**File name: CW10\_5th Oct part B**

**Audio Length: Part One: 0:37:27**

**Part Two: 0:04:30**

**Date Transcribed: 16 October 2023**

**Date proofread: 18 October 2023**

Interviewer: Great. So, yeah, thanks for being part of our research. I’m really reassured that you’re actually a real person, and I say that because I’ve had a lot of participants joining the study who have not been real care workers, and they’ve been using AI to answer the questions and stuff.

Respondent: Oh, really? But why?

Interviewer: Yeah, just to get the voucher. So it’s great that you are actually an official real care worker.

Respondent: It seems a lot of effort to go to for a £25 voucher. (Laughs).

Interviewer: I know. It’s absolute madness, isn’t it? But people will do all sorts for £25, which is… yeah, it’s crazy.

So, yes, thanks for being part of our research. I wondered if I could just start off by just… you don’t have to tell me your organisation, but just tell me… you are working for a care work organisation at the moment, aren’t you?

Respondent: Yeah. So I’ve worked in care for probably about eight years now, nine years, mainly in supported living services. I currently… well, for the past couple of years I’ve been as an agency worker but have recently just got a new job working on, like, doing a day care centre. So it’s still care work but just a slightly different area.

Interviewer: So is that quite a large organisation that you’re working for, or medium, or small, do you know?

Respondent: So, relatively, the new place I’m working at is quite small. There seems to be quite a lot of people there, but that’s only because we’re all there all day every day, whereas in bigger ones you’re in different houses, aren’t you? So I would say that’s quite small. The agency I work at, I would say, would be about medium. It’s very regional. And then, I’ve worked in national companies and smaller companies as well. So, yeah, at the moment, I would say maybe medium rather than small.

Interviewer: Yeah. And so, what’s your actual job title at the moment?

Respondent: Enabler.

Interviewer: Enabler, okay. And that’s in, like, not a… would you call it a residential home, or is it, did you say, supported living?

Respondent: So, again, it depends because I’m doing these two jobs at the moment. So, I guess, it’s probably easier to focus on the agency work rather than the day care centre because the day care centre, that’s, like, a community interest project, and it’s very different to most care stuff. So I’ll forget that for a sec. With the agency work, I do a bit of everything, but my main expertise is supported living services. So I have done some residential, but mainly supported living.

Interviewer: So, when you say, “supported living”, that’s going into people’s homes and helping them to wash, dress, feed, that kind of thing? Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. I mean, so some it is going, literally, into someone’s home. Then, you get, kind of, the shared supported living services, where there’s six people, and there’s always a staff member on. And that’s the one that I do rather than home care treatment.

Interviewer: Brilliant. That’s really, really helpful. And what geographical area are you in, CW10?

Respondent: I’m in (name of place).

Interviewer: In (name of place), that’s lovely. That’s great. Sorry, I’m making sure I get a good spread of people across the country. So I’ve got quite a lot of questions. I might not get through all of them. And, again, feel free to give as much or as little information on each one. It might be that some of them you want to say more, some of them, you don’t need to say as much. So, yes, as I say, I’ll try and get through as many of them as I can.

So, thinking about the agency work then, how long have you worked with that provider?

Respondent: I joined February, not the year just gone, the year before, so just over two years now, I think.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay. No, that makes sense. And have you always worked in care? I know you said you’ve been in care for about eight years.

Respondent: Yeah, so since I turned 18, I’ve worked in the care sector. I’ve worked for a company, and I’ve also done a bit of team leading. I found that quite full on, so I went to agency. But, yeah, I’ve not done anything, really, else other than care work.

Interviewer: Okay. No, that’s great. And what attracted you to care work in the first place, CW10?

Respondent: So my dad worked for a housing association, and I was looking for part-time work to go alongside my uni studies. So I got a bank job because it meant that, if I had exams, I could pick up less shifts. And then, I finished uni, was saving up to go travelling, and because I already had a job, it just made sense to stay.

And then, we had to come back from travelling because of Covid. And, at that time, that was the only work available because I was determined I wasn’t going to do care work again. I was going to do something else when I got back, but it was lockdown, so it was the only work available. And then, I’ve just been in it ever since, really.

Interviewer: Okay. That’s really helpful. And how did you come to, like, hear about the particular job that you’re in now. So how did you come to hear about the agency work and the roles available there?

Respondent: So I used the agency that I’m on to cover gaps in the rotas when I was a team leader. I left… so my previous job… my first job in care, I was bank worker, as I said. And then, I was a team leader and doing rotas. And, when I left the team leading role, I started a new job in care, but it lasted two days because it turns out I don’t like people doing my rotas for me. (Laughter). So, “Oh, maybe, I should join one of the agencies that I use, then. I can choose my own hours, then.”

Interviewer: So you left one role to move into this one, and the reason for that was because you wanted to have a bit more, sort of, autonomy over the rotas. Is that right?

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah. So I left the team leader role because I was burning out, basically. I found another support worker role for the same pay but just not… as a support worker, not a team leader, so left the team leader role to join them, and then realised that, actually, I needed the flexibility because…

Although, when I was a team leader, I wouldn’t just give myself the best shifts. I could do the rota so that people could have a day off because it was their nan’s birthday as part of the rota rather than annual leave. Whereas, if there was someone else doing my rota who wasn’t that flexible, I was like, “No, it’s not for me.” (Laughs).

Interviewer: That makes sense. And so, do you mind me asking what rate of pay are you paid at the moment?

Respondent: Yeah. So, at the moment, with the agency, I’m on £11.25. But I get my holiday pay on top because we don’t get annual leave. So it’s £12.25, generally. My new role at the day care is minimum wage. It’s £10.42. So I’ll be taking a massive pay cut. I’m, kind of, in a transition because there’s a big pay gap period between the day care… it’s six weeks. So I’m doing half and half until I get fully enrolled. So my new job will be minimum wage but way more fun.

Interviewer: So, with the agency work, you said you get your holiday pay on top. So did you say it’s £11, but you get an extra £1 to cover the holiday pay? Is that right?

Respondent: Yeah, it’s £11.25, but it’s £12.25 to cover the holiday.

Interviewer: Brilliant. And do you know when the last time your pay was increased?

Respondent: So our pay was increased in December last year. So there was a massive minimum wage change, wasn’t there, in April last year? And a lot of the care companies went up to £10.50, £11. And, at that time, we were still on… I think we were on £11-something. I think it was… and, once you took the holiday pay off it, we were actually just on minimum wage and on the same level.

And, because you don’t have the consistency of work and people think that you’re paid way more on agency, as well, it… actually, a lot of people were getting paid more than us because that was what the minimum wage increase had made. And so we had a massive pay increase in December. Yeah, I think it went up from £11 to £12.25. No. No, it must have been £11.50 because, otherwise, we wouldn’t have been earning minimum wage. But it went from £11.50 to £12.25 in December.

But that also meant that, in April this year, when, again, the minimum wage went up, they didn’t increase anything again because they’d only just increased it.

Interviewer: Because they’d already done it. I see.

Respondent: And they’d actually managed to get between April and December without any kind of increase, and they’ll probably do it again. So, yeah, I’ve not heard anything about any, kind of, increase.

Interviewer: Any further increase… I’m glad you mentioned about the April increase because I was going to ask you that. So do you know if your employer has signed up, either the agency that you’re with now or your new employer that you’re going to work with… do you know if either of them have signed up to pay the real living wage? If you don’t know, it’s okay.

Respondent: I don’t think so. So I know that the agency… they’re above that. They should be slightly above that anyway because that’s part and part of agency work and that. And the other place is £10.42. So I’m not sure what the difference between the real living wage and the minimum wage is at the moment, but I think the other place I’m working at is very much, sort of, going up with the minimum.

Although, they did just… I’ve only been there two weeks, and in their team meeting, they did say that they are looking at pay. So…

Interviewer: That’s reassuring. Hopefully, there’ll be some changes. Do you… and, again, you can reflect on either of the role here, but do you have any other benefits as part of the roles, like bonuses or sick pay? I know you mentioned you don’t get annual leave in your agency job, but potentially do in your… you’ll get some, presumably, in your new job. Any pension contributions? So any other benefits in those roles on top of pay?

Respondent: Every single care role that I’ve had has been minimum in terms of you don’t get sick pay. You get minimum pension contributions. You get things like the blue light card, which is… I’ve had one. I lose it. I’ve probably saved a couple of quid over the years with it. It’s never what you want the discount to be. I mean, we had one prize where they wanted you to work a certain amount of extra hours to win a free Hello Fresh box. And it’s like, you get Hello Fresh codes free with every one you get.

It’s things like that that, in terms of what really matters, you get you get your minimum annual leave allowances. You get your minimum pension. You get no sick pay. You just get statutory sick pay. And that seems to be the same across all of the care sector, which is crazy when you consider… especially the sick pay, when you consider how likely you are to get sick on the job. And then, it’s like, “Oh, sorry.” (Laughs).

Interviewer: Yeah, exactly. It forces people back to work before they’re fully recovered and so on, doesn’t it? It’s really crazy.

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah, and half the time you’re getting sick because of work.

Interviewer: Exactly, yeah. Exactly. And there’s no recognition for that at all, is there?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: So, when you say about “it’s minimum pension contributions”, do you know what those are? If you don’t, it’s okay.

Respondent: I just get a thing to say, “You’ve signed up. We’ll match through Nest,” or whatever, and a bit of my money goes there, and I don’t really know what happens to that.

Interviewer: Do you know how much it is per month that gets taken off, then?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Don’t worry. And then, do you do any sleep-in shifts at all, CW10, and if so, are you paid for those?

Respondent: Yeah. So, through the agency, I get hourly pay, which is brilliant. Like, I’ve literally come back from one and arrived at 10:00, went to sleep, got up this morning at 7:00, and then got 12 hours of pay for it. But that’s through agency work. Most places that I’ve had have been a flat rate, and it’s about £50 at the moment.

Interviewer: Right. And do you know what it would… will you be doing sleep-ins in your new role?

Respondent: So there is a supported living service separate to my new role that’s right next door. And they’re going to take me on for two sleeps a week, but I’m not allowed to start with them because they have to buy me out from the agency. So I’ve got to wait a period of time before I can start with them. But, because it’s quite a drive to the day centre, I’m hoping that I’ll get two sleeps to, kind of, join up the shifts.

Interviewer: That sounds good. And is that, again, a flat rate, or is that an hourly pay?

Respondent: That would be a flat rate.

Interviewer: Do you know what it is, typically?

Respondent: Yeah, so that would be £50 from 11:00 PM until 8:00 AM.

Interviewer: Okay. And how do you feel about that, about the sleep ins and also the rate that you get for those?

Respondent: So I have always loved sleep ins as a money maker. I’m more than happy to do them. I do feel like they should be hourly paid, but I think hourly paid at minimum wage. I don’t think you necessarily need to match the wage or even have nighttime wages. A lot of the time, you’re sleeping. But there’s a case of… a lot of places are, like, if you wake up during the night, you can get an hour… you can start the clock. But, if you’re getting woken up regularly for small chunks, it doesn’t add up the same way.

And you are away from your family and your friends and your home, which for me and my partner works quite well. We don’t have a family. But, for someone who’s got a young family or people that they need to see at home or people that don’t sleep very well at them, it is still work.

And I know that there was that big court case a few years back, and they almost put it down to hourly pay, didn’t they? And then it got appealed by (NAME OF ORGANISATION) at the last minute because they were wanting to backpay everyone, which… they got greedy, basically.

Interviewer: Yeah, which makes it really tricky.

Respondent: And then, people were like, “We can’t afford that.” But yeah, I think… because even in any job, even the people that sit and hold [signs 0:15:35] and stuff, you’re still at work. It’s minimum wage.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah, you’re not relaxing the same way you would in your own bed at home and having that, like, off time are you. You’re still, essentially, on shift. It’s just that you might get some sleep whilst you’re there. But, yeah.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Completely. It is work at the end of the day.

Interviewer: Yeah, I completely agree.

Respondent: And the same with on call, like, you’re basically there on call, aren’t you?

Interviewer: You are.

Respondent: So you need…

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely. No, that’s really, really helpful. In terms of other things that your employers paid for, have they, in the past, in your agency work and in the new role, paid for a DBS check, your uniform, induction?

Respondent: Yeah. I’ve never had to pay for my DBS. The only time that I’ve had to pay for any training or my DBS was that place where I quit after two days, which is fair enough. They’d paid for it all, and then I went, “No.” And even that was just taken out of my two days of wages. I’ve never had to physically hand over any money for these things.

My uniform for the agency, so you get one free that gets updated every year. And then, I think you can buy more, but they have, like, a second-hand… so you can buy new, which is a lot more expensive, or second-hand, which is I think a lot cheaper. That might have even been free as well.

But I’m not the biggest fan of the big residential homes where you wear the uniform, so I haven’t had a problem. At the farm, they’ve got uniforms, but they are not compulsory. So you can buy them if you want to, which I will because having to think about what to wear every day is already difficult. (Laughter).

So, yeah, mileage, I get paid for with the agency, but that’s only people that are paid for getting to and from work. But I’ve had mileage paid for if I’ve been driving for work during work hours.

Interviewer: So just say that again. With the agency, you get mileage to and from work?

Respondent: Yeah. So anything that’s over seven miles from my house because, with the agency, you can be sent everywhere. So it’s not uncommon for me to travel up to an hour’s drive. Yeah. So it’s anything over seven miles up to 100 miles gets paid for.

Interviewer: And how much do you get per mile for that? Do you know?

Respondent: 45p.

Interviewer: Right, okay. But, with the new job, will that just be seen as your commute?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah, so you wouldn’t get any mileage for that.

Respondent: And every other job I’ve had, that’s been seen as my commute. I think agency is a bit different because you can be sent so far. Well, actually, at my previous job, everybody had a base house, and if you had to go anywhere other than the base house, you would get the additional. So they would take away the distance between your house and the base house, and any additional mileage would be covered as well because there was, like…

Interviewer: And does that… will that… go on, sorry.

Respondent: So (name of place)’s quite a big county, and everything’s quite spread out and rural. So, when I was doing it in (name of place), it wasn’t like that. But your change of house could be, like, an extra 45-minute drive.

Interviewer: Yeah, there’s long stretches, isn’t there, in (name of place), where there’s not very much? And then you’ve got another place to visit. So would you just typically see that on your wage slip if they’ve paid for mileage? Do you see it as an additional bit on your wage slip?

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah, so it’s got your hours, and then it just says “expenses” or “mileage”. I can’t remember which.

Interviewer: Okay. That’s really helpful. Most people are saying the same, that they will get mileage for agency work but not for other roles. And, in your new job, presumably, you’ll be in the same place most of the time. You wouldn’t be having to travel to different clients or anything like that.

Respondent: No. No, so they do do pick ups and drop offs, but they’ve got their own buses for that. So [you wouldn’t generally do that 0:19:37].

Interviewer: Okay. So you wouldn’t get anything for that. And how… and this might be a tricky one because, again, you’ve got different roles. But, in terms of checking in and checking out with each client, do you have to sign in and sign out in terms of the time that you’ve spent with each person? How does it all work in terms of that checking in and checking out?

Respondent: Well, my first ever role was the one in (name of place), where I was on bank, and they had a system called CM2000, which meant that every client we had had a landline, and you would have to call the landline. That would be checking in, and you’d call it to check out, not only for timesheet purposes but for safety purposes as well. And that’s the only time that I’ve ever really seen it.

So a lot of places… like, my old job where I was the team leader, you would always be handing over to someone, I guess. So that would be a way of checking in and checking out because there was always someone on site. It’s the same with the day care centre. There’s so many people there that it would be noticed if you weren’t there. And, with the agency work, I guess, if they’re expecting you, they would call the agency if you didn’t turn up.

So, with the agency, after every shift, you do a timesheet, and you get the clerk, someone who works for that house to sign it for you, but not clocking in. I haven’t really had… yeah.

Interviewer: And, with the agency work, do you get paid for the whole of the shift, or is it just the time that you spend with the client?

Respondent: So I don’t do, kind of, home care stuff. I do long shifts, I mean, 24-hour shift, 12-shift, eight-hour shifts. I am very reluctant… I did a little bit of the dotting around, and I was getting… so the shift would be an eight-hour shift called out in the community, so you’d get paid the whole thing. But I just… and this was years ago, and it was so stressful, man, because you don’t get enough time between them. And I only did it once a week to cover, like, the odd Saturday. And I was like, “No.” [\*\* 0:21:56].

Interviewer: Having to move between different people?

Respondent: Yeah. People who do that full time, I’ve got a lot of respect for. But not for me, thanks.

Interviewer: So your role with the agency is you’d go to one particular family or one particular person and be with them the whole of that time. Is that right? Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah, we go round, sort of, the bigger supported living houses or the residential houses. So we’d be there to cover that shift.

Interviewer: [\*\* 0:22:21] full time. Yeah, that makes sense. I’m just going to move down to my next little bit. So, I guess, this is more like a… it’s a rating question, really. How would you rate your rate of pay in terms of care work generally but also other jobs in the area? So, kind of, other… not necessarily comparable jobs but other jobs in the area. Do you think that it’s a good rate of pay? Do you think that the rate of pay needs to be better? And how does that compare to other jobs that are available in your area, CW10?

Respondent: I definitely think it needs to be better. I mean, living in (name of place), getting well-paid jobs is very difficult. But the level of responsibility that comes within the care industry compared to the pay is just crazy.

I mean, when I was team leading, this was a couple of years ago before the minimum wage thing, but I was on £10 an hour to be a manager, which is why I left. And I was on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I wasn’t allowed to do overtime because it would cost them too much, even though the people below me were on, like, £9.20 or £9. That was [\*\* 0:23:49] I was earning a pound more. That was it.

And you look at… I mean, I did a carpentry qualification just so I could maybe try and get a job with slightly better pay because the, sort of, standard at the moment is about £12, £13 for labouring work. And it just seems crazy that you literally have responsibility of somebody’s life and wellbeing, and it just seems like… and it’s insulting, also, that it’s minimum wage.

I mean, it’s always a comparison. “Oh, I could go and work in a supermarket for more.” And I’ve got a lot of respect for people that work in supermarkets. I’ve done retail before, once in my life, never again. It’s a hard job. So I don’t want to put them down, but you’re not having to do first aid, meds, safeguardings, and putting yourself on the line all the time as well because, if something goes wrong, you could very well be taken court on a daily basis if something goes wrong, and the pay doesn’t, kind of, reflect that.

And then, there’s different levels of care, which I’ve discovered through the agency work. So supported living is a lot easier than the big residential elderly care homes. But it tends to be the big residential elderly care homes that are even less pay. I mean, I did a 14-hour shift at one, and I could barely walk afterwards because it’s just so non-stop. I was like… (laughs).

Interviewer: Yeah. I’ve interviewed quite a few people from residential homes, and they say that, you know, they’re just moving from one person to the next person constantly and just never able…

Respondent: [\*\* 0:25:23], yeah, and to even have a sip of water, there’s just no time. And then, they’re on minimum wage for it. It’s just… yeah, it’s not right.

Interviewer: Yeah, it’s very challenging. And your views and perspectives on this are very similar to other people that I’ve been talking to. So this is, again, one of the reasons that we’re doing this study. We’re just hoping to raise these issues onto the table more. Is your income the main income in the household, CW10?

Respondent: My partner also works for the same agency as me. So we both work around each other on the agency rate.

Interviewer: And, thinking about your weekly income on its own from care work, does it meet your needs and your household needs?

Respondent: It does if I work 45 hours to 50 hours a week. At the moment, with the agency work, some of that can be sleeping. So that’s much more sustainable, but it is difficult. And, actually, with the sleep ins with this other place, that’s an extra £100 a week if I do two a week. So, without sleep ins, it’s not very sustainable because of the amount of hours.

So I need about £500 a week to, sort of, be comfortable, which is with minimum wage, take away tax, that’s 50 hours a week of pay. Now, if I do two sleeps, that’s 40 hours, which is a normal working week. But, yeah, you wouldn’t be able to do 37.5 and survive.

Interviewer: That’s interesting. So you’re having to go above a normal working week in order to…

Respondent: And that’s… we’re a household of two full-time earners with no dependents, and we live in slightly alternative accommodation, where it comes to £600 a month, all bills included, so incredibly cheap rent and bills. And I’m still saying that we need to work a lot of overtime to feel comfortable and survive. So I don’t know how people do it with real houses and children.

Interviewer: Yeah, and a single person on their own, without having those two incomes, it’s challenging, isn’t it? Would you say that the cost of living has impacted you in any way?

Respondent: Again, not as much as other people. So, obviously, the food prices have gone up, but because we… I’m going to say it quietly in case my landlord’s around and decides to put the rent up. He’s not increased anything since it all. And, because it includes our bills, we haven’t, kind of, seen that influx that everybody saw last year. We were very, very lucky in that sense.

Interviewer: Okay. And, in terms of your contract, CW10, I guess, you’ve got two contracts, haven’t you, at the moment? You’ve got your contract with your agency and also your new contract. Can you tell me a little bit about those contracts? So is the one with the agency, presumably, a zero-hours contract?

Respondent: Yes. Yeah, so I’ve worked in both… with zero hours and I’ve worked with contracted hours as well. And, honestly, the zero hours in the care sector works. It works for a whole… like, with people with flexibility. Like I say, I started on bank because I was going to uni. It works a lot better than, I don’t know, a McDonald’s zero-hour contract because there is always work available. It’s about that, kind of, flexibility over, “Well, we might have work for you one day. We might not have work for you one day.” There is always work.

Contracted hours, and from conversations… it’s been a little while since I’ve been in a contract. But, actually, even when I’ve done it and conversations with people with it, you’re always seemed to be expected to do more. So you’re contracted to… my last one was a contract of 37.5 hours, but in these settings, you can’t leave it unstaffed, and they don’t want to pay for agency, or the managers certainly don’t want to come in. So you never stuck to your… you can’t just do your contracted hours. There is a lot pressure to do above and beyond.

Interviewer: So you’ve mentioned that, often, you’re required to do more. Does it ever work the other way, that shifts are cancelled on you, and if that was the case, how much notice would you typically get?

Respondent: So the policy with the agency work is that, if a shift is cancelled less than 24 hours, you still get your full pay. They have tried to make it before that, if it’s the house’s fault, you get full pay, but if the agency has made a mistake, you only get half. But we’ve managed to fight that because it’s like, it doesn’t matter to me.

It is frustrating. There’s certain houses that I’ve clocked on to that basically all [\*\* 0:30:48] out more agency shifts than are needed and then will cancel last minute when they realise that it’s not needed. And that’s frustrating because you would have turned down other work, and then you end up doing a shift that you’re not… or maybe not getting work if it’s last minute.

But, out of all the houses we go to, there’s two or three that, kind of, work that way. And, actually, they get punished because people don’t pick the shifts that are there because they lose faith that they’re actually going to get the work. So, overall, I think it’s pretty fair. It’s part of what agency is about.

I’ve never had it with contracted work. If your shift has been cancelled somewhere or double booked, then there’s an obligation to find you that work. And you’ll end up… even if… we’ve sent people to the office to do paperwork before. That’ll, kind of, be there. And the agency, it’s part and part of the flexibility of it. It’s just annoying when they cancel 25 hours early. (Laughs).

Interviewer: Yes. Yeah. You should just ignore your phone for that extra hour.

Respondent: Yeah. (Laughs).

Interviewer: And so you mentioned that you’re typically having to work more hours than you’re contracted each week. How many hours would you typically work in a week, and how are those spread out at the moment in terms of your working week? Do you have to do weekends, different shift patterns?

Respondent: So, with the agency, it depends. So, back when I first started just after Covid, there was so much work that I think I did Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, long days with sleeps, sometimes even just Tuesday, Wednesday 24 hours, a long weekend every weekend. But, now it’s died down a bit, it’s a bit more, like, what can you get?

And the agency work, that’s quite a hard question to answer with the agency work because it really does depend on what we’re doing and what the shifts are. Nine times out of 10, I can make it work around my personal life. The day care centre, I’ll be working every weekday apart from a Wednesday. And then, I’ve got this other job that’s going to top up my hours. And weekends are off.

In the previous contracted role that I had, it was meant to be every other weekend, but it doesn’t quite fall like that. And, again, I was doing the rotas, so it would mainly be, like, somebody wanting to work two weekends in a row because they had two things happening. And weekends were, kind of, fairly shared, but it never felt like it.

But I also, for that job, had to do on call, and I wasn’t allowed to be on call when I was working. So I would work two weekends a week, then be on call one weekend a month… sorry, two weekends a month, on call one weekend a month, which meant I only really got one…

Interviewer: You had one weekend to yourself, yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. So that was just crazy, that job.

Interviewer: So do you find that your income varies quite considerably from week to week depending on what the agency have booked you for, or do you find that you’ve some stability in terms of knowing what you’re going to be getting at the end of each week?

Respondent: So it does vary. It varies depending on what I worked. I have my own numbers in my head. So, like I say, I quite like to work around the 45-hour mark. And so, a lot of my payslips will reflect that because I’ve found that amount of work. But, I mean, whilst I’m having this crossover period where I’m working three days at one place and then two days with the agency, because I don’t have as much flexibility with the agency, sometimes, I can’t fulfil the hours I need in those two days, and there’s a lot of up and down going there. But that’s only a temporary measure.

But I think, overall, since I started with the agency two years ago, it’s been pretty steady income wise. Odd dead weeks where I’ve not had much, but nothing too major.

Interviewer: That’s good. And, also, in terms of the actual day-to-day aspects of your job, which bits do you enjoy, and which bits do you not enjoy?

Respondent: So I enjoy working with people. I think the thing that I’m excited about with the day care centre is it’s people that are a lot more… it’s just a nicer environment to work in. So I’ve done a lot of mental health work where there’s been a lot of mental manipulation, and that’s exhausting. You get a lot of team splitting. So, “I don’t like this person because they’ve done this,” and starting rumours. And, although you’re trained against it…

Interviewer: It still gets to you.

Respondent: … it batters you down. And I’ve done a lot of work with learning disabilities where it’s the other side. There can be quite a lot of physical aggression. And, again, it’s like, you’re going in and you’re getting paid minimum wage to potentially get beaten up. Great. And then, elderly care, I just really find rude. (Laughs). I just don’t… I literally almost walked out of a shift over a quiche yesterday.

Interviewer: Oh, no.

Respondent: (Laughs). But there must be something that keeps drawing me back to it because I’ve been doing it for so long. I like making those relationships with people, and I like just, kind of, living life alongside people. So, yes, you get the hard days and there’s a lot of responsibility, but then, you get the odd day where you go to the cinema for the afternoon, and that’s nice. Or it’s someone’s birthday, and you can make a nice birthday party or Christmas, and it’s like, “Let’s go to the Christmas market together.”

So I quite like those social… going out and the social bits, which, I guess, is why the day centre sounds quite exciting because it’s mostly just that. I was getting paid to go to a spa the other day.

Interviewer: Very nice.

Respondent: I know. (Laughs).

Interviewer: That sounds a lovely way to spend the afternoon, doesn’t it?

Respondent: Yeah. (Laughs).

END OF PART ONE

START OF PART TWO

Interviewer: I’ll continue by just going to the last bit of the interview schedule, which is in terms of training and career development. And I wondered, can you tell me a little bit about what kind of training you’ve received, and also how good that training’s been, and do you feel like you receive enough training in your current work, CW10?

Respondent: So I’ve probably done the same training 101 times, which is all this e-learning stuff, which is great but it doesn’t really sink it. It feels a bit like a waste of time. Whereas, there’s training that you really need in terms of, like, self-harm. So you get your online first aid training, and even then, it’s like, “Well, but you’re not first aid trained because you need to do it in person.” The same with medications, you read all this stuff, do this online thing, but you’re not medication trained until you’ve done it in person.

The more bespoke training needs to be better [\*\* 0:01:06] the houses. But, also, the in-person training, every company I’ve been to struggles with it. I did my care certificate years ago, but never got my care certificate because they never did the observations on me. The same with, as I said, the medication. It’s like, well, I am medication trained. But my partner’s done an online medication thing, but he can’t administer medication because there’s no one available…

Interviewer: To watch the practice.

Respondent: … to watch the practice. And, yet, you join a company, and you have hours and hours and hours’ worth of reading that just isn’t, kind of, that relevant, and it’s all very academic. I don’t need to know the theory behind autism. I need to know best practice of how to work with someone with autism. The same with epilepsy. It’s like, I don’t need to know how the brain works. I need to know how to administer Midazolam.

Interviewer: So it’s good in terms of theory, but there’s not those opportunities to work in practice with it and get the observation and the support with having a go with all of those things.

Respondent: Yes. Yeah, that would be my main issue with the training.

Interviewer: No, that’s really helpful. And what about, sort of, career development opportunities. Do you see that there are career progression opportunities? What kind of things… and do you want to progress your career in care, or do you have different…?

Respondent: So you can quite easily go from support worker to a team leader if you put the time in. The thing is, the reason you can do that is nobody wants to do it, and people have do it (*sic*) end up stepping down because it’s too much, same with the management and then registered manager.

I mean, my dad works as a director for a housing association, and I look at him, and I’m like, the levels of stress of working in a career that way is just insane. And I don’t think, including myself, many people really want to progress up that particular ladder. But there could be more opportunities for things other than support work, like the day care centre or working as an advocate or even looking at HR roles within a company for people because they’re all people that are good with people.

But that, kind of, ladder of team leader, service manager, registered manager, the opportunities are there, but I don’t think people want them.

Interviewer: Really? What’s the reason for that, just because it’s taking you away from the care side of things?

Respondent: I think it’s the level of pay and the expectation or, at least, my experience of it. So, when I was leaving the team leader role, they were offering me the manager role. But I was so burnt out from being the team leader, and my experience of being a team leader is very similar to a lot of people. It’s like, “Do I want to go up a rung? Maybe, it would be easier because I would be in a 9:00 to 5:00 job and not having to do both the support work and the management side of things.”

But, yeah, a lot of people that I know have just burnt out at that second level and not really wanted to go any further because the second level’s been too much.

Interviewer: Too challenging. No, that’s been really helpful. I’m going to stop the...

END OF AUDIO

NB quality of WL is in separate word doc as participant had run out of time