it's just gone. There is less of an emphasis on expanding the public sector, what it is is really whittling down the public sector to the bare bones but still expecting the services to be run as if all these resources were still out there."

From Paul's perspective as a youth worker;

Paul: "I think at all levels from the government to local authority heads of services, not that there are many that still exist now a lot of it is gone

or has just been picked up wherever possible by the voluntary sector charities and so forth. But I think at all levels there is the need to recognise that, I think a couple of things, there is a need to recognise the root causes of the problems faced by young people in our society and to tackle those causes. There is sort of deficit model of young people that just says how young people are lacking, you know, "what's wrong with young people today?", that sort of thing. As opposed to what is wrong with society today that is causing these problems, what is presenting young people these challenges that are tough for them to deal with and many of them don't succeed. So, rather than a deficit model of young people, obviously as a youth worker I prefer to have a much more positive view of young people. So young people have a tremendous potential, a real capacity for growth and development and to contribute to their communities and society."

9.15 Losing Hope

A recurring theme of the discussion was that of losing hope. I was struck particularly by one of the comments made by Chris, the community mental health nurse. He made a distinction between nursing as a career and nursing as an occupation "so obviously you go in thinking that nursing is a career but it's just very much like an occupation really".

I asked him to tell me more about what he meant by that, he said;

> **Chris:** "I'm in two minds because there is still a part of me wants to develop as a nurse and I wouldn't want to do anything else. I really like the job, every day is different, I talk to different people, you get a snapshot of their lives. I know it sounds a bit cheesy but it's a real privilege to go into people's homes and you're told a lot of personal information about their lives, I love that part of the job. But we don't see them for long enough it's not the way the team works so you can't do actual therapeutic work with people or take a systemic approach, talking to the whole family for example. If you take too long during a visit people think "well you could go to see someone else in that time" so spending a long time getting to know the situation for somebody, I don't think that is valued any more."

I then asked him if he thought there was potential for future improvements to the services he was working in.

> **Chris:** "No, I can't. It sounds so pessimistic but I really can't. I'm really worried that in this country we are really struggling to maintain the

NHS as a service, not just mental health the whole thing. It's constantly under attack on a negative level in the media, morale is so low when I talk to staff, not just in my team in other departments too. They have asset stripped so much of the NHS I can't see it being improved unless we ever see… an emphasis on increasing public services not the private services you keep being shown coming in on their chariots saving a dying service (laughs) and then they take all the glory. That's how I see it. I don't see a strong commitment to health and wellbeing, well I do - there is a strong commitment but only if you're willing to pay for it and that's the difference. So for those that can't pay for it there's not a commitment much, it is the bare minimum and there are a lot of people out there in these rural areas, not much work around, not much wages, where it really is the bare minimum to them and that is the sad thing about it. They could be getting a much better service if the government invested in that."

I got a similar sense from Holly too.

Holly: "No I'm not, I'm not hopeful at all and the departments are struggling to get staff and, do you wonder at it, it will be privatised. Well the Children's Act makes it clear that it's local authorities who are responsible for safeguarding but of course the government can always change bits of legislation. You might be privatised out, I don't know, we're seeing it happen in the NHS."

9.16 Traumatogenic Environment: Lost Hope

Psychoanalysis works on the basic assumption that how the external world is perceived is largely influenced by the inner world. Individual development and an ability to flourish will always therefore, be embedded within the culture and society, the social contexts for the individual. However, discrimination and stereotyping contribute to a powerful social mirror that shapes its self-images and perceptions by others. Individuals will cope in varying ways with negative social messages. However, the ways in which people cope, or not, will frequently be attributed primarily to an individual's capabilities or competencies rather than the societal dynamics in which they experience (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2002). The experience of discrimination and social injustice contributes to various challenges to an individual's sense of safety, belonging and integration (Tummala-Narra 2016). The failure of public and private institutions to address the needs of people on the margins will have profound implications, not only for the individual but potentially for society as a whole. In their study of the experiences

of immigrant families, Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2002) note that people can suffer real damage when the society around them mirrors back to them a demeaning, perhaps even contemptible picture of themselves. When the expectations are of laziness, irresponsibility, low intelligence and even danger, the outcomes for those individuals can be a sense of discouragement and futility. When these reflections are received in a number of mirrors including the media, the classroom, and the street, the outcome can be psychological devastation. I think that their argument here is of importance and it can be extended to other discriminated against social groups.

To examine traumatic stress through the lens of psychoanalytic theory can allow for a critical understanding of the impact of social oppression (Tummala-Narra 2016). Helen Fallenbaum, a clinician who has been working with people who have experienced physical or psychiatric injury at work, notes that trauma is the psychoanalytic portal to the outside world. It is the site where we cannot deny that what happens outside affects what happens inside. She says "it is by looking at what happens to a person's psyche when the outside world forcefully disrupts the person's fundamental sense of safety that psychoanalysis is made to face straight on the power exerted by environment on a person's inner world (Fallenbaum, 2003, p.89).

Group analyst and psychotherapist, Earl Hopper (2001), says that in order to recover from traumatic experience it is necessary that relationships within the community are reestablished. This depends both on individual members of the community and on the structure of the community as a whole. Problems arise though when people feel powerless, they can develop a concrete and operational style of thinking which can then permeate through the generations through child rearing. In other words, Hopper says, "in some sections of our societies, the Chinese water torture quality of everyday life restricts the ability to think about and reflect upon experience" (p.205). But in order to have an ability to reflect on past traumatic and difficult experiences there is a need for optimal cohesion in social groupings and this is very dependent on the degrees to which these groups are impacted by inequality in power and authority. Exercising power and authority must be done in such a way that shows care and responsibility, without this, Hopper notes, there can be no safety; "this is true for the parent-infant relationship and it is true for the political life of our organisations and our society" (Hopper 2005). I return to the work of Andrew Cooper (2015) here, as previously mentioned in chapter 2. He notes that modern psychoanalysis engages with a whole array of social realities, bringing them to attention. Psychoanalytic discourse insists on thick textures of social and personal suffering as well as desire and aspiration. What is of importance is the grounding

if policy makers in complexity of social relations, thereby taking into account the the lived experience of those directly impacted by policy decisions.

The experiences of those who use services, therefore, should be taken into account during service design and beyond, listening to the users of services as a "legitimate source of welfare wisdom" (Schoon and Bartley 2008, p.27). There is something of value in research that actively seeks out how the effects of risk can be mitigated against and to explore ways in which hard pressed communities are able to get by in the face of adversity. However, "many individuals are crushed by the experience of poverty and disadvantage, and it is always the most vulnerable who suffer the consequences. Even the most resilient child from poverty-stricken circumstances is finding it more difficult to do well in life than a more ordinary child from a wealthy background. To witness these inequalities one has to ask, what would the resilient child or person have been able to do - what would their contribution to the community or the economy have been - if they had not had to overcome disadvantage? A society that maximises opportunities for all citizens is also one that makes the best use of the many assets for wellbeing, social and economic development" (Schoon and Bartley 2008, p. 27). As Young argues, when a large category of persons are placed under a systematic threat of domination, structural injustice occurs. Under such conditions people are unable to exercise their capabilities (Young 2011). To be able to flourish under such conditions will be dependent on how the individual is able to compete in the free market enterprise economy. Through the lens of the free market, if a person is unable to flourish it is not due to the circumstances they find themselves in.

9.17 Glimmers of Hope Return

I was mindful in each interview that my interviewees were working or living in difficult and complex environments. I felt it was important to explore with each of them if they were hopeful for the future. As I have discussed already, the overwhelming response was one of despair. One motivating factor for many in the caring professions is a desire to alleviate suffering in others especially if caregivers themselves have had the own experiences of distress. This is hugely problematic in a damaged caring system where a sense of failure of a system is then felt by those who work in it, in a very real way as their own personal deficiency (Dartington 2010). It is important though to draw from the interviews what I think of as glimmers of hope, the stories they felt were signals of a more hopeful future. This was

particularly evident when talking about the positives to be found in community and voluntary initiatives.

Miriam told me about the benefits she thinks she has as a journalist who has grown-up in the area she covers.

> **Miriam:** "I think I have a sense of pride working for my local paper. A lot of people I work with aren't from here as they have just qualified and then found a job in local news, which is often where you start. So I think there is a benefit, having local links and contacts and a sense of trust, I think, and people are more likely to come to me when they know that I have grown up here especially somewhere like here where there can be suspicion of strangers. It's nice for me to be able to write about some real positive community projects too, like the Repair Cafe, things like that that locals have set up to help themselves."

I asked her to tell me more about the positive initiative she saw:

> **Miriam:** "There's a cafe owner who is spearheading a community improvement plan. It's stuff like that that's really heartwarming, to see people taking the initiative and not being trodden down by the poverty in this area. It's annoying that they have had to step in and fill gaps left by the public sector but it's good to see that people do this. Seeing people who want to make a difference for the better in our local area, I think it makes people feel hopeful."

I asked Clare too if she had hope for the future of her hometown;

> "I would like to think so and I have high aspirations but, the way it's going possibly not. I don't know. I have a kind of golden vision but it's all about money we don't have any and I'm only one person and unfortunately the cause is much greater than I am, although I will continue to do small bits - and I hope for the best but I'm not sure I can do it all by myself, it needs a group of people with the same hope."

I asked whether she thought there were people with the same kind of hope.

> **Clare:** "Possibly but as soon as they try to speak up they tend to have water poured on their fireworks by the council: you're not allowed to do this, you're are not allowed to do this, that and the other. It has to be going along with something that is trendy, so if we can catch your wave with something that is trendy, like the environment, that is

probably going to help. So if we could move towards that and go with that wave and start bringing in ideas about environment and community and working from there. I don't know, it needs much more movement, maybe there will be a domino effect but I am not quite sure how yet."

I asked her if she had a spark anyway.

Clare: "I'm going to try, I'm going to try."

Clare had needed to access services to help her as a teenager and on into adulthood. She knew first-hand how difficult that could be, nevertheless she was now training to be a nurse, she wanted to help people, it was very important to her;

Clare: "Yes, and the fact I see so many people around me struggling to access services. How can you have good wellbeing when the facilities that you would expect to help you reach wellbeing are not in place, just not there? And actually how many people do you know go and knock on an elderly person's door to make sure they are all right? There's not much for the elderly, there's not much for children. It seems if you're standard adult, which most aren't, then its ok but around here there's a lot of poverty. Our food bank is really busy so there is clearly something fundamentally wrong with our beautiful seaside town - and they need to get rid of those lasers!"

For Chris, the hope came from seeing more of a move to ensure services were patient-led although he showed some scepticism that service reforms would be undertaken with, in his opinion, the right motivation. I had asked him about how the team he now worked for, following a service restructure, was working.

Chris: "Well this is the difficulty, we been up and running under a year but we still haven't really got operational policy so there is a lot of difficulty around what our role actually is. We are all trying to be consistent but we're getting a lot of inconsistencies because we have guidelines about how to take referrals but not everyone reads these so that's an individual's problem really rather than the Department. But essentially we are nurses that go out into the community and we tried to replicate what the community mental health team does but in a more intensive way. That's the model and this was all put forward by the Clinical Commissioning Group but they have had serious discussions

with peer support groups and the patient movement group, people like that. So there is more of an emphasis on the people that actually use the service, so if they want to they can be part of that service to degree to help change the service to focus on the people that use that service, if that makes sense."

I asked if this was service user driven.

> **Chris:** "Yes I think so, not wholly but they definitely have a voice and it is becoming more vocal. There are pros and cons to that. From a nursing point of view I think it's good when the organisation working with us has a real focus on mental health and really enabling service users to be involved. But I wonder whether some organisations are just too profit-driven and that's all they worry about …"

Holly stated what changes she thought needed to happen;

> **Holly:** "Well I really think the government needs to run a public campaign. A big government campaign needs to be on the telly, in the newspapers, social media, it needs to be out there - they are good enough at putting their manifestoes out there so they've got the wherewithal to almost try and indoctrinate the public. We shouldn't have to tell them how to do it, just get their resources and do it and you know, with that surely there would be lots of triggers. Then people will start to say "okay and what about the poverty, what about child poverty what about our awful statistics on that?" There would be protests and pressure groups, it would mobilise a lot of things."

For her hope came in the form of much more community awareness about children, particularly when thinking about the families that come to an area looking for a new beginning but actually have no social network around them. She is suggesting there is a way to build a social network even if it isn't familial;

> **Holly:** "I think there is a perception out there that it is the welfare agencies' and the state agencies' responsibility, "nothing to do with me mate". I think there ought to be a programme from the government that actually showed that it is everybody's responsibility to look after the welfare of children, even in a very small way. You know like a disabled mother struggling to get her child to medical appointments or something, the neighbour steps in and takes that mum to that medical appointment. And I think hand in glove with this, and it's something I

was talking about the other day with someone, our societies are so disjointed now. Grandparents could live in John O'Groats and you could live on the south coast but then there would be grandparents just up the road on the south coast that have got their grandchildren living 100 miles away - why couldn't they have a grandparent role to the family next door that are struggling. Do you see what I mean?"

Paul had very direct experience of being a community member who had stepped in to fill gaps in services and make sure a much needed resource was saved for local young people. After 23 years working for the youth service, the local authority took the decision to stop running all 22 of their youth services. He and his colleges had kept the service running as a charity. In many ways he actually felt that, as a youth work service, they now had more freedom to run it in a way that they wanted to rather than being under the guidance of the local authority. For Paul this meant that he would be focusing on anti-discriminatory work with young people work over the years. His aim was to encourage young people to have positive views and to recognise prejudice and discrimination and, in his words "decide they don't want to be part of that":

> **Paul:** "As youth workers working for a charity we can discuss with young people and decide what we focus on. And we can focus on our developmental work. Whereas if I was still working for the local authority I would probably be doing home visits with a kid that has just been excluded from school and finding out that his family have got drug addiction and mental health issues and I will be liaising with social workers about it, going to meetings. So I suppose I'm quite happy that working for the charity means there is more freedom again to deliver the kind of educational developmental and preventative work that I always believed that youth work should be about primarily. That is certainly where my heart is a youth worker."

9.18 Community Belonging: Key Component of Flourishing

My thesis has discussed narratives of resilience as a component of human flourishing. More often the narrative of resilience is one of individual responsibility derived from a set of personality characteristics. An alternative and perhaps more useful understanding of human resilience is a theoretical perspective which conceptualises the interaction between individual and context, thereby shifting the focus away from resilience as a set of personality characteristics. Taking this view of resilience allows for an understanding of the individual who is active and growing as part of an ever-changing environment. Human functioning is a dynamic process, shaped by the opportunities available to people and the choices they then

exercise. Research into community resilience (Faulkner and Brown 2018) finds that communities choose their own capacities that they view as important factors for resilience. Even though there is a typology of resilience, promoting capacities, place attachment, leadership, community networks, community cohesion and efficacy, knowledge and learning, a community will choose for itself which ones they find useful as a resource. For example, one community could prioritise the need for leadership whilst others may self-organise without an obvious leadership role. Faulkner and Brown (2018) found however, that place attachment was integral to community resilience and demonstrated its collective nature. Place attachment provided an impetus for individuals to come together as a collective based on their shared experience of where they live. This demonstrates the relational and subjective aspects of resilience. Tyler finds in her research that what people want in order to create the conditions for a liveable life involves being able to lay down roots, feel safe, create a home and family, belong to a community and have a sense of a better future: "what many disenfranchised people actively desire is not flight but rather anchorage" (Tyler 2013, p.12). To return to the work of Shah and Marks (2007) as discussed in the literature review, their manifesto for wellbeing emphasised the importance of a social dimension to wellbeing. A vital component of wellbeing is a sense of belonging to a community. It is more than that though, it is about being able to feel that one can make a contribution to the society one lives in.

All the transcripts of my interviews can be found in the appendix and I think it is worth taking a moment to read these people's stories. There was not the space in this analysis to do justice to all the rich experiences of my interviewees. Particularly joyful however is Paul's account of the 'Big Brother' weekends held at the youth service, he portrays a real sense of the positive impact these events had had for both young people and staff alike. As I have said, the interviews are not meant to be representative of all views on Weymouth, the services there, the people and the way of life, they serve as narratives of personal experience but ones in which it is possible to see a common voyage.

In my four case studies I have taken a psychosocial approach to examine how social welfare is perceived in the public sphere and how welfare reform and austerity have impacted, both from an individual's perspective but also from a community perspective, focusing particularly on a UK coastal town. The purpose of these case studies is to show the shift that has taken place in welfare policy where there has been a distinct move away from any understanding of welfare as having a part to play in how a population may flourish. Instead, the emphasis is on workfare. I have sought to demonstrate the tension that is felt by the neoliberal subject to flourish, take responsibility for oneself, and to thrive in the face of

adversity yet without the containing function of a welfare state. I have taken a particular interest in coastal towns as they are so often evoked as places of good health and wellbeing, an environment in which to flourish. Yet often they are areas of social injustice and deprivation which are not conducive to the flourishing either of the self or of the community.

9.19 Acknowledging Dependency

The philosopher Nel Noddings describes an ethical ideal which comprises two sentiments; "the natural sympathy human beings feel for each other and the longing to maintain, recapture or enhance our most caring and tender moments" (Noddings 2013, p.104). It is in the moments that we experience reciprocal receptivity, when we are open to the other and that feeling is reciprocated, we can experience great feelings of joy. Noddings says that this feeling of joy is a sense of feeling at one with the other, be that a child, a lover, an idea, scene or work of art and this sense of joy helps us to maintain us in caring. Noddings does not make mention of psychoanalytic ideas in her work, and I think that she has missed some very valuable insights in doing so. At the very heart of our capacity to flourish is the moment that we are far from alone, we are at our most dependent. The first love object of (m)other is a tremendous source of joy and pleasure which has the potential to be transformed into an affectively positive object, says the analyst Alizade (2010). What she means here is that an early stabilising, harmonious and facilitating environment can have long term positive implications for good mental health and wellbeing "whilst melancholy is the shadow of the object, joy is its light" (Alizade 2010, p. 6). I think the ethics of care approach has something important to offer when we want to re-imagine a social policy on welfare and wellbeing.

To live a life, especially a good one, having a sense of curiosity can play a crucial role in making us feel that we want to learn. Being able to be curious about our environment begins in childhood as we play and explore. This curiosity about our environment helps us to develop the skills needed to make informed judgements about the future. This sense of curiosity about the world needs the presence of care givers who are consistently sensitive and responsive to the activities of the infant. The infant experiences, then, a care giver who is engaged and excited by them and who is capable of providing a stimulating environment (Brazelton et al 1974, Cassidy and Shaver 2008). The sense of security lays the foundation for the development of social and emotional skills required for experiencing a good life, imbued in which one can be said to be flourishing (Chisholm 2011).

To be able to provide such a consistent and sensitively attuned environment means that the child develops a future oriented outlook capable of generating an idea of what a good life may look like. Such an environment is not easily achieved however, especially when the care giver experiences a life of uncertainty, inequality and poverty. Risk factors such as these make it more difficult to for the development of secure attachments (Tronick 1989; Belsky and Pasco Fearon 2008; Chisholm 2011). Kwong and Hayes (2017) research found that adverse experiences in childhood, that were then compounded by socio-economic factors, meant that children were less likely to flourish. They argue that adverse childhood experiences should be considered as a public health issue. Many health issues in adulthood can be viewed as developmental disorders that began in early life (Shankoff and Garner 2012). Adverse and traumatic experiences in childhood can lead to an increased tendency to adopt detrimental coping behaviours and unhealthy lifesyles. This can then further exacerbate socio-economic inequalities and an increased likelihood of unemployment, homelessness, or entering the criminal justice system (Shankoff and Garner 2012). It can be argued therefore, that there is a public health need to alleviate the persistent health disparities that are associated with poverty, discrimination and maltreatment. In doing so it may be possible for a government to show a real commitment creating the conditions in which citizens can flourish.

9.20 To Matter and To Hope

The purpose of the case studies has been to document the impediments to flourishing, yet also, to find the things and feelings that offer a more hopeful future. It is here that an important link emerges. Care, compassion, the need to matter to people and the society you live in are linked to a sense of hopefulness as I will explain. My case studies have shown ways in which social injustice is an impediment to human flourishing. However, what is also evident is that many of my subjects are striving for, and in some ways achieving, the needs to matter and to hope. To matter to others supplies the person with a sense of who they are and offers a guide as to how they fit in with their surrounding social situations (Elliot et al 2004). It is concerned with receiving attention and value from others and forms the foundation for the person to believe that they can make a difference in the world of others (Rayle 2006).

In *Moral Repair,* the philosopher Margaret Urban Walker (2006) writes about "the task of restoring or stabilising - and in some cases creating, the basic elements that sustain human beings on a reasonably moral relationship" (p. 23). Moral repair is about restoring or creating trust and hope in a shared sense of value and responsibility, shared moral standards. Making

amends must involve taking reparative action which will need to involve an acceptance of responsibly. The dynamic tendencies of hope include feelings of futurity, desire, belief, possibility and efficacy. The last component of hope involves someone taking a certain kind of affective attitude or emotional stance in relation to her beliefs about the possibility of realising her future-directed desire. "Our own actions form some part of the conditions for our hopes being realised … hope clearly can dispose us in a variety of ways to seek out, plan for, strive for, take heart about, concentrate on, our renewed energy into getting the outcome we want" (Walker p. 50). Hope is not only an individual and a social good but a necessity and shows people that there is a future to value.

> "Hope can leak away, in lives of relentless hardship, loss or injustice … even so, many people summon strength, make plans, reach out and fight back, sometimes banking not on the smallest hopes but on the bigger ones that aim to change lives. The human capacity for hope can be astonishing, like weeds that can grow up through the smallest of cracks in slabs of concrete. Hope too, is a kind of growth towards the light." (Walker 2006, p.42)

Chapter 10: Discussion and Conclusions

Psychoanalysis has a vital contribution to make insofar that at its core, there is a recognition that progress is only achieved through painful struggle towards forms of reconciliation with others. Lack of political engagement and critical enquiry may be based on powerful feelings of helplessness and hopelessness (Cooper and Treacher 1995). The therapeutic environment actually allows a space for creative and flexible thinking about the unthinkable (Leader 2011)

The essence of neoliberalism is to produce an individual as a form of economic opportunity, to fail in this brings the threat of exclusion from the promise of the good life. The fear of redundancy is no longer just from the workplace but from life. "The pain of failure, of being a loser, of being invisible to those above us cuts a deep wound in the psyche" (Rutherford 2008: 14). As Bauman (2008) observes, there has been a major ideological shift in which composing a vision of a good society is considered a waste of time because individuals themselves are expected to find, and implement, individual solutions to problems, despite the fact that many of the problems they face are socially created. This new ideology "derides the principal of communal responsibility for the wellbeing of its members, decrying it as a recipe for a debilitating nanny state, and warning against care-for-the other on the grounds that it leads to abhorrent and detestable dependency" (Bauman 2008: 20)). At a time of social and political turmoil how does one maintain a sense of the possible?

10.1 A Welfare Society

In Paul Hoggett's (2000) view, the original idea that the welfare state was based on the concept of universalism was irrevocably tied to the notion of an institutional model of the welfare state. Post-war welfare has become rule based and hierarchical, dependent on expert knowledge to develop service provision. It is based on the faded ideals of a universalistic welfare system, from each according to ability to each according to need. In essence this enshrines the structural disadvantage faced by the poor who have been asked to bear the costs of others' progress. If rights are not integral to the system, then those who receive support become blamed for inadequacy and deemed underserving. In Hoggett's view, the institutionalisation of welfare meant that the origins of welfarism, based on common welfare, family, neighbourhood and the community-based networks of society, had been overridden. Hoggett suggested that what was required was a non-institutional model of a welfare society.

What could be considered is a welfare society rather than the welfare state. A welfare society is based on mutuality in terms of interlinked values of generosity, trust, interdependence and solidarity. These values, Hoggett says, have actually been working tacitly as the submerged foundations of the welfare state in the UK. He bases his definition of a welfare society on work by the sociologist and social policy researcher Fiona Williams, who discussed ways in which a renewed universalism could be imagined where universalism is combined with the commitment to social diversity. Her proposal is that welfare should be based on the politics of recognition.

Williams (1988, 1999) argued that social policy is structured and delivered in practice as a version of the dominant values of society, notably around family, work and nation. Rather than a welfare system formed around the binary construct of dependency/independence, Williams argues, persuasively, for a model based on interdependence. Williams argues that to recognise interdependence, one also has to accept that at times we are all necessarily dependent. However, such a view challenges the institutional structures which render some marginalised groups unavoidably dependent. The ethics of care, according to Williams, provides an exemplar of how care requires both recognition and a careful negotiation of the different interests caught up in its discourse and practice. An ethics of care is necessary to redress the balance placed on the ethic of paid work. "It is through caring and being cared for that we take account of the needs of others" (Williams 1999, p. 678).

Cooper (2008) argues that, at a time when neoliberalism is the dominant ideology, psychoanalysis can offer us a critique of its reductionist view of human nature. Resisting the usual top-down approach to policy making, psychoanalysis can open up an opportunity or 'space' for policy that acknowledges real, complex, lived experiences of social relations. Winnicott, although not known for his political work, was devoted to promoting the importance of environmental provision for healthy growth and development and, through examples from his clinical work, he was able to discuss the impacts on children and on into adulthood when failings in their environment had occurred. The implication of psychoanalytic theories such as Winnicott's therefore, is that there is a social responsibility to provide the conditions for optimal psychic development (Peltz 2006). A relational approach holds that psychological and political wellbeing are both dependent on relational conditions that promote rather than stunt growth (Frosh 2010). This approach places emphasis on finding alternatives to the constraints placed on human capacities by oppressive social forces (Rustin 1995).

Peltz (2004) advocates for recognition of a post-depressive position "in which we could put forth a form of relating that extends beyond the triad of the Oedipal (whole objects) to

communal groupings and society at large" (p.15). By this she means that the capacity of effectively locating self in relation to a social grouping could be considered a developmental achievement. A developmental process such as this would be about respecting difference, maintaining separateness and assuming responsibility for other group members. It would also be about recognising the anxieties that can arise from group membership too, such as the fear of disappearing or anxieties about competition. The infant is born with a tendency towards growth, the integration of the personality, and the move towards object relating and inter-personal relationships. However, these processes of growth must take place within what Winnicott called a "facilitating environment" (Winnicott [1967] 1986, p. 144):

> "A facilitating environment must have a human quality, not a mechanical perfection, so the phrase 'good enough' mother seems to me to meet the need for a description of what the child needs if the inherited growth processes are to become actual in the development of the individual child" (144).

From an ethics of care approach as outlined in Chapter 2, I am suggesting that flourishing can only be seen as a worthwhile pursuit if it is considered to be part of an inclusive social collectivity. One should not flourish at the expense of another Instead it is about fostering something good within that can be shared, such as kindness. I have argued that the development of our capacity for concern forms a significant element in our collective capacity to flourish. If a facilitating environment is so intrinsic to the development of that capacity, then how might social policy take that into account and actually provide an environment that can allow this to take place? In my first case study in Chapter 6, I presented an exploration of the Sure Start project, established by New Labour, to see if social policy had the potential to enable the formation of a facilitating environment. I argued that the Sure Start initiative was an opportunity for government to show real commitment to a social policy beneficial to the wellbeing and flourishing of all.

10.2 Context - Con-text: The Counter Transference at Work in My Thesis - The Search for Hope

"Making hope possible, rather than despair convincing" (Williams 1989).

Motivated by my interest in the UK government's policy to measure the wellbeing of the UK population (Lennon-Patience 2013), the purpose of my thesis has been to examine how

positive psychology has been influential in UK policy making. I had been struck by the absence of a psychoanalytic perspective around the meaning of wellbeing and flourishing. I have been particularly concerned that despite the commitment to measure wellbeing, the implementation of austerity measures in the UK have had a negative impact on people's capacity to flourish. I have sought not only to document the impediments to flourishing but also, as Highmore (2016) argues: to "grasp hold of the feelings and things that can, potentially at least, offer a more hopeful future" (p.23).

Throughout my thesis, an overarching theme has been the place of hope in human flourishing. I would like to return to the theme of hope by way of a conclusion. As I reflect on my thesis I return to my position as a researcher. I do not come from a 'privileged nowhere' (Dreier 2008, p.26). My interest in my subject matter did shape the process and product of my enquiry, and as I acknowledged from the outset, I did become personally affected by my chosen subject. I wrote that the drive behind my thesis was perhaps to seek reparation and hope in a time of bewilderment and uncertainty.

Whilst reviewing the literature around hope and flourishing, I read a journal article by education researchers, Wolbert, Ruyter and Schinkel (2018). Their work explored how parents should relate to their children's future flourishing lives. I was interested in this article and how it related to my case study on Sure Start and the importance of childhood as the crucible for flourishing. As I read the article I had to pause and take in what I was reading. The authors were referring to a book and a poem that I had read shortly after the birth of my child. The book is *Far from the Tree* by Andrew Soloman (2014). A book about parenting what he calls children with 'horizontal identities', by which he means 'recessive genes, random mutations, prenatal influences or values and preferences that a child does not share with its progenitors' (Soloman 2014, p.1). The poem is by a mother who happens also to be included in Soloman's book. Emily Kingsley wrote *Welcome to Holland* about the experience of having a child diagnosed with Downs Syndrome. This poem is regularly given to parents of children who have disabilities, perhaps via social media or through a support group. The poem gets to the heart of how a parent can feel when their child has a disability. It describes someone planning for a wonderful holiday in Italy, but when the plane lands they find that they are in Holland instead. One soon learns to adapt and appreciate Holland but it is not the holiday to Italy that one had expected.

The book and the poem had resonated with me as a parent of a child with a physical disability. Although I have written from a personal perspective about Sure Start and the

impact of the closure of my local center, I had not had this experience of being stopped in my tracks by the research material I was engaging with. The point being made by Wolbert, Ruyter and Schinkel (2018) with their references to Soloman (2014) and Kingsley (1987) was that the flourishing life a parent may imagine for their child may not be possible or even desired by the child themselves. Furthermore, they make the distinction between *goal oriented* expectations of flourishing and the *hope* that a child may flourish. Goal oriented flourishing involves the belief that the expectations for the child will come true. Instead, having hopes for a child's flourishing is a belief in the possible. Expectations of flourishing, Wolbert, Ruyter and Schinkel (2018) suggest, can be connected to parental pressure and competitiveness. Hope, in contrast, can imply an awareness of the limits of human powers and is connected to a sense of humility and an openness to the unforeseen. They conclude that an abstract and many-sided ideal aim such as flourishing requires humility and flexibility on the part of the parent. The mobilisation of hope is central to human survival; it is the belief in the possibility of improvement, creativity and the possibility of making things better. Hope says Hopper, is always 'Janus faced' (2005, p.197) because although it is directed towards the future it is always based on past experience. Highmore suggests that Raymond William's work around structures of feeling was never simply about doing better more rounded cultural research. It was about understanding how change occurs, how social and cultural forms are maintained and "perhaps most importantly of all, of locating what Williams referred to as 'resources of hope'" (Highmore, 2016, p.23)

10.3 Good Enough Flourishing

As I discussed Chapter Three, positive psychology's understanding of human flourishing is that it is best achieved by gaining a sense of control or mastery over one's life (Lamore 1999). This excludes the possibility of flourishing through the unexpected and unplanned moments, when new opportunities arise, and new meanings can be made. Goal oriented flourishing seems to be about achieving perfection, what is missing from this idea is that flourishing can be about what is good enough rather than perfect. The common sense understanding of 'good enough' implies a 'that will do' attitude, used as a consolation for not being perfect (Jacobs 1995). This detracts from the more useful way in which Winnicott employed the term. Good enough flourishing would encompass an acceptance that there will be uncertainty and complexity. As Martha Nussbaum notes, Winnicott 'knew how messy and complex people are when they are allowed to be themselves. He also knew how endangered human complexity always is, in the face of society's constant demand for

conformity and order' (Nussbaum, 2006, p.376). Demands for conformity serve only to stifle creativity and prevent flourishing. Beyond mere satisfaction, Winnicott wanted people to be able to experience genuine flourishing. He gave psychoanalysis 'a hopeful and also a liberal face, one that emphasized people's capacities for love and society's capacity for 'holding' diversity, play and freedom' (Nussbaum, 2006, p.392).

Christopher Bollas (2018) writes that depth psychologies, such as psychoanalysis have always placed a high value on the examined life, on looking into selves and their societies in order to gain insight into these mental and social forces that paralyze us. He contends that whilst psychoanalysis may be imperfect, it is nevertheless, a 'work in progress' that points to the crucial function of understanding the many causes of human suffering. Psychoanalysis directs us to take mental life into account when thinking about politically or economically determined structural injustices. As Bollas concludes, there is a need for a politics influenced by a psychology. However, that psychology could be predicated on 'a new form of collective understanding in which humans can once again turn towards becoming human beings' (Bollas 2018, p. 105). This could lead to the revival of the generative aspects of human thought and endeavor which accompany the quest to create meaningful lives and a better world.

10.4 The complexities of hope

The Greek poet Hesiod documented the myth of Pandora's box. The god Zeus bestowed two gifts on Pandora, the gift of curiosity and the gift of an ornate box, the contents of which was not for mortal eyes. Zeus instructed Pandora not to open the box, but curiosity got the better of her and she unlocked it. Once open, the box released all the evils and sufferings of humanity. The last item in the box, however, was hope. To include hope as an element of human suffering can be read in two ways. (Meyer 2010). Firstly, hope can be seen as damaging, it is deceptive, offering only false promises. On the other hand, hope could be in the box as a counter balance to the evils of humanity.

Deceptive hope is akin to Berlant's description I have discussed above, cruel optimism. Individuals' hopes and dreams serve only the goals of a neoliberal economy rather than collective political transformation. For now, I will draw on the second reading of hope, hope as a counter balance to suffering. Tainen, Leiviska and Brunila (2019) merge two original understandings of hope which I think can be useful here which include those from the philosopher and pedagogist Paulo Freire and also the philosopher Patricia White.

White (1996) defines hope in a positive way as being central to democratic virtue. Hope is required if democratic institutions are to flourish. Friere (2004) takes a more nuanced view. Hope is as much about denouncing present injustices as it is about announcing a more desirable world. Hope, therefore, can be viewed as a democratic virtue that can combine identifying and resisting social injustice, with a collective endeavor to visualize a better society (Tainen, Leiviska and Brunila 2019). It is at this juncture between hope as resistance and hope as a vision for a better future that I think Winnicott has something important to offer when he discussed hope as a form of defiance.

Winnicott (1986) made a surprising suggestion that delinquency or anti-social behavior in children may actually, in some cases, be a sign of hope. He wrote;

> "the mother in her adaption to the small child's needs enables the child creatively to find objects. She initiates the creative use of the world. When this fails the child has lost contact with objects, and lost the capacity creatively to find anything. At the moment of hope the child reaches out and steals an object. This is a compulsive act and the child does not know why he or she does it … it is not the object that was being sought … the child is looking for the capacity to find, not for an object" (Winnicott, 1986, p.83).

The capacity to search and reach out contains at a deep level the belief that there is something there that can be found (Abram 1996). In a clinical setting, failures of environmental support can be worked through and the patient can explore their internal reference library of past experiences (Babits 2001). Bollas (1989) writes that these internal reference libraries are historical sets that make experience available for future work. Historical sets are clusters of memories bound by space and time and form parts of the construction of an earlier self. Historical sets are created in the mind to preserve the integrity of self-experience, they are a 'holding space in memory' storing the child's experience of being themselves as such are a process 'essential to living' and part of the 'acute sense of transformation in our being' (Bollas, 1989, p.197). I would like to extend this concept to the way in which I have sought to document the Sure Start initiative. I identified Sure Start as a generative policy, laying the foundations for flourishing and wellbeing right from the outset of a child's life.

Despite its tremendous potential, the Sure Start project has suffered under the rise of neoliberal principles I am writing this thesis because I think it is to document for posterity the areas of social welfare we have lost but which we may one day be able to reinstate when

we realise what has been lost. Perhaps this could be described as a sort of curation. To write about a cultural or social artefact, in this case Sure Start, by way of preservation, to use Bollas's term, a holding space in memory. As I discussed in the case study on Sure Start, it can be argued that Sure Start can be viewed as a transformational object (Bollas 2011). Within an historical set there will be memories of transformational experiences from childhood. The transformational object, seemingly grounded in the future, is yet firmly based in early childhood memory. Whilst Sure Start may have had many imperfections, it nevertheless represented a willingness of government to improve the potential for all to flourish. "It is possible to imagine a world in which the most vulnerable were the most valued members of society, given the respect due to those who are facing or who have faced the most elemental boundaries of life - sickness, madness, death, despair. It is possible to imagine a society where dependency was not just begrudgingly accepted but recognised as a vital element of human development" (Hoggett 2000, p.179). As I have mentioned before, Rustin argued that those on the left of the political spectrum need to recover some deep and grounded view of the meaning of human life:

> "in order to be recognised as having some far sighted grasp of the future direction of their society, it will not come only through their political courage and militancy ... it will also depend on their wider understanding of a capacity to live by meanings and values clearly more civilised, sociable and altruistic than their antagonists, and more equal to the difficulties of life" (Rustin 1991, p.11).

To this end, my thesis has aimed to offer an alternative understanding of what it means to flourish that encompasses greater tolerance of the complexities of what it is to be human. With a rightful place in political discourse, I have sought to demonstrate the potential of psychoanalytic theory as a vital tool for the formation of policies which should be enabling people to live under conditions in which they can flourish. I have therefore advocated for an understanding that social policy in relation to flourishing and wellbeing should be generative in nature.

10.5 Radical Hope not Radical Despair

In his philosophical anthropology, *Radical Hope* (2006) the psychoanalyst Johnathan Lear enquires into why 'The Crow People', indigenous to America, managed to sustain their way of life despite facing white supremacy and environmental destruction by the new settlers. In the face of cultural devastation, The Crow people showed immense hope

and resilience. The story of The Crow people centres around the dream of a young boy, the dream shows a forest which has been decimated by a storm of four winds, leaving only one tree standing with a tiny bird, a chickadee, singing in it. The elders interpret this vision as a warning of the destruction of their tribe, every aspect of their culture, their very way of life with all its meaning and purpose. This dream foresaw the cultural vandalism and destruction that would take place with the arrival of new settlers to America. The tribe could have chosen to battle this out, or they could have retreated to a place of total despair. Instead they took deep meaning from the vision of the chickadee singing in the last remaining tree. For the Crow people, the bird symbolised the one who listens, learns and passes on the lessons of the people so that a new way of being could be imagined. A culture tends to embody a sense of life's possibilities and tries to instill those in the young.

Lear tells this story to explain what happens when a culture faces breakdown because of the inherent inability to perceive of its own downfall. He contends that what is required in such circumstances is an ability to envision possibilities beyond those handed down by the existing culture. He calls this ability 'radical hope'; hope that is directed towards future goodness. It is a commitment to the idea that the goodness of the world transcends one's limited and vulnerable attempts to understand it. Lear says that radical hope is not something you have, rather it is something you practice and it demands flexibility, openness and imaginative excellence.

The assertion by the positive psychologist Martin Seligman that psychoanalysis has had its day, is but an echo of the past. Criticism, rejections and obfuscations form part of the very history of psychoanalysis itself and, in an interview for the BBC in 1938 not long before his death, Freud acknowledged that the resistance to his findings had been "strong and unrelenting" and said the "struggle is not over yet". In this thesis I set out to explore the idea that psychoanalysis can still offer valuable insights into what may constitute wellbeing and may allow the exploration of meaning in social life. The radical project of psychoanalysts was to help change the perception and treatment of mental illness from a moral defect and weakness to an understanding of mental ill health as a consequence of the 'combined effects of environmental development and unconscious conflict' (Bilmes 1999, p.628).

I acknowledged from the outset of this thesis that as researchers, we bring our own internal conflicts and unconscious desires to our theoretical writing; there is a counter transference at work in which we project these feelings onto the work we do (Craib 1989). I

was bitterly disappointed that the campaign to save my local Sure Start centre ultimately failed; I was saddened by the lack of support the campaign to save the resource received. Yet I still want to be able to find something hopeful amidst the worrying turn against collectivity, dependency and vulnerability. With this in mind, the drive behind my thesis has been to seek some form of reparation. To curate a version of collective flourishing that may be called upon to form the basis of future health and wellbeing social policy in the UK. I was concerned about (as I see it) the worrying turn against collectivity, dependency and vulnerability. It is perhaps for this reason that the trajectory of the thesis has been to find something hopeful as a counter narrative. Whist I wanted to present something hopeful, I have also tried to convey the complexity of what it means to flourish.

In conclusion, I would say that in any discussion regarding the social policy of wellbeing and what it means to flourish, psychoanalysis has an essential role to play. As an original contribution to knowledge, this thesis reasserts the value of psychoanalysis for an understanding of flourishing. Through the lens of psychoanalysis I have also offered a new way of understanding positive psychology and how it has played a significant role in the policy and culture of welfare since 2010. Therefore, I have contributed a new intervention into the evaluation of positive psychology and its relationship to contemporary political culture of austerity because I have added a psychoanalytic dimension. I have argued that the current narrative of 'to flourish', as articulated through positive psychology, has been useful to the current dominance of a specifically neoliberal view of welfare. As a result, we are at risk of losing an understanding of what it means to flourish which takes into account a more relational view of human beings. It is my contention that an alternative articulation of what it means to flourish is vital if we are to reimagine the 'good society'.

Psychoanalysis has the potential to enable us to value life with all its vagaries and complexities, and the practice of psychoanalysis is about helping people to develop a greater capacity to tolerate a wide range of emotional experiences. Rather than a life project with a final goal of self-actualisation or the ultimate goal of happiness, we are able to view life as always being a work in progress with a varying degree of triumph and tribulation on the way. Psychoanalysis brings together both knowledge and action (Craib 1989) and permits us to think about ways in which the space in which we find ourselves may be improved. In Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921) we can perhaps see a more hopeful view of human beings. He says that humans are able to relinquish personal interests in favour of the interests of the group as a whole. Freud suggests that there is a libidinal tie which limits the

tendency to narcissism and is fundamental to the very foundations of what he calls 'civilisation'.

> "... a group is clearly held together by a power of some kind: and to what power could this feat be better ascribed than to Eros, who holds together everything in this world. … If an individual gives up his distinctiveness in a group and lets its other members influence him by suggestion, it gives one the impression that he does it because he feels the need of being in harmony with them rather than in opposition to them – so that perhaps after all he does it '*inhen zu Ziebe'*(for love of them)*"* (Freud 1921, p.33)

To suggest that we should pay attention to our internal states, acknowledging that we are capable both of destruction and creation and to be observant of our interpersonal relationships, is to take a profoundly ethical stance. We are able then to recognise our capacity to repair and make good. Psychoanalysis compellingly offers a way to understand what it is to be human that moves away from an individualist premise and towards a much more relational understanding. To close, I return to Stuart Hall's work and his concept of articulation which I think is so important. Articulation is both to express and to join together, it is the process of ideological struggle. Cultural texts and practices are multi-accentual, that is, they are spoken in different voices. I wanted to understand how the notion of flourishing is currently being articulated and then to try to speak about it in a different accent. However, I concur with Michael Rustin writing in *After Neoliberalism? The Kilburn Manifesto* (Hall, Massey and Rustin 2015). He states

> "In the post-capitalist future which we would like to see, a different priority given to the cultivation of human needs and capabilities would be a significant indicator of progress. A different economic and institutional architecture from that which we now have will be needed if we are to bring these objectives into the centre of public policy, and as indicators of progress" (p,48).

10.6 Cartographies of Hope

Braidotti writes about the politics of affirmation in which she pleads for a more joyful perspective. Rather than the melancholia for what has been lost, the role of thought can be about the creation of new concepts and the importance of making transformations of values possible (2006b). She talks about cartographies of hope; hope that the act of writing is not fleeting or an empty wish, instead it should be striving to be an empowering force on the

political landscape. Feminist and post-colonial theory has taught the values of learning from those who speak from the margins. Those who have been damaged by a system are likely to be those who are in the best positions to show how things can be done differently. I think here of Danny Slogget in Jaywick who is able to bring a real glimmer of hope despite the adversity, poverty and inequality faced by the people living in an area profoundly impacted by austerity, "Shine on" he says as he told me about his Jaywick Sands Happy Club.Stuart Hall wanted his students to actively think about what political implications their observations may have (Gilbert 2019).

> "The aim of conjunctural analysis is always to map a social territory, in order to identify possible sites of political intervention. Such interventions need not actually be made, or be made on behalf of any particular political project or tendency, for the political analysis to have validity, but its potential utility to anyone wanting to intervene in a given situation is the key criteria according to which conjunctural analysis can be judged" (Gilbert 2019, p.15).

I would argue that a collective and generative account of flourishing is vital because, as Erik Erikson (1950) put it, a failure to contribute to the common good leads to a sense of radical despair, which in turn destroys the trust of the younger generation. Instead of that radical despair we need radical hope, the virtue of radical hope and a desire for future human flourishing. In my own small way, I hope that I can contribute though my thesis writing and my activism to a sense of hopefulness in the desire to repair. I close with the words of the poet Emily Dickinson;

> "Hope is the thing with feathers,
> That perches in the soul,
> And sings the tune without the words,
> And never stops at all,"
> (Emily Dickinson, [1861], 1983).

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Appendix: Interview Transcripts

Interview with Miriam, Journalist Working for the Local Newspaper

SLP: Interviewer, Siobhan Lennon-Patience
Miriam: Journalist working for the local newspaper

SLP: I asked Miriam to tell me what had brought her to journalism in the first place.

Miriam: I had been a traveller and that's a group that had been badly represented in the media. There were lots of reasons why I wanted to be in the media but that's one important one. I wanted to represent marginalised communities, be on the right side of the truth - I'd experienced it myself.

We were limited to where we could park up, very few places. But often people in the community would comment on how disgraceful it was, even though I was working and didn't look like how a traveller might be perceived. You know, I'd get into my van in my suit and high heels and I'd get uppity about it as they would say "we don't want your kind here" and I thought, what do they mean by that. I'd ask them what they meant by it and they would get red in the face because they would have to defend themselves for saying something they knew was not very nice.

I only lived like that for a few months, maybe eight or so. So I just assimilated into life like that but could see what it must be like if you had always been a traveller, the impact of media portrayal. I had friends who had their windows put through. I think Thatcher had really railed against the travellers, there always has to be a folk demon I suppose.

SLP: Tell me more about your work at that time.

Miriam: I was living in my camper, sometimes I'd even be parked in the car park where I worked. So I'd sometimes, like, get and be emptying the slops bucket down the drain but I was proud of the fact, I've always been prone to be a bit different, I think from my early upbringing. I moved here because my parents were teachers, we moved from London to work. I grew up in a low socio-economic area where expectations aren't really academic. People might aspire to have their own plumbing business, or be a fitness instructor. So I felt like I was different growing up and I think that's why I was drawn to being a bit of a rebel. So I would go into work and be quite proud of the fact that I live in a van. It became a running joke, people were curious but respectful - they were like "that's kinda cool, you don't have to pay rent and you've got freedom", probably some jealousy, and I could save. I think the media can tap into that jealousy and create fear. That was eye-opening.

SLP: Tell me more about your job at that time.

Miriam: I was working for a council, in their media team. I would get lots of calls from the press. A journalist might ring and say they knew there was a new traveller encampment somewhere, such and such a place. It wouldn't be people I knew, I wasn't quite part of a big traveller community. I was part of just a few of us who had vans. I felt the journalist would expect me to respond in a certain way by saying the council would get them moved on. But I would get hold of the traveller liaison officer and say "can you respond", rather than a councillor, because I thought they would be more ethical in their response because their role was to help the community, making sure the children had a decent standard of education and that living standards were OK. I was there for about a year. I enjoyed the line of work but there were things I didn't ethically agree with and I thought "you know, when you are finally on your death bed and you look back on your life and you think, what contribution have I actually made to humanity?". And I thought, if I had only worked to defend a council or a private sector organisation, that's not going to be very satisfying. So I went to India, travelling. And then I came back to be an apprentice journalist.

SLP: Why journalism?

Miriam: I think probably it was what I was born to do, in a sort of cheesy way. When I was little, I used to like writing fake newspapers or pretending to read the news. I was always writing, I feel like it's in my blood. I've always been someone who wants to find the truth, get to the bottom of what's going on, find out the truth, like a dog with a bone. So, that's what I decided to do.

SLP: I suppose a question for me here is: it could be said that, in recent times, the public are a bit more wary of the press and how truthful articles are, how do you feel about that because of your desire to get to the bottom of things? Do you feel hindered in any way, I wonder?

Miriam: Because I'd been on the other side of it, as a press officer, I knew that journalists were always trying to find a story, the gory details if you like. So I'd be wary of the press and I can understand why people are. I'm very aware that the local paper I work for does not have a good reputation because of the previous owner. That editor had been an editor of one of the red tops in London. It was unusual, usually you'd go from a local paper to a national one but he went the other way, and turned this local paper into a sort of tabloid. You know, there would always be, say, a car crash on the front page, something really brutal. So I think that's still its legacy now, I'm afraid. So, when I phone people up and say where I'm from, nine tomes out of ten it kills the interview dead. Even if it's a good news story, people are resistant because they feel so suspicious.

But I can see how difficult it is for journalists because there is this mistrust. People are cagy but I know, and many of my colleagues would say the same, that we are not trying to spin anything or find something salacious. We are literally just trying to get a comment. The biggest pressure we actually have is, not to create a scandal, it's actually just to get the paper out on time. Maybe it's different in the tabloid press but, with local journalism being what it

is, we are just so short-staffed, we just have to get something on the page, even if it's mundane. Sometimes, when I'm really interested in a subject, I will research or go to things in my own time.

SLP: So you have a certain freedom, then. to seek a story for yourself?

Miriam: It's about 50/50 I would say. We can do our own. then others are often from press releases we are given, say from a local business or a charity. But the really good stories are from when someone contacts you and says "this is happening in my area".We would then run it past the news desk and see if they think it will be a good story and something they would want to print.

SLP: So, do you have a particular remit or area you cover?

Miriam: No, not really although I do have the community news column, which I do every Wednesday. There are so few of us, we just all have to muck in.But my interest is always the investigative stories. My unofficial brief, then, is that side of things, usually data-driven stuff so, for example, a spreadsheet of NHS data and I would have to find the story in that. People do think there is an agenda at the paper, to be more right wing. But, actually I think that is unfounded. I'd say most of the journalists are young and straight out of training and, although we are non-partisan, no one really discusses politics much, I would say we are left-leaning demographically, if I had to guess. If I had to think how my colleagues voted, I'd say they were more likely to be on the left side of things.

SLP: What about the role of the editor?

Miriam: Hmmmm, that's a trickier one. So, I would say that in our area, where we have a long-standing MP, they are more likely to to have a relationship with the MP. I wouldn't like to say which way his politics would go. I just see that he's under massive pressure to get the paper out. in local papers, I don't think there is any real agenda, maybe subtly but I think any particular persuasion is second to just meeting deadlines.

SLP: So you don't seem to feel any pressure to put a particular spin on a story. I'm hearing that you have quite a bit of freedom to produce a story.

Miriam: The pressures I feel are more from the PR teams of organisations trying to push a particular story. But often you go with this because you are under time pressure and it's a way to make a story. So, when you have someone who knows how to work the media and you are time-pressured, you go with it. You don't have time to dig beneath the surface and that's the danger, where I can't say more on that because that's where the money is and they can court the press. Even if you do a small expose, at least in some small way, you show how it's possible to hold people to account.

SLP: Tell me about the articles you have written that you have been most proud of.

Miriam: Well, there was one about social mobility and another about child poverty. The one on child poverty was about how 30% of children in this area live below the poverty line and, often, these families have at least one working parent, so it's not just people on benefits.One area here is actually at 40%, one of the worst in the UK.

SLP: Are there specific issues that you notice because of this being a very coastal town?

Miriam: I think, because we are at the end of the line, we tend to get forgotten. People are very aware that people who graduate don't come back here because there are no jobs and prospects unless you have a skill to have your own business. Adds to a mentality of "why bother, what is the point?". There is also a huge problem with homelessness and all that comes with that, such as addiction and malnutrition.

SLP: How about the owner of the newspaper - do you sense any influence from him about what you cover?

Miriam: I think the company is in America, No, not that I'm aware of. But, a constraint is that we have to be so very careful in case we are litigated against because we are so skint and it would break us. We have to be so thorough about printing proven fact, Bigger papers can take that risk but i don't think the old line, "don't let the truth get in the way of a good story" applies to us in local news.

SLP: It must be difficult when you are feeling time-pressured though?

Miriam: Yes, but I hope that, as a journalist, accuracy should be really important, making sure your sources are credible and you are straight down the line, avoiding propaganda. I've written about County Lines and young people being recruited by gangs and I spoke with an ex-police officer who talked about how this would impact on a coastal town like ours. But I also talked to local addicts here and they said we didn't really have these gangs, dealers tend to be local people. Creating fear seems to me to be unethical.

SLP: What do you think about the fact that you are local to here and you have links to the local community, do you think that makes a difference to your journalism?

Miriam: Yes, I think I have a sense of pride, working for my local paper. A lot of people I work with aren't from here as they have just qualified and then found a job in local news, which is often where you start. So I think there is a benefit, having local links and contacts and a sense of trust, I think, and people are more likely to come to me when they know that I have grown up here, especially somewhere like here where there can be suspicion of strangers. It's nice for me to be able to write about some real positive community projects too, like the Repair Cafe, things that locals have set up to help themselves.

SLP: Tell me more about this, the positive initiatives.

Miriam: There is a cafe owner who is spearheading a community improvement plan. It's stuff like that that's really heartwarming, to see people taking initiative and not being downtrodden by the poverty in this area. It's annoying that they have had to step in and fill gaps left by the public sector but it's good to see people are, like when people took on the youth service when the local authority pulled out. Seeing people who want to make a difference for the better in our local area, I think it makes people feel hopeful.

SLP: In terms of hope, what signs of hope do you see? What do you think might be needed in an area like this?

Miriam: A university, maybe. Truth. There are stories I would love to tell that I actually could not write, but for legal reasons I probably couldn't. If I didn't have to have a job, I would start a zeen and look into things in more detail, take that extra time - put it round the shops and let everyone see it.

SLP: Have you seen changes over time since you started reporting in terms of stories?

Miriam: Due to the editor changes, now reliant too much perhaps on stories that will get many hits on social media. Human interest stories do well. Maybe the readership gets a sense of hope from the local interest and positive stories, people taking an active role in their community. But I still think we need a local press that will continue to hold people to account.

Interview with Clare, a mother from Weymouth

SLP: Interviewer, Siobhan Lennon-Patience
Clare: Mother

SLP: Really I want to start with just asking you to tell me about you and where you live?

Clare: So I have lived in Weymouth since I was born. I'm 33 years old now and I have no inclination to move away. However, I have a different perspective to living by the sea to most, I think. I think, as a child growing up it wasn't too bad but as I reached my teens there is so very little for teenagers to do, no services for us to access. Jobs were very seasonal very far and few between. I remember being 12 and I worked in Claridges tea rooms, it's no longer there, it will be against the law now anyway due to high population of children and young adults and teenagers. Jobs were very few for the preschool leaver age and prices were also quite high. Just basic amenities because it's a very seasonal thing, prices would go up naturally in the summer and in the winter most places would close, obviously like the swimming pool, but again that's pretty boring. They don't really do very much unless it was the summer and then it was for the people visiting. We did try to sneak into Littlesea holiday park but we always got shooed out because it was for holidaymakers not locals.

SLP: What did you hope to do when you were in there?

Clare: Well, play on the arcades, there's a swimming pool there, there are parks there, just a different environment. But locals weren't allowed in (laughs) and so I don't know. The opportunities weren't as, sort of it wasn't as, many opportunities we were quite closed in and our nearest town, Dorchester, that's a fair old bus ride really realistically for a young person. So we're kind of a bit enclosed so to speak, a bit captured. People come in but not lots of people go out and unless you had someone who drove, a parent that drove, you are kind of stuck here.

SLP: So the sense I am getting from you is that it is a very different life, a very separate life for the tourists that came in and what it was like for locals?

Clare: Yes it was, you know, all song and dance in the summer but when the winter was here it was kind of dusty old town that didn't really do very much. And also, when the summer hit you couldn't move in Weymouth so you try to go about your day-to-day life and it was hell. So you try to avoid town and beach to the best of your ability or you would be stuck in hours of pedestrian traffic, you wouldn't be able to get into the shops properly because it was just horrendous because there were so many people. It's obviously not as popular now.

SLP: Yes I noticed you were talking about it in the past tense.

Clare: It's not as busy now was it was when I was growing up. I think the last time I probably visited our beach was when I was 14.

SLP: Why is that?

Clare: I think I had a group of friends that live, a friend that lived in one of the B&Bs on the seafront. So I used to spend a lot of time there with her and obviously the beach being across from her doorstep, yeah. When we kind of moved apart I didn't go down there. It's just a big space……

SLP: And you still feel that way about beach?

Clare: Yes, I don't like the beach. The facilities aren't there so, as a parent going down the beach it is terrifying because there is one lifeguard station so if you lose your child it's a long expanse to find them again. There are very limited toilets, lots of refreshments, you can buy ice cream till it's coming out of your eyes but facilities like toilets…. and you just don't feel safe because you don't know who is down the beach, you don't know who all these touristy people are, so it is not a community beach, it might as well be the Costa Del Sol, you have no idea where anything is or who anyone is. I think I might be down there once with the children possibly because, actually, if one of them needs the toilet I have to pack everything up and go to McDonald's because that is the only toilet I know that is sort of free to use for the public. It

is the toilets down Ali Gardens [Alexandra Gardens] way that's been closed. They did have toilets up by the King's Statue but that's quite a distance apart and I think they were closed, and they were underground so they weren't particularly nice toilets either, so you often found drug paraphernalia. It's not somewhere you would want to take your children and along the seafront there are lots of bars and you don't really want to be taking children in there. So there were very limited opportunities and Ali Gardens have been really strict on the public using them so unless you are using their arcade games they don't want you just waltzing in there from the beach and using the toilet. So actually there's not really a friendly "welcome come to the beach" vibe.

SLP: So, even though this is your hometown, I'm hearing from you that that part doesn't feel like home.

Clare: No it's a million miles away from anything. So, if your local in Weymouth we tend to use the Sandsfoot Beach. It's much smaller there are no facilities again but you do feel more comfortable about leaving your belongings and peeing in a bush, but you know needs must. I think there is also Smallmouth but I've never been. That's near Portland, I think its a bit too exposed for me because you can see the beach from the road. And then there is Ham Beach which is pretty much stone and that is also along the Portland bypass on the main road so, there is more dog walking and a paddle rather than….. actually that is really mainly for water sports and most of it is inside the Portland Harbour. Personally I don't know many true locals who actually use Weymouth beach unless it's to walk their dogs in the winter.

SLP: Would you want to go down there in the wintertime?

Clare: Yes. but it is to walk the dogs rather than to take the kids to build sandcastles. So I have a sandpit in the back garden along with the a pool in the summer. So the kids don't miss out on the beach scene. So, although I grew up here, I'd rather not take them because the tourists don't treat our beach very well, they leave lots of litter behind and generally some of them are quite crass. It's not where I would want my children to be around, it just doesn't feel very safe. So if I were to go to a beach it would be Sandsfoot.

SLP: Do you think there is anything that would make a difference for you as a local, to make you feel that the beach was somewhere you would want to be?

Clare: I think more amenities. I think more stations for child safety, a location point. Because actually I don't know any child who would be able to find the Lifeguard Station, because there is one at Greenhill. I don't know how long the beach is but that's a long way away and there is one at the King's Statue. But, as a local, you tend to stick to the Ali Gardens end. There is very little accessible parking that is cheap enough, because I would want to park near the beach so I didn't have to carry everything and, yes, decent toilet facilities, basic amenities. The beach huts, I understand, are ridiculously expensive, they are twice the price of what you would pay in the town so nine times out of ten I take a picnic rather than try and buy from there because you would be very broke before the summer was over if you try to do

that. And Ali Gardens by the Pavilion, it is the sandiest part, as you move up the beach it becomes more stonier so it's not very pleasant for the children walk on.

SLP: What was it like when the Olympics came here, the sailing events?

Clare: Hell. I was pregnant at the time and all the roads would be dug up all the roundabouts were being taken out. And that was a thing in Weymouth, we had loads of them and they always used to be decorated for the season and they were really quite nice, they were. So we had a bit of congestion but they worked. I remember all the hype around it. I even bought myself a bike that year because everyone told us how really busy it was going to be and, you know, it was going to be a real big input to the economy. They took out our fairy lights, which we loved, everything that kind of made Weymouth the quintessential seaside town went and we got these massive laser light things which were hideous. And actually it wasn't that big of a high when it actually came around, it wasn't that busy. There was a lot of negative publicity because of how much the Council had spent getting ready for the event and obviously we had, what's it called, Portland had lots of new homes built for the Olympics. It was the Olympic Village. Consequently I actually moved into one of them and actually they weren't very good at all.

SLP: Tell me a bit more about that.

Clare: Well they were all open plan downstairs and they were very basic they were built to look good but the functionality was poor.

SLP: So these were the ones that had been built for the athletes and the competitors?

Clare: So, I think the back bedroom was the biggest bedroom. It was absolutely enormous but it had vaulted ceiling. So, Portland being very coastal, every wind or rain that came in it sounded like you were in a shed and half the loft space. For a family living in these homes, it would be all right if you were a couple with the spare room, but it wasn't any good as the family home.

SLP: So aesthetically they looked nice but they weren't very functional?

Clare: Yes. They had obviously made the gardens in a rush because we had a massive infestation of leatherjackets larva, baby dragonflies. So, for years afterwards we had massive swarms if these flies because they had literally thrown them together and the garden used to get quite boggy because the drainage was poor and it was all on a slant, it was all uneven.

SLP: So your outdoor space wasn't even really somewhere you wanted to be?

Clare: No, and the fact that the downstairs was completely open plan, there was nowhere to put anything, you would be tripping over. I had a young child and toys had nowhere to go. It looks very nice as show home…..

SLP: But no storage?

Clare: No. No storage. It just wasn't a family home and parking was horrendous. They hadn't really thought about parking and it's not a Council road. So it's a private road, it's all in with the service charge. You could tell mine was a council property, because obviously a certain amount had to be affordable housing, and you could tell that the standard that they had redone those homes to, the ones opposite us that were for sale, were a lot less, they weren't equal standard. We used to have letters written to us frequently about the use of parking outside our own house, because we did have a parking space that was down the back behind the garages of the other houses miles away from your actual house. So it actually felt quite unsafe to walk in the dark from the car park that was based on the house, especially with a small child.

SLP: Particularly if you have lots of things carry I guess.

Clare: Yes, yeah, but they do try and press the fact that no one was allowed to park on the road because, athletically speaking, it wasn't the done thing. So, although it felt like a nice community to start with you could feel the divide with the social, those who couldn't afford their own homes and those who could. Although the environmental factor ,we had wood pellet stations that they would come and fill up and that would supply the gas which was fantastic, although the consequence was the constant smell of bonfire which is a bit opressive and I know that the bigger houses the four-bedroom houses had rainwater collection systems which was pretty awesome.

SLP: So they had tried to think about the environment.

Clare: Yes but no solar panels. They would probably not have gone down well with the ascetics of the building. There is a lot of "you can't do this, you can't do that, you can do this" and there was very little closer shops. A whole village, there were no amenities, you would have to walk all the way up the hill to the Co-op at the top of Fortuneswell, which is a fair old trek. So, yes, considering we were so far, or you would have to walk into Castletown, which is a fair old trek the other way. It wasn't, I didn't feel like it was the place I could have my children grow up in the long-term. I probably wouldn't mind returning there once they had grown up and moved out but not for growing up and also the schools on Portland were very limited and had lots of bad press. So I didn't have much confidence, so even while I was living there I had made arrangements so that my child could be schooled in Weymouth because there would be more opportunity for her education.

SLP: So you obviously then moved.

Clare: Yes, we moved back to Weymouth to Western, which is where I grew up and the amenities are quite good and the community feel isn't horrendous. You know, it's not one of the best places in Weymouth, there is a massive tarred brush about whereabouts you live, yes very much so socially. If you speak to someone who lives in Weymouth for a large amount of

years then Littlemore is normally a place, unless you come from there, you wouldn't live there unless you had extenuating circumstances. Wyke is a nice area, however I don't like being at the top of the hills because in the summer it can be quite difficult to get into Weymouth or anywhere else. And that's another reason why Portland wasn't really working for us, because I work in Dorchester and I just couldn't get to work effectively because the road kept getting closed. And the sea would come over and road would be flooded and there will be times I will be stuck in Portland and I can't get into Weymouth or stuck in Weymouth and I can't get back to Portland. If I had a day off and I got my child in nursery it could potentially mean my child could be separated by the water. And that was terrifying, so I had to get off the island. So yes, there are areas that are better than others probably due to the amount of privately owned homes. Council tenants, we still have this real taboo about being a Council tenant. You wouldn't really announce it, even though I'm not ashamed I'm a council tenant. You know, you have a lot better social standing if you're not and there is this kind of social standard, if you've have bought your house you have done well. So, me and my husband we work full-time and we have decent jobs but that we still live in a council house places us down on the social ladder, so to speak. Even his mum and dad looked down on us compared to the rest of the family who do own their homes.

SLP: How does that make you feel?

Clare: Ashamed because I haven't bought my own house but prices here are far too high. My wages just can't match the market value of houses so I'm kind of stuck and that is a big fear for my children in the future because actually we're out-priced in our own town. So, actually, if we wanted to buy we would have to go to Littlemoor, which is actually quite a distance out of town and it does have quite high crime rate and the amenities, although they are getting better, they're still not the sort of things you find in the centre of Weymouth. So Littlemoor is kind of its own town, by itself, but you still have to come back to the main town to get most of your stuff done and that is something I think about because I have my children. Because, when they get to their teens, I want them to be able to access the cinema, the swimming pool you know on their own, independently so that they become well rounded human beings and, yes, I want them to be able to catch the bus and me not to fret that they're going to be on the wrong bus, catch the wrong bus and not being to get home which is a big part. So I am within walking distance of town and there are some safe routes that they can take and there are, what I would deem as, not as safe routes, so the underpasses are safer than going round by the waterworks.

SLP: Is that because you're worried about them on the roads?

Clare: No, I'm just worried about because there are quite a few teens and they have always been teens that are bored The funds that are available to youth services are poor and they have shut Waves, which was a really good place for teenagers to go for advice, whether it be mental health, finances. I used it when I was 16 when I was kicked out.

SLP: Tell me some more about Waves.

Clare: When I was 16 my mum kicked me out, in the March of my GCSE year and because I was 16 I wasn't able to access housing for myself, because you have to be 18 to hold tenancy. Which put me in a real predicament because my Nan had just died and she was the one that was going to take me in. So clearly that wasn't going to happen. So Waves had a support team then to advise you about access to housing. As far as I'm aware there are two housing facilities for young people. There was one, it was a lodge, it was like being housed in a mass children's home. There everyone was like a happy family but I didn't feel comfortable with that because I wanted my own room, I wanted to be able to lock my door and feel safe. So I decided to go to the Foyer, a 20-bedded property split into five clusters. Sure, so that was somewhere I stayed till I was 18 although it was meant to be temporary accommodation, you are meant to be moved on to less supported living. I was kicked out because I was very self-sufficient and I had rammed everything into my room including fridge, fridge freezer, toaster and a hotplate so I can cook my own food. Because actually my food would go missing from the communal kitchen. They had a communal kitchen with the washing machine and the basics but I felt much safer when I was in my room, obviously my room wasn't very big. I didn't manage to go on and do my six form education I didn't get the grades I wanted. There were often disturbances, quite often, and the young offenders institute would release people into the Foyer so they could be quite violent a lot of them are taking drugs. I was really out of my depth there, I didn't fit in because I wasn't an alcoholic or a druggie or violent.

SLP: And yet you managed there for two years

Clare: Yes I did I manage there two years and then they kicked me out at 18 because I had gone and got myself a job at the local dive shop. So I was doing full-time and they kind of failed to tell me that my rent would then be £105 a week plus service charge. so, at 17 I really wasn't learning that So I fell behind with my rent because it is only 4 pounds or something top-up from your income support if you are not working, so it didn't benefit me to go to work but I thought this was going to be the way to save so that I could get my own place because they clearly were leaving me on. Yes, I got kicked out because I fell behind on my rent so there wasn't actually as much support as there could've been. So my support worker, that was good, she was fantastic but her means were limited and the difficulties with the other residents, some of the girls got pregnant and they weren't allowed to stay there once they gave birth so they have issues. A boy got held hostage during my stay so we had police. We frequently had people trying to clmb in my window so I did wake up one morning to find two bars being drilled on the outside my window.

SLP: You must have felt very vulnerable.

Clare: I did and there is no communication to the main office. So, I had a violent boyfriend at the time in my room and I had no way of contacting them. So I literally picked up my intercom and shouted until somebody heard me but that shout had to go outside until

someone heard me from inside the office. So actually that wasn't a good kind of organising plan. They should have been especially considering most people in that facility needed additional emotional support. We had a massive kitchen downstairs but it rarely got used. We had a massive computer room and that didn't get used very often because of the fear that someone would go in and smash it all up so the facilities. Limited, any opportunities were limited and we would have people coming from the job centre who would talk to us about how to manage our finances and how to claim benefits and what jobs we could be looking to apply for. But obviously no one was being encouraged to apply for jobs because, at 17, you weren't paid minimum wage so they wouldn't be able to afford your room rent and even by today's standards £105 a week for a room was a lot of money, with shared facilities. Then the support was limited and the fact that most people stayed in their bedrooms most of the day. And I came across a pregnant teen at the food bank a couple of weeks ago who was living in the Foyer, so they had come to collect a food parcel but they had acrylic painted nails and, you can tell that instead of organising their money and spending wisely they had spent it all, relying on the food bank to feed them over the week. So then that young lady was about to have a child and they still hadn't kind of help to support her in a way that she will be able to manage her finances and find out what's important. I know it's difficult with children and young adults. I know they can be impulsive, especially people who have ended up there, they've often got multiple issues and traumas. But that's a fantastic hub for mental health people to be at, with the pop-up service and careers guidance. You know, the college could set up something to go in and help them to determine how they are going to improve their future, rather than a holding cell for the undesirable teens who couldn't be placed anywhere else.

SLP: Is that what it felt like?

Clare: Yes, yes it did. They did offer me an B&B before I ended up there, just above the Chinese shop but the woman, no it was a man told me that he would come and check on my room at 11 o'clock at night, so I completely freaked out. I refused to stay there so I was technically classed as homeless from the age of 16 to just before I turned 20. Once I was kicked out of the foyer at 18, once I was no longer eligible for their support, they literally kicked me out at the end of October.

SLP: And what did you do?

Clare: I went to stay on a friend's couch. Luckily I have had the sense to pass my driving test. My income support, I've got £43.25 a week and £22 of that went on driving lessons every week and I lived of toast and pot noodles. But I managed to get a loan from a friend to get my first car so I literally bundled everything I owned into my car and I sofa surfed with friends and then I kind of returned to my mum's house briefly where I was going to pay £100 to sleep on the couch. And then they finally offered me a little flat. It was the biggest thing and best thing ever that I finally had my own home. But again the opportunities for the young, especially 18 to 20, are limited you know. I was lucky because I had a bit of drive in

me but a lot of the youth don't and they don't have the support or the direction and those who struggle with education are left unprovided for. And that, I think, and that's why the seaside town gets such a poor name, the abuse and crime. Because there is that kind of postcard seaside town everyone knows but the unemployment is high and the crime rate is high and they blame it on the youth. But the youth have nothing to do. There is the boys club, I think that's now called Steps I believe but again I don't know anyone who actually knows if it's very much better and if it's that much of an important organisation then it should be advertised by the Council and it should be provided for and they should be money going into it and I know for a fact that they are struggling and numbers are dwindling because nobody knows about it and it is difficult if these services close. There should be one per area Weymouth.

SLP: What sort of services do you think would help?

Clare: Definitely mental health services, I think there should be. I know that CAHMS [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services] is stretched to the limit but if we had what's needed at an early age, and provide support for the children when it's needed, we would have less in the services later on. I think schools, every school, should have an area where they've got a trained professional, in order for the children to access ad hoc if the children are feeling emotionally unstable, they need advice. It would also bring support for those who are being neglected and abused at home and prevent further problems and the rise of emotionally unstable disorder. It's on the rise and is a very difficult illness to deal with and it is often caused by traumatic childhood and these people struggle to manage their emotions. And we have got a whole millennial kind of growth of people who are unable to regulate their emotions and that is down to the schools and the mental health services that are meant to be there for people who need anything in certain circumstances that we have nothing to support parents who are going through issues. Teachers have got basic training, actually I know that there is one school I know that has a fantastic space where the children can access any time there is always someone to talk to about their feelings and emotions and help them go through, especially things like grief and bereavement. I know there are number of parents here, I mean parents don't seem to have the time or the skills to talk to their children about managing emotions. We've got lots of apps but they don't replace the parent skills. It takes a village to raise a child and we are not in that kind of situation any more and we're very isolated.

SLP: Do you feel there was a time when community felt like that?

Clare: Not in my time but I believe there was previously. There was more community but now we are little bit more sporadic and people are moving to different towns where families aren't together any more. It is very true we are lacking in basic child emotional development. No amount of lessons are going to help if the child can't talk through what they going through. Parents don't have the skills that a trained clinician would have. So, if these things will pick up we would be able to help people earlier. So if there was a room, or a club, or

facility for them to go to and off-load, they could divulge and get that support and they could interact with those supporters and work out plan. So it be good for when you have less confident children coming through and there's a lot of self-doubt, body image problems. We've got the trans community coming widely recognised. Actually my daughter turned around and said, she's eight and she asked me "well, if a boy wants to be a girl that's fine, he obviously didn't feel like he wanted to be a boy but when he changes to a girl where does he go to the toilet in school?".

SLP: Lots of big questions.

Clare: Lots of big questions that I don't have the answer to and it is very difficult for me to access those answers because the Internet is a whole web of answers that you don't know which ones are the right ones. So you've got to be really careful when accessing Google because you know a cold could lead to death.

SLP: So you are not feeling like there is any way to go and talk about these issues.

Clare: No but actually that should be something that is seen in school because it is their generation of interest and what is happening in a generation is becoming a lot more apparent. People have got differences and we talk about equality and inclusion but we're still not quite there.

SLP: You are speaking very knowledgeably about how you see the problems that are arising, about how people are affected by many worries and difficulties. Do you want to say more? Is that something that you are interested in or is this something you do through your work?

SLP: My interviewee then discloses something to me of a very personal nature. I ask if she would like me to stop recording and I check to see if she is comfortable to continue to talk to me. She was happy to continue our discussion. However, I feel it is inappropriate for the purposes of this thesis to include a small section of this interview as it would be unnecessarily intrusive. However what emerged at this point showed that she felt she had not received support as a teenager and this had impacted on her family relationships resulting in her leaving home at 16.

Clare: Actually I think these things could have been highlighted at school if the services had been available to me. I don't think mental health in children was taken that seriously at that time. Initially had a diagnosed thing such as Autism or Asperger's, something very obvious to people, you know. I was very clever and I was forward and I seemed to be the model student, so it looked like I didn't have any problems but actually I had significant problems. But there was no one to talk to and it wasn't okay and I felt blamed. I'm now receiving treatment, now that I'm in my 30s but it's been a really long time. But now I'm getting on, I've got my family and my husband and I'm doing a degree in nursing but this has meant that things are started to come out for me and affect me. But perhaps if I had had support when I was younger, when I was actually needing the services, then maybe I wouldn't be needing as

much of the service as I do now. And even now the services aren't really available, I just finished one lot of treatment but I've got to wait now five or six months for next lot. So it's not, as a community we're not providing for the people within it. So actually there is something fundamentally wrong with this beautiful seaside town. It doesn't match what is on the postcard.

SLP: And yet at the beginning when we started talking you said you wouldn't want to leave.

Clare: Yes I feel very attached to my hometown. I am very much a homebody and I suppose I fear change but I do worry about the opportunities for my children. However, I know that I'm going into a career where I am very much needed within this community and I want to give back to my community and fix the deficit that we have within our community so I think that is probably my main aim.

SLP: So that's been your drive and your motivator?

Clare: Yes, and the fact I see so many people around me struggling to access services. How can you have good wellbeing when the facilities that you would expect to help you reach wellbeing are not in place, just not there? And actually how many people do you know go and knock on an elderly person's door to make sure they are all right? There's not much for the elderly, there's not much for children. It seems if you're standard adult, which most aren't, then it's OK but, around here, there's a lot of poverty. Our food bank is really busy so there is clearly something fundamentally wrong with our beautiful seaside town - and they need to get rid of those lasers!

SLP: There is something quite reminiscent there for you when you think about those fairy lights.

Clare: I remember when I was a child, fairy lights and firework night, it was that kind of, even if we popped down in the car and sat on the seafront, fairy lights and fireworks that we've lost. That Carnival day used to be our big thing but we've lost that. I think it's coming back but it will never be the same. That used to be for the whole community, the red arrows always flew over at about three and it's all gone thanks to the funding and because we are solely reliant on tourist trade. It has gone because we are not getting the money in any more.

SLP: But at least those times were times when it seems like the community could reclaim their space in a way, do you think?

Clare: Yes indeed, yeah, and it was we were very lucky. We did have fireworks every Monday night through the summer. You know teenagers used to be like "right, on Monday we will meet at the clock and then we'll watch the fireworks and will be home by 9 o'clock", our curfew. But it was a thing to do, a place to be. Even if you didn't access the beach it was still something to do and actually I don't remember there being that much trouble, there were no police sirens going off or mass police raids. So actually I'm imagining, I might be

completely misinformed, but I think that crime on those nights when there was something to do and community feel, it wasn't particularly high considering the amount of people that used to congregate and the amount of teens that used to be unsupervised. Actually It brought the community back together which the Olympics successfully disintegrated because they took away our identity.

SLP: So what do you think the identity was before the Olympics?

Clare: That quaint seaside village, not so much what you saw in the summer. It was because we were quite isolated there's no one else around, you know. Dorchester and Weymouth and Portland are all very, very different communities, so if you came from Dorchester you were a completely different human from someone who came from Weymouth and vice versa. If you came from Weymouth, she came from Weymouth and she knew what was going on and she knew where the parks were and you knew which ones to avoid. I think I do miss the old Weymouth. I know that there was limited opportunity but, I think, growing up here you knew that there was limited opportunity but you did know where the opportunity would be. So I went to work at the Sea Life Centre when I was 14 because that was on all year around. I worked front of house dressed as a pirate all summer, as you do. But again, you're not allowed to do that any more, so even for the 14, 15, 16-year-olds they are not allowed to get a job until they are at least 16. So, actually you know, I can remember saying "I can't come out tonight, I've got work tomorrow". I had a purpose, I had a job, I had a role within the community and I had money to spend within the economy. So actually then, withdrawing the ability for youngsters to work in their weekends and summer holidays, it's actually detrimental to our economy. I'm sure there are lots of teens that could be doing something that aren't. Actually the youth of today don't really want to work for their stuff. They have got a completely different kind of approach, you know, mum or dad will buy it, it will be fine, or the government. Only again, this is not an ideal situation. I am probably guilty of providing too much for my children to make sure there is no deficit in their lives but I remember taking my brother down at 13, going round the newspaper shop and making sure that he had an opportunity to earn for himself. And he kept that job until he was 16, he went out every morning and did his paper round, he cycled.

SLP: So there is something really important to you about having a purpose.

Clare: Yes I do, and it worries me. I don't think they have a purpose. The fact that we have so many old people's homes but the youth have no idea. There's a massive opportunity for schools, or brownies, or beavers to be including themselves within the older community. Why are we all so separate and segregated? It seems daft, considering we are all meant to be community but we seem to be moving away from that. When I was at school we used to go, I'm sure we probably did four or five different homes where we used to do carol singing. We used to go to Brewer's Quay (that has sadly closed down now) which was fantastic, especially for dementia patients, it was such an iconic place.

SLP: What was that? Tell me about it.

Clare: It was kind of like a shopping centre. It had a time walk which was like a museum about Weymouth's history and it had a tea shop and various knickknack shops and a Disney shop which I frequented quite a lot. And they were craft shops and it was just this whole wonderful community of shop-owners and, I don't know what it was about it, but it was really special place. There was a bar. iI was just an old harbour, we used to go crabbing down there and there was a shop there, I don't know it was just, it was a fantastic place and as I got a older I used to work in a care home and I used to take my patients. down there for a cup of tea and it was really olde worlde. when we did that it was fantastic.

SLP: It all sounds like it was the part of town where the tourists would have their bit but the locals could have this bit.

Clare: Yes. Sometimes the tourists used to make their way down there and they would stumble upon it, but it was very much off the beaten path and it was much more in-keeping with the history of Weymouth. It would tell you about how the black plague arrived in Weymouth, and there are various cannonballs still in the buildings, you could see that. And, although you don't appreciate that as a child, it was always a really really cool place to hangout as a teenager but it wasn't in the middle of the town it was on the outskirts and they shut it down and now it is completely disused. It has had some pop-up shops but is actually a really sad state of affairs because it's a really beautiful building, absolutely stunning, and is very historical.

SLP: It sounds like it is somewhere you would've liked to have taken your children.

Clare: Yes, one hundred percent! Well, it was really good at Christmas and used to have a massive grotto there, if you're struggling to find a Christmas present you would find one in there. And it was just something about treading over the cobbles there because there are cobbles in between the shops and it was really quite something that they completely closed that down. Well of course they have, because why wouldn't they, because why wouldn't they close something about Weymouth? It really was a fantastic little place and there could've been a place for young people to drop in. We used to go carol singing there with the school. I'm sure we did country dancing outside for the people to come and watch us and bring in the community, because the Holy Trinity Church was just up the road on the bridge so it's that kind of community feel again. But you wouldn't dream of just randomly taking your child there to sing now and it's not the done thing but only if it's an organised group.

SLP: That coming together was obviously an important thing for you.

 Clare: Yes, seeing other people smile, you know, it's just what we'd do. And I think there is a stark contrast between then and this generation of children of that community factor.

SLP: You mean feeling part of Weymouth?

Clare: Yes. I think they will lose that, to be fair I think it's probably gone. I don't know any schools that go carol singing in care homes now because of the safeguarding issues and the risk assessments and funding and teachers aren't willing to give up any extra time. It's almost like a depression of a community. The economy is not doing very well, house prices have gone up, a lot of people from London have bought second homes so people can't buy homes if they have lived here or they live here. There is no local discount and it is just a sad state of affairs.

SLP: Do you have hope for the future of the Weymouth?

Clare: I would like to think so and I have high aspirations but, the way it's going, possibly not. I don't know. I have a kind of golden vision but it's all about money we don't have any and I'm only one person and unfortunately the cause is much greater than I am, although I will continue to do small bits - and I hope for the best but I'm not sure I can do it all by myself, it needs a group of people with the same hope.

SLP: Do you think there are people with the same kind of hope?

Clare: Possibly, but as soon as they try to speak up they tend to have water poured on their fireworks by the Council: you're not allowed to do this, you're not allowed to do that and the other. It has to be going with something that is trendy, so if we can catch your wave with something that is trendy, like the environment, that is probably going to help. So, if we could move towards that and go with that wave and start bringing in ideas about environment and community and working from there. It all depends, I don't know, it needs much more movement, maybe there will be a domino effect but I am not quite sure how yet.

SLP: But you have that spark anyway.

Clare: I'm going to try, I'm going to try.

Interview with Chris, Mental Health Nurse

SLP: Interviewer, Siobhan Lennon-Patience
Chris: Mental Health Nurse

SLP: If we can start by you telling me a bit about yourself and then what you do for your line of work and how you came into that? What bought you into wanting to work in mental-health in the first place?

Chris: Well to be quite honest with you, when I was unemployed and used to walk around, I would have time on my hands and quite often people who were clearly unwell would come up and talk to me. Because they were talking to me and I was talking to them but I just felt, I

never felt really that uncomfortable with it, so it seemed a natural thing for me. So I thought, maybe that is somewhere that I could be better really. So that's what made me think about it seriously. I'm a registered mental health nurse now and I came into that through volunteering initially back in the early '90s. Before that I had worked in, er er, I would call mundane jobs, factories, that sort of thing and then I came across a voluntary sector agency. It was next door to the agency I would go to to get my regular employment from. I was given the opportunity in between having short periods of work to go do some voluntary work so I said yes, So I could have had the opportunity to work with blind people helping with their shopping or I could go to the local psychiatric hospital so I went for that. I met a really nice lady who ran the voluntary organisation service. She kind of made me really interested in escorting and talking to various people on various wards who had been long-term patients. The people you see back in that time it wasn't unusual to see some people who had been on the ward for 30, maybe even longer, years. There was a heavy medical model then around the diagnosis of people, which I didn't understand much about then as a volunteer but that's how I got involved a mental health per se. Looking back now to those days I kind of think I was doing something different, doing something right and that I was having an impact on some people with the level of engagement I was providing with some people. But I think now that probably any new face that was walking in through those wards would've made the same impact because they were so lonely and isolated. Although within the grounds they did have their own kind of sense of community, those that particularly functioned better, in that they could get involved in more things and the severity of the illness wasn't has chronic.

So I did that for about two years and, at that time, as a volunteer you could even go onto training to learn about more about mental health; even more options then, I ended up going to university. I did a placement as part of my degree and I worked in a Day Centre and at that time it was really good because at the day centre they use to do things like art therapy, drama therapy. It wasn't formal you didn't have particular people coming in and running it. It was just kind of run by the people that ran the centre, so I got involved in that. I liked that and obviously you could also go out escort people around support them, take them, it was nice to do the practical stuff going to the local charity shops having a bit of money given to me from the day centre and you could deck some people out in some clothes ….. Yes so it was very much based around, at that time, based around helping people at the centre itself. So people would go to the centre you would have your regulars but then you'd also have people that were referred in. I was also shown around little projects where people would have experience of, well they used to call it employment experience, but I was quite dubious about that because I found out they were working for big companies and they'd be like packing pencils, stationery, things like that into boxes. But they were not really being paid a good wage so I thought there was an element of exploitation there towards people that were unwell but the flip side to that is that you could argue it got them out and it got them involved and it gave them a kind of purpose. A bit like for myself when I was a volunteer gave me a reason to get out of bed, gave me a reason to kind of walk further afield. So when I finished my degree, from then on I worked for MIND locally only for a short time. I must have made an

impression because they wanted me to be deputy manager but for family reasons I had to move away so that didn't happen. So I became a mental health support worker for another organisation for many years. When I was there I talked to the manager and I began to embark on my nursing qualification.

SLP: So that was a role in mental health service?

Chris: Yes it was like a halfway house environment People can stay there, it was basically based on rehabilitation and people could stay there for up to two years. We got people cooking, trying to review, is the kind of doctrine of caring for themselves. You're kind of tackling a lot of the negative symptoms around psychosis that we had the responsibility of administering medication whilst not actually been qualified to do so so in that time we just went by the medication cards we would give into from hospital when they were discharged to us. It was a seven-bedded unit at the time and we did sleepovers, got people up in the morning, tried to run some groups and then some changes happened around about 2000 in that they bought in a mental health team that actually worked on the premises rather than just being a voluntary organisation. So that meant we had nurses there, occupational therapists, psychologists and that's when things really started to take off for them because they had all the resources there to signpost people to and then they could help people find places to live things, like that, help you with debt, make sure they got their entitlements as well because a lot of them weren't claiming, it was a big emphasis around medication concordance.

SLP: What does that mean?

Chris: Well it's funny because it used to be medication compliance but that was seen as a bit to dictatorial, it seemed like an emphasis on forcing people to take their medication. Patient groups and anti-psychiatry groups were starting to take off so the language did change but back then a lot of things were still very medical model.

Anyway my manager had said why don't you become a social worker and I said I'm not really interested in that and he said go for nursing then and, lucky enough, I was supported to embark on that. I already had the degree but now I was going to do a nursing degree so I could do a fast track course. It was really good, there was a lot of emphasis on evidence-based practice and the profession itself, we did lots of things around the different diagnoses of mental health, the wider aspects of mental health as well.

SLP: The wider aspects? Tell me more about this.

Chris: Well it was more to do with the management side of it I suppose, like on Trust level rather than an individual nursing level. So it's looking at how a Trust was run. things like that, which really wasn't kind of relevant at the time to us because, unless you really want to go into management which most of us didn't, then the only thing that people really wanted to aspire to was was to use that nursing degree as a springboard to maybe be a doctor. You also looked at different therapies. Yes, it was very person centred - humanistic person centred -

which I liked, I still do even today. So I did a foundation course for 6 months, which involved general nursing and I got experience of going out with the assertive outreach teams and the community mental health teams which, at the time, had a lot of money invested in them. It was the Labour government; a lot of these teams had just started to take off around the country, it was a big thing, there was emphasis on caring in the community. It had been at its embryonic stage when I began as a volunteer in the early '90s so 10 years later it had really taken off as a kind of ideology, that was that.

SLP: Why do you use the word ideology?

Chris: Well it was all to do with the Third Way, what Blair had called the Third Way, embracing a neoliberal model but the emphasis was to have much more support from the third sector. So you've got your primary sector, which is the GP surgeries, general hospitals; then you've got your secondary sector like a community mental health teams in various shapes and forms and then a third sector which is the voluntary organisations. So they were there really to be more involved looking at the overall care of the individual. There is more of an emphasis then on focusing on the individual rather than in the old hospital days where I think there was more of an emphasis, kind of more communal emphasis, and even more so when I've been a support worker where the emphasis was about a sense of community where the organisation's ethos was how mental health was intrinsically related to social involvement.

SLP: So what I'm hearing from you is you think it's different now, in the way work. Is that what I'm hearing?

Chris: Yes, I mean after I became qualified so I'm a community psychiatric nurse but that's like an old title we're now called mental health practitioners so the psychiatry bit has been dropped. I can get onto why but, like I said, when I did my degree it was still very medical model psychiatry emphasis on mental health. After I had qualified I worked on an adult acute ward for about 13 years and that was pretty good at first. I had a lot of experience there but I've been trained with the orientation of evidence based practice so it's really hard to try and instil evidence based practice in a culture of work that has worked in a certain way prolonged time. So we had a lot of nurses who would come from these big old hospitals, big old psychiatric hospitals, and they were suddenly running the smaller wards but they were still trying to run them in the same way as they did when they were big hospitals. So for example, when I worked on an older persons unit for a year things were done still regimentally, patients have to fit with the model of the unit rather than the other way round, rather than the unit fitting individual patients' needs. So that's what I mean by replication, its the previous culture of the old-style psychiatric hospital kind of "matron knows better" kind of attitude.

SLP: So the ward work was different then to how you experience the community work?

Chris: Wards are, there was, there was kind of times when you could've taken people out to the doctors and things like that, that the wards were like. Well it was then that I really found the wards are very insular and they develop their own working styles and cultures so there was a lot of conflict, what with me being a newly qualified nurse, I was quite keen to put new ideas forward but I was coming up against lots of resistance to change. So I was kind of seeing some things I was really uncomfortable with, like people being put in their pyjamas at 4 o'clock everyday, gentlemen coming in with beards and straightaway they would be shaved, things like that. That was the kind of thing I came into conflict with on the older persons unit and it was at that time that I started to have a deep understanding of how Trusts work because we were then told that they were shutting down the unit which was incredible.

SLP: Can you just tell me what you mean by Trust?

Chris: Well a Trust, like the overall running, it's like the company that runs the health provision in the area is all encompassing all the different projects wards that are going on. So for example an NHS partnership Trust, so the management and the directors of the Trust kind of the way they run things and their personal budgets and obviously it was then that I've found out that your job is never really kind of secure any more. I got the impression there in the old hospitals the big hospitals people would work better generations. You might have one or two different generations of the same family working there like it was a job for life but I quickly noticed in the smaller wards they quickly sold off all the big hospitals and the job for life idea got out of the window. So obviously you go in thinking that nursing is a career but now it's just very much like an occupation really. So we were told that we were being moved and we were given the chance to choose where we wanted to go and there were redundancies but then as well as recent people others took early retirement, and other people like myself were moved. So I went to work on the adult acute ward for nearly 12 years and that went quite well. It was a good team; I established myself well there within the team. It was one ward with 32 beds at that time. The day consisted of going in having a cuppa tea in hand over and then you were dealing basically with pretty serious incidents right throughout the day. We were very much firefighting rather than actually doing any therapeutic work with people and we had a psychiatric intensive care unit next door. So quite often we would be negotiating so that people could go across there or we could bring people back. Intensive care unit was the people who were at risk of harming themselves or others. It was a bit more difficult there, it was stressful there but became the norm the many years and we were quite often saying to the management it wasn't really discriminatory but they were accepting admissions of a particular diagnosis personality disorder to the point where the ward was often getting dangerous in the older wards where you are dealing with psychosis. But it was becoming more and more the case that you were having less psychotic people being referred to the ward and you were having more emphasis on personality disordered people and at that time ages starting to see how you could treat people with the so-called personality disorder. So before that they were often seen as untreatable, seen as the drug and alcohol people and it wasn't acceptable to have them on the ward but they had nowhere else to go and, because of

the nature of the risk, we had to allow people to come to the ward and real change there was probably in about 2000 in conjunction with government policy they looked at Trusts and saw that, where some were making a profit it would be used up by the trusts that weren't making a profit. So it was sold to the public that that wasn't a good model so the Trusts themselves began to seek independence from the NHS and go for foundation status and what they have to do, they had to ask staff and the public but mostly the staff whether they were on board with becoming a Foundation Trust and what they had to do was send in a paper to say whether we were in agreement or not. What happened there was you had a high proportion of staff that didn't say yes or no. There is a lot of apathy so you just didn't have the numbers to go forward to the government and say we're on our Foundation Trust. So what they did was reverse criteria and said we will assume you are all on board the idea of being Foundation Trust but if you're not let us know but because of the apathy again they obviously got that through. A lot of people didn't really, you know, put themselves forward to say they did or didn't want to be a Foundation Trust. I remember talking to people about that back then and a lot of people didn't really understand what Foundation Trust was, like I say the environment was so busy firefighting all the time that a lot of people just didn't have the time to sit down and think things through. So they managed to put this Foundation Trust idea through and that is probably when things began for me, I began to notice that things were, especially resources, they were beginning to change. What happened was things that were there before suddenly weren't there any more.

SLP: Tell me more about that what sort of things did you notice?

Chris: Well you must have occupational therapists and psychologists but then they'll became separate in their own buildings rather than on the ward itself. It was something you had to refer to or go and seek out for yourself. The nurses were primarily running the ward with the doctor, or doctors if you were lucky enough to have two. So there was less emphasis on a multidisciplinary team which all departments really should have and be funded for.

SLP: Why do you think that works?

Chris: Why it works it works is because you have a multitude of ways of looking at a problem and working out how to solve it. If you think about medication as a means of solving the issues that's often our first port of call when looking at the problem, whereas before we didn't have any nurse prescribers we would rely little doctors to do that.

SLP: So a nurse prescriber is someone who has taken on an additional qualification?

Chris: Yes, but they sent out that program but then they cut it. But the idea behind it was, where there is a shortage of doctors, then the nurses could prescribe and free up some of the doctors' time, the doctors that I left by prescribing. But they can only replicate what doctors have prescribed anyway, they can't prescribe a new drug or anything like that. They can only write-up prescriptions. It's something like what we used to do anyway when I first started

back on the ward, we would write a prescription and the doctor would read it and sign it. So the only difference now is that a nurse is signing it not a doctor but they done a course where you could even do what a doctor might do on an admission basically but as a nurse. Quite a few nurses have done that and now they are the ones that are mostly on-call. It used to be doctors but now its nurses after only these additional courses and they can do the admissions onto wards.

SLP: So you have seen a lot of changes in the way mental health services are delivered in the time that you have been qualified nurse.

Chris: Yeah I mean, I suppose in relation to the psychology IAPT [Improving Access to Psychological Therapies] approach and steps to wellbeing we have got to a point to now where people who might have been classified as personality disorder, what they really kind of experiencing is trauma. I think they will do away with the category of unstable personality disorder because of the negative connotations to it and also it's such an umbrella term. It's like a dustbin diagnosis, you just drop people in there but you're not really sure what they would come under. So they are now going to call it, and I think this is good opportunity to open up the resources for people in the future, but they are going to call it complex trauma. So hopefully that will open up a lot more resources in psychology for people to work with complex trauma. At the moment they are few and far between, the people that do the counselling therapy anyway. They are not all psychologists, some are nurses but I was talking to someone the other day and he is the only therapist in that area so one man for that whole area and there are a lot people in that area that I know that need therapy so it's a resource that you can't really access, you can't. So more and more people are being asked if they can afford to go private because they could be such long waiting lists so you are starting to get a culture of "that's not my job" whereas, when I first started it was an attitude "what can I do to help?". Now I am hearing more and more that's not our job so you need to go here or you need to ring this number, because of the reconfiguration of services. So they have done away with the crisis team and now we are the home treatment team connected to the community mental health team. What we're finding is some people are still trying to use us as a crisis team, particularly Friday night through to Monday morning when there are not many resources out there. There is the phone service that runs over the weekend but we wonder how well trained and what training opportunities there are for people there.

SLP: So tell me a bit about what your team now does.

Chris: Well this is the difficulty, we been up and running under a year but we still haven't really got operational policy so there is a lot of difficulty around what our role actually is. We are all trying to be consistent but we're getting a lot of inconsistencies because we have guidelines about how to take referrals but not everyone reads these so that's an individual's problem really rather than the Department. But essentially we are nurses that go out into the community and we tried to replicate what the community mental health team does but in a more intensive way. That's the model and this was all put forward by the Clinical

Commissioning Group but they have had serious discussions with peer support groups and the patient movement group, people like that. So there is more of an emphasis on the people that actually use service, so if they want to they can be part of that service to a degree to help change the service to focus other people that use that service, if that makes sense.

SLP: So this is service-user driven?

Chris: Yes I think so, not wholly but they definitely have a voice and it is becoming more more vocal. There are pros and cons to that. From a nursing point of view. I think it's good when the organisation working with us has a real focus on mental health and really enabling service users to be involved. But I wonder whether some organisations are just too profit driven and that's all they worry about and we are finding that so many service users face such complex problems like risks of homelessness and we're hearing that homeless support services are just inundated, some getting 30 referrals per week which is just unrealistic.

SLP: On that perhaps you can tell me a bit more about the type of area that you work in? What is the sort of demographic?

Chris: It can vary. It's not like London, you don't really come come across a lot of different ethnicities is mainly white Caucasians. It's a rural area and I think they can be as "them and us" at work, which I haven't got involved in, where the county is split into East and West and the model of the mental health services means that most of the money goes to the east but we are in the west so we see the east get a lot of investment including government investment. So people in the west always feel like the poor cousins really in relation to resources but we cover a larger area. But with the reconfiguration of services they cut our staff team by 40% and when people are leaving they are not really replacing like-for-like so there is a lot of attrition going on. But this is all in conjunction with the increase in referrals, so more referrals coming in but less staff to maintain and follow up on those referrals. I've even heard the manager say "how on earth could we run this service when we haven't got the staff". I don't know what that's about. It's like the idea, I don't know, I go out and talk to people on my caseload and you get an idea of where they work. But you just keep hearing it's all about getting more for less. It's not sustainable and I wonder why that's not being addressed by the powers that be. It's just not sustainable, something is going to happen and it will happen, I think a major incident. This is what happens, you go through period in a way, you might find more people are taking their lives and it's not until something terrible happens like that that things start to change. Where you suddenly see support and other services coming out of the woodwork but it doesn't stay like that, it's always short-term, maybe a month if that's where departments start to work together. But then it all starts again.

SLP: So in addition to cuts to your staff team you're also getting more referrals as well?

Chris: Yes, 35 more at least a month. We've got a cut off point for referral is that we're always going over. About that, we seem to be getting a lot more referrals coming just from

the Gen Hospital and we do get referrals from the new drop-in centre which works at night and they also have these things now called front rooms and these are things that are instructed by well-meaning well thought out people, kind of people, but the demand outweighs the supply.

SLP: So what is this front room?

Chris: They're also like drop-in centres and they're run by peer support specialists and I think they have a nurse.

SLP: So again it's service user led, do they volunteer to be there?

Chris: I think they actually get a wage doing that as well, so that's good. But not all areas have these resources, in fact in one area where there is nothing I'm hearing that nurses are leaving too, so I just don't know. I think they just feel overwhelmed. They haven't actually said that to me because they are professionals but when you look at the caseload and you add it all up (big sigh) but the caseload is getting so big especially in the older persons mental health teams, how can you see all those people in the week, you just can't.

SLP: Tell me about the issues that you find your patients are facing.

Chris: Well the biggest one's housing. They can be evicted for falling behind with rent or if the people that own the building have asked them to leave. A lot of people are in housing associations and people say they've waited a whole week for things, like someone from the housing association to come round and put the water on so they had no hot water. We often have to go to food banks with people just to help them eat, I've even bought a fish and chips before for some because they haven't had a meal.

SLP: So there are a lot of social factors that you are encountering.

Chris: Yes but I would say but the main factor we come across is loneliness. People are feeling so lonely, that's the main thing especially in a rural area and you're seeing people in small villages in the middle of nowhere where a bus might come along every two or three hours and it only goes to one place. So there's only one place they can go to they can't go anywhere else where there are train links or bus links. So loneliness is a big thing and the rehab centres are really non-existent and there are no day centres like what I'd been to as a volunteer, nothing like that and they have been places that were invaluable. There were places where people could gather together, they have a sense of belonging, that kind of community spirit. It seems to me that the care in the community ethos, the ideology behind that it seems like it was well intended to begin with but it wasn't sold to people as a model that would completely stand in for a ward-based environment. So we have less and less beds and the emphasis on community care is becoming more and more stretched and quite often another big issue we come across is that there just isn't a bed to put someone in. So they

might be a high-risk person but there is nowhere for them to go and the family might be under immense pressure, carers strain, and it's really hard to tell family that someone has to stay with them for another night or two because there is no bed. I think they don't get it. I think they think there are loads of beds out there. Often the beds are out of area anyway and that is not the best answer because people can end up having to go a long way away so they are even more isolated down from their families. There are so many issues we come across, debt is another one, people getting into debt, not able to manage their finances and there's no one there to do that for them, whereas before there used to be people, social workers for example, that would do that for them; and that's another thing if you look at safeguarding for example. It's an absolute minefield trying to get safeguarding involved because we've got our own safeguarding team, then the Council safeguarding team and I've had cases we arrived trying to follow-up safeguarding and I have been pushed from pillar to post because someone has said "oh it's not for us you need to try these people" and they just say "it's not for us" and you have to go somewhere else. Accessing the GPs have become increasingly a problem, some people in some areas that waiting two or three weeks for an appointment then just to see the doctor.

Two or three weeks time that's an add-on issue things that were easily accessible becoming more few and far between now as a resource. I know some people, in the media for example, are starting to blame people for using services inappropriately or there are too many people all this too much of a demand or whatever. But it seems the same to me as when I first started. So for people to be blamed for that, it doesn't seem fair really and I have seen an increase in people experiencing trauma over what we call serious mental illnesses like bipolar, depression etc. We seem to just be getting people they just don't know where to go, they don't how to get help individually, they either don't have the information or there is nothing that they can go to, so they just feel stuck and they have lost the ability to look after themselves or develop new skills to cope.

SLP: So I have two questions really. They emerge from that, as I listen to you, I'm wondering where the people who you described as having the serious mental health conditions, where they are going who is seeing them? And then I wonder why you think that perhaps you are seeing more people who are experiencing trauma? Do you think people are more able to identify that they need help from trauma or is it the other services are not there for them so they are coming to you?

Chris: I think trauma is becoming more recognised. I think trauma, before, would just have been given a medical term schizophrenic psychopath sociopath but we don't use those terms. Then, so you are more likely to use emotional unstable personality disorder (EUPD) but again those diagnoses will not be about again as well because, like I said at the beginning of the conversation, I think they will introduce the idea of complex trauma. So we do come across as very high proportion of people who have experienced some form of abuse, often in childhood. So it seems to me that things like the rapid eye movement therapies that work with

trauma really need to be invested in and other trauma light therapy, rather than the unique model of CBT which supposedly can treat everything but it doesn't really. But CBT and trauma, I don't know many people have experienced trauma who have had CBT and said that it worked; then they haven't said "I feel different now because of CBT" let's put it that way. That might be about the individual counsellor and their level of experience, or even as a model this idea that you've got to change your negative thoughts into positive thoughts. I mean, some of the places I go to, I will be negative if I lived in that area or down that road because they're not nice places you know. I saw someone the other day, a young woman who is relapsing, she is becoming unwell and clearly upstairs there are drug dealers and music being played into the early hours. There were no police around, so there is no security and the housing association, she wants to move but they are blocking back so she is stuck where she is. So it's all very well to say "let's have a look at you individually and there is more of an emphasis on the individual", it's almost like it's individuals problem that the reality is that the social stuff out there that used to be readily available has decreased so much. Places where people could go and gather together talk to one another, this is the idea behind the retreat and the front rooms, at least they still give people the opportunity to drop-in and talk and not feel like they are alone. But really it's shortsighted just say to people have CBT, in the 12 weeks all your problems will go away. They won't go away because they are still living in areas where they're not nice areas to live.

SLP: Do you feel that what drew you to mental health work in the first place, that you're still able to work in a way that connects you with people, in the way you described when you first realised you wanted to work in mental health?

Chris: Quite often, more times than not, I do get good feedback. But sometimes I don't get good feedback. It's often because the expectations on the services are really high, you know, where perhaps somewhere else down the line they've been told that they might get a bed in a hospital but then there isn't one or someone makes a decision that they don't need one after all and it's up to nurses like me to go and tell them and that can be quite difficult, that we quite often get the anger and frustration offloaded onto us. But it seems like those that are willing to complain, all those that shout the loudest, those experiencing un-met need,)bearing in mind that most of us have needs that can't be met for various reasons anyway) they are the ones that get heard. But if you're on your own and you've got no family and live in the middle of nowhere, it seems to me that they don't really get the same kind of treatment………. properly gone off on tangent now…… that we come across this quite frequently.

SLP: So what do you think about the way governments show their commitment to mental health at various times through your career?

Chris: Government seem to just throw around figures, X million here X million there, but you've still yet to see really where things are going to improve. You just have to look at the shortage of staff and posts that aren't filled. It just seems to me it's all talk, I don't think they really want to help the NHS maintaining standards. When I first started working, I used to get

lots of positive feedback from people that use the service but now trust in the NHS seems to have dwindled and people have lowered their expectations and there's been a gradual decline in the standards of the service, like there used to be lots of training available but not so much now because of budgets.

SLP: So you are working in a service that is primarily about helping people in terms of wellbeing but I'm wondering who helps you and your colleagues for your wellbeing?

(A long, long pause while Chris thinks)

Chris: Well, things just seem to naturally take their course. We all informally help each other. It's strange because what I'm hearing at the moment from colleagues that worked there for a long time is that we are kind of our own worst enemies. I can't remember quite how she put it that basically we are all still covering all the work that is given to us even with the increase in referrals we're still getting the work done trying do what we can and by the end of today we've tried to see everyone down everything. In a way we are our own worst enemies because the management don't think will these guys they can do this so they're not worried about replacing staff. There is just an expectation on us as nurses and doctors that we will maintain a high standard of service of care and support. There is no means by which we can back off from people when they're saying they want to take their own lives so you have to prioritise on your caseload, I mean staff meetings we don't really have those not that many anyway. Other departments seem to have away-days. We talked about this so many times that we never go on any, it's like at Christmas time, I went to the canteen and there were loads of people from other departments having Christmas dinner but our department haven't been told about it, the email had gone to the managers and they wouldn't free us up to have Christmas lunch because we just so busy. I think we just feel like we're the hamster in the wheel just spinning round and round, around eventually one of us gets off in the next hamster gets on then we start running around again.

SLP: So I'm hearing really that wellbeing isn't particularly looked after.

Chris: I do get supervision it does help me but quite often it's not proper clinical supervision it's more just moaning about what's happening (laughs) but I have things on my chest that I wanted to get off, issues were very long term so I thought I could talk to her on a personal level but I don't, here is my support for the staff, to be honest but we kind of support each other.

SLP: You talked earlier about a distinction between nursing is a career and as an occupation why did you make that distinction?

Chris: I'm in two minds because there is still part of me wants to develop as a nurse and I wouldn't want to do anything else. I really like the job, every day is different, I talk to different people, you get a snapshot of their lives. I know it sounds a bit cheesy but it's a real privilege to go into people's homes and you're told a lot of personal information about their

lives, I love that part of the job. But we don't see them for long enough it's not the way the team works so you can't do actual therapeutic work with people or take a systemic approach, talking to the whole family for example. If you take too long during visit people think "well you could go to see someone else in that time" so spending a long time getting to know the situation for somebody, I don't think that is valued any more.

SLP: I'm hearing that you feel like you don't get that opportunity any more to build that professional working relationship the therapeutic relationship between a nurse and the patient.

Chris: A therapeutic relationship can be built quite quickly if you have the right kind of rapport with the patient but, for a lot of people, it will take time to them to trust you and what you've got to remember is that we really just see the tip of the iceberg when we first come out to see people. To explore all the rest of it would take a long time and we don't have the time to do that. It would be good if we did have. I think we wouldn't have so many people coming back again so quick.

SLP: Do they get a chance elsewhere within the system where that can happen for them?

Chris: Well it's a bit of an old one because the psychology team now won't accept people unless they had a period of stability but we only take people that are unstable. So once we've been involved with every bit and we feel like the risk has gone down there still might be a period of time when they're waiting for the psychology input because they want to see this period of stability, and I've never really understood that because a lot of people say they need the therapy now not 12 weeks later and, to be quite brash about it, they could be dead in that time. They can wait 12 to 18 weeks and sometimes people paying all their hopes on that, and then they get a phone call and then that says oh no, you are not for us, not everyone is accepted.

SLP: So is your role to find a place in a hospital to see that person while you're waiting for a place in hospital for them, or is it to try to keep them out of hospital in the first place by supporting them?

Chris: It's prevention but actually that's a problem with the community care model because the emphasis on prevention, it's about keeping people out of hospital even whatever risk. So rather than preventing ill-health in the first place, that kind prevention, it's just about trying to keep people out of hospital. It's more like looking at that person and thinking "do they need a bed that's going to cost £150 a night?" We even get people referred to B&B because it's cheaper so landlords are making money anyway.

SLP: What do you think needs to change?

Chris: Well I would like more buildings built and more therapists specialising in trauma, that would be good, more drug and alcohol units. We used to have what we called dual diagnosis

- something we would help people with all those years ago where someone will have a primary diagnosis, say of depression or bipolar, but in conjunction with that they take alcohol or illicit substances. So all those units have gone, those departments don't exist any more, they used to have dual diagnosis nurses that was specially trained in that but it's just gone. There is less of an emphasis on expanding the public sector, what it is is really whittling down the public sector to the bare bones but still expecting the services to be run as if all these resources were still out there.

SLP: So your team now works with people that have drug and alcohol issues?

Chris: Yes all the time but we do try to refer all because the risks are high. We can try to work with people but obviously it can be quite risky, if they've been drinking or taking spice for example and they are very quickly yo-yoing, and you can't really run with that because it's really hard to predict risk in those circumstances. I just think there needs to be more investment in public services, not even just mental health services. It can be social clubs anything, anything that people are go along to say that I'm not excluded because they don't work or because they've got a disability, do you know what I mean? It's like, I mean, the drama therapy, the music therapy, the things like that. It's all gone. Are you to say people that were depressed but that actually be smiling, making music together or painting together or even in a writing group where they're sharing their life stories with each other. You don't see any of that now it's all gone. You might have an OT [Occupational Therapist] on the ward and they've got time to spend with people individually and people come out of hospital and say "I didn't really see the nurses much or the doctors but the OT was brilliant" but that's because they've got the time freed up to do what I think nurses were doing years ago. So the roles have changed. I feel like we've just become management level.

SLP: Can you see any potential in the future for an improvement in services?

Chris: No, I can't it sounds so pessimistic but I really can't I'm really worried that in this country we are really struggling to maintain the NHS as a service, not just mental-health the whole thing it's constantly under attack on a negative level in the media, morale is so low when I talk to staff, not just in my team in other departments too. They have asset stripped so much of the NHS I can't see it being improved unless we ever see… an emphasis on increasing public services not the private services you keep being shown coming in on their chariots saving a dying service (laughs) and then they take all the glory. That's how I see it. I don't see a strong commitment to health and well-being, well I do - there is a strong commitment but only if you're willing to pay for it and that's the difference. So for those that can't pay for it there's not a commitment much, it is the bare minimum and there are a lot of people out there in these rural areas, not much work around, not much wages, where it really is the bare minimum to them and that is the sad thing about it. They could be getting a much better service if the government invested in that.

Interview with Holly, Social Worker

SLP: Interviewer, Siobhan Lennon-Patience
Holly: Social Worker

SLP: I asked Holly to tell me about what her role as a social worker involved.

Holly: Well, I've been in social work for many, many years, solely with children since 1985. It's been a long career and it's always been in what we call an area team, which is the team of people who are at the higher end of working with people and families over which there are concerns about the wellbeing and welfare of children. And that has obviously meant that we have gone through, I've worked through, the gamut of trying to do preventative work when problems are brought to our attention by referrals, moving sadly then into child protection and safeguarding work if early-stage work has proved not to be effective in improving the welfare and wellbeing of that child. And often and of course we do end up in care proceedings and going through the courts. We also have, I've, worked a lot in situations where the families have just given up on their children despite our best efforts. We have had to have them in the care system because parents have asked and walked away. So that's been my background, it's been right from the word go. Obviously things have changed and moved on in ideas and thinking but we've been governed by the legal framework legal structure, for what we have to do and the way which we do it. And since 1989 there has been the Children Act that has been in our mantra, which says that the child welfare is paramount and it doesn't matter what the problems might be, the parents have got or whatever, but when push comes to shove we look at that first and foremost because children are 100% reliant on their parents. But all the way through it is the child's welfare that is paramount so when push comes to shove, when it comes to drug use with parents and the child is being neglected, drug using parents start methadone treatment and going to groups whatever they choose to do that suits them to try and get off whatever dropped it on and then something happens, perhaps is a death in the family or something and they go backwards and they start using drugs again and the wellbeing of the child is gone downhill. It's not acceptable it's not good enough then it is their child that comes first not the parents, even though you can understand why they may have gone back using the drugs, the child has to always come first. It's important to get the child's wishes and feelings and views as well from them.

SLP: Can you perhaps tell me a little bit about the location where you work.

Holly: Well, except for two years I have worked in a local authority which is in large rural area, Tory controlled if I dare say it. I did have two years in a Yorkshire local authority with a very different political background and that was completely different to the rest of my working career that I had in a rural coastal county.

SLP: Tell me a bit more about that, how was it different?

Holly: When I worked in Yorkshire, the first thing that hit you was the resources - many many more than what I've been used to in the rural area and I remember that a lot of the resources where actually attuned to the needs of parents, for example there was a day nursery that was heavily subsidised and one of the priority groups was single parents. I had not known anything like that from working in my rural county days. There were also a lot of preventative services for teenagers who had started to show challenging behaviours and that led to a much less stressed life for childcare social worker because there are other services out there supporting them. And another big thing that hit me when I worked in Yorkshire was that the two years I was there we didn't have one single emergency where the police done a raid and found children living in squalor and had to remove them so that they would then have to be found placement bought to us in the back of the car and then over to you social workers. That sort of thing, that never happened (long pause while she thinks) and the rural county in which I worked, the half of that time I did work in an area which it was very deprived and not simply a deprived area within that county but one of the most deprived areas in the country but I never felt to this day when I came to retirement that policymakers planners in that local authority have ever grasped that and the particular needs in terms of resources that that area needs.

SLP: How do you know that, can you give me some examples of what made you get that sense?

Holly: Yes, there was a voluntary organisation in this particular area that ran a very, very good service. I think it was for 14 -year-olds upwards and they did a lot of preventative work. They did family mediation work so if the teenager started to show challenging behaviour they would work with that and mediation work we never saw it, we were the statutory social work service so we never saw it. We never saw the good outcomes from what they did by enabling a teenager to stay home. Yet that voluntary organisation closed, it had to close down because the local authority withdrew. The local authority in which I was working actually has more children in its care then other comparable local authorities when you look at the demographic.

SLP: In terms of the types of things you've been involved in your extensive career, have problems people face changed over time or has it been fairly consistent?

Holly: I think it's been fairly consistent. I think people who have been traumatised in their childhood through neglect or abuse, there is no effective support or help for them. They then start relationships in their adult years and they then become victims within that relationship and they have children but they're not really fully equipped to emotionally parent those children and often practically parent them as well. Another big theme which runs through my work is a addiction. It may vary. I have moved areas within the local authority I mainly work in and I remember one area it seemed to be alcohol was the main addiction and I moved to another area and it seemed to be drugs, heroin and ketamine in particular, so the actual source of the addiction has varied but, as childcare social worker doing statutory care work, the

results are all the same, the resulting factors all the same in that the child's welfare is being harmed and statutory childcare services come in when that harm is significant. So the resultant effects are the same, it's just that patterns tend to vary a bit. There is a seaside town in which I have worked, I haven't worked there for a while now but I know people who do. One thing that has changed over the years is a lot of displaced unsettled families from other areas, they feel they can leave all the bad stuff behind and settle down on the seaside because they feel they did have holiday memories from there as a child, or hearing people talk about it and they think they see perhaps a seaside town as a nice place, a fresh start. And also the seaside town where I worked, it was an area of particular deprivation but, I know this sounds like a silly thing to say because I guess all seaside towns are like it, but it's the end of the line, the end of the railway line. And the end of the railway line seems to mean something as well in terms of bringing people in who have had trouble to live somewhere else perhaps. It's not always necessarily parents with children it can also be people without children who have problems but, I have heard it said before, it's end of line seaside places that seem to attract.

SLP: This notion, end of the line, it somehow seems symbolic in some way perhaps and I wonder if you can unpack that little more?

Holly: Yes …. It's interesting ….. I actually grew up just outside of a seaside town on the south coast. It was actually nice and posh when I was there, the theatrical set from London would be there and it was all terribly nice and I was at a private school in centre and what have you. But now I hear it's not like that all there was a study recently I think about seaside towns they all seem to have gone downhill. I wonder whether it's a mixture of seaside towns being more and more kind of vacant because the better off take off on their holiday somewhere else and a mixture of this or are we are given of how the seaside is a wonderful place and if you want there is happy. And also in that because lots of the indigenous populations perhaps have left those seaside towns, so there is perhaps cheaper accommodation than other places. This particular seaside town I'm thinking of, I know house prices are cheaper there than only six or seven miles up the road, so that must be attractive to people that are displaced. I think it is a mixture of things but I was told once by solicitor, he did care proceedings, that it is a common factor - the end of railway lines having particular problems.

SLP: Have there been any particular initiatives that you found that worked well in terms of the type of work you have focused on?

Holly: Well, the initiatives affecting my work have sort of been, kind of like three layers. So overarching was the Children Act of 1989 and then there were a few Acts in the early 2000s, in particular there was a Children Act of 2004 and they looked at safeguarding procedures, a lot of adoption and permanence issues for children in the care system So we have the guides, out of that comes how we fell in care proceedings. And the feedback we get from judges and what feedback we get from, I don't know what they're called, it was Mumby, he's just retired but the senior judge overall the child-care proceedings in this country and he kind of dictates,

I say he is always been, he kind of dictates themes that we have to listen to. So we've got that overarching what we do and then, as a local authority, we pull out what we have to do on a statutory level and get into details of the policies and procedures we have to work along, that criteria that changes constantly. That is a local authority the one I've worked in. I think it's always been quite good about telling its staff what elements of the procedures are going to take on a different angle than we have held. People are working on the ground and various working parties looking at policies and procedures. There is then a third level outside, well second level of outside influence, and that is any particular government initiative that might be going on any one time. The thing is I can think of two, Every Child Matters and the Troubled Families project. And thinking about it, when I have been involved in care proceedings and I've been involved in a lot of care proceedings, the court has never ever attached on those, never ever raised them. Which is interesting, very interesting I think.

SLP: Can you think of a reason why that might be the case?

Holly: Well, the Troubled Families program that David Cameron bought in in 2011 was, I think, to move away from the public purse doing things for the families and getting families to do things for themselves. It didn't target the families with the most entrenched problems and in fact the National Institute for Economic and Social Research, in October 2016, actually concluded that this project had no significant impact. So I guess that the Troubled Families initiative and whether any family that was involved in it who were going to care proceedings never came up in court, because it was pretty ineffectual. But I think the other reason why it probably never came up in court it was because when we end up in care proceedings there are parents that have long-standing entrenched problems and the Troubled Families initiative never targeted them. The cynic in me thinks that if they went for the much lower families, where the teenager maybe had lower end antisocial behaviour, then they might feel that they would have a better success rate and then people that say "oh look what a wonderful project we've got". And I think they shied away from the really entrenched families because they wouldn't know what to do basically. Also, when the Troubled Families initiative set up it was £4000 per family to focus on behaviour, not going to school, parents getting into work it was made quite quite clear that the local authority social work department have no hand in it at all, they would get no money from this project whatsoever. And it turned out that they chose families we never quite knew how they chose them, they had a list families that they had chosen that was encrypted on emails and just sent to senior managers. I think possibly one of the common denominator factors were the parents, they work in paid employment and there might have been poor school attendance but the people that administer the scheme locally never came to us to say "have you got any families that would fit this game", never. So there was a big mismatched there between what the government were trying to do with the Troubled Families initiative and actually starting to look at what was already out there. There was no strategic thinking behind it or acknowledgement that there were already people out there trying to do this work so let's get together with them pick their

brains, get some ideas off them; okay it's a project, we don't want to get sucked into the work they're doing but we've got valuable information that we can kick off with.

SLP: I get the sense that you feel there was lack of joined up thinking? And that they were selective in the way they chose the families?

Holly: I think at the time it was more than that. I think that we felt that the government just thought we were really rubbish at what we did and that they would just come in and sort it.

SLP: How did that make you feel?

Holly: Pretty disheartened. It was around the same time as baby P and David Cameron gave a speech in the comments and the head of Haringey was sacked. It was during that time and there was the speech blaming the death on social workers when, in fact, it was a paediatrician, it was medics. I haven't picked up the injuries on that little boy and I was so incensed when these comments made by David Cameron in his speech in the Commons, and I was by the Department of education that it was up to local authorities how they spent money on safeguarding children, which was nothing to do with the points I was actually making in the letter at all, so I felt pretty disheartened. I thought that the government at that time really didn't see that social workers were doing any sort of good at all. When I worked in the seaside town I can think of two locations when a local councillor actually came in, not a single local councillor came anyway near us to see what it was like on the ground.

SLP: I wonder why you think that is? What do you think it is about? is it about not wanting to know? All not bothering not caring? Or is it that they think that you are all capable and can manage to get on with it? What are you thinking?

Holly: Well my personal view, what I am thinking, in my view they haven't got a clue what is going on on the ground they just don't have a full grasp of the remit of local authority work. And I think many people just want to pretend that child-abuse doesn't happen and it is not out there. I mean the other scheme I was thinking of was Every Child Matters and this touches on this theme because there were five outcomes that that scheme set out. And one of the ideas behind it was that if you focused on five clear outcomes that would bring together everyone working with children in need and it would help further the understanding between different agencies of their respective roles. But that has never happened and to the day I retired it continued. I shouldn't think it's any different now but other agencies do not want to know. They drop it like hot potato if there is evidence of serious child neglect. They just do not want to know because it's such high profile and you're dammed if you do and and if you don't by the press and other agencies just don't want to get involved.

SLP: Was there ever a time when you felt that there was sufficient support from other agencies or was ever thus?

Holly: I think at one point until about five years ago there was an effective support service for schools in how to manage safeguarding issues in that the local authority had a team of advisors going out schools. All that has been dissolved because of Academy status and because of cutbacks. There was a team of about 60 now there's only one in post. So schools aren't getting specialist support any more. I also think that Health Visitors, when you think back they are very much individuals and individual personalities. And some people really got it and gone with it and try their hardest and then referred it over when they have done lots of appropriate things, others didn't want to know. Now Health Visitors are under the local authorities they don't seem to be able to do as much and see children and families as much as they used to and being under a local authority control doesn't seem to have brought them into the fold any closer to the social workers doing the safeguarding stuff at all.

SLP: So this was because they used to be under NHS?

Holly: Yes that's right, so this hasn't improved at all in fact it's probably got worse. I'm thinking about it, I don't know whether it's also the Academy status there's been a factor But I can think of a couple of families, when we were involved, where we had planning meetings for what to be done with families. Often schools do not attend when it came to us taking the professional view that the family didn't need a tier 3 social work service any more. Then schools came on board. Schools do not seem to understand that there is a threshold for our service and when that is met that's fine but when that threshold isn't any more we close the case. Schools seem to like to have tier 3 statutory safeguarding out there involved with their families. It's a nice cushion for them and I have had discussion with the headteacher about the teacher wouldn't just have an open door of the classroom and teach 30, 35, 40, 50, 55 children (laughs) erm they would draw a line at some point and we have to do the same for our service.

SLP: It's about managing your caseload?

Holly: Yes, which you have to do more so because of lack of resources. You see there is three tiers, there is universal which is Health Visitor, schools and GPs. Then there is the slightly more specialised service where there is no evidence of a significant risk of harm to a child but that parent could do with some additional support and that would be mainly children's centres here and family partnership zones and the family matters agency. I'm not quite sure of their remit now, but the family partnership zone can refer to them and put in measures like a short session of counselling, things like that. And then there is the tier 3 service which is the statutory service safeguarding where there is a growing concern about the wellbeing of children and that other agencies say well we've been working with them and we've tried this this and this and these have been the outcomes and what we're finding is that the other services are not working with families and they are actually being left to drift and it gets to a crisis situation. And then tier three because either of those lower services aren't staffed, and I think some of the time it's because they can't get the staff or it's because posts have been slashed, and partly because, again my theory, that statutory childcare social

workers are seen as a terrible thing. It was never the intention that those services were managed by qualified social workers. So you've got situations, for example, where a work in that lower tier stage two service would go into the home and be shown into the lounge, which might be in a disgusting state. And then subsequently there might be a referral from school saying the children are coming in filthy dirty and what have you. We would then go in and actually the whole house is in a state but actually if social workers were going and seeing a filthy disgusting lounge they would start to ask questions about the rest of the house how do the children present at school but they don't because they don't have that social worker background so the services are ineffectual in my view.

SLP: It sounds like people are working in little silos?

Holly: Yes, yes very much so.

SLP: Was it like that when you first started in social work?

Holly: We wouldn't have had the family partnership same then the tier 2. We had people working as part of our team that were social worker assistants. They were going and doing sessions of cooking to help them get things sorted out, get families that lived out in the sticks to the hospital appointment for their child, all those sorts of things they did. That was all done away with it in a big restructure about four years ago. Social work assistants have gone, there is no talk about bringing them back this part of the social work team. They weren't qualified social workers, that's all gone, all little bits have been farmed out now and that's the impression I get in health services well. I mean this Every Child Matters program was useful in that it bought in the concept of outcomes, being quite clear as to what outcomes you needed when working with the family so looking at what the concerns were, what could be done how they could be measured. But it didn't do it in a …. it was about be safe, healthy, enjoy and achieve economic wellbeing and making a positive contribution but what does that actually mean for the families that we work with (laughs) yeah economic….. wellbeing… well it was about getting the families into work and it was about teaching the children this is what you do when you leave school, get a job. Well you know, when you have traumatised damaged parents bringing up children, ain't going to be thinking of that sort of thing, they're going to be dwelling on their own issues, own problems and until there is support for them ..… But you know the other thing I've learnt in my career is that there can be all these wonderful groups set up, parenting groups, children centres, groups for mothers and young babies, whatever it is - but if you've been traumatised as a child in whatever way, you can't go out and feel confident about being in a group. So we often have parents coming up with all sorts of reasons and excuses as to why they don't go along to these groups. People are missing the point - they can't. So you can have a very troubled family with the whole circle of support networks around their house but, unless you're psychologically in a place to take that support and help up, they're not going to go across the road to the most wonderful group in the world.

SLP: Are there ways of being able to work well with the people you describe?

Holly: Well, yes. You know we're told by mental health services that you can do a certain amount of recovery work with adults that have had childhood traumas, victims of sexual abuse as a child. There are always ways of working with the adults but if anybody says that you can make them into this untraumatised perfectly balanced emotionally okay person…..I'm sure that you can work in some way with the more entrenched troubling problems that they have but then there is no-one out there who is going to do that work. Mental health services just see people as, well, whatever it they've got a definition of mental illness or not. There are some things around steps to wellbeing, CBT and things like that that they do, again these troubled people are not going to come to groups, they haven't got the confidence even to talk over the phone. They need somebody from that service to go out to them build a relationship with them and then start to talk about the therapy all the CBT and explain to them what it's about. So, no, the services aren't there. It is a very depressing picture I am painting (laughs) but you know, they are not out there.

SLP: So, in terms of the outcomes that you described in regard to Every Child Matters, despite the obvious issues that you have pointed out about resources and also the understanding of the underlying problems within their families, is there still evidence that these are the sort of outcomes social workers are working towards?

Holly: Well, they've been dropped now. I think Every Child Matters is called something different now. It would seem as if that had been mainly aimed at schools. The five outcomes started popping up on all the various forms we have to fill in, they've fallen off the agenda, not on the horizon any more. It's now all about smart measurable, setting out to begin with what you wanna do how, it's going to be measured, review process to look what you've achieved and how things are going. We are audited very very heavily en Matt and our computer forms are geared around that as well. I think the Every Child Matters stuff, or whatever it's called now, I think it's still around in schools but, as I understand it, it was aimed at 5 to14 year olds. The children's fund that the setup was aimed at, 5 to 14 -year-olds, we never saw any money from the children's fund and and his aim was to abolish poverty and disadvantaged children (she shrugs, she sounds incredulous, she laughs) what do National statistics tell us? Child poverty is on the increase, it is not on the decrease and certainly I have never, I can't think of, families where they have got themselves into work and out of debt and living a more fulfilled life in a way that they are not anxious about just meeting the basics and the children having the basics. But then I have worked with some of the most disabled and disadvantaged people in the community and it's the same family names when I started my career back in the 80s and, I look at the system now the computer database, who we are working with now is the same families, is the same names, they keep coming up.

SLP: You mentioned poverty do you think that is a key factor or not?

Holly: That is an interesting question isn't it. Because, on one level, poverty talks about the money that someone's got coming in and the necessities that they have to spend on but, in terms of the individual's perception of whether they are poor or not, it doesn't necessarily depend on that. I mean, I'm thinking of somebody outside of work I knew who had very nice lifestyle in London, and then they were struggling to meet the necessities in life by any stretch of the imagination but they saw they changed circumstances as them being poor. On the other hand, we work with families who, their parents have never been in work and have always struggled and perhaps grandparents were either. So they don't see they're lot as living in poverty, it's just how life is.

SLP: So it is a matter of perspective?

Holly: Yes, I don't think I've ever heard any service user say, I can't ever recall that….. I recall service users saying it's tough managing on benefits, that the government doesn't pay you enough…. but I never recall people saying they're actually poor….openly say that they need to go to the food bank and can I give them a voucher, or a voucher for the secondhand furniture place. But I do recall situations where we've had to initiate that, you know when you've been in a new scene that they've got nothing to sit on they have got no table for the children to eat at, are you aware of the reuse place and that you can actually go there and because you're on benefits you are entitled furniture and it's about 15 quid for a table and we can help you with that. We often have to push it on families. I remember this family quite distinctly not having a dining table there was nowhere for the children to eat. There were three children that because their parents have never had one they had grown up without one so they didn't think to have one. It was learned behaviour. I'm going back to what this guy is saying in the book I'm reading now about where all life in 1910 and a preacher, a member of the church saying this what what life is all about.

SLP: This is your lot?

Holly: Yes, this is your lot in life.

SLP: Were you able to see the impact on the family when they had the table? Once you've had your inputs do you get to see the outcomes is what I'm saying?

Holly: Yes, I guess after they had that dining table one of the older girls did start to look at her life at home and see the gaps in it and she did leave home but she went into a very you know, inappropriate relationship but she did start to question. Her sister didn't but she did. What she's doing now I don't know.

SLP: What would you bring in, in terms of the way we work with families? What would be your ideal do you think?

Holly: Well, first and foremost I think we should create an emotional health service. People trained to work with victims of trauma and come away from the line of the NHS who aren't

coming up with a diagnosis, just saying it's personality disorder. We sit there and say "no she's been abused as a child, she spent some time in care". You know that is one one big thing that is missing that would help tremendously and I guess I'm saying it's all really. I suppose there could be some small local initiative, perhaps to try and get a team of counsellors together to volunteer their time to do some work. You could not rely on that any long-term but then I'm talking about central government initiatives that are needed very much. So I think that the whole question of welfare and the education system needs to be looked at. We are not teaching children as to what's acceptable and what isn't.

SLP: Explain what you mean by that.

Holly: Well, is it acceptable to be shut away in your room long spells of time because dad is hitting mum or mum is hitting dad?

SLP: Okay, so it's about what they see in their own lives, you mean, whether they should question that it's normal?

Holly: Well, it's about education and health, healthy relationships. It's okay to say when you don't see healthy relationship. Obviously child poverty is a big thing, real big thing, but then alongside that, even if you up universal credit levels tomorrow even if you …double them, there also needs to be a support service going to a lot of the families that we work with to show them how to manage that money. I think there is a lot of work to be done around with parents about the importance of education for children. I think some of the parents just don't get it. They haven't been able to engage in education themselves so they just don't get it, they don't get it's important. I mean I was a product of grammar school education in the days when you took the 11+ and actually it was quite a social leveller then. I'm not talking about the grammar school debate now but then it was so much my route out of a very basic working-class background and I can think it was to others in my class as well. I'm not saying that everyone needs to go to grammar school but what I'm saying is I think the importance of education is lost now to a lot of people. Some sort of enquiring mind to begin with, an interest in learning and perhaps a few qualifications and employable qualities in that person. If they don't want qualifications, about being nice to others and that you enquire and you don't just rubbish stuff you're given. Yes, there's a lot of education that needs to be given to parents about the importance of education …… what else needs to be done? …. I think that Joe Public, I think there needs to be huge national campaign and they have missed the boat so many times. I mean, Jimmy Saville for example it was all about the bloody BBC and what they haven't done I mean who the hell cares about that. What national government could've done is set up a whole education program for the general public out there - the signs to be alert to if a child is not only being sexually abused but perhaps being neglected. You know, for example, I had an example recently the child was very smelly, her face looked dirty. Oh she smells but if somebody actually sat down and talked to that child, actually that family didn't have any running water, their water had been cut off because they hadn't paid the water bill. So just a few gentle questions showing major signposts to Joe Public to be aware of.

Because I think there is that perception out there that it is the welfare agencies and the state agencies, it's their responsibility "nothing to do with me mate".

I think there ought to be a program from the government that actually showed that it's everybody's responsibility to look after the welfare of children even in a very small way. You know like a disabled mother he struggling to get her child to medical appointments or something, the neighbour steps in and takes that mum to that medical appointment. And I think hand in glove with this, and it's something I was talking about the other day with someone, our societies are so disjointed now. Grandparents could live in John O'Groats and you could live on the south coast but then they would be grandparents just along the road on the south coast that have got their grandchildren living 100 miles away - why couldn't they have a grandparent role to the family next door that are struggling. Do you see what I mean?

SLP: Yes. Yes I do and you touched on earlier, in the families that come to an area like where you work, looking for a new beginning actually had no social network around them and I think you're kind of suggesting there is a way to build a social network even if it isn't familial?

Holly: Yes. Yes and there's nothing. I mean we had the Children Act since 1989 which, if you look at at the very first part of it, it makes it quite clear that it is the child's interest that comes first above anything else. The government has never put that message out to Joe Public, never ever ever. And you hear stuff on the news all the time. Not so long ago, you know the tug of love between one parent aboard and the other parent over here and who would have custody over the child but nobody actually stopped say what does the child want, what would be in the child's best interest - it was all about two bloody adults.

SLP: Do you think there is a tension then between what the legal frameworks says and what actual resources can cope with?

Holly: I think this a tension in the legal framework that is supposed to represent us as a society and how we treat children and that has never been communicated to society. So these two things, the Every Child Matters which was about lifting children from poverty and the Troubled Families initiative about reducing antisocial behaviour and basically the cost that these families put on the public purse, they never touched on any of this. But it's a child that comes first so you know when it comes to, for example, reducing antisocial behaviour there is nothing in the troubled families initiative about the community coming together and helping young people, like helping set up the skate park or something like that to give them something positive to do. That was never in either of these programs, Every Child Matters and Troubled Families.

SLP: So I think what I'm hearing from you, in many ways over a long period of time, despite policies, we have actually lost sight of the child.

Holly: We have lost sight of the child, yes. And we have lost sight of the ordinary person being able to do something. You know, in any small way for the child by putting the child first. You know, I mean, if you saw a disabled mother spending quite a bit of money on alcohol or something, you see some empties outside the garden gate and she's wanting help to get her children to hospital appointments. You know, I expect a lot of people would just say "well she's got the money but she spent it on booze, I have seen it in the recycling bin", rather than actually, because the child comes first, that they think this child needs to get to the hospital appointment so I could help them. They just see the mother, whether the mother is deserving (she emphasise this word as if she is putting it in quotation marks) deserving of help or not.

SLP: How do we bring the child back into view do you think?

Holly: Well, I really think the government needs to run a public campaign. A big big government campaign needs to be on the telly, in the newspapers, social media. It needs to be out there – they are good enough at putting their manifestoes out there so they've got the wherewithal to almost try and indoctrinate the public. We shouldn't have to tell them how to do it, just get their resources and do it. And, you know, with that surely there would be lots of triggers. Then people will start to say "okay and what about the poverty, what about child poverty, what about our awful statistics on that?". There would be protests and pressure groups, it would mobilise a lot of things.

SLP: Can you see that happening?

Holly: No I don't. It's very depressing. No I don't because the emphasis is on business and capitalism, getting people into work. They're not bothered, I mean if they were perhaps they might wake up a little bit.

SLP: So my sense is that, despite your long career and your wealth of experience, you're not feeling particularly hopeful about social workers who are now coming to the profession, what they're going to find.

Holly: No I'm not. I'm not hopeful at all and the departments are struggling to get staff and, do you wonder at it, it will be privatised. Well the Children's Act makes it clear that it's local authorities who are responsible for safeguarding but of course the government can always change bits of legislation. You might be privatised out, I don't know, we're seeing it happen in the NHS.

Interview with Paul, Youth Worker

SLP: Interviewer, Siobhan Lennon-Patience
Paul: Youth Worker

SLP: Tell me about you and what you do.

Paul: I've been a youth worker for most of my adult life now. I started at 20 and I'm now 52, so 32 years, originally in the area I grew up in and I did my degree there. Then one other area before I moved here, just over 25 years ago. It used to be a boys club but we changed the name to a club for young people. For the first 23 years, I was employed by the local council as an area youth worker, so I had responsibilities for other clubs and projects in the area too. And, three and half years ago, the council made cuts in financing and decided not to run a youth service any more and to stop running all the 22 youth centres they had. Many closed, some buildings remained open but for other use. A few remained as youth centres and have been taken over by community groups, charities or schools if they are on school sites. So, any youth provision in the county is now run by the voluntary sector, not by the local authority. That has reflected the national picture, that is, well over 1000 youth clubs have closed in the last 10 years, with a huge number of professional workers being made redundant, as were so many others three and a half years ago. But we managed to keep our service going by running it as a charity. I was made redundant in 2016 and since then I've been mostly fundraising and managing the building, which is a shame that it's a modern day necessity.

SLP: So you have had to bring in a new skill set?

Paul: Yes I've learnt a lot in three and a half years and I'm very proud that we've kept the club going. It's been really hard and we've made a lot of sacrifices. We didn't have money to pay staff. I returned as a full-time volunteer and my part-time paid staff came back voluntarily, bless them. This is pretty amazing. Slowly over time, as I've managed to get money, in we've been able to employ a team of paid staff again in the evenings and, increasingly, we've been able to pay me enough to live on. So I'm very proud to have kept the club going, that I've lost a lot of income in three and a half years, which has been tough but I couldn't of walked away, it would have broken my heart. What I'd forgotten to say was that three years beforehand, before we became a charity, we'd been involved in a long process and a ridiculous amount of work. We had managed to get a £3 million grant to build a state-of-the-art club because the old club, which are been built in 1964, was on its last legs, it was literally subsiding into the marsh. So in the last year of the Labour government, 2009, they invested £272 million in a program called my place which was to develop brand-new state-of-the-art youth facilities in deprived areas, which are areas failing too. The only part of Dorset which was eligible, so we got £3 million funding and it was a very long and detailed process. And this is just capital funding, not ongoing revenue funding, that's up to the council; when they got the funds to build the building they essentially signed a contract a 20 year agreement to run the club so that we could deliver everything we said we would deliver. Three years later, when the council decided to stop running all the youth clubs, myself and others said well you can't do this because you've signed a twenty-year agreement that would mean you'd have to give the 3 million quid back to the government. But by then it was the

Conservative government and the local authority had some discussions so somehow the council was simply allowed to renege on that commitment and there was nothing that we as a charity could do about that. It was pretty shocking. The building has been built but there is no ongoing support, they walked away from the running of the club and it would've closed. I couldn't walk away, we had to provide a service that would benefit our young children.

SLP: So, tell me a bit about what you're able to do there now

Paul: So, what we do has changed over the years and it's certainly different to how used to run it when it was a brand-new building and we were still supported by the council. We used to be open all day and in the evenings and provide 56 hours of varying support to our young people. It was very substantial, all sorts of daytime programmes, the example for children excluded from school or at risk of exclusion, perhaps children in social care, we had after school drop in advice and information centres, we had after-school programmes of sport and art in any evening, youth club six evenings a week. The stuff on weekends we would run a gateway club for people with learning disabilities, it was incredibly busy, and we ran a really wide range of provision including for young people that were quite excluded and disadvantaged and at risk.

All of that had to change because we didn't have the staff to run daytime programmes any more. We couldn't have full-time substantial staff in the day, so myself and a team of part-time staff mostly had to work in the evening four evenings a week. It's not just staff capacity is an issue that we only run four evenings a week but for funding reasons. There are three elements to how we get income and the first and the most important one is that we have to hire the building out to a variety of users when we not running it in the evening. So, over the last years, we've built up a whole range of different user groups almost all of whom provide services for young people or people with disabilities or children have been excluded from school. We also have football teams in the dance Academy as well as exercise classes and the family partnership zone. So the building is still used a huge amount at the time but in terms of us actually running youth work sessions it's just the four evenings a week. So what we do with young people has changed over the years but essentially how are describe what we do, youth work should be seen as part of the overall education system, it's what we call informal education rather than the schools and colleges which are formal education providing opportunities for young people outside of the school day. Our target age range is 13 to 19. It's targeted at teenagers but people can still come after the age of 25 if you have a learning disability or additional needs. I believe it is is important to have structured sessions, our staff are very good at planning. It is good to have structure and a variety of activities so they're not coming and just milling around or just playing pool or table tennis, we do have a pool table and a table tennis table, but we are not a stereotypical youth club where that is all they do.

SLP: Tell me why you think structure is so helpful?

Paul: For lots of reasons. I hope that the young people who come are being offered a variety of things that are developmental and they get used to that pretty quickly, that it is not just a place to come a doss around. It is somewhere where there are a variety of opportunities on offer. Some of those might be health promoting, others might be about developing their social skills in various ways, some are targeted at building their confidence and self esteem. We do activities with large numbers or small group work. Our small group work is probably the most developmental, such as accredited programmes, such as the youth achievement award. We also work with individuals, it is worth just noting that our work with individuals has increased massively over the last 25 years. The work we do as a planned structured activity tends to focus on the fun stuff, the arty, sporty things, a wide variety, an attractive programme to encourage people to have fun. This attracts people to the club in the first place and is in itself developmental, building confidence that sort of thing but essentially that is kind of a fun programme.

Then we have a specifically educational programme. We have a number of planned, scheduled activities that are directly educational such as developing independent living skills, shopping and cooking on a budget, loads of things around health, awareness raising around things like drugs and alcohol or mental health, signposting to various services that sort of thing. On the issue of health we have done a number of things in the the last few years on diet and exercise, or on sexual health, the sort of things that are so important for teenagers. So we have regular evening sessions with targeted work around that. We also have, as a club and as youth workers, a very strong stance against discrimination, anti-discriminatory youth work. Around issues like racism, sexism, homophobia, prejudice against people with disabilities, we regularly do work around these of subjects. We've also done a variety of directly educational projects such as film. We've made films around educational subjects such as the dangers of joyriding or drugs or date rape, homelessness. Engaging people with filmmaking is a really engaging way for youth workers to work with young people so they can talk about the issues that may affect their lives. We also look at global issues. We've done things around climate change and the environment we also did a project called young people doing good. We deliberately call it that; it does what it says on the tin - it's about engaging our young people in projects that will benefit our community, such as conservation projects with the wildlife trust, and we painted Disney characters on the wall at the local hospital, done gardening projects for old folk, we've been to care homes to do social evenings, and with them a garden, we've been there a number of times. We've also done things to support people who've been victims of crime; youth crime that we've written about in the papers and we've got in touch it's almost like reparation. That was actually praised by the government. It is called our Young People Doing Good programme. When there was still youth youth service in the local area about five years ago there was a real focus on getting young people to gain accreditation. So we ran the National Youth Achievement Award one evening a week. Hundreds of young people have completed this national award with us, which takes about a year to complete. They complete all sorts of challenges and projects. From time to time we've had young people gain arts awards, sport awards and first aid certificate, various ways that

young people can be accredited to the things that they have done with us. In terms of arts, we have done a variety of things around creative and performance art, things like music and drama, although sometimes it's physical art like arts and crafts. Young people are particularly keen on music based projects. So that's basically the youth work that we do.

But nowadays we increasingly do more one-to-one work. Pretty much all the work described before is proactive work, educational and developmental. The other side to my work is reactive support work, mostly one to one. I'd say there isn't an night that goes by without at least one person wanting to talk to one of our staff about the issues they are facing in life. So obviously young people can get all sorts of confidential support from youth workers and that's side of the work has increased massively. If I look back over the 25 years of doing my job it probably used to be 10% of the work, now I would say is 50% of the work. I say we used to do 10% of the time one-to-one and 90% of the time developmental and educational work but now it's 50% one-to-one and 50% educational and developmental.

SLP: So, based on your experience then what do you think has changed? Why do you think there's been that shift?

Paul: I think there are several reasons for that which are worth exploring. I think many of the issues facing young people are issues that they have always faced in the developmental needs of young people and their ability to cope in society In which they live. Some of the things round that have never changed and have been constant. And our youth work is focused on enabling young people to gain the skills and confidence they need to survive and thrive and do well and move into adult hood. But I think there's been an increase in both the amount of problems and the level of seriousness and I think there has been a decrease in other support that is out there, and when I say support I mean it in a really wide context, including the familial support, community, neighbour, extended family kind of family support. I think it's fair to say, in my opinion, that our networks of support in society have reduced over the decades. You know that thing about there is no such thing as society and people don't know their neighbours like they used to. And working-class consciousness has decreased and you don't necessarily know the old lady at number six and you noticed whether her milk been taken in, or you might go shopping for her when it is snowing, which were all things that are commonplace when I was a kid but now we don't know. I don't think people know their neighbours. They buy houses and build fences in their gardens so their gardens aren't overlooked and we don't know each other or care about each other, I think, like we did 30 or 40 years ago. I think that affects young people in that they, perhaps, don't have extended family support, maybe the closeness that they used to have. They don't feel so connected to others like they did in other communities. There's also something about how young people - don't they seem to spend less time socialising and more time doing solitary pursuits, computer games, X boxes and things? So young people are, perhaps, lacking social skills. They're not able to form friendships that would help them to cope with stuff that's going on in their lives and then those reasons and, I mean, I should also mention the social media issue

- sometimes I think it gets overplayed and sometimes I think it gets underplayed. I'm in two minds that first of all I'm absolutely convinced the social media as a whole is extremely detrimental to young people's lives. I now have a growing and vast wealth of experience over the last 10 to 12 years, seeing people having really specific problems to do with social media, whether it's bullying, whether it's lack of self-esteem, whether its exposure to racism, exposure to violence, exposing to bullying in a wide sense and nastiness, abuse, homophobia, all forms of prejudice really and also an exposure to violence. to sex, to extreme sex that is damaging to them forming healthy relationships. But I think without a doubt I'm in very young people that talk to us about sexual experiences that's very horrific for them have come from the world of extreme violence porn; and we're talking 15 -16 year-olds here talking to us about those things that's obviously massively concerning. That's not social media so much the pornography through the Internet.

SLP: You see this as a significant change since you first started in youth work?

Paul: Yeah, yeah I mean absolutely and mobile phones of course. I mean 25 years ago no young person had a mobile phone even 20 years ago. Now, of course, every young person has a smartphone and they spend a ridiculous amount of time on smartphones. I think there are very damaging things about young people and social media and messenger and chat facilities and and they are errr errr kind of beholden to it. I can give you an example if you like.

SLP: Yes, yes please do.

Paul: I have asked, well, probably over 200 young people over the years and I pre-empt the question by saying "please think about this really seriously and give me a serious answer, don't just give me knee-jerk answer but think about what you would really feel like in both scenarios" and I say to them "do you think you would rather have a week with no food or week with no phone and Internet access?" And I would say 90%, yeah probably 90% overall of young people and 95% of females, have said they would rather go without food. They say they could literally not survive without the Internet access for a week. So then, of course, I discuss with them what it will be really like to go a week without food and I explain that they would be incredibly ill after a week with no food - they would probably want to eat their phone. Today of course they just say I don't care but still rather go week without food I have to have my phone. So in just one generation of 15 to 20 years we've seen this incredible reliance on technology and phones, social media, connectivity with their friends that is damaging. As part of the program and mental health program about the resilience and mental health, we do number of things. One of the things is called digital detox. It's a night at the youth club where no computers get switched on, no Xbox and, most importantly, they hand in their phones at the start of the night and they get put away safely and at the end of the night they get their phone back.

SLP: And what do you notice about these nights?

Paul: Well, the fascinating thing is that the end, to be evaluated with young people, we put sheets on the walls. And when we recently did one of those nights it's like an open invitation to hand in the phone when they come to Club: now, if you want to, you can. It's rarely taken up when we specifically say that we are doing a digital detox night, no technology and is definitely a case of handing in your phone when you're coming and you get back at the end of the night but, in the meantime, we will have lots of fun with no technology and re-evaluate those nights when we specifically do them. And, yes, so I've got on the walls sheets and flipcharts where young people have commented about how they felt, fascinating and also scary in that there was positive feedback like "I did more than I normally would", "I did more activities", "I spent more time talking to my friends", "I talk to new people that I've never talked to before", "I actually really enjoyed it", "I forgot I'd handed my phone in I just enjoyed myself ". So lots of really positive thoughts but every time we've done it we've had some really worrying negative feedback, if you like, from young people who really struggled to cope without their phone two enough hours. The session is two and a half hours, in fact we had one young woman who said "I felt like I wanted to die" because she didn't have access to her phone for two and half hours.

We did, by the way set up even though it was digital detox. We try to be relatively straight and say "if you come that night we will be asking for your phone when you come in and you get the end of the night" but we did also say "if you have a really good reason why you need to keep your phone on you (you know say someone was ill, or if the parent needs to get hold of you) of course you can keep your phone" or "if you're not feeling great and you really need your phone of course you can just ask someone for it and we'll give it to you". But anyway this girl had gone to two hours without her phone and she said that she felt like she wanted to die without it which is very worrying and that wasn't a one off comment. Young people said it was a really difficult and challenging experience for them generally. That has then led us to identify young people that need some additional support because pretty much invariably you can imagine that those young people that really struggled to be without their phone for two hours were young people that were lacking a variety of skills, lacking self-esteem, confidence and so forth. So then, through doing those nights and getting the feedback and having some young people say they really struggled with it, we've been able to identify some young people to do some specific work with, to build up the confidence and engaged the in new things, to try to get them to the point where actually surviving being without their phone for two hours will be okay (he laughs). But it would at least be manageable for them. There is also a whole thing about, I would say, this gets into quite complex things about young people's identity

SLP: Tell me more about that.

Paul: I have a sort of theory about social media. When I say that, I think it's probably increasingly detrimental and damaging to young people and their mental health and social skills and their self-image. I think there are a lot of things around identity. Obviously in the

teenage years is a real time when people are forming their identity, should be forming their identity in various ways, more securely and starting to feel confident about who they are what they believe. Also things about sexuality and relationships, what's the norm for them and hopefully feeling comfortable about who they are and how they want to respond to issues that that they face. It is always a difficult time, that transition, that adolescent transition, from childhood to adulthood, from dependence on their parents to independent from their parents. It's challenging. Fractures at home often with rebellion, that natural rebelliousness that takes place and can be difficult and it always has been. You know there is this classic bit of script, I forget it exactly, from Roman times. It is about adolescence, about being rebellious and naughty and stuff, you know. So it's obviously, you know, it's centuries old, all sorts of things happen and anything. About the '60s and they were mods and rockers fighting, oh gosh, all sorts of examples about how it's a difficult time. But I think one of the things that social media has done is make it harder for young people to be confident and sure about their identity, it makes them much more susceptible, I think, to be insecure to be fearful err to be fearful err to seek something that is false. What I mean there, I mean there is obviously stuff about, you know, people do selfies and they out them on Instagram and they want 20 likes in 20 minutes and if they don't they feel crap about themselves and that's not healthy in my opinion erm and some people are very very obsessive with things like that. So I think that's really damaging in terms of their self-esteem err err erm and, just a little aside, this thing about identities is very worrying and dangerous, to do with online social media and, I think, particularly things like their exposure to far right material and a classic that gets talked about is self-harm material, access to information about self-harm etc. So there, you know, and obviously we talked about you know the dangers of sexual predators online things like that. So there are a number of specific threats, you know, I think to young people's safety that they are exposed to now. They go back to the identity thing, the need for likes.

It's a fascinating thing, you know, my experience with things like Facebook, which I don't think young people use much now it tends to be an older person's thing Facebook. Most young people use Instagram and Snap Chat and Messenger and stuff like that. Most young people are on Facebook but don't use that much for communication so errm. But the development of Facebook, I think I've seen kind of three stages if you like. Initially there were lots of really positive things, getting in touch with old friends in using some acts that were either fun or could be developmental although some were negative and dangerous and fostered things like racism but there were fun and developmental apps and you can get in touch with old friends which was great. That was kind of the first stage of Facebook but the second stage was errr, errr, was what I kind of call the bragging stage You still see this now. People, to some extent teenagers but probably more young adults about people 18 to 25 or even 18 to 30, bragging about their exploits whether it's sexual or to do with drugs or in particular to do with alcohol. So Facebook was, and still is, awash with people talking about how hanging they are today after the night before etc. That sort of bragging about a whole variety of aspects of their life. You could even argue that people brag in a materialistic way about their cars their phones their homes their holidays etc and adults are as guilty as young

people are of doing it. But young people take the lead from adults, they see the kind of stuff that gets posted and they join in. So it's not great, the bragging phrase, phase rather. And then the third phase is, I've noticed on Facebook which has probably been going on five or six years and again I see very regularly, and this is from adults not just young people, that certainly something that young people do a lot is the cry for help. So people tend to put a cryptic message indicating that they are pissed off, that they are unhappy, that something has happened, that they need some support. They are looking for some affirmation of some sort you know, it's not normally, they don't normally explicitly say what's up. They even use cryptic message like "I'm so pissed off" or "why does he have to do that", something along those lines and what they're looking for is, again within half an hour, they want 20 people of their friends to have put "what's up babe, inbox me, message me I'm here for you" etc etc. And its validation and it's letting them know that they got some friends and that suffices really and often they don't seem to ever say what the problem was (laughs) and there 20, 30 messages of people saying "what's up I'm here for you" and they never respond by saying what the problem was. Maybe they've sent direct messages to sum of their friends to say talk about it in more depth you see that all the time and I think there is an argument to say that social media serves the purpose there in a world where people perhaps don't have the real-life connections and support networks that they used to. So social media serves a positive purpose select people that are having a difficult time, difficulties, something has upset them or they are feeling really low and they can leave a message and within a short period time they can know that there are 20 friends that care about them. Arguably that's a positive thing. It might be helpful in terms of the mental health but actually, in reality, I think with young people there are some young people that never do that and there are others that do that sort of thing all the time it is their standard behaviour. And those young people, we are used to young people that live really chaotic lives, their home lives are very chaotic and difficult for them, their families are like that, they are experiencing a variety of complex problems within the family unit in their lives and err and you know they turn up everyday with new problems and difculties and day really struggled to cope. Those young people are the sort of people that are doing this sort of behaviour everyday online, shouting out that there is something they are pissed off with with or that they are struggling with and they are getting a number of friends saying "I'm here for you" kind of thing. Like I say, arguably that is positive. But actually I think that ultimately it is negative. The reason I say that is because it is not real, it's online, it's not real friendships, it's not being able to talk to someone in real life. it's not having the kinds of small friendships. Friendships with the small number of close friends that you can tell anything to, talk to about anything

SLP: In your experience then, I noticed earlier you said you were doing more one-to-one work, with young people who come to you, but in terms of linking with each other do you say that there is a struggle there? Do you find that, when they are together they are able, under one roof together, do they find it hard to connect to the real world? Do you think?

Paul: Yes, yes increasingly so. I will come back to that. I just want to say a bit more about the cries for help. About what actually happens and it's to do with why I think there are actually more problems with mental health issues and suicide. I think that if, whilst one may argue there may be certain purpose, it may be useful that people can go to social media and get some instant feeling of support, that there is some kind of support network for them, like I say, that's not really real. But it is arguably, and I would suggest, more valuable to have three or four genuine close friends that you can tell anything to, in real life and get support from them, than 500 Facebook friends, half of which you've never met, who will leave a message, you know leave a message back for you but you can't actually go see them and talk through the problems. So what I think happens is that people get the support they need by posting those cryptic messages and getting 20 people saying "I'm here for you", people get a level of support when the problems are not that serious the but when the problems are serious, posting a cryptic message then messages like "what's up babe" doesn't cut it. It doesn't do it in terms of the actual real support you need, you really need. What would help and be best to support you in those circumstances, when there is something really quite serious, I know maybe at the point self harm and suicide for example, you need to call three really close friends you can talk to. Friends or family members who you can go and talk to and whose opinion you value and you know that they value you as a person, and they genuinely care about you. And I think some young people don't have those friendships any more, they only have the online fairly superficial ones. So that's why I think ultimately that can be very damaging, those cries for help. It's not real and when the problems get very serious the support you get online isn't what you need; it's not enough. So that's another reason why I do think that has an effect on mental health problems and suicide rates.

Sorry, yeah, and going onto your question - are young people less able now to build real-time relationships with each other, real life relationships with each other? Yes. I mean, some young people are still incredibly social and you have young people you know that are very gregarious and will be friends with anyone. But I think we have undoubtedly got increasingly, over the years, increasingly seeing young people that really struggle to make, to build relationships. They lack the skills, they lack the confidence, they lack the ability to really form relationships, positive relationships and, yeah I mean, there's a whole variety of reasons for that but I think undoubtedly there are young people that struggle to form healthy well developed relationships, the percentage of young people unable to do that has increased.

SLP: Tell me a bit about the demographic of the area you cover, the young people who come to your service over the years, where are they coming from?

Paul: The club is on the outskirts of the town. It's an area of deprivation, relatively high levels of deprivation. Around 65 to 70% of the young people who come to the service actually live in that area but young people do come to the club from all over the area. Again 60% or so go to the same school but we have smaller numbers that go to others. Traditionally youth work, and our service is no exception, tends to attract young people that are not particularly academically gifted. Obviously that's the real journalism and we do have some

young people who are perfectly academically gifted but, as a generalism, youth clubs tend to attract young people that are not particularly academically gifted. Research has shown that young people who tend to be academically gifted are err spend more time at home studying, doing things with family, or they belonged to single-interest groups, whether it's a sports club or a chess club, music group, and don't so much go to youth centres. So young people tend to, the young people we work with, and this is a real generalism, tend to be people that are not academically gifted, not necessarily succeeding in school or in their life in general in various ways. Errr, and, errr a considerable percentage, and this has increased over 25 years, considerable percentage of the young people that come are young people that have one or more quite considerable challenges in their lives and that might be exclusion, social exclusion, or directly excluded from mainstream schooling. They may have challenging behaviour or disruptive behaviour they may have learning disabilities they may have social care involvement in their family, they may have a social worker, they may have very difficult or disruptive or chaotic home lives. Family lives, you know, and that can involve things like parental drug and alcohol use, domestic violence, a parent in prison, the the abuse within the family unit, things like that and errr and, yeah, and a variety of other things such as involvement in antisocial behaviour, or drug and alcohol use themselves, mental health problems, early pregnancy. So if you like, there is a whole variety of things that can affect young people's lives very negatively that can be viewed as challenges and the percentage of young people that come to us that have one or more of those things going on has increased over the last 25 years quite substantially. Again, it used to be something like say 20%, 25% of our young people were at risk and in need and had specific issues like the ones I have just mentioned but now it's probably 60+ percent, I would say, of our young people that have one or more going on in their lives.

SLP: Is that because there has been an increase in issues or is it about lack of resources? Are you just getting more people through your door?

Paul: I think it's both. Yeah, I think there has been an increase in young people and families experiencing those problems in their lives and and a reduction in other support.

SLP: I'm so interested because, at first, the way you described what you did, I got the sense that you felt you were an extension of the education - not sure about the word - system. That is, you are part of a more holistic way that children learn, you felt that your organisation is very much part of that. But, as we've gone on the more we've talked, what sounds to me like an increasingly more complex world in your view. Is that fair to say?

Paul: It is interesting that you point that out. It is fair to say that our work, by necessity, has has become far more about targeted work with young people who have problems and issues going on in their life and young people who are excluded and struggling for one reason or another and at risk. And our work has become more based on one-to-one support than developmental group work that youth work was mostly based upon. And I am resistant to that change in various ways and I think my team of staff generally are because, to be honest, it's

an argument within youth work about targeted youth work and open access youth work as it's called. So more and more funds, as more and more resources cut, local authorities that still deliver a youth work, and to be honest over the last 20 years more and more funding has been allocated to targeted youth work rather than what used to be called generic open access youth work available to all, turn up come in, anyone can come. More and more funds were put into doing targeted at work with specific individuals whether they were NEET, you know, not in education, employment or training, it was also work alongside the youth offending teams, or whether it was people being excluded from mainstream school, or had challenging behaviour. So, yes, over the years funding has been aimed at targeted youth work and open access has seen significant reduction in funds, or is now not funded at all, across the country. And at the same time we have seen a massive rise in young people having a variety of problems, challenges and issues in their lives. And, more recently, we have seen a rise in things like suicide rates, mental health problems, knife crime etc. Well a huge number, over 1000 in England, youth centres offering open access youth work have closed and thousands of the youth workers were made redundant. But we've seen a massive increase in the number of young people having problems and those problems are becoming pretty serious in terms of our society and quite public, particularly in terms of things like knife crime. But I think things like mental health and suicide are also fairly public issues and are fairly well-publicised. I think there's a bit of a crisis in mental health, including young people. It's a bit of a crisis in terms of the number of people committing suicide. I think there's certainly a bit of a crisis in terms of the number of people carrying knives and knife crime and murder. So the things I mean, clearly in my mind as a youth worker, the two things are connected - that there has been a massive reduction youth work, in youth clubs, in places for young people to go to to be safe, to develop and to have positive adult role models in their lives, to make friends with new people, to develop the skills that they need to cope with life and to do well, to be encouraged to be aware of issues affecting their lives and making positive choices, to be aware of issues around prejudice and how that might affect them, and to have positive views, and dealing with discrimination. Things always happen within youth work, youth centres, youth clubs and a massive reduction in all of that sort of work with young people and I think that's very detrimental to our society and I think it is one of, yes one of the reasons that has led to any increase in some fairly serious problems to do with young people, yes.

SLP: You mentioned enabling young people to gain skills for coping can you elaborate on that?

Paul: Yes, there's a lot of work that's been done over the years about trying to define what youth work is and what we seek, what we seek eerr, young people err errr to enable young people to gain from their contact with us, their relationship with us, definitely this form of youth work has gone back decades as a form of education. There is a classic, I've more or less memorised it, a classic definition of youth work in that it is about social education. Social education is the, the conscious attempt to help people to gain for themselves what, to enable people to gain to themselves, the knowledge, feelings and skills necessary to meet their own

and others' developmental needs. So that was Mark Smith, from a book called Creators not Consumers, which is a bit of the classic old youth work book from about 30 years ago (laughs). But I've always found that definition of youth work as social education and enabling people to gain the knowledge feelings and skills necessary to meet their own and others' developmental needs, it's as good a definition of youth work as I have found. There has been quite substantive detail work into what youth work is and what we're looking for young people to develop and gain in terms of skills, sometimes called skills competencies, and to define things like confidence and self esteem. Because we always say that a big part of our work is to engage with young people in a way that increases their confidence and self-esteem and I believe that is the central tenets to youth work. Youth work is about that and, in that, we've got countless examples of where we've had young people who are self-harming, have suicidal ideation, and here we recognise that one of the reasons that they are in that position is that they are severely lacking self-esteem, they don't feel great about themselves. And our main response to them is actually, rather than sometimes clearly we give young people specific support around self harm. But actually a lot of our generic response is, if you like, a more holistic response to young people that are self harming and lack self-esteem is to engage them in things that aim to bolster their self-esteem. And we find that, a couple of months later, they have stopped self-harming. The answer actually is trying to tap into the root cause of why they are self-harming and the lack of self-esteem that leads to that, rather than just looking at the self-harming and not the reasons behind it. Yeah, so there's been countless examples of doing that.

SLP: I'm wondering whether you have had to do some additional training or bring in some new skills to your workforce where things have changed over time in relation to the kind of support you offering?

Paul: Errrm I suppose there is two or three things to say about that. First is that obviously I am trained as a full-time youth worker, the rest of my staff team part-time youth workers work one, maybe two, evenings a week. Pretty much all of my team has done part-time youth work qualification, it's the full year academic qualification in youth work and nationally recognised qualification part-time youth workers and then on top of that myself and team members would have done a variety of different short training courses. So, say it might be drugs, sexual health, supporting young people with sexuality issues, working with people with challenging behaviour, or, gosh, there were so many mental health issues emotional and mental health training, gosh, a variety of other training courses, some of which, the majority of which, provided locally offered by the local authority children services or other organisations, the NHS and so forth. And sometimes at national events, conferences and things that staff have been to. So, yeah, a variety of training but I suppose the other thing I wanted to say about that was that there is still the thing, you know when I talked about the difference between proactive and reactive youth work and that more and more focus has been on funding for targeted youth work, targeted at specific types of young people who are already struggling in one way or another, will have perhaps identified problems in their lives

and this issue, this working more one-to-one with young people with specific problems. There is still for me, and my staff team sort of know this and feel the same, there is still the thing that youth work, that I feel we should strongly retain a commitment to the core basics of what youth work has always been, which is about giving young people opportunities to develop, developmental opportunities. They develop behaviourally, socially, personally in various ways and to develop self-esteem and confidence through taking part in activities with their peers that are challenging in some way, challenging and developmental. I mean we had our workshops around things like self-esteem working with young people and looking at things called self-esteem boosters that can range from hideous notions of standing in front of a mirror and giving yourself positive affirmations which, you know I don't knock any particular idea, but I don't think that works. Basically if someone already has low self-esteem I don't think that suggesting to them that they stand in front of the mirror and tell themselves appear beautiful or strong or whatever erm, So anyway that's a slightly extreme example there are some things a whole variety of things that are called self-esteem boosters that you can suggest to young people that they do or that you can do with them; some I think are valuable, others I think are not. Got this definition, this little thing that I wrote about what I think is the very best way, I think for young people to gain self-esteem and it's more or less as I just said. I think that the absolute best way for people to develop healthy self-esteem is for them to regularly engage in activities that are developmental, that challenge and expand their horizons, if you like, with their peers. I think there is nothing better than that and arguably again going back to things like social media and isolation, things that are just so much a feature of young people's lives these days, perhaps arguably the opportunities for young people to engage in developmental activities with their peers have been greatly reduced over the last three years I would suggest.

SLP: Perhaps you can give me an example of a way that young people come together in developmental work with a peer group?

Paul: Yeah, something that immediately springs to mind is our Big Brother weekends. Big Brother weekends we're basically a group, usually 8 to 10 young people spend the weekend at the centre and are not allowed out, a bit akin to the Big Brother house. The weekend is actually based around around a series of challenges and we work with young people for a month or so in advance of the Big Brother weekend to support them. So the weekend is mostly based on each one of them having to run a challenge for about an hour that they set the rest of the group and introduce it. They run it and the rest of the group take part. At the end of the challenge they evaluate, they go into the diary room (which was actually upstairs toilet) and they talk to Big Brother. So we filmed lots of the weekend, we filmed the challenges in particular and I and then the person that has planned and run challenge talk to Big Brother about how they feel they did with it in their planning, their preparation, the delivery of the challenge, how they think people have taken part in it, what they think they gained from it, what they've learned from it and how they could use that learning in other areas of their life. So they are just amazingly fabulous weekends and incredibly

developmental. And the film's kind of famous because after I then spent a ridiculous amount of time editing it into a wonderful film with music, highlights and montages of the best bits and outtakes and all sorts. And each group has always loved watching their film and the DVD is always one of their prized possessions, which they talk about 10 years later. They have always been very meaningful weekends to the participants and very developmental and the challenges have been extraordinary over the years, ranging from things like they have an hour to plan their own fashion show using only rubbish and recycling materials, they have an amazing Fashion show with music and stuff and they had made these incredible outfits, and in indoor fireworks display with no fireworks (laughs), without fireworks, using all sorts of, you know, crazy materials colourful balls and tinsel all sorts of things to create a funny version of an indoor firework display. They've done things like devising their own adverts for charities like make poverty history, kick racism out of football, things like that. They have done things like developing their own sign language with songs, their own fun sign language to sign a song, telling six six fairytales in 6 minutes, acting out six fairytales in 6 minutes. Each of these things they have like an hour to plan, doing versions of stomp you know the sort of dance using dustbin lids and broom handles and things, all those kind of things and 1 million and one other things.

I mean we have probably done 10 Big Brother weekends. There has probably been about 100 different challenges over the years and they have been fantastic and very developmental and a lot of these, as you can hear me saying, from those things pretty much every single challenge that is run by one young person at Big Brother weekend necessitates the rest of the group working really intensely and closely together to achieve goals and yeah have a lot of fun together, and over these Big Brother weekends formed the kind of relationships that can mean something to the rest of their lives. So, in lots of ways, both in terms of just leadership skills confidence to stand in front of the rest of the group and speak be on camera and speak run a challenge, to take part in challenges, there is a wide range of skills and competencies that are enhanced through the Big Brother weekend and obviously self-esteem and confidence is greatly boosted. Also, I should've said we have a positive nominations process so with Big Brother on the telly people are nominated to leave because they are disliked but this is kind of the opposite because after every challenge every person gets to nominate the person that they think performed best in that challenge, or contributed most to the success of the challenge is how we phrase it. So positive nominations, by the end of the weekend everyone will have received one. They will be secret and delivered in the diary room and at the end we find the top three prizes. Whoever wins the Big Brother weekend, in all honesty, at the end of Big Brother weekend it's kind of weird. and this is the lovely thing, that it is nice if you can be first but no one cares if they did or didn't get however many nominations because they have all loved and enjoyed the experience so much the nominations don't really matter.

SLP: So with the resources that you have now are you still doing these weekends?

Paul: Haven't actually done one for a little while and that's mostly because we haven't been doing the youth achievement award because, for several years, it was the youth achievement award groups that we did that Big Brother weekend with and we have not run the youth achievement award for a while. And that is because of a lack of resources, because we devoted a Friday evening to the youth achievement award group. On the Friday evening, when we used to be open six evenings a week and now we're only open, able to open, we only have enough capacity staff wise to open four evenings a week so we can't really just dedicate one evening a week now just to this achievement award. It's arguable because it's one of the most developmental use work I've ever done but, you know, it's young people time and when we are only open four evenings we can't dedicate one evening to just working with a small group for a year over three years. We have not run the youth achievement award, hence haven't run a Big Brother weekend. So, yeah, if we had better resources and we were open more evenings we would probably still run the youth achievement award.

SLP: What changes would you make then? Do you think, if you could, what would make things better? If you could wield more influence in terms of the youth service, what would you like to see happen?

Paul: I think, at all levels from the government to local authority heads of services, not that there are many that still exist now a lot of it is gone or has just been picked up wherever possible by the voluntary sector charities and so forth. But I think at all levels there is the need to recognise that, I think a couple of things, there is a need to recognise the root causes of the problems faced by young people in our society and to tackle those causes. There is sort of deficit model of young people that just says how young people are lacking, you know, "what's wrong with young people today?" that sort of thing. As opposed to what is wrong with society today that is causing these problems, what is presenting young people these challenges that are tough for them to deal with and many of them don't succeed. So, rather than a deficit model of young people, obviously as a youth worker I prefer to have a much more positive view of young people. So young people have a tremendous potential, a real capacity for growth and development and to contribute to their communities and society positively and just need steering in the right direction. So they can be presented with the right opportunities and get the right support for them to grow, be engaged in positive things and to make positive and healthy choices, so that they can grow meaningful positive relationships. That young people are increasingly faced with a variety of challenges that make life very tough for them and I think there is a need for government and local authorities to discover causes and try address them on a wider level than just that the level of the individual young person, at a more strategic level. So those are the problems around poverty, problems around parental employment, employment opportunities for their parents, employment opportunities for themselves as they become independent adults, problems with education including educational exclusion, problems around the support we give to young people who have learning disabilities or SEND, and young people with challenging behaviour and support that is available to them within our education system. The support staff you know, TAs etc that

are being massively cut, which is one of the reasons why school exclusions have increased so much. The problems around league tables, schools being so focused on exams problems, that mean a considerable number of young people are excluded from school because they are not likely to get good exam results which will reflect badly on the school so they get excluded often in year 11. Young people constantly being tested from a very young age, which if we accept that only a certain percentage of students will be academically gifted and a certain percentage of students will have talents in other areas that are not so academic, rather than developing a schooling system that celebrates whatever gifts and talents a young person has that seeks to develop those, we have developed the schooling system that from an early age really regularly tells young people, a considerable proportion of our young students, they are shit, they are stupid, they are dumb, they are not able to learn - well, you know all those negative things - what an awful way to have developed our education system. I find that appalling. Obviously it has significant impact on young people and the people I regularly work with have been a victim of that system of schooling, system of education. The 10 years before I get to work them they have been a victim of being told they're crap, being told, I mean obviously not directly no one told them you are crap, but when they're tested regularly and it shows they are not academically gifted they are regularly reminded that they are not good in one way or another and that is not a positive experience for them. I mean so many people I work with, I would probably say the majority of young people I worked with, hate school by the time I get to work with them at 13 maybe 14, 15, 16. I would say that the majority of them hate or have a considerable dislike of school. They go there under sufferance, if they go. I think it's crazy that we have developed a schooling system that fails young people so many of our young people so badly and creates a sort of animosity between young people and school, young people and teachers.

SLP: Has it always been like that or is it something you've noticed has become more apparent?

Paul: Again I think it's grown, it's definitely grown. I'm just reflecting on it and reflecting on 25 years ago and what sort of problems, I mean it's always been issues of young people not achieving in school and not too doing well in exams, and it has been positive moves towards more coursework being included as opposed to just exam based tests. But then sometimes those things get reversed so it's more focus on exams again. I mean certain things to do with league tables and the way friends I have who are teachers talk with me about it. And, certainly, teachers have to teach the way schools are set up, very much about young people doing well at exams, because schools have to do well in the league tables which are based on exam results as the primary way of assessing how good school is, other than sort of OFSTED inspections and things. I mean just to give a couple of examples that spring to mind. I mean 25 years ago we never experienced this but in the last 10 years we've certainly experienced quite a few young people being told in year 11 that they're not going to be entered in certain exams because they might not pass, not that they've got no chance of passing but that they might not pass. That they've done a mock and they just failed, they are going to be denied the

opportunity to take that exam to have the chance of passing because they just failed in their mocks so the school don't want them to even try the actual exam because it will reflect badly on their league tables. So the young person is told, yeah, we're not putting you into that one. I find that appalling, shocking, to deny a person the opportunity taking exam just because they might fail and that that would reflect badly on the school. That's not the schools' fault, that's the government's fault. The government have, for some time now have, put the focus on league tables and I think that's very damaging to pupils and to teachers. Most teachers I know are wonderful, highly skilled, extraordinary capable, dedicated, hard-working and want to teach in a particular way that is more holistic than they are allowed to. So yet again, most of our school system now seems to be based on teaching to exams, teaching young people to pass exams, rather than giving a more holistic learning experience, rather than engaging young people in the style of learning that engages them as active participants in a learning process. Again, that's a phrase that we use in youth work, a description of youth work, active participants in a learning process alongside us as youth workers, School erm I know teachers that can be very frustrated, that they want to teach in a way that is more about engaging pupils in active process where young people learn to develop critical thinking skills, learning to ask their own questions and find their own answers and that, of course, gives us in society an opportunity to develop new knowledge, to develop in young people an ability to critically think, to question, to discover new things and to be more likely to do that through their lifetime work. And then, as a society, it means that we are more likely to make breakthroughs in science and maths, medicine, travel, all sorts of things. So I know teachers who are very committed to that the whole concept or that want to do that but the system is set up so that the main primary purpose of the teacher the notion of schooling now is that knowledge is known by textbooks and teachers so there is no opportunity of new knowledge. All the knowledge is already there in textbooks and in the teacher's head and the textbooks and the teachers head are imparted to the pupils who have to learn those things and regurgitate them at exam time. They have to find ways of learning you already know, facts. And again, that is not a positive way to teach and to enable young people to learn and for many students it's not a style of learning that suits them. Because, as you know students have all different kinds of learning styles that may suit them, you know learning things by rote, from textbooks and regurgitating them at exam time may not suit them for many students. It doesn't inspire a creative spark or desire to learn, it turns them off that whole process. Rather than be something that is engaging and developmental, it is something is just a turn off. So, as I say, it doesn't enable students to develop any new knowledge that benefits society.

So anyway, I have waffled on a bit there but the gist of it, I think, is that - well to go back to your original question "what should we do?" I went on a long rant then about some of the failings of our school system. And another thing, I mustn't move on from schooling, our education system without mentioning the social reproduction theory of education which I subscribe to. I believe that's what it is and I disagree with it being what it's for. So the theory goes that schools are going to reproduce the social inequalities of the existing society, so it replicates the status quo and it does that in a variety of ways because the type of schooling

available to people is based on their social status and economic status, their level of privilege or not, sorry - public schools for the rich and secondary schools for everyone else. An increasing understanding of the education system, the non-private if you like school system and there are fascinating things about how it's not just the difference between private and non-private. There are things about how public schools teach the privileged rich that attend to be captains of industry, to be bosses, and to be hedge fund managers, and politicians and so forth. Whereas secondary schools wouldn't teach pupils from poor backgrounds to have such hefty aspirations. Most fascinating stuff that is decades old now about the relationship between pupils and teachers, that is about getting children used to a level of subordination that they will then put up within the workplace. Why Working-class Kids get Working-class Jobs is a 30-year-old book now. I'm out of the loop in terms of more current reading but those are the things I read back when I did my degree. They talk about how just the relationship between authority, the teacher and the people in subordination. I'm not suggesting for a moment all teachers are acting a horrible authoritarian way and, of course, we have moved on from a time when there was corporal punishment in schools. But still there is an unequal power balance that we often talk about in youth work, that there is an unequal relationship, that we try to form relationships based on equality, equality of power. So I try not to exert any power as an adult or a professional on young people. I want to my relationship with the young people to be based on equality and that is very important to us as youth workers. And young people really appreciate that, it is not something that they're used to and that is why they often really value the relationship they have with youth workers so much. They want to go to a youth club and see us as really positive adult role models. They're often not used to an equal power relationship with adults because all other relationships they have with adults tend not to be equal, with their parents, with their teachers, with the police and whatever other adults they come into contact with, the adults tends to have authority and power over them and they exert it, and they feel that negatively. Often then they meet a youth worker who doesn't exert that authority and actually befriends them and wants to share power with them and that's quite a powerful thing, if you like, and something which is quite transformative for the young people to have a relationship with an adult that is based on. I think young people respond very well to that - sorry, I've going off on a tangent again.

So, yes, that's very important theory, that's one of the things, an element of the social reproduction theory of education says that schooling, partly through the relationship between teacher and student, authoritarian and subordinate relationship, prepares pupils and particularly from working-class backgrounds prepares them for a lifetime of subordination in the workplace. Wherever they go to work, that they will say "yes" to the boss and put up with poor terms and conditions and put up with being exploited and they have got used to that system preschool. Obviously I've gone off on a bit of a tangent on that, so I think with education we need to move away from emphasis on exams. I think we need to move away from underfunding the school system and really invest in schools and teachers and TAs and support staff. We need to tackle exclusion in a better way than we are now. School exclusions are rising, rising, rising in particular with Academy schools we need to move away from the

academisation of our schools. Education should not be run for profit and we need to look for a school system that focuses more on what young people are good at and where their talents may lie and encourage everyone to feel good about themselves and to develop their talents, rather than constantly telling they are crap up to 15 years. And I think ultimately it would be good to move towards a more progressive education model that we see in some Scandinavian countries, where even formal subject testing is not even included. That the first seven years, the emphasis is on play and development and when far more subjects are introduced they actually more than catch us up, even though they started two or three years behind in maths or languages or whatever. People soon, in countries where they have just learnt to play and develop, get confidence and social skills. So, when they start to do the subjects, they overtake us. We have known about these more progressive education systems and types of schooling for decades, seen other countries do it but we continue down the path that we have continued down, which is not good.

SLP: I am interested to note that, when I asked you what you would change in youth work, your focus has very firmly been on education. So to me that indicates how clearly you feel that you're role in youth work should be as part of the education composite as a whole. But I sense that what you are experiencing is that, rather than being a part of the whole system, you are perhaps just filling gaps at moment.

Paul: (sigh) Yes, you know I talked earlier about, I mean you're right it's always been said to me that I am a youth worker, very rooted in education and I believe that youth work is part of our overall education system and should be seen as that and it should be retained as part of an education system, as opposed to a social care system. And I said that money, over the last 20 years for youth services, has become more targeted to young people who are already experiencing problems, and I talked also of the deficit model of young people. I'm working more one-to-one with young people so all of that has meant that, in the last 20 years, youth workers have been seen and used more in a social work context rather than an education context. And I disagree with that shift in youth work hugely and most of my colleagues would, not all but most, some obviously argue that we should work where the need is and if there are individual young people having critical need we should be working with them. Of course, but if you only do that work reactively when people are experiencing problems and stop doing all the preventative work it is a surefire way to make more and more young people have problems. And that is exactly what's happened the 20 years youth workers have been asked to do more targeted work, they've been funded to do more targeted work with individuals already having problems and funded less and less to do open access work that is preventative. As you know, I've described youth workers being educational, developmental and preventative and those are the three words that I like to use to describe youth work: educational, developmental and preventative. In the last 20 years, particularly in the last 10 years with the massive cuts to youth service budgets local authority budgets and the closure over 1000 youth clubs. Whatever money there is delivering youth work is more put towards targeted work, which has tended to be work based on the deficit model of young people

people already having problems, less and less work with young people in a preventative way, more and more young people having problems. Youth workers are being used essentially as social workers or assistant social workers. We work more more with young people doing home visits and family assessments and things like that and this has coincided, of course, with the cuts in social care - a massive crisis within social care. So I think what has happened is, certainly what has happened here is, that youth workers were more and more used as the way to fill in the gaps in social care. The cost of social care is collating the costal agencies to social care staff and social workers and the cost is been millions of pounds every year spent on agency staff that are twice the cost of having their own staff because it is hard to recruit and retain social workers. So that is the biggest reason why I think the youth service has been destroyed here, because they wanted to use those youth workers as a kind of assistant social worker to relieve some of the pressure on social care. So I think the shift in the notion of youth workers working in that way with individuals or with families is already having problems with the deficit model of young people. And you're not doing preventative work, it's very detrimental and it's not where youth work should be. But we always used to say that youth work is educational, developmental - developmental and preventative done with all young people although traditionally with young people that tend not to be academically gifted, that might be the young people that may get into problems and that a percentage of our work was targeted, used to be say 20% or so would be one-to-one work with a specific group, it might be maybe a girls group or group excluded from school, or an unemployed group, really do some targeted work, but it would be about 20% of our time and that has shifted massively over the years. And I'm against that because I think youth work is essentially part of educational, developmental, preventative system and I think it should be there.

SLP: I sense there is an external pressure on you to perform a certain role now, which is made even more complex because you have such limited resources and a limited time now to do your role.

Paul: Yes, I mean things are slightly different for me now because I just work to the charity now. So I just do the sort of youth work that we want to do, I'm not tasked by the local authority. I am no longer employed by the local authority so I'm not part of the youth service that was increasingly asked to do targeted youth work, more like social workers. So I am able to do work that is educational and developmental and preventative, work that is accessible to all. I mean we still do some targeted work, for example with learning difficulties. I'd like to get back to your other question about what I would do. Again, it's different levels. If I was government or in charge of local authority or whatever and obviously, as you pointed out, I focused very much on education, schooling and a bit about youth work, how it should be an how it's changed over various years with funding pressures. Sorry - just before I move on from that, I was going to say, I also strongly feel that youth work has been attacked by government, arguably the school system as well, but youth work certainly has in terms of our ability and desire to engage young people in political education and in the questioning inequalities that exist in society and that political education and questioning inequality has

always been a central tenet to youth work. Our anti-discriminatory work and our desire to engage young people in issues, wider societal issues, not just the issues affecting their lives, but things like the environment, nuclear weapons, or the rights of animals not to be hunted. I'm trying to think of examples off top of my head but the political with a small p if you like, not party political as such, you could say unemployment, homelessness, things like that we would do as youth workers related projects to raise awareness of those issues, in part to help young people understand those issues. And then if those issues that might affect them in their life and hopefully enable them to have an understanding of those issues those negative issues, if they don't affect them in their life and its a preventative thing. But also a part of that work was about instilling, instilling is probably the right word, enabling young people to gain for themselves views about those issues. Ultimately I would suggest those views were about being a cooperative cohesive caring society and that they could play apart in that and I don't think government has wanted youth workers to do that. I don't think the government has wanted youth workers to deliver a political message or education to make young people aware of their rights, to make young people aware of human rights, about their ability to vote, to peacefully demonstrate within the law, to change, to mobilise the positive change. I don't think governments have wanted that. Governments have been increasingly happy for young people to be apathetic and, as Noam Chomsky says: keep the people apathetic and then the powerful will be able to do whatever the powerful want to do and the rest of us will reap the consequences - that was me paraphrasing. I think governments have taken that view of young people they don't want young people to be angry about injustice, to be angry about equal opportunities, or universal credit sanctions they don't want young people to think they have the power to change through demonstrations, augmentation or whatever. They don't want young people to be politically … erm …. literate and want to change the status quo and that is one of the reasons I think that youth work has been changed and attacked.

SLP: And now that you are a charity do you feel that you have been liberated to a certain extent? In the things that you can do now that you are not local authority controlled.

Paul: Yes and no. I mean no, in that I just have to spend most of my time fundraising. I wish I didn't have to, you wish, wish I could spend more of my time as a professional youth worker, working with young people. So in some ways my time is much more limited now in terms of delivering work with young people. I'm mainly managing the building, liaising with various user groups and raising funds and so on and so forth. But yes, in terms of the youth work, the work I do with young people, yes working now just for the charity and not for the local authority, that has been a liberation in terms of the things that we can deliver. I mean our staff team, we've been talking and discussing things with young people, trustees and the staff. We have just decided that, over the next year or maybe longer but certainly at least for the next year, to have a focus to work on two different ongoing projects, if you like, which some of our work will be focused on. We'll still be doing other things with young people but there are two projects that will be ongoing for at least the next year. One is around climate change and engaging young people in awareness, raising awareness, possibly getting to the

point that they may want to be active to seek change but certainly to raise their awareness of issues around the climate crisis. Because I think it will be the biggest issue they will face in a lifetime and I think it would be wrong not to have to focus on that.

And secondly, the second ongoing project is about racism, discrimination and the dangers of the far right, which have grown in the last five or six years, particularly with Brexit. It has been a growth for a resurgence of far right organisations. We've always had the National Front, the BNP, EDL etc but now with Britain First and Tommy Robinson, you know Stephen Yaxley Lennon, and support for anti-immigration policies. So I think there are two things, there is an increasing support for far right organisations and celebrities, hate entrepreneurs I call them - people who are making vast sums of money from hate, like Katie Hopkins or Stephen Yaxley Lennon - hate entrepreneurs. So there is a resurgence in far right ideology and groups and parties. But the other, probably more dangerous, thing is there has been an adoption of the language and the policies of the far right into mainstream parties and policies, in my opinion. So things around the hostile environment and how we treat refugees and asylum seekers, anti-immigration laws and most of the Brexit debate, we've always had the sort of far right fringe groups but I think it's even more dangerous that their language is being adopted by the more mainstream. Anyway, I feel that is an ongoing danger to our young people that more and more young people are suffering with than ever before, with discrimination, with bullying that is racist, sexist, homophobic etc and since Brexit there has been a massively growing level of prejudice and discrimination you see online, which is incredibly worrying I think. So that's what we have been discussing as a staff team and with trustees and young people and we have decided that will be our second main project over the next two years to raise awareness with young people around those issues. So, not just raise awareness but to enable young people to come to terms with that and fuel positive opinions, decide they don't want to be racist or sexist or homophobic or whatever. It's obviously a big part of our anti -discriminatory work over the years, which has been to encourage young people to have those positive views, and to recognise prejudice and discrimination and to decide they don't want to be part of that, I don't want to add to that. We have had young people over the years who have pledged to be anti-racist for the rest of their lives and that always tickles my heart, it makes me very happy as an anti-racist myself. We've always done a lot of anti-racist work and when young people take the pledge and understand, know more about the evils of racism and then take the pledge to be anti-racist for the rest of their lives, I think that's an achievement for us as youth workers to get young people to that point. So I'm really pleased and I think that's perhaps an example of the freeing up of us, me and my team as professional youth workers working for charity, that we can discuss with young people and decide what to focus on, what we can focus on as our developmental work. Whereas if I was still working to the local authority I would probably be doing home visits with a kid that is just been excluded from school and finding out that his family have got drug addiction and mental health issues and I will be liaising with social workers about it, going to meetings. So I suppose I'm quite happy that working for the charity means there is more freedom again to

deliver the kind of educational, developmental and preventative work that I always believed that youth work should be about primarily. That is certainly where my heart is as a worker.

Interview with Danny Sloggett from Jaywick

SLP - Interviewer, Siobhan Lennon-Patience
DS - Interviewee, Danny Sloggett

SLP: Tell me about your experience of being in Benefits by the Sea

DS: Yes, well it was a January/February day in Jaywick. It was 2015 and I was minding my own business, loving the Costa del Jaywick. Then I saw loads of cameras around and I thought "what's going on here?". So, me being a nosy person, I went over and said "Hello, I am Jaywick's blogger. If there's anything happening with cameras why am I not involved?". They said "Yes, we've heard about you, we wanted to come and see you." So I said "Here I am, what's the deal?". They said "We are making a programme about Jaywick". So I said "Well, I should be on it". They said "We was going to come to you, We've seen some of your videos". So I said "Well, I am the star of the show. What sort of show would it be without me in it?".

SLP: Sounds like they had done their research.

DS: Yes, everyone does their research. They know about me but I don't do it for publicity so, basically, anything about Jaywick I want to be involved in it, so I can tell it exactly as it is for Jaywick and [the] Benefits by the Sea team told me what it was all about. I just went "Yeah awesome. I can't wait". So they filmed me living in Jaywick, working in Jaywick, 'cos I'm a builder and I thought the whole programme would be about me, people like me. I didn't realise it would have such a different type of person. A lot of the people on the show I had never met before and I am Jaywick. There were some good people on the show and there were the odd person that weren't so good, not that they are not so good, it's just that we're a different class of people, you know what I mean. I've always learnt to make the most out of everything and some people don't live like that. Jaywick has taught me to live like that because there is not a lot of infrastructure, not a lot of opportunities. So I make them opportunities and I make them infrastructure because that's what I do for a daily job. And then, like, as we got towards two or three months of filming the director said to me "Oh would you put a talent show on and I went "Yeah" and we called it Jaywick's got Talent.

SLP: So was that an idea you had had, or did the production team suggest it?

DS: It was our idea. We came up with it together. We had discussions. When you are making TV programmes you talk to the people who make the films and tell them what could be possible so, yeah, we came up with it between us. I could not have done it without the team. But I do it every year now since and I kept it for myself and I kept it for Jaywick. So, even

though it was done the first time for television, I have continued it every year. I am now on the fifth Jaywick's got Talent. Yeah, I've done five 'cos I did two in one year 'cos Dutch television wanted to do my show for their TV so I did an extra one. So if television asked me I would do it again to show people what we achieve here.

SLP: A different side to Jaywick? Something more positive?

DS: So I was quite happy about the way I came across on series one and a few months later they came back and said "Oh, we are going to make a series two". I went "Well, I weren't happy with some of the people I filmed with, I'm not that sort of person. If you want me to film with you, you do what I want". They went "OK what do you want?". I said "I want to set up a youth club for adults and I want you to help me. I want to call it Jaywick Sands Happy Club and I told them exactly what I wanted before they even started filming and they said "Yes we will do that". I was a bit gutted that they never showed a lot of it on TV in the programme because they didn't even get the chance to tell the programme what I called it. They just said "Danny set up the club doddle le do [sic] Disco Dave was laughing doodle le do". I didn't do it justice, not the justice that it is. We are really rich beyond Jaywick, we've reached world wide with what we are doing here. And I want to give the Jaywick Sands Happy Club its own TV show, its own book, its own limelight in its own right because a lot of other communities could learn from what I am doing here. All because of Benefits by the Sea. I've really done well out of this programme. I got my talent shows up and running, I got my Jaywick Sands Happy Club up and running. I'm not set up for life through what I did on TV but I was clever, I knew that TV companies come and go . I knew that once they had finished filming with you they won't help you so the way to do this is to do it on your terms so you know you can carry it on when you go and that's exactly what I did and it worked out exactly as I planned it.

SLP: So, when you first met them, did they describe the type of programme they were making or did they just suggest you take part and see how it went?

DS: They spoke to me about my role in it rather than the programme, about what I can offer and they did say I would be the star of the programme and they did say that, with what I do already, that the way they film me doing it the World would love it. I'm really happy with what they done on the Christmas Special, how they showed pictures of my mum and how………..have you seen the Christmas Special?

SLP: I have, yes.

DS: I was very impressed by that, that was personally like, and I got my mum out there.

SLP: It felt like they were sensitive to and interested in your story.

DS: That's why I'm in Jaywick, 'cos I've had a rough life. I've been to prison. My mum died when I was fourteen but I'm not a bad person. People would think maybe that, because I have

been to prison twenty years ago and because my mum died when I was fourteen and that I've been in trouble with the police, people might think "Oh let's wash our hands of him" and that's what people said for years about me but I never gave up, I always knew that I was a good person. I've always worked, I've always paid my taxes, I'm a great father and a great person. Channel 5 came at the right stage in my life. Look on my wall here. You can see they put me on instagram, you know, and I made a little picture of that for my wall. I'm really proud of what I have achieved.

SLP: It comes across to me that, having been on the programme, some real positives have come out of it for you.

DS: Big time. Very much.

SLP: Tell me more about that. Do you think Jaywick has benefitted from the film crew being there?

DS: Jaywick's really benefitted because it shone the spotlight on Jaywick and it showed how bad it can be in Jaywick but ever since the programmes a lot of them people have disappeared, now it's not as bad as that. Jaywick has really improved. All the roads have been fixed. The television programmes helped Jaywick and I would like them to make a series three because we are still here and we still want to make this happen.

SLP: Did you have a chance to see any of their filming before the programme aired?

DS: No not at all, nothing to do with me. They put out exactly what they wanted. There's a lot of things………I mean I went looking for a lost railway track that used to be in Jaywick in the 1930s. It was like an Indiana Jones. Me and five people walked all across the marshes for about five hours with the adders and holes and railway station's bumpers in the ground and ern. That would have been like Indiana Jones in Jaywick, that would have been such great TV but they never ever shared it. You know I would have loved that. I like imagined it all. I like Jaywick has got this great railway track that used to be here in the 1930s and you walk across them fields and you will find the stopper for the trains to stop against, you've got to really look for it and find it and hopefully I'll get that opportunity.

SLP: To show the historical side of Jaywick which is really interesting……..

DS: Well it was built in the 1930s, this guy built a railway track so you could get to the top part of Jaywick from the bottom part. They were all people that could afford to buy two houses. They had one house in London and then they had a second house here. They were never built as all year accommodation, just from like April to October. After the war all their houses got bombed so they had to come o Jaywick because their house in London had been bombed. So that was where it started - the war.

SLP: I can see why you're so interested in Jaywick's history.

DS: That's it, we've got history that would appeal to all people. We could talk about WWII, about how their houses were bombed and how they came to Jaywick because they had no choice, how they set up a new life. They are the real working class people. We love them. It's the riff raff they let in, you know like the people who have nowhere to live. Oh, send them to Jaywick and, because they don't believe in themselves already, they take drugs and drink every day to overcome it and then there's nothing left apart from a lost soul in a fish bowl.

SLP: Tell me a bit more about that if you would, Danny, because I'm aware that some of the other programmes that have focused on Jaywick, how did you feel about those? Did you watch them?

DS: What do you mean? I didn't see no other programmes.

SLP: Well, for example Channel 5's 'Life on the Dole', they focused on Jaywick in a way that some people in your area were quite disappointed by.

DS: I didn't remember that but there has been a lot of negativity I've never listened to or let it affect me.

SLP: I'm interested because you are so keen and positive about Jaywick. I think this comes across in the programmes you were in but other programmes had perhaps left out anything positive there could be said about Jaywick.

DS: Yes, they don't show the people who drive to London every day and drive back to Jaywick every day and work. They didn't show them people. Them people don't wanna be filmed for programmes like that because they don't want to be linked to people not of their calibre. So it's hard for people of that calibre to get filmed in the first place because they don't want to be associated with some of the riff raff that was round here. Does not mean they are bad people, they just hadn't been given the same opportunities. But I'm willing to help them. I run a youth club for adults and everybody is welcome.

SLP: Tell me more.

DS: I let people with drug problems come. It's for them people, to give them a voice, to show them that they are wanted and that they are loved and that is what I give to them. I will override all negativity, always.

SLP: You had input with your ideas.
So I can see from what you are telling me that, as a result of doing the programme you were able to put in place both Jaywick's got Talent and the Happy Club. Were there any other positives to come out of this? Did anyone else take notice do you think?

DS: Yes, the Council. It opened their eyes and, ever since the programme, they spent £5 million on our roads. So how about that for a chain reaction?……..I won't sing Diana Ross

but it's true. The programme done so much good. It was the best thing to happen to Jaywick in my lifetime and I am the star of that programme and I would know and maybe the people around here don't agree with me but I don't agree with a lot of the people round here most of the time 'cos I'm well different to them. A lot of them wait for you to fall and then get on the bandwagon. They don't help you when you are rising. A lot of them…….when I make ideas at the Happy Club they get 2, 3, 4 hundred views but then I only get 30 to 50 people who come to the Happy Club, so that shows you how nosey and cynical they all are about it and, even though they don't all come to the meetings, what I learn in the month through my daily blogging I write things down all the time about things that I'm going to bring up at the meeting, questions that I'm going to ask the Council myself. I'm speaking for Jaywick during that month so I'm always picking things up. i'm picking up about the guy who lives in a shed, I'm picking up about the sea walls when they get painted, I'm picking up about the sand not in certain places on the beach, I'm picking up about litter, dog shit on the pavements. I'm picking up about all this and I will bring it up at my meeting and I will say I'm not having this. There is a Jaywick in us all and I want to fix this right now so I'll make films until it's fixed.

SLP: Tell me more. Do you think you get the community on board with you? The Council?

DS: I've got both. I've got the people and the Council. The Council knows to work with me because I know what the people in the streets really think and the Council would have no idea what these people were thinking if it wasn't for me.These people don't want to talk to Council people. They look at them as authority. They look at them as police. They think they are going to come and get arrested and stuff. They don't play their game. That's what they don't do. But through me i can act as a voice for them. If the Council knows what's wrong then the Council can fix it and then people won't be upset and then there will be no more problems. I can stop things happening and stop pain and shit and pain by expressing what is going on. So it's best to work with me and make things better than not to work with me and make thins worse. Things only get worse when people are not listened to, when people are ignored. That's when things get worse. The way to keep everything on the ball is to keep working with each other and that makes everything better.

SLP: Did you watch the programme when it actually aired?

DS: I did. It was the first time I saw it.

SLP: Tell me about that experience. How did it make you feel?

DS: I was like ooh look I'm on telly, I was like……..I was like shy, I was scared to go on social media. I actually made videos before each programme came over. I'm well excited I'm going to be on telly in like fifteen minutes and millions of people have added me and watching me. Yeah, I've got loads of people……….said to me………I've had women send me things they had like knickers, T-shirts, money, chocolate. I loved the attention. I tell you

what, it makes me want to be on telly again. It's done me great. It's done me great. I've been making videos for about five years now. Anything that goes on in Jaywick and you Google it my videos pop up. I've done so many about so many things. It would be hard to miss me so that's basically why I'm always getting contacted b people because they can see that I am here daily. I am on the ground every day and I'm trying to make a difference so any publicity I get, to me, is welcomed because I want to make a difference.

SLP: It seemed from the programme that other people in your community were working to make things better. Has that continued?

DS: Yes, there are a lot of people behind the scenes, not on cameras, doing a lot of things like the Jaywick Forum. They are like the official club of Jaywick, not like my youth club where I actually invite the people. They do something similar but they are more legal, more like the law, they are more with the people you see. So joining forces is kind of a connection that they never had that I am giving them. We are all seeing an improvement by working together. And I do believe that what I have started is really working.

SLP: When I talk to you, I sense a real connection with Jaywick. Why do you think Jaywick makes people feel that way?

DS: The people that love Jaywick love it and the people that loathe it don't stay here very long. There is a lot of loyalists like me. For example, there was a woman that lived across the road from me and she lived in this big house but the guy that owns it had a heart attack so he had to go back to his house. That means she had to leave and she was crying for weeks because she had to leave Jaywick because there was not another big house available for them. They had to move to Harwich and every day she messages me saying "Have you found me somewhere yet? Have you found me somewhere yet?" I can't. Everyone wants to live here at the moment. The magic of Jaywick is spreading. I'm only 43. I've got many more years of making films, each showing the Costa del Jaywick as I know it is. I'll be on more TV shows. I am working with BBC Look East today you know. Jaywick's been in the news again. Donald Trump used a picture of Jaywick in a campaign poster saying that, if America carries on as it is, it will end up like Jaywick and that really made me sad.

SLP: What are your hopes for Jaywick?

DS: My hopes are that I carry on doing what I do and one day, when I die, someone else carries it on for me. Jaywick Sands Happy Club, which I created, is now an official club. I now have a Treasurer and a Vice-Chairman. I'm the Chairman, the creator, and I've got a Secretary. And we do AGM's which is annual general meetings we do once a year. It's totally official. I get a bit of funding from the government and the lottery, I think,. I got £450 last year but if I never got enough money I would pay for it myself because I work and an afford to, so it doesn't matter to me if I get funding or not. I will do it no matter what and my dream is, we need to get some big companies to come down here and build houses for

working class people that actually go out of Jaywick and work and I want more people like that. I want a supermarket for Jaywick, all we've got is lots of rogue shops that are selling shit for top prices. A lot of people round here can't drive. Can't get to the major supermarkets in Clacton so they are getting ripped off daily paying more than what they should for their groceries. There is not a lot of fresh groceries either round here. I would like to give people the same opportunities they have everywhere else. People don't know how hard it is. We are so close to Clacton, so close to Colchester, so close to London - why haven't we got a supermarket? It disgusts me. This is one of my major next projects. I want to invite the supermarkets to come here and open one and, yeah, they would need a security guard but they could afford it. I'd do it for free if they want. But I want Jaywick to have a supermarket and the same opportunities everyone else has. There's loads of land there doing nothing - build some workshops, start training the young people, carpentry, bricklaying, plumbing, training people. I'll even train them for free you know 'cos that's what I do. Give people the same opportunities. You can't expect people who have no money to get the train or bus to anywhere where they can learn 'cos they didn't have the money to do that. I want to be able to give these people what is missing - money, time, love, infrastructure, supermarkets, opportunities - I want more. I've got a lot to fight for. I've got a lot to do and every television crew I get I will be telling them this.

SLP: To get your message out.

I want Jaywick to be known and to be equal and I will not quit and I will not stop until they get that Jaywick is in every person I have met. There is a Jaywick in all of us, we've all got a darkness of life.

Doorbell rings - we have to stop here.

Interview with Stewart, Job Centre Work Coach

SLP: Interviewer, Siobhan Lennon-Patience
Stewart: Job Centre Work Coach

SLP: So, when you're ready, I'm interested to hear about yourself and about what you do for a living.

Stewart: Always bad this (laughs) well have worked with the DWP [Department for Work and Pensions] and its forebears right back to the DHSS [Department of Health and Social Security] for 41 years God help us! As has been pointed out before you get shorter time for murder (laughs).

SLP: That sounds like real dedication.

Stewart: No not really I had to get a job there. I used to work for the NHS but lost my job because of my union activities at the time. I was sacked on Christmas Eve, so I started out as a clerical officer for the Health and Safety Executive. So I was promoted and the only place I didn't want to go to was the DHSS so guess where I ended up (laughs). I think they put all the dubious scumbags there, the ones who in 1 million years wouldn't pass security checks to work anywhere else in the civil service, even though I have an unblemished police record, that my political activism has been well displayed and well known. So I worked in the national insurance office in the days when we had them. I was a national insurance inspector. It was a place, regarded as a place where people went when they're about to retire give them a few easy years before they retire. You didn't deal with claimants it was simply about National Insurance so it was regarded, I think, as safe (laughs). When I left London move to Dorset my partner and I had broken up and she'd moved down there and I came down there too. I had some stupid idea that I might be able to save the marriage; didn't work but we are still friends. I am married to somebody else now. It's just the way things went that I came down as a pensions officer, it was either that or on the front line of your unemployment benefit I declined that (laughs). After about three or four years though they cut down on the numbers in the pension service because it was quite a new service, a new idea. When It came out, Service staff properly, it was like a shining example of how an office should be. It was brilliant not much work pressure, the people that work there loved it and the claimants loved it. You had time to explain to them about the claims such as attendance allowance or DLA. Of course this is working so well so they thought they would cut it, so they did. I was surplus to requirements so I basically ended up as a JSA advisor but we are commonly now known as Work Coach and and that's where I've been for the last all my god what's three away from 17 years - shit - 17 years I've been a work coach

SLP: 17 years ago was Work Coach the way your job was described?

Stewart: It was called job advisor then, or JSA advisor. So we were much more involved in advising, so we knew a lot about benefits and were quite involved in an intense effort to refer people to a specific job and we had our own sort of government job-finding service on our computers rather than it being private. It was flogged off some years ago to (a private company) they now do it. It's crap but then in the old days we used to have the slips in the slots and you just pick them out but we ended up with computers and all that bollocks we have now. Yeah and err I have taken retirement now but I still work there for a couple of days a week. But I'm still a union officer there and that keeps me sane, I think I've even gone mad or committed suicide if I didn't have that (laughs).

SLP: That's quite shocking what makes you say that?

Stewart: The stress levels are unbelievable. To be honest there is not a week goes by without someone losing it at the front desk and some of my colleagues have got the empathic interviewing skills of a small newt which is not high (laughs). You know some of the things I hear and I just think shut the fuck up. So to a lot of my customers I just say to them just

behave reasonably and you'll be fine I do not sanction people unless you are really taking the piss out of me. I do use those words I know I shouldn't do.

SLP: I'm really interested in what you're saying. Just go back to the others that you described as not having that empathy, can you say a bit more what you mean?

Stewart: They've just got no idea, they try and sort of be hypercritical - you've got to do this, you've got to do that is not the way we are meant to be interviewing and it is not effective and what it does is wind people up and create potentially violent situations when none needed to have happened. If you have just been a little bit you know as in "I am sorry about this I don't make the rules up, this is what you need to do to avoid getting into trouble", explain it in those sort of terms, in language that people can understand rather than talking nobby language and long words.

SLP: I'm wondering, why do you think they do that? Using long words?

Stewart: The problem is, it is very easy to become not brutalised but immunised, not to see people as individuals, desperate people, and start seeing them as problems stopping you getting your daily work done so your not meeting targets because this idiot is it going for a job. The fact that they might have Alzheimer's - no not that one the syndrome autism, autism spectrum - or the fact that they might be incapable, some people really cannot get on a computer, some people cannot read but some people can be quite contemptible saying these people are stupid without actually seeing why or trying to understand. You see the thing is when I first came here I didn't know hardly anyone all, so I used to spend many of my nights and weekends in a local pub with all the bikers (laughs) and to be honest you are not going to get on with them if you use highfaluting words and airs and graces because you would get your arse kicked in if that happens (laughs). So I kind of…. and also that I was doing kickboxing probably gave the impression that I could look after myself (laughs). Of course, part of the reason I did kickboxing was so I could look after myself (laughs).

SLP: So I'm getting a sense here that what you're really saying is that this enabled you to "speak human" to the people that you met with during the course of your work?

Stewart: Yes yes that's exactly it. So I might even run into the people in the pub who I would've seen in the job centre and it would be like "hello mate" and if I saw someone, to be honest, who is doing a bit of time behind the bar cash in hand or collecting the bottles up for a few sovs, there is no way that I was going to turn them in. It's just not ethical in my view, it's just human. Of course, sometimes if people phoned in and they were dobbing someone in there wasn't a lot you could do about it except perhaps delay it a little while before you reported it. But I think I had five or six they call them PIPs, performance improvement plans, basically I was whacked with disciplinary action five years out of six for refusing to do sanctions.

SLP: And that is recent?

Stewart: Yes, started about five years ago, I mean there were no targets on sanctions.

SLP: Are there targets now?

Stewart: Much less so. The ethos behind it it seemed brutal, it's better now to try to avoid issuing sanctions. So this actually makes it a lot less untenable for me. It was a time when I was thinking "how long can I justify to myself actually working there" but because they changed that particular ethos, even though I personally believe that Universal Credit is designed to atomise the working class, it's designed to make people in casual or fragmentary work completely dependent on the state so they can't organise or unionise, but the actual structure of the benefit itself, if someone doesn't make an appointment then you can find them, you can send them a message saying please come back to an appointment, you don't instantly have to leap to a sanction.

SLP: So you do have some discretion then about how you work with people in terms of issuing sanctions?

Stewart: You do at the moment yes.

SLP: So when Universal Credit first came in, are you saying that wasn't quite what was happening?

Stewart: No no definitely not there's been a change, not in policy but in attitude. Management are starting to say we are not meant to be police officers. I think, to be honest, they be getting such a bad press they had to try and sweeten the bitter pill a bit.

SLP: You talked as well a bit about potential confrontation in the workplace. Is there something you saw happening?

Stewart: Yes, I've certainly seen people shouting and threatening behaviour, threatening violence. I've been threatening at least once in 15 years but I have heard from people that I'm the nicest one in there.

SLP: Why do you think that might be?

Stewart: Because I talk the same language as them largely and I don't say things like "well there are loads of jobs", only that there is a few. I try to tell the truth. I say "I know it's shit out there and I know the jobs are rubbish and I know that they are zero hours contracts". I would never push someone to do a zero hours contract job, I see what it does to people and I'm not ever frightened to see my customers in the streets.

SLP: Do you think your colleagues feel differently?

Stewart: I think some of my colleagues are brutal to be honest. Some of them have got absolutely no idea, they have no people skills. You can teach to an extent, people skills but there is the degree to which you have to have the materials to work with first and some people can't do it. They just have no idea, it's almost bullying and I have seen bullying in that place. The staff survey showed a consistently high level of staff themselves feeling bullied by management and it freaks out the higher-ups because they like the figures to look good.

SLP: So you mean staff there are feeling bullied by by other staff?

Stewart: Yes, and often by management. We had a series of arsehole managers who were dumped on us. On a small office out on the periphery less damage could be done there and basically we made sufficient stir, through the union and with the help of some sympathetic senior managers, we have seen off these three really vile managers who are being, what is the word, leant upon, encouraged to take retirement because in some stages it felt like an open warfare in the office, people openly calling their managers bastard, not to their faces but to each other.

SLP: And this was about what? About meeting targets?

Stewart: Yes it was about meeting targets and then about having blatant preferences, blatant - I've forgotten the word now, favouring one person over the other…..

SLP: Favouritism?

Stewart: Yes, yes that's the word. There's been a real history of that. So now people are really suspicious of new managers but because we've managed to get rid of these three managers people do feel a bit more confident in themselves.

SLP: So I'm wondering who the favouritism was shown to? What was it about them?

Stewart: It was the ones that could deliver the goods, meeting the targets. JSA was based very much on stats, management information stats and if you were slipping down the table in a national sense managers used to get a bit itchy.

SLP: So you were being compared to other services around the country but without taking into account the complexities or differences of location?

Stewart: Oh god yes we were compared but by no means will they take into account what we would face in this area where there is an unusually high level of zero hours contracts and seasonal work, that was never taken into account and the thing is, because JSA was so management information heavy, you see, it is very hard to get management figures from. It's all very speculative stuff this, very difficult to get any real sense of what's actually going on, it just seems to justify changes to the employee deal, like extending the working hours by an hour and a half to 630 in the evening, after the time the office usually closed. We have to

have certain benchmark figures about how many people are in the office at times, seems to have been done on very speculative is stats, it was calculated on how many people they thought would phone in.

SLP: So this was to extend the opening times?

Stewart: Yes that's right. So you had the option not to signup but if you didn't you would have reduced pay increase. So it made it into the system, if you didn't agree to go into this, to agree to work until 6.30 and they are progressively making this up to 8 in the evening and Saturdays as well. So you would have to work one Saturday in four unless you had really good medical or social reasons and a lot of people that didn't sign up to it. What are, for example, single parents and women over a certain age, so largely people who were already discriminated against anyway and this was five years ago now but they still haven't got round to doing Saturday. At the moment they are trying it various parts of the country, some open late in the evening some are doing these Saturdays, but there's no rhyme or reason to it; it seems a bit chaotic there is no stats so you can't measure the impact.

SLP: I'm interested you know, you have this great wealth of experience in all the years that you have been in the Job Centre, obviously you have seen changes.

Stewart: Yes and the biggest one has been Universal Credit which seems to change all the time, almost weekly. It's like a beta system because they keep upgrading little bits of it or changing the rules with a bit here or a bit there so you have to be constantly aware what are they call them. Oh I actually gave up looking at them. I just ask my neighbours now what's the latest version, I forget there is particular name. Oh yes they have huddles everyday, none of which I get to go to because they have them before I get into work.

SLP: So you are a bit out of the loop there?

Stewart: Yes they are supposed to provide a buddy but I don't have one. There is a lot of part-time staff and a lot of older people as well. Some Work Coaches like to do Universal Credit. It is very much down to yourself, there is more leeway in it than there was with JSA. Some people quite like that, this flexibility in how you do the interview or how you talk to somebody or how you approach someone for the compulsory things, whether you make them attend an interview. You can update the commitments that you get people to do, you can change it from one week to the next. So you could say we're running a Job Fair in the office next week and you could then make their condition for them that they attend. You can make it a compulsory one and, if they miss it or not, you could sanction them or not. There are loads of different things you can do, which restores a certain amount of discretion for the Work Coaches. On the other hand though it is constantly changing, you are never sure what particular regulation is going to be followed here whether it will be interpreted this way or that way. It is quite challenging sometimes. So you basically work through the documents with yes or no answers; they are called agent-led processes and you effectively have to download them. They haven't quite fitted into the system yet so you download it completed

and then we upload it so It's completed. You can clear it as if it's only half done you have to leave it open or it will clear it and you bugger it up so you end up downloading it and re-uploading it. So long as you remember - download it work on it uploaded it is fairly straightforward it's all yes and no answers.

SLP: It sounds quite time-consuming.

Stewart: It's very time-consuming which is why now, I mean under JSA we were constantly told we had sufficient staff and at one stage we were doing five new signing appointments and somebody had 70 appointment a day 70 yes (laughs).

SLP: Just not enough time.

Stewart: Nowhere near, not the longest appointment let alone the shortest. The shortest appointment you can make is 10 minutes, you cannot do one shorter than that, the system won't let you and then a large one breaks in the system so you are actually given time. Not enough but you can read your emails and catch up on things and do some research so it's a little more generous in terms giving some leeway to do things. It's still very much a work in progress. It's meant to be a beta system so they are open about it because they want people to suggest different ways of doing it. They even had the bit you can fill in for suggestions how can we improve this page at the bottom and people do actually, idiots actually do this but things do change because of people's opinions and this bank of electronic specialists they have with it as well. It's just constant endless improvement that's the division underlying it.

SLP: What I think I'm hearing here is that you are meeting customers, is that the preferred term?

Stewart: Yes, I never get used to what word we are supposed to be using. Some use clients, some use customer, some use claimant, others like me just use whatever one comes into my head at that time at the appropriate moment.

SLP: It is interesting that the system seems complex then, not just for them but the staff using it too.

Stewart: Oh god yes totally. It is designed to be simpler and in some ways it is but it is not always simpler because because it is responding to change it means that you can never get something fixed in your head, you always have to read up on what is going on.

SLP: When you first described yourself, you were talking about your role as an advisor. Is there still a place for advice?

Stewart: Well yes, for a lot of people that come to us it isn't really explained what is going on. So I spend a lot of time actually trying to explain this is roughly how it works. There is no real time in the system built in to do that, so if you do that you do it at the expense of

referring onto a job. It has parts that are interesting, that are okay in some ways but then it's got bits that are completely savage.

SLP: Savage is an interesting word, explain a little more.

Stewart: Well, you have bit that treats the self-employed. I know someone who was all working tax credit and they advised that she would be better off going onto Universal Credit. So she did but what happened was, because of the way the self employed are not served very well by the Universal Credit, it happened that, in the winter when her husband was busy making the things that they sell in the summer on the market the following year, that because he wasn't actually working he was deemed to be not doing sufficient work to claim Universal Credit so he can't have any awarded then. But in the summer, when he then sold the things he been making, he was deemed to be above the minimum threshold so you can't get anything then either. So you've gone from having working tax credits, Universal Credit gave them nothing so people are going forward but they're really losing out. People end up just eaking out what they've got coming in. It's like, how did Bilbo Baggins put it, it's like butter spread on too much toast.

SLP: So you see people struggling more now, do you think?

Stewart: Yes, when we had JSA food banks may have existed but I wasn't particularly aware of them. We weren't considering then doing surgeries in them to catch people and give them advice like we do now. It's appalling and bloody Tory MPs get themselves photographed at food banks like is something they brought in, they are proud of it but it's total fucking charity, excuse my French.

SLP: I sense a real anger there.

Stewart: Yes in many ways, if it's a small job with small earnings the system manages that well and you still actually get something but if you're self-employed and certain other categories it just doesn't work and of course there are loads of self-employed because there is a huge drive to get people to be self-employed because it got them off the books.

SLP: What about the nature of work in this area, is there anything in particular, have you noticed a change in the employment here that's available?

Stewart: Yes it's got worse, with the lowest average wages in the country the situation is ghastly and it's getting worse.

SLP: As you know I'm particularly interested in narratives of wellbeing and there was a move to bring in psychological therapies, that sort of thing, into job centres. Is that something you have seen happen?

Stewart: It's been sort of mentioned and met with derision but then they do now have mental health first aiders.

SLP: That's for the staff I assume?

Stewart: Yes but there is a work psychologist that's always been there and you can actually refer customers there. One sometimes feels that you are expected to be a bloody counsellor as well and we are obviously not trained for that but we get people just breaking down in tears and things. It can be quite challenging at times

SLP: That's a lot to take on isn't it?

Stewart: Yes, yeah, really is it's not easy.

SLP: How do you cope?

Stewart: I think I cope quite well as long as I manage not to weep myself. It's like you know something is wrong and you can't nail it down and because of the way I chat to people in a fairly nonjudgemental way, after a couple of interviews they will come out and say that they have experienced mental violence, physical violence or sexual physical violence in the relationship. In fact quite a few of the work coaches, it's supposed to be all that quite a few have done what is called dragonfly training which is the training about domestic violence. They try to run it now that you are not a specialist, you are generalist. It's one between two poles over the years are back again, we seem to be swinging back toward specialisms again which I think is entirely to the good

SLP: So each work coach has a particular specialism you mean?

Stewart: Yes so there's a single point of contact so I am the single point of contact for the homelessness. So I read up about it get a bit knowledge find out what the hell is going on and I attend outreach sessions at the homelessness centre and I'm deputy to specialist lead on domestic violence. There is a leaning towards it again that you are allowed to specialise even though officially no specialism can be brooked as its all done universally, which is bollocks, it's only the ones higher up that don't have any experience of working with people with complex needs.

SLP: So at a local level there is a recognition of the complexities people are facing?

Stewart: Yes there is more of the recognition but it is quite vague. It would be good to be proper specialist but you just don't have the time or the access to the resources you need.

SLP: So because they are these specialisms, albeit not really recognised as such, do you think there is recognition that joblessness is not simply a factor of that there isn't the work out there?

Stewart: There's always been that but in the past it got tracked into ESA [Employment Support Allowance] but now everything has merged into Universal Credit. But the trouble is they've still got that bloody work capability assessment, so you have got people that you know are not fully capable of work but they have been found capable of limited work or capable of work completely by their work assessment. So you end up, you still have to see them weekly or fortnightly but you know darn well they're not going to get a job and, if you are sensible about it, you just have a chat with them and keep them at two weeks rather than trying to do an intensive course with them. And the fact remains that the ones that we do see weekly often end up getting a job just to get away from us. But how long for and what the quality of that job is, who knows. And at the moment we are still told that we're fully staffed but you are lucky really if we get to see people every two weeks let alone every week. We are meant to see people in the first 13 weeks of when they started to claim, you are meant to see them weekly. After that you should see half of them weekly and the rest of them fortnightly, which is bollocks because the caseload is too high.

SLP: So the reality is that even when you are supposed to potentially sanction somebody it would take too long anyway?

Stewart: Yes it would take far too long to be honest the sanctions we are meant to take and I just don't bother. It's probably a disciplinary offence but nobody is checking because the managers just have too many meetings all the time, they barely have time to do a quality check which they should be once a month.

SLP: What would you like to see change?

Stewart: All the management. I think Universal Credit needs to be scrapped some of the elements can be checked that I think the actual benefit should be scrapped. The formal five-week wait should go straightaway because it introduces people into being in debt they may have never been before, so basically you get used to being in debt. This stupid thing we've introduced when you are trying to get people into work and the amount people get is far too low, it needs reevaluating. I am glad that there is that there is no signing on any more, that was a complete pain in the arse but we need more discretion as Work Coaches, who we see. When some people, you set them on the path, you know that they will be gone within six months, they know what they're doing. I feel like we should be able to take you on a case-by-case basis because there others that just need so much more help, and having the specialisms, the single point of contact. In the old days we had special case officers and we should respect that. That's my feeling anyway.

SLP: Are you hopeful that things will change?

Stewart: No, under this government no chance

Interview with I was a JSA claimant

Having been in an employed person for over twenty years he was made redundant. He moved back to his home town, worked for a while through an agency but when that work dried up he found himself needing to sign on for work at the Job Centre and claim Job Seekers Allowance. He was assigned an advisor and as he tells me; " I very quickly realised there was an issue She was very keen for me to keep my hand in with work so she said "can you do some volunteering?" and, just by chance, the housing association that I'm a part of was looking for people to do a review. They'd created this Help to Work department and they were offering all sorts of training, resources, support and job clubs and all sorts of things and they wanted people who were unemployed to actually review the service to see whether it could be improved, you know, just to get feedback basically and the idea was that, from that, maybe there would be other opportunities but, initially, it was just a couple of days that they wanted people to be involved so I was invited to do that. I gave my feedback and listened to everything they had to say and then I went back to the woman at the job centre and I explained what I had done volunteering and she made me fill out a form and she was very positive about it she said "that's great" and I was happy to do it. I enjoy doing volunteering I do an awful lot anyway so I did not think there was any sort of issue. So this is the Monday I went for the appointment and on the Thursday there was no money in the account and I'm thinking oh, so I rang them up and they said you had better go and speak to, they didn't call them work coaches, they were calling them advisor I think, job centre advisors". When he rang the advisor he was informed that he had been sanctioned, this means that he had been penalized for not meeting the criteria for clamming Job seekers allowance. The reason for this sanction, the advisor informed him, was that the volunteering he had done too closely matched his previous employment skills so really he should have been in paid work. At this point my interviewee says that he was unaware that sanctions could be imposed. He continued "and on that day the woman was too busy to explain it to me. But the problem with that was, so they have stopped my money and I have not been given a time frame of how long they stop it for and the woman said well you know you still have to continue doing your job search and all this or you will be sanctioned again. So I'm like oh right ok. It left me in a lot of confusion and quite upset and stressed." During this sanction period I was a JSA Claimant found himself accruing debt as he was unable to cover the regular direct debits leaving his account. In the end the decision was not to uphold the sanction but it took him around 6-8 weeks to catch up with his bills and debts.

A new opportunity is then offered, the DWP are keen to help people set up their own small business, job seekers can gain training and advice and there is the potential to be supported with a financial grant to get themselves set up. My interviewee was keen, he recalls a fond childhood experience of making Welsh cakes with his grandfather. This inspired him to want to set up a market stall making and selling a whole variety of artisan Welsh cakes. He embarks on a two week training course in a collage in a nearby town. Upon completion however, and despite finding the course very helpful, he returns to the job centre only to discover that there is s problem "So I go back to the job centre after the course has finished and I was told that I had a new job centre advisor so I had been moved. I sat down and the woman's demeanour from the off set was very different to the woman that I had had before and I knew that there was a problem. You know how you can just feel it. She didn't even have to speak". He explains " I gave her the forms and they said training, which I had been directed to write by the previous advisor. And this lady immediately asked me why I hadn't done any work search. So I said well I was doing training and you know, I was told that I did not have to do the 35 hours a week work search whilst I was doing the training course. I just had to write training on the form and that would be it. So she looked at the form and she then she looked at me and then she went off and spoke to my old advisor and other people and she came back and she said well this is not a DWP course so that means that you should have done work search on top of the course, 35 hours. I was like, how can I? I was told by this woman something completely different". He was then told that he should be applying for jobs within a certain criteria, coded to show which one's were deemed suitable to his skills set. He had been an administrator so the codes assigned to him included one for SAGE accounting. The problem was that he had never used this before. "And she gave me these jobs and I said I can't do them I don't have the sufficient skills on SAGE, you know, it is quite a sophisticated piece of software. You have to have specific knowledge, she said well you know it is on your code so you should apply for it. This conversation carried on and at this point it is becoming quite a difficult conversation and she said I am surprised that you have not seen these jobs before and I said well I don't normally look over the weekend, I try to keep the weekends for myself so I can spend them with friends and family, you need that separation and switch your brain off. She said no, no no, job seekers should be looking every day for 5 hours a day. If you are not looking over the weekend then I can refer you for a benefits sanction ...... so anyway, that was the end of that appointment. I go home and I am terrified about what is going on over the next few days". In the lead up to the Christmas period that year, I was a JSA Claimant finds himself sanctioned again. "So on the Thursday again no money in the

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account. I ring up the person and they said it looks like your account has been suspended. They have referred you for a sanction. You need to speak to them at the job centre, to find out what. So I went to the job centre and they said oh no you need to phone the benefit hotline or whatever it is called. So the people on the phone were telling me to go to the job centre and the job centre were telling me to phone up the number. And the woman who referred me was never available. So I am going through this process of trying to sort something out and not getting any help at all". His money is rapidly running out and then his electricity is turned off because he does not have enough money to top up his key meter. He cannot heat his flat and the food in his freezer, which he had been topping up a little week by week for the Christmas period, is now rapidly defrosting. The Citizens Advice suggest that he apply for a hardship payment, " so I went to the job centre and I said I have been told that I can claim hardship payment. And they said oh no, no, no you can't apply for hardship at this stage you have to wait for a decision, and at this point they had not made a decision". As I listened to him I had the very real sense that he felt at the mercy of the job centre.

"Absolutely. And this is the thing that I hear again and again. You are absolutely at their mercy. And if you see people on social media saying that they have lost control, they feel isolated as a result and stressed". He goes in again to see his advisor, she does not really make eye contact with him, keeps her head down and looks mainly at her computer screen. I wonder at how she is feeling too at this point although it is not appropriate to speculate, but one wonders how the job centre staff cope on a daily basis with people who are probably feeling desperate and even angry. My interviewee is running out of food, the local food bank at this time is relatively new and only open for a short window of time one morning a week, he is resourceful though and attends a work placement scheme or job club each day. He used to go once a week, it is a requirement for receiving JSA and a chance to undertake job searches. He goes every day now so that at least he can get a hot drink and some fruit from their fruit bowl. It is close to Christmas now and these facilities will be closing down for the festive period. By the end of the week he has completely run out of food. He experiences health problems that he had not imagined, lack of food has caused him to have diarrhoea, he soon runs out of toilet paper and resorts to cutting up teal towels and then washing them in the bath to re-use. There is such a sense of a loss of dignity and he feels unable to tell friends and family what he is going through. He has no money on his phone and feels unable to contact his family, he does not have a particularly close relationship with them, although at this time of year he would usually see them, but he cannot afford to travel to them. The Christmas period brings him very low indeed as he watches out of his window and sees

happy people walk by, he wishes for nighttime to come so that he can just go to bed and sleep. Recalling this is clearly very emotional for my interviewee, I ask if he wants to stop or take a break, he says he wants to continue. In the days that follow he receives £20, a gift from his aunt who lives some distance away. At last he can put some money in the electricity meter, buy some food and cleaning products, a little dignity and comfort restored. When the Christmas break is over he returns to the job centre to see his advisor, thinking his situation cannot get any worse. "In the new year then I have to see this woman again. I did not think that she could make it any worse, but she actually did. She said that the sanction to her was an indication that I lacked a work ethic. The fact that I had been in work for twenty odd years and you know also include the years I went to university. Two jobs at some times. But she is telling me that I have no work ethic". My interviewee tells me that this is his breaking point. He returns to his flat and tries to take his own life, found by his neighbour he is taken to hospital. It is truly shocking to hear how low he has become by this point and impossible not to be affected by his story as an interviewer. An indication of how the negative narrative around benefits, mental health and disability have impacted, the social worker who comes to see him in hospital tells him how much his suicide attempt has cost the NHS. This is when he first uses a twitter account to tell his story, using a protected identity gives him a certain freedom to speak out, even though at this stage he only has a few followers. One of his first tweets is about how a mental health professional visiting at home asks him how he is able to have a computer, he reminds her that he has not always been an unemployed person. This tweet strikes a chord with many of his followers. After some considerable time I was a JSA Claimant is referred for Counselling, he is also recognized as being unwell and is transferred on to Employment Support Allowance.

I asked him to tell me more about why he wanted to tell his story on social media. "Well I didn't want to use Facebook then because I didn't want to share what was going on with family and friends, so I thought I would try this thing called Twitter. I didn't know what Twitter was, just another form of social media. So although I had an account I had not really used it. So I started tweeting on there and started telling people about my story and very quickly I started getting a bit of a following. Not a huge number at this stage we are talking about 500 although 500 from zero that's quite good. It quickly moves up to a couple of thousand and at this stage I am mostly talking about myself and the people I come across. I stared doing a couple of blogs as well. on one occasion I went on the work programme and we were expected to do this group activity, it was something really basic like what does confidence mean and you have to get into two groups and discuss this. You have only got

about 3/4 of an hour so all you end up doing is discussing the definition of confidence, put that on a piece of paper and that is it for the session. There was one guy that attended, he obviously had some sort of leaning difficulty, and it's not to say that he should not have been there or excluded, but it was clear he needed much more support than was on offer, and the trainers could not give that and it was sort of left up to the group to do. I blogged about that. I was also noticing other people. A particular concern of mine, women are mostly impacted by the cuts to benefits, but in my experience of the work programme I mostly saw men, because it is mostly men that go to those training programmes. I am seeing these men and they seem to have the same history. They have been in some sort of physical work, on a building site or in a warehouse, in a factory or something like that. They have lost their jobs in their 50s or maybe early 60s and they are pretty much nobody wants them anymore, no employer seems to want them anymore. But what quite quickly happens after that their relationship breaks down and they lose their home, end up in a bed sit. They all seemed to have that same ring to it with their stories. I'm not saying there was huge numbers it's just that I seemed to come across this story over and over again. I was really concerned about this. They are going through the motions of looking for work but they are not really looking for work at all because I imagine that when you have gone through losing your job, losing your partner and losing your home for many people it is all they really wanted out of life, they wanted to get married, have a home and have children, have a job and provide.

SLP: It is very much about identity isn't it?
JSA Claimant: Yes that's right, and it is a working class identity. What many aspire too. If you have lost that then it is like a bereavement.

SLP: Yes.

JSA Claimant: It is not surprising then that these people are not really committed, yes they go to the CV class and they are doing the form. But they don't really expect to get anywhere with it. You can see it in the way that they are. Going through the act. Ticking those boxes. These are the people I started tweeting about. Worrying about these different groups. Other things happen like when a woman comes on and a massive row breaks out and the work programme everyone has to leave and the police are called and I tweet about this and I start getting a following. The sort of person I am I wanted to understand what had happened to me, how had it happened? The politics behind it. Things like that so I started doing some

research. I discovered millions of people had been put forward for sanctions. It is something like 16 million sanctions since it was introduced, I am going back now to 2000 under Blair, it stared then but the sanctions were not so long. Sanctions were a week, you could get through that, but then Ian Duncan Smith comes along and he quadruples that and makes the worst penalty three years. A whole series of reforms that make life an awful lot worse. Reforming the assessments for disability and sickness too. I joined Unite Community and I came across the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre because I had met the guy who is running it and he shared with me his annual report included in this annual report is a whole series of stories from claimants. There was one story of a guy who claimed disability benefit, he failed the assessment and the initial appeal so he has gone to the second appeal but he died before he got to the appeal. He ended up winning the appeal anyway so the money went to his sister. But the story went that the DWP decided that they were going to recover the money from the sister. That was a story in this report so I turned that story into a meme. That was one of the first stories that I shared on line it ended up with hundreds of comments under it, a big response. A lot of people were saying this was a lie. I realized a lot of people did not know that this was going on. I didn't know this was going on until I started looking into it. You are not hearing about it in the national newspapers, all you are hearing about is benefit fraud. Scroungers, about what the Chancellor said about you know, you are going to work and the neighbour has his curtains shut. Hearing all this negative stuff, it is not surprising that fewer and fewer people in society support social security. So I stared doing more digging for people's personal stories and you would find lots of them in local newspapers but they would only get to the local newspaper stage. Local newspapers are often owned by the big national newspaper groups the local newspapers are basically feeder newspapers for the mainstream media although they are not being used. So I thought I would start sharing them. And that is how my account started to grow. More and more people were seeing what I was doing and I was getting a following. I ended up in the top 50 people who blog and tweet and my name was up there with significant TV and news personalities like Alistair Campbell and Guido Fawkes, and I thought there is something going on here. Each day I would go through a routine research like on NewsNow and look up welfare for example and it would bring up all the latest welfare related stories. I was also doing google searches under certain search parameters and getting google alerts. I would restrict it to the last 24 hours and I would go through that routine each day. I would share them on Twitter and that is how I have built up what I have now. Then people would see what I was doing and think that I was some sort of expert and people would write to me and say this is my story can you help me. I would say

well no not really but I can sign post you to where you might get help. But some of the things I was posting did then end up in mainstream media, so a story I posted about a homeless father and son who were having to live in a tent got to the Mirror and these people were able to get some help. It made me realize that I had power with my social media and I could help people by publicizing their situation. I could influence and that is part of what I can do as my social media grows and I realized I had quite a few journalists that were following me and that I could target them with specific stories that I wanted to share. I have gone from a position where I have had all my power stripped from me but through my social media I can sort of start to grow it back if you see what I mean".

As a result of his campaigning on social media, I Was a JSA Claimant now has the opportunity to assist the Unite union on their efforts to raise awareness of the impact of benefit sanctions, the problems with the new universal credit system, and welfare reform. He has also assisted in the development of a working document for the PCS union on welfare policy. What I hear in his story is someone who felt completely disempowered through circumstances not of their own making, who then saw a way of regaining a sense of power telling their own story and tweeting about their experiences. He has then arrived at a point in which he is enabling other people to tell their stories too. Through this he has also met with members of the PCS union who actually work at the DWP, he admits "I was seeing people from the DWP in a different light, they had been the people I was angry with for sanctioning me, but although they can be criticized for not speaking out sooner, I realized that my relationship with them had to change we have to work together of we are going to effect change. I have privilege on social media because I can help to make change. I must be careful not to use it in the wrong way". This last comment interested me, I wondered if he felt that he had has to develop his own social media code of ethics so to speak, as he realized what influence it is possible to have. " Yes I has to start thinking about it. I am aware that if I am really critical and I lose my temper with a particular Twitter account other people will pile on and attack that account so I don't do that. I have done it a couple of times in the early stages, now that I have a bigger following I have to be more careful. I will put out a tweet to enable other people to be angry. Sometimes people will say that I am not strong enough with my comments. That I am not calling someone an effing so and so. I have been accused of being naive. They say I have been doing it long enough to know what is going on. I do know what is going on but that is not the point, I am tweeting in a fashion to get you riled up, if you see what I mean .... You learn these things, you learn to do things in a certain way. I just want to help people understand what sick people, disabled people, unemployed people are going

through. People know I am a Labour supporter but I can still get support from people on the right, you know over food banks and things like that, or telling stories about homelessness. People want to know this. They want to know what is going on because the main stream media still does not cover those although it has got better, but they are still not saying it in many quarters. On a good week I am getting a post reach of 2-3 million. Some days I don't do any at all, you have to think about your own wellbeing. Some stories just leave me in tears". I wondered how he coped with this and how he also dealt with the negativity and abuse that he could also be subjected to by those who disagreed with him or wanted to troll him. "I have things in place, using quality filters on social media, mute a lot, block a lot and grow another skin. At first I did not have that skin and it affected me quite a lot. Now I have learned to grow a skin, I have been to the police once about Facebook. But also I have real life friends who will see my accounts and give me a call, because if I am seeing them then they are seeing them too quite often. That is how you cope, there are coping mechanisms. I don't see a lot of the stuff people are saying to me now because I have those filters in place. If I choose to open them I am prepared for it".