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Interviewer: That’s absolutely fine, CW14. I stopped the recording, and I’ve restarted it, so that’s brill. So, just before we start, you don’t have to give me the name of your organisation, but I wondered if you could tell me, is it a residential home? Are you working for an organisation that does domestic care work? Tell me a little bit about the place that you work, but you don’t have to say where it is.

Respondent: Well, the company that I work for, they do a range of support. I think they do technically do domiciliary, not that I partake in that. But the support that I do, initially, when I started with the company, the home that I was in was classed as a care home. There were deprivation of liberties in place. We cooked for them, cleaned for them, shopped for them. It was all done for them.

But, where I am now, it’s classed as supported living, and they all have capacity to make their own choices. They all shop independently, cook independently. We don’t do, like, care home activities where we’re like, “Come on. Pile on to the minibus. Let’s go out.” It’s none of that. We treat them as the individuals they are.

Interviewer: That’s lovely. So is your job title “care worker” or “care assistant”?

Respondent: Support worker.

Interviewer: Support worker, okay. That’s great. And what geographical area are you in, CW14?

Respondent: I think we’re classed as the Name of place. [\*\* 0:01:27].

Interviewer: That’s fine. It’s just so I know I’ve got a spread of people across the country. And do you know if it’s a large organisation or a small one?

Respondent: It’s fairly large, yes.

Interviewer: Fairly large, okay. That’s brill. So tell me a little bit about how you came into this role.

Respondent: I worked for a company called Jewellery Maker, found out I was pregnant. When I finished maternity leave, they were very clever. They have to keep your job open, but they said, “All we can offer you is weekends.” So I was working Saturday and Sunday with no overtime, and it was just crap. Like, I had no time with my partner, and it was really stressful, to be honest.

Interviewer: Yeah, I can imagine. (Interruption 0:02:16-0:02:44)

Respondent: (Interruption 0:02:16-0:02:44) Yeah, so I went back there working just weekends, and it really impacted my mental health, to be honest, having no family time. And then, this job came about. No history required, no training. You don’t need anything. Just, “Come to us. We’ll give you everything. We’ll even pay for your DBS.” I was like, “I can’t not, really.” So, yeah, I went for it. I think, at the time, my son was about 18 months, and he’s now eight.

Interviewer: So have you been with this provider for that eight years?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you said before that you had a different type of role altogether. So was it mainly the aspects of the job that attracted you to it, or was it because it fitted more around family, or what was it that attracted you into the…

Respondent: Selfishly, at first, it was because it fitted. But, where I am now, I’m in the process of starting my own business, which is similar roles. It’s doing, kind of… basically, I’m a handy woman for older people and poorly people, just when they need help, but social care. I’m like, “Hello, choose me. I’m cheaper. Social care is shit.” Sorry.

Interviewer: You don’t have to apologise. This is a totally safe space. So I’m not working on behalf of any social care organisations at all. I’m totally, like, independent, and we’re just trying to find out what’s going on in the sector. So feel free to speak your absolute truth.

Respondent: Yeah. So, at first, it was selfish reasons. And then, where I first was sent, they had the… it was put to me that, “Welcome to… we have to two most severe cases of epilepsy in the Name of place.” I was like, “Wow. Okay.” I hated it. They were all non-verbal. I was thrown into the job with no BSL training, so it was really, really difficult. Loved the guys, couldn’t fault it, but it was just really, really hard.

But, where I am now, like I said, I’m in the process of starting my own business, and I’ll slowly cut down a day for when I get more customers. And then, people are saying to me, “So you’ll eventually leave?” And I’m like, “No.” (Laughs). No, I can’t leave there. Those guys… I’ve been there for, like, seven and a half years, so I’ve seen them grow and thrive and go from really malnutritioned shells to these independent people. And I don’t know. I just can’t walk away from that.

Interviewer: You’ve got a strong attachment to it.

Respondent: Yeah, definitely.

Interviewer: So tell me about the pay, CW14. What’s your hourly rate of pay in your current role if you don’t mind me asking?

Respondent: So my current pay is £11. That has only just gone up. We had a two pay rise paygrade this year, which, I think, we were £10.30 if I’m right. When I initially started the job, it was advertised that, “We pay way above the national minimum wage,” so that’s obviously what drew me to it, as well. And then, that slowly just went… we were here and it was like… and we were like… so then, in September, we went to £10.82, I think. And then, we’ve just gone up to £11 an hour.

It’s not enough. It’s not enough, not at all. But no one listens because they’re classed as a charity organisation. But it’s amazing how… what made me laugh… a few weeks ago, I’d had a really, really shit week at work. I’ve got a new manager, and she is the least empathetic person I’ve ever met. She’s funny. She brings biscuits. She’s nice, but she’s got no empathy.

Interviewer: That’s tough.

Respondent: I’ve forgotten what I was going to say now. But… oh, shit. What was I going to say?

Interviewer: Was it about the rate pay?

Respondent: Yeah, but it’s gone now. Shit. That’s annoying. Sorry, I’m concentrating on my child as well because he’s in my room. (Interruption 0:07:05-0:07:45). But, yeah, I just don’t think the pay’s enough at all, to be honest, I really don’t.

Interviewer: And how does it compare with other jobs in your area?

Respondent: In the care sector, I haven’t looked.

Interviewer: Do you know about any, sort of, other jobs in your local area that are maybe not care? How would you say it compares with things like shop work or other…

Respondent: Yeah, you go work at Lidl for more. I’ll come home, and I’m like, “Have I got any keys on me? Have I took anything home that…” And I think, “God, I could go and work at Lidl and just sit there with a face like a slapped arse and go, ‘How was your day? Thank you. Do you need a receipt?’” And I know there’s more to that job. I’m not oblivious. But I just think… I don’t know. I just think there’s some people that do a dead-end job who get paid more. (Interruption 0:08:35-0:08:40).

Interviewer: So was your pay increased when the minimum wage was increased in April?

Respondent: No. They took it to Unison or whatever it’s called and said that they would look at increasing it as well as looking at… because we do sleeps as well. So some weeks, I do a lot of sleeps. I mean, I think, next week, I’m doing three sleeps. This week, I’m doing Saturday and Sunday, so it can be quite a lot. But they turned around and said that they can’t afford to increase the sleep rate, but pay will be increased, but not until September and then again in October. So we have, like, a two-scale pay increase or something.

Interviewer: And what do you get when you do a sleep? Do you get paid hourly for that, or do you get a flat rate?

Respondent: A flat rate. Thankfully, where I am, we don’t get disturbed. There is another house that I used to do sleeps at. I can’t do them any more just due to, like, how it all plays out. I’m like, “I can do them on a Friday, every second Friday.” And they’re like, “That’s not helpful.” And then, I’m like, “Well, that’s what you get.” And there, you get disturbed. You are up until 11:00, 12:00 at night, and then from, probably, 4:00, 5:00 AM, you are likely to be up due to incontinence. So there, it’s a lot more intense.

Interviewer: Yeah. So you get to actually get the sleep whilst your there.

Respondent: I sleep better at my work than I do at home.

Interviewer: What do you get paid for that period of time, then? What’s the flat rate for that?

Respondent: I think it’s £39 a night.

Interviewer: Okay. And then, that just gets added on to your wages for that week, yeah?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And do you get any other benefits in your role, CW14, anything like bonuses or sick pay or pension contributions?

Respondent: We get pension contributions. I think we get sick pay. I don’t know because the last time I was sick was during Covid, so I really looked into all the policies regarding that. And they had a sickness policy and a Covid policy, but they did not intertwine. They were just like, “You just can’t be at work. You don’t get paid for sick pay because you’re not sick. You’ve got Covid.” And I’m just like, “Um...”

Interviewer: That doesn’t make sense, does it?

Respondent: So yeah, I don’t know what you get for sick pay, but I’m sure you do.

Interviewer: Do you know, is it, like, you’d get full pay if you were off sick for a period of time?

Respondent: Yeah. I think you get the full amount for a certain amount of time, and then you have to self-cert or something through your GP.

Interviewer: Okay. That’s really helpful. And you said you got pension contributions, as well.

Respondent: Yeah. We also have… I don’t know what it’s called, but we have, like, this company, so if you’re struggling and you need a therapist or a counsellor, you can phone them and we can use them. And I have actually utilised that service because I found someone deceased at work, and they really were, “Just do it. We are strongly encouraging you to just do it.” And it was amazing. I can’t fault it. I didn’t have to pay for that service. It was just there.

Interviewer: Great. So it’s like an employee assistance, a counselling service or something.

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah, and they do a bike scheme. And, also, I wouldn’t be driving if it wasn’t for my company either. They do a drive scheme. So they pay… at the time when I did learn, they pay for 30 lessons, one theory, one practical.

Interviewer: Wow. Oh, my gosh. So they put you through that when you first started?

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Is that because they wanted you to go out and about and travel with the clients?

Respondent: Yeah. So their stipulation is, for the first 12 months, you must be a driver. And then, for the first 12 months, if you leave the company, you pay it all back. Two years, it’s 50% back. After that, you’re scot-free sort of thing, that you’ve paid your dues. I mean, [\*\* 0:12:41]…

Interviewer: Right, okay. So there’s a few additional benefits.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. And, in terms of people who are more experienced, obviously, you’ve been there a while now. Are there any different rates of pay for people who’ve been there longer? No. And what are your thoughts around that? Do you think that people who’ve got that bit more experience should be paid more, or do you think that just generally people need to be paid more in the sector?

Respondent: Weirdly, we were having this conversation today, of saying… we keep getting new staff start. And, obviously, there’s a lot to read. There’s a lot to learn. There’s a lot of training to do. So, in the initial months of being a support worker where I work, you literally just sit there, and you, kind of, think… and unless another trained member of staff goes, “I’m going there. You can come with me. Come on. Let’s go,” you’re not going to actively be like, “Can I come?” because you’re nervous. You’re new.

And we were having this conversation today, saying they’re expecting us… managers, we barely see the managers, probably one day a week and then that’s it. They work from home, or they’re at another service, or whatever the case may be. But we were saying today, we don’t actually get structurally told, “You are all training this new person.” We just get told, “Make them feel welcome.” Okay. “Do you want a brew? I’ll make you a brew. But I haven’t been told to train you, so I’m not.”

I will. I will go out of my way to make sure that the new person isn’t an idiot, and in two weeks’ time, I can come in on my shift, and I can rely on them a little bit more than running round like a blue-arsed fly and doing it all by myself. It’s really frustrating. So I do make sure that… “You can do this. You can do this, so please just get on with it, and put your phone away.”

But I do think… the only incentive they’ve got, in my company, is long service awards. I think it’s five years, 10 years, and so on. You get, like, a bonus. But, other than that, no. There’s no paygrade. You only get paygrade if your job role changes, so lead support, manager, assistant manager. That’s when the paygrade changes. But, even a manager, the paygrade isn’t good. It’s not good enough at all.

Interviewer: Yeah, a lot of people have been saying the same thing, that it’s maybe a pound an hour more or something like that, or not much more.

Respondent: Yeah, but it’s not… I wouldn’t do it. No way. I would never do that job for a pound more an hour. Absolutely not.

Interviewer: No, it’s ridiculous, isn’t it? Do you know if your organisation have signed up to the real living wage, CW14? If you don’t know, it’s okay because lots of people don’t know about whether their organisation has done that or not. And, when you started the job, did they pay for things like your DBS check, your uniform?

Respondent: Yeah. No uniform. We don’t wear uniform, but they do cover the DBS check.

Interviewer: Okay, and were you paid when you completed any induction training?

Respondent: Yeah. So, literally, you start that job… you can’t start until your DBS is back. But then, the second your DBS is back, you’re in the door, and they’ll go, “Right. You can’t do…” so if I’m speaking to you, I’d go, “Right. What you can do today is read all the support plans. Get to know all the people on paper. Read the policies and procedures. Get to know the service. Get to know what you can and can’t do. Once you’ve read those, do your lone working. Do your first aid. Do your basic food safety. And then, you can start to shadow and actually come round with me to people’s properties.”

But, as I say, once your DBS is done, you are in. You hit the ground running. You go for it. It was a lot more relaxed when I started. And I think, because I transferred services, it was a lot easier as well. But, even back then, people were a little bit more relaxed in the sense of, “Oh, you can go and do that dinner because they’re easy. They’ve got capacity. They know choices,” things like that. So we would, sort of, go, “Just go,” and throw you in at the deep end. But they won’t now, not at all, which is fair enough.

Interviewer: That really, really helpful information. Thank you. So, in terms of… because all of the different people who I’m interviewing have slightly different structures in terms of where they are and who they’re working with, etc. So just tell me a little bit about how it works for you. Do you have to check in and check out at the end of the day? Are you based in the same place the whole day? Yeah. So there’s no, like, additional travel between clients or anything like that?

Respondent: No, not domiciliary. So it is supported living for people within their own properties, but we a block of flats, brand-new built eight years ago, 14 self-contained flats. So they don’t need to come out of their flats to go, “Oh, I need this. I need that.” They do. They go, “I forgot to buy this at shopping.” And we can go down to, like, our communal area where we’ve got a kitchen for the staff, and we’ve always got stuff. We can just give it them.

Interviewer: That’s nice. So you’re literally, kind of, spending your time going between the different houses in the space.

Respondent: In the building, yeah.

Interviewer: That’s really helpful. Thank you. So, thinking, again, about the pay and the financial side of things, is your income the main income in the household, CW14, or is there a second income?

Respondent: There’s a second income, my husband’s. Yeah, we are very much, I’d say, 50:50, but Christ knows at the minute. We’ve just got a dog and…

Interviewer: They’re expensive, aren’t they?

Respondent: … we got married last year. So everything’s just expensive.

Interviewer: It is.

Respondent: But we both pay our fair share of just everything, really.

Interviewer: Yeah. And would you say that your income meets the household needs?

Respondent: No. My son, he’s diagnosed with a learning need. So he receives DLA, and that is very much a help when it comes to things. Like, he does rugby of a weekend, and he recently did do gymnastics, but that has finished now. But his DLA money would top up my fuel and to pay for those things. My wages wouldn’t be able to cover… and I know that’s additional outgoings, but it definitely tops up the money because it doesn’t cover everything at all.

Interviewer: So would you say that the rising cost of living has affected you guys?

Respondent: Yeah, I think so, definitely. We got a grant last year off the government. Yeah.

Interviewer: Everything’s just gone crazy, hasn’t it?

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Food, going out for… anything additional has just gone crazy.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And are you in receipt of any in-work benefits, any other benefits that you can claim whilst you’re in work?

Respondent: Absolutely. We tried to… I say, “We tried to…” when my son was younger, he did the 30 hours free childcare. We received a comment saying that we might be entitled to working tax credits, and we were like, “Okay, we’ll try.” They were like, “Yeah, you’ve qualified.” It was, like, £20 a week or something stupid like that. But we were like, “Whatever, it all helps.” We received that for 11 months. And then, 10 days, or something, before Christmas, they said, “You owe us £550.” [\*\* 0:20:09].

Interviewer: Oh, my God. That’s awful.

Respondent: “We want it back in 14 days.” So I phoned them up. I said, “You’re not getting it back. You can have £10 a month off both of us. If you don’t like that, screw you.” They take £10 a month off us. That was, like, four years ago, and we are still paying it off. I refuse to give them a lump sum of money. I’m not doing it. I’m not doing it.

Interviewer: That’s so unfair that you were put in that situation.

Respondent: Yeah, and there’s just nothing. It wasn’t our error. It was their error for calculating it all wrong.

Interviewer: Yeah, that’s so unfair. And for them to demand it in that way, as well, is… I’m glad…

Respondent: Yeah. But, other than that, we don’t claim any benefits, bar my son’s DLA. We can’t claim carer’s because we both work too much. We looked into universal credit. However, because I’m trying to start my own business, my income is fluctuating. So I was like, “That’s going to be more of a hinderance than a help. So let’s just leave it for now.”

Interviewer: And stay as you are.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: So I think you’ve probably alluded to this a bit, but to what extent would you say you’re satisfied with your pay? Do you think your pay is reasonable for the work that you do? (Laughs) I can, kind of, anticipate your response. But…

Respondent: Yeah. I mean, it’s not… I don’t look at it and go, “Oh, my God. That’s diabolical.” But I do look at it and go… during Covid, if we were in a property that had Covid, we were put up to £14.50 an hour. The work ethic of people changed dramatically when they were being paid… and I’m like, “How can you not see the willingness of staff?” But they just went, “Carry on as you were. You’re back to £10.82.”

And it’s like... I don’t get it. The productivity of staff increased hugely. But I think, in their heads, they just think, “Well, if we do that, you’re going to want more and more.”

Interviewer: Yeah, they don’t see that it’s going to be sustainable, do they, in that sense? But, yeah, it does make a big different, doesn’t it, when people feel that they’re being a bit more fairly rewarded for their efforts? Definitely. So how many hours do you typically work a week, CW14? What’s your contract and your shift pattern?

Respondent: So, with care work, obviously, they try and say, “You need to be fully flexible.” I was fully flexible for three years. But every time I met with HR, every time I met with my manager, it was, “When he starts school, I need to change. When he starts school, I need to change.” And I was really, really repetitive.

So, now he’s started school, I’ve gone from 28 hours down to 23 hours, working 9:00 AM until 2:45, Tuesday through to Friday. But then, I’ll also do a sleep. Most staff will do a late shift and a sleep, but I’ve said, “I’ll go home. I’ll come back at 10:00. Do the sleep. Go home at 7:00 AM. Take my son to school. Come back to work for 9:00 AM.” And they’re like, “Why would you do that?” I said, “Because that’s what works for me. It might not work for you, but it works for me. And it’s a way I can earn more money.”

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely. So would you say… how do you feel about your contracted hours?

Respondent: I’m happy with that because it’s what I asked for for years, and I’ve got them. I can pick up more around that, which I do, like, a lot of the time. So there’s, more than often, chance for overtime.

Interviewer: And would they ever change your hours at short notice, like cancel shifts?

Respondent: They’re not allowed.

Interviewer: They not allowed to? Okay.

Respondent: I am a flexible working contract signed and dated through HR. They cannot tell me, “From now on, you’re this, that, and…” they can’t do it. They’ll be breaking my contract, and I can legally take action, I guess. I don’t know. But, yeah, they can’t legally do that.

Interviewer: That’s good. That’s good to hear.

Respondent: But, generally, with other people who are just… they get their shifts and that’s that, they don’t cancel shifts with anyone.

Interviewer: So would your income stay quite stable week to week, then, if you’re working the same hours and the same patterns?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. And… hang on, I just need to move down to my next question. Are most people in your organisation able to ensure that they get a work schedule that matches their preferences, would you say?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Right, okay.

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Is that because you’ve, kind of, negotiated that and laid it down as, “This is what I can do, and this is…”

Respondent: Yeah. I mean, they try and only, like, give it to one or two people. And we had a new boy start, and he was like, “Oh, yeah. I can half 7:30 starts.” And then, two shifts in, he started turning up at 9:00. He went, “Well, I can only start from 9:00.” And I went, “The fuck you can. You’re contracted you have 7:30 starts. You’ve confirmed it.” I said, “You can fuck right off.” I said, “I’ve got that contract.” I said, “I’m not having you come in, a little boy with no kids.” I was like, “No, fuck off.” He ended up getting sacked anyway because he was just an idiot, but I was fuming.

But, other than that, people can… the only thing I will say is, like, a colleague the other day said, “I don’t know how to book annual leave. Can you show me?” And I said, “Well, what do you want off?” And he said to me what he wanted off, and I said, “Don’t book annual leave. Just email the assistant manager and say, ‘I can’t work this this week, but I can work this this week.’” And I said, “What did she say?” And he said, “‘That’s fine.’” So he hasn’t used any of his annual leave. He’s just swapped his shifts. If she can do it, she will.

Interviewer: So there’s a bit of flexibility for people.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay. And tell me a little bit about what your job involves on a day-to-day basis and also what you like about it. What are the things you enjoy?

Respondent: So I like the fact that it doesn’t feel like I work in a factory. So, when I first started there, we had a married couple. And my manager at the time, she was amazing. She was like, “Stay away from them. Looking at you and her, on paper, just stay away from her. It’ll be beneficial for everybody involved.” Well, it turns out me and her got on like a house on fire. She’s since moved to the (name of place) with her husband, and I still communicate with her.

Interviewer: Oh, lovely.

Respondent: So, yeah. But, when they lived there, I supported them in the morning, of an evening every single day. And I was like, “This isn’t fair for me. I don’t know any of the other people I support. They’ve all lost trust in me.” So it’s definitely taught us lessons along the way to not put people on pedestals, that they can only have certain members of staff. And so, I like the fact that they all have that, sort of, connection with all of the staff team. There’s some that don’t like others, which is fine. We don’t all get along with one another.

So day-to-day, we’ve got different ranges of people. We’ve got one person that’s in a wheelchair. We’ve got one person that’s incontinent. But, generally, it’s minor medication in the morning. One lady had personal care in the morning. We’ll walk a couple of the guys up to their day centres. We’ll do shopping. We’ll do one-to-ones with them.

I mean, some evenings, I’ll come in, if I’ve picked up a shift… I’ll walk in, and they’ll be like, “What are you doing here? You don’t work evenings.” And there’ll be a karaoke machine. They’re singing their heart out. Everyone’s got takeaway. The staff have got… and I’m like, “I feel like I’ve walked into a flipping youth hostel.”

But then, there’s other times where it’s full on, and it’s hectic, and you don’t see one staff from another for, like, six hours. The difference per shift is astronomical.

Interviewer: That’s interesting. So what are the negative aspects of the job? What are the things that you find either difficult or stressful?

Respondent: Currently, the new manager. If it isn’t broken, “Let’s tinker at it and see how we can change it.” And it’s like, but it’s not broken. Leave it alone. Blatant bullying between staff, that they get a…

Interviewer: Between management and staff, or between staff?

Respondent: No, no, no. Just staff. They just get a talking to. “I’ve had a chat with them.” And just the people we support being treated like they live in a care home by management and trying to put things in place. And, it’s not us. It’s not us as the staff. It’s the people that we support that go, “Do we look like we live in a fucking care home?” And I’m like, “Go tell that to the manager. I can’t do it. I’ll get sacked.” So, yeah. I think the lack of understanding from management is quite frustrating.

Interviewer: And stressful at times, potentially.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And so, in terms of training and development, CW14, what kind of training and development do you get in your current job, and how do you feel about the training that you get?

Respondent: Training, I think, is shit. The online training, it’s death by PowerPoint that you have to redo every 12 months. But, don’t forget, it’s three months prior to that that the manager starts getting shouted at from her manager because we’re now on an exclamation point to tell us that, in three months, our training’s going to expire, that we should do it now. And I’m like, “No, I’ll do it in three months when it expires.” So that’s always a discussion that doesn’t go down well when I say “no”. Proper face-to-face training, there’s not enough of it.

Interviewer: Right. So it’s mostly online, is it, mostly an E-learning type thing?

Respondent: Yeah, it’s mostly online. You do a refresher for first aid, moving and assisting, and eating and drinking. I think, off the top of my head, they are the only ones that, when I started the job, that I have physically gone… and I don’t know if Covid affected that, but they are the only ones that I have physically gone to a classroom and refreshed.

But, also, I don’t really think they really hit home about how important first aid is because, prior to finding someone deceased and having to do CPR and all medical intervention, I took first aid, like, “Okay, yeah.” Then, the next time, after I had gone through that situation, I was sat at the first aid course like, “I have a question. I have a question. I have a question.” And I just don’t think people really… I don’t know. I just think it’s taken too easily, maybe.

Interviewer: Yeah. And what kind of training would be beneficial for you, do you think? I know you mentioned more face-to-face but…

Respondent: Sign language.

Interviewer: Okay, sign language, yeah.

Respondent: Social skills for staff because a lot of staff come into this job a jibbering social… anxious… and I’m like, “Really?” Everyone’s got anxiety. I have anxiety, and there’s things that trigger me. And I just think the people that come into this job, they need to have those little courses, even if it’s just half a flipping day, just stupid little courses. “I can see you’re struggling. How can I help?” But there’s not. It’s, “You’re struggling. You should better.”

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah, definitely. There’s a real gap there, isn’t there, in terms of that more, as you say, the social side of things? What about career development opportunities, CW14? Do you feel that there are career development opportunities or opportunities to develop your career? Do you want to develop your career in this line of work?

Respondent: Not in this company because, within this company, I’ve been able to be privy to, like, management meetings because I did my… during Covid, I decided to do my Level 2 Health and Social. So I had to be a part of management meetings or some shit. I can’t even remember what it was now, but I had to do it as part of my course.

And I just sat there, and I’m under diagnosis for ADHD, so I observe and listen. And it’s quite funny because I said to… the lead support worker now is actually a really good friend of mine before she became lead support worker. And she’d watch me, like, just smirking, and she’d text me and go, “What are you sensing? What is it?” And I’d go, “Can you not see the complete rift between these managers, the cliques, the digs?” And I was like, “No, thank you. No, not for me. No, thank you.”

Interviewer: Is that, do you think, the stress that they’re under in their role, kind of, causing some of those issues, or it’s hard to know?

Respondent: Maybe.

Interviewer: Yeah, it’s difficult to know, isn’t it? You’ve talked about setting up your own business. So you’re going in a slightly different direction, aren’t you? But you said you still want to stay in care… well, doing some hours for this organisation to maintain those…

Respondent: Well, my thing that I’m venturing off to do to myself, it’s to do with companionship, if people just need someone to take them to a shop or go to a shop or whatever, but also, like, cleaning. But the type of customers that I want to take on is people that just can’t do it for themselves, whether they are poorly…

One of my customers, she’s got three Autistic children, older, all older, all live at home because they’ve all left education now. So it’s like, there’s just nothing for them. And the first time I cleaned, she was talking to me, and she’s in the hallway talking to me. Her son is behind her, and she’s like, “Yes. Yes. That’s really good. You go over there.”

And I just said to her… I said, “I’ve worked in this job long enough to know your son has behavioural issues, and you are blocking him because you are scared he’s going to hit me.” And she was like, “I am.” I said, “If he hits me, I’ll still come back next week and the week after. And I’m telling you, eventually, I’ll even get (name of person) doing a bit of dusting for me.”

Interviewer: Oh, bless you.

Respondent: I’m not just going in going, “Hi, I’ve cleaned in there. I’ve cleaned in there. Bye.” I want people to know that they are heard and seen. So my job role now, it, kind of, ties into it I think.

Interviewer: Yeah, it sounds like you’re going to do a really… have a really successful… it’s not a new path, is it? But it’s a new direction within the path.

Respondent: Yeah, that’s it. And it is something that a lot of people are like, “That is sought after.” So I just thought, “Why not? I’ll just go for it and see what happens.” So it’s going well so far. On my days off that I’m not at (Name of place), my work, I’m busy.

Interviewer: And so, with your decision to move in a new direction and eventually cut down your hours in your current role, what’s been your driving factor for that, CW14?

Respondent: Being able to be present for my son. I struggle with power, as in, like, if someone says, “Can we have a chat? I’m a bit busy today, but tomorrow afternoon, at 6:00 PM, can we have a chat?” “Hell, no. You speak to me now. You’re talking to me now. You’ve got time now. Speak to me now,” because I can’t stand when people hold power over you.

Interviewer: It’s horrible, isn’t it? It’s really anxiety provoking.

Respondent: Yeah, it is. And I’m just like, “Uh-uh. No. Not interested. Speak to me now or just forget it. Not interested.” I really struggle… I’m social. I can work as part of a team and things like that, but I just really struggle with keeping my mouth shut.

Like, if someone walks in on their shift… someone did it yesterday, walked in. It’s the start of your shift, and he went, “Have you seen a laptop?” And I went, “Oh, what do you need a laptop for? What have you done? You’ve only just walked in the bloody building.” And, like, I’ve been lucky. I’ve been fortunate that I haven’t been told off for it yet.

But I just think my mouth gets me in trouble more often than not, so just being able to be my own person, my own boss. And my customers get to know me and not… there’s no hiding behind a manager of HR. It’s me. You get what you get.

Interviewer: Yeah. So you’ll have more freedom, won’t you, in terms of that?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: That’s really helpful. CW14, the last little bit of my question sheet is… it would probably take about four minutes, and then we’re done. It’s literally a series of statements that I read out, and you have to say which one you agree with. And then, that’s it for the questions. Would that be okay?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Brilliant. Okay. So this is because we’re trying to create, like, a quality of working life toolkit for care workers. So there’s about 12 statements and you just literally have to say which one you agree with. So the first one is, thinking about your role and the difference you are able to make in people’s lives, which of the following best describes how you feel? “I am able to make as much of a difference as I’d like / I’m able to make some difference / I’m able to make some difference but not enough / I’m not able to make any difference.”

Respondent: I’m able to make some difference.

Interviewer: Okay. Thinking about the relationships with the people that you care for, which of the following describes how you feel? “Overall, my relationships with people drawing on care are as good as I want them to be / good enough / not as good as I would like / not at all good.”

Respondent: As good as I want them to be.

Interviewer: Great. Thinking about how much autonomy you have in your role, “I have as much autonomy as I want / I have adequate…”

Respondent: I don’t know what that word means.

Interviewer: Oh, right. Sure. So it’s, kind of, freedom and independence to make decisions and that sense of you’ve got freedom over where you go, what you do, how you determine your… how you do your tasks, that kind of thing.

Respondent: Okay.

Interviewer: So, “I have as much autonomy as I want / I have adequate autonomy / I have some autonomy, but not enough / I have no autonomy.”

Respondent: That’s a difficult question because… I’d say it’s not the bottom one. It’s the next one up. Because it’s supported living, I don’t make the choices. They makes the choices, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah, I get you. Yeah, so you, kind of, have some…

Respondent: Yeah. If I’m supporting them to clean their flat, they might go, “I’m not interested today.” I can’t force them to do that. If we go out for the day, it’s their choice where we go, how we get there, how much money they’re… it’s completely their choice.

Interviewer: Got you, yeah. So it sounds like that one would be a good fit, then, that “I have some autonomy,” but yeah, it’s dependent on them, isn’t it?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: That’s great. Thinking about the time you need to do your job well, “I have the time that I need / I have adequate / I do not have enough time / I do not have enough time to do my job, and it’s having a negative effect on me.”

Respondent: The last one, definitely.

Interviewer: Really? Okay, so you don’t feel like you’ve got enough time. Thinking about how much you worry about work outside of work…

Respondent: (Laughs).

Interviewer: “I hardly ever worry about work / I occasionally worry about work / I often worry about work / I constantly worry about work.”

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah, in terms of, like, the filter with work and home, it’s often because it’s… yeah.

Interviewer: You often find yourself thinking about it and worrying about it outside of work?

Respondent: Yeah. I’ve reduced it by, like, removing my phone number, so they can’t text me and call me. They can email me, but they’ve got no direct contact to me. And my answer is, if they want me to be directly contactable, they need to provide me with a work phone.

Interviewer: Yeah, and pay you for the hours that you’re contactable, as well.

Respondent: That’s it.

Interviewer: Thinking about how well you can look after yourself at work, so having time to eat and have a break and so on, “I am able to look after myself as well as I want / I am able to look after myself well enough / Sometimes, I’m not able to look after myself well enough / I am rarely able to look after myself well enough.”

Respondent: It is literally in my contract that we are not provided with lunch breaks.

Interviewer: Oh, really?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: So do you get chance to have, like, anything to eat at all, or are you literally, once you’re on shift, that’s it?

Respondent: If I get time, I get time. If I don’t, I don’t.

Interviewer: Gosh. So would you say it’s, “I’m rarely able to look after myself.”

Respondent: Rarely, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. That’s sad.

Respondent: It’s [\*\* 0:41:16], definitely.

Interviewer: Yeah, definitely. It’s so important, isn’t it, just to have that little bit of time to just…

Respondent: It’s all right though, if you smoke. You can go out and have, like, 10-minute breaks every half an hour. That’s fine. But I’m not a smoker. So…

Interviewer: You need become, like, not a smoker, but… I don’t know, an outside crisp eater or something. (Laughter). Say, “This is my habit. Sorry, I go and eat crisps every 10 minutes,” get yourself outside. Thinking about how…

Respondent: I’m going to text my manager that. “Sorry…”

Interviewer: Yeah. Thinking about how safe you feel at work, “I feel as safe as I want / Generally, I feel safe / I feel less than adequately safe / I don’t feel safe at all.”

Respondent: I feel safe. Like, top one. Yeah.

Interviewer: Top one, yeah. Thinking about your relationships with people at work, so your professional relationships, people you care for but also your colleagues, “Overall, my relationships are as good as I want them to be / good enough / not as good as I would like / not at all good.”

Respondent: Good enough. I’m there to be paid not be friends with them. It doesn’t bother me.

Interviewer: Okay. Thinking about how supported you feel in your role, so supported by your…

Respondent: Sorry, that was about staff not the people I support.

Interviewer: Sure, okay. Right, that’s…

Respondent: Yeah, not the people I support. Yeah, the staff, I’m not interested in building relationships. Workwise, yes. But friendship wise, no, not interested.

Interviewer: So it’s “good enough” with staff, and then with the carers…

Respondent: People we support, yeah, it’s fine. I think it’s, like, not an issue.

Interviewer: Okay. No, that’s great. Thinking about how supported you are in your role, so this is, like, supported by your manager, “I feel highly supported by my manager / I feel adequately supported by my manager / I do not feel as supported as I would like by my manager / I do not feel at all supported by my manager.”

Respondent: What was the third one?

Interviewer: The third one was, “I do not feel as supported as I would like.”

Respondent: Yeah, that one.

Interviewer: That one, okay. Thinking about the skills and the knowledge you need to do your job well, “I have the skills and knowledge I need / I have adequate skills and knowledge / I have some skills and knowledge, but not enough / I do not have the skills and knowledge I need.”

Respondent: I’d say the second one.

Interviewer: Okay, just a couple more. Thinking about your career goals and how you’d like to progress in social care, “I have opportunities to advance my career as I would like / I have adequate opportunities to advance my career / I have some opportunities to advance my career, but not enough / I have no opportunities to advance my career.”

Respondent: I’d say some but not enough.

Interviewer: Okay. Thinking about your income from your work in social care and your financial security, “I have as much financial security as I want / I have enough financial security / I do not have enough financial security / I do not have any financial security.”

Respondent: I have none, not really. I’m paycheck to paycheck each month.

Interviewer: Yeah. Thinking about how your role in social care is valued by other people, “My role is highly valued by other people / My role is adequately valued by other people / My role is not as valued as I would like by other people / My role is not as valued at all.”

Respondent: I’d say, not the top one, but the second one down.

Interviewer: “Adequately valued.” Yeah, brilliant. And then, the last little bit is just literally for me to say your gender is obviously female. Do you mind telling me your age range? You don’t have to tell me your exact age but, like, a bracket.

Respondent: 30.

Interviewer: And nationality, White British?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Any disabilities, CW14?

Respondent: Just under the process of being diagnosed with ADHD.

Interviewer: Okay. And educational qualifications?

Respondent: Through school and college, I’ve done all that. And then, I’ve done a Level 2 Health and Social Care.

Interviewer: Yeah, brill. And then, finally, you live with your partner, did you say? Sorry, your husband, you said you got married, and your little boy, is that right?

Respondent: Yeah, my husband and… yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, brilliant. And how far do you have to travel to work?

Respondent: It takes six minutes in the car.

Interviewer: Okay, that’s brilliant. That’s fabulous. I’m going to stop the recording.

END OF AUDIO