

# **Formal volunteering in Child listening services: The motivating factors and relative impact on Volunteers.**

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of HDip Psychology is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledged by references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree.

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this research was to understand the motivating factors by which individuals engage in child-based listening services, their expectations prior to commencing their role, had their expectations been met and the reasoning behind why they remain in their role to date. Four semi-structured interviews were conducted which examined the experiences of each participant. Thematic Analysis was used to identify the themes which were found in each of the interviews. Interviews were transcribed and coded to understand these subthemes which led to the creation of five main themes which included volunteer supports, motivators, frustration, benefits and difficulties in volunteering. The results found that the volunteers all had a shared interest in working with children either in a professional or volunteering setting. Participants experienced a great amount of difficulties and frustration in their roles, however, the benefits which they described seemed to outweigh the negative aspects which was the motivating factor for them to remain in the role. The participants also described a large amount of support available to them through the organisation in the form of supervisors, counselling services and friendships.

## **Introduction**

*“Volunteering is any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause. Volunteering is part of a cluster of helping behaviours, entailing more commitment than spontaneous assistance but narrower in scope than the care provided to family and friends”* (Wilson, 2000). Motivations by which individuals volunteer vary greatly depending on the individual themselves and their life experiences (Grönlund, 2011). Research has found that volunteering provides a rich value to a person's life and their well-being, however, other factors are involved in terms of altruism, having free time, career progression

and human capital. It is important to understand the reasoning for why an individual engages in volunteering particularly in a child-centered organisation in which the volunteers are dealing with vulnerable members of the population. It is also interesting to understand why individuals remain in their roles after a certain period of time, as volunteering in a long-term aspect deals with a large amount of lifestyle changes and personal realisations. This research was inspired by the fact that the researcher themselves is a volunteer in a child-based listening service. The researcher is aware of their own motivations and reasons for remaining in the role so far but understands that these factors can vary quite greatly amongst others even in the same organisation. Having spent a considerable amount of time in the role itself and learning about other volunteers through general conversation, the researcher found it important to understand in-depth the factors which lead to the decision to make such a commitment to the role and organisation regardless of the consequences which it may have on the volunteers' own life. This study explores the volunteering experiences of individuals who are unknown to the researcher as it provides an unbiased analysis of those participants' involvements. Thematic analysis will be used to understand the similarities behind the positive and negative aspects of volunteering, the motivating factors and the conditions which are required for the volunteers to remain content in their role and continue their work.

## **Literature review**

In 2013 it was stated that 28.4% of Irish citizens aged 15 and over volunteer (Central Statistics Office, 2013). Volunteering can be divided into both 'formal' and 'informal' volunteering in which 'formal' is that volunteering work carried out with or through an organisation (National Committee on Volunteering, 2002). Half of the volunteers in Ireland engage in formal volunteering (Volunteer Ireland, 2014). Out of those individuals who actively engage in volunteer work, there has been a high level of life satisfaction reported rated 'high'

to 'very high' in comparison with those who do not actively volunteer or who have never volunteered in their lives. Following the teachings of Adam Smith (1759) in that the helping of others is the best way to maximise individual wellbeing, Meier & Stutzer (2007) examine volunteers and non-volunteers in various industries and found that the overall wellbeing of volunteers was much higher than those who do not engage in volunteering. As well as the volunteers doing the activity for their own levels of satisfaction, organisations rely on those volunteers to operate as they would not have the funding to pay staff for the work that volunteers do. However, this paper aims to highlight the rationale behind why individuals volunteer and remain in their role rather than an organisations' need to require volunteers.

The reasoning for an individual to engage in volunteering can vary widely depending on their life circumstances and individual values (Grönlund, 2011) and these motivations can consist of career development, social factors, gaining valuable knowledge or individual reasoning such as the altruistic nature of the person, advancing personal growth, personal satisfaction or gaining self-esteem (Kelly, 2014). In terms of the outcome an individual can have from volunteering, it can be a way of asserting their identity or expressing their individuality which is what this study is aiming to identify. The definition of volunteering has varied over time but in a broad sense can be described as "*Choosing to act in recognition of a need, with the attitude of social responsibility and without concern for monetary profit, going beyond one's basic obligations*" (Toman & Leichtman, 2010, p.8). Considering this, the various forms and functions of volunteering can differ amongst individuals and there are different goals and needs which are to be fulfilled through each individual volunteering experience (Grönlund, 2011).

Literature has shown that volunteering directly impacts on an individual's life satisfaction and wellbeing (Krause & Rainville, 2017). A qualitative study conducted by Wallace (2010) remarked that there was a significant positive impact on life satisfaction in volunteers who worked in an adult phone-based listening service for adults suffering from depression despite the difficult nature of the work and daily activities. The participants of this study described their experience in their role as 'rewarding' and 'enlightening' and the reasoning behind these feelings of self-efficacy and fulfilment was that they were able to help people in need on the calls they were taking which made them value their role and themselves as a function of the volunteer organisation. In other cases, it was found that successful engagements with users of these services and the relationships with volunteers develop with their peers in the organisation strengthen their willingness and commitment to their role (Kewes & Munsch, 2019). However, in some instances, volunteers may have some conflict in their roles if they are witness to certain practices and approaches of an organisation by which they do not agree with or are against their personal values and this can cause strain on their personal values and therefore acceptance of their volunteering role. Kewes & Munsch (2019) did identify that this may have been attributed to a sole organisation and is not reflective of the volunteering role as an overall function.

### ***Why Volunteer?***

According to Meier & Stutzer (2007), people generally volunteer for one of two reasons, those being either intrinsic or extrinsic motivators. These reasons can be further subdivided into different reasonings. Intrinsic motivators are that people volunteer because they care about the wellbeing of others and they expect no other reward other than the altruistic nature of their volunteering. This can be explained as follows:



- a. *The act gives them fulfilment.* Volunteering for the individual gives them a level of self-efficacy which they may not find elsewhere, and they are contributing to the benefit of society and the public good. This outcome gives the volunteer the feeling of a ‘warm glow’ (Andreoni, 1990). This feeling can also be attributed to guilt reduction (Bierhoff, 2009).
- b. *The benefit of work enjoyment.* Regardless of the outcome of the work, people enjoy the work they are doing and may find it interesting or challenging. In this instance, individuals who are engaging in a child-based listening service may enjoy talking to children about their lives and be a listening ear for those in need in spite of the outcome they may have from their work (Deci & Ryan, 2000).
- c. *Caring for the utility of the recipient.* Individuals happiness and emotional wellbeing increases as the recipient of their actions also benefits from their actions, and vice versa. For example, a volunteer in a child-based listening service may feel more satisfied if the child on the end of the call is benefitting from their experience also. This causes a direct link between an individual volunteering and the level of satisfaction they receive from it.

Extrinsic motivators relate to people volunteering because they receive an external reward or benefit from the experience and the act of volunteering itself is a secondary benefit of their expected outcomes. This can also be further broken down as follows:

- a. *Investment in a social network.* People may volunteer to expand their social contacts for business or employment prospects in the future. These future rewards are responsible for the relationship between the individual volunteering and their wellbeing and satisfaction gained as a result of the activity. Individuals who engage in volunteering for these reasons may be wishing to communicate their good-willed nature to show society that they are willing to devote

some of their time to others when in reality they are volunteering to display a positive representation of themselves.

b. Investment in human capital. Individuals may engage in volunteering to benefit the labour market for either themselves or others. This may be in the case that they are filling a vacancy for somebody who is unable to do so at a given time, or for the individual themselves as a means to generate their own job prospects in the future. An example of this may be in that somebody is required to have a certain level of experience in an area prior to getting a paid position but they do not have the ability to get a paid position because of their lack of experience. Volunteering in that position may allow the individual to gain the required experience.

Many individuals who volunteer tend to be high earners (Brown, Meer & Williams, 2019) who believe that they are happier to volunteer their time than their money because of the 'warm glow' feeling mentioned previously. A study conducted by Brown et al. (2019) tests the satisfaction which individuals have when donating money or an equal amount in time to charities. It is noted prior to the study that there may be a higher level of satisfaction from donating time because an individual may receive direct recognition for their contribution and interact directly with those who they are helping, rather than being detached from the recipients of their efforts if they were to just donate money. It was found in a laboratory testing environment that individuals behaved more generously when working directly for a charity rather than earning their own money in the job and donating what they had earned, and this was found consistently across all the tests. They conclude that the reasoning for this is because the individuals were experiencing the 'warm glow' effect.

It has been noted that volunteers can generally identify their reasoning for volunteering initially and these motivations coincide with the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators which were previously stated (MacNeela, 2008). However, Roy & Ziemek (2000) state that while individuals may feel as though their altruistic nature is the sole source of their motivation, there may be other factors which they are either aware or unaware of, suggesting there are more than one factor which drove them to volunteer. The altruistic reasoning for volunteering can include that of the desire to help others, challenging the status quo and making a contribution to the community (Rochester, Paine, Howlett & Zimmeck, 2010). As well as these altruistic beliefs, individuals also believe in a 'perceived obligation' to begin and remain in their volunteering role as they may see volunteering as 'giving back', especially if the volunteers have a pre-existing relationship with an organisation or service directly or indirectly through friends or family (MacNeela, 2008; McGrattan, 2014).

### ***Trends in Volunteering***

Volunteering is carried out under the idea of "Grassroots Associations" (Stebbins, 2009, p. 3) designed by non-profit entities defined by locally-based volunteer-run organisations that have substantial levels of altruism within their contributors and the volunteers carry out the activity as for intrinsic satisfaction and altruistic expression. According to Ellis (2012), it is more common for volunteers to seek short-term positions as modern society is in a time of wanting things to be done quickly or instantaneously and because of this many people feel deprived of time and because of this, some individuals may feel less willing to commit what spare time they have volunteering and considering that they are filling time with unpaid work this act as an aversion. In short, these individuals may want to volunteer, but don't feel as if they can. Because of this, people generally would be more inclined to donate short timeframes

worth of energy to volunteering such as day-activities, so they won't have to make that large commitment of time and effort.

For those who may see this as too much of a time commitment also, a new form has been created named 'micro-volunteering' which can be done remotely via a smartphone and can be done in less than 30 minutes. This may entice many individuals who do not have that much time to spare or who may have idle time during their commute. Although this means of volunteering may serve to allow those less-willing to donate their time to an organisation or service, it does allow for an increased headcount in those who have the ability to volunteer which can be seen as a modern-day shift in the function of volunteering.

### *Career Development*

Another trend in volunteering is for individuals to engage in activities in an un-paid means so that they can improve their own skills and efficiencies (Dean, 2015) in the job market rather than filling a societal need. This has, in turn, developed the sourcing requirements for volunteering organisations in some instances by sourcing human capital rather than fulfilling the altruistic needs of an individual. Volunteering can also be used as a tool of competition amongst University students in that prospective employers may recruit students on a voluntary basis with a promise of improved job prospects in the future compared to their non-volunteering classmates who may not have such an advantage. However, these forms of volunteering have been criticised by Dean (2014) in that it raises ethical and moral questions regarding students working for no pay and the idea of volunteering in the organisation being 'sold' to the students. In these University situations, volunteering has been moving from an extra part of study to a required part of study in order to progress within a course (Holdsworth & Brewis, 2013). As well as the students using volunteering as a means of them improving

their job prospects, the Universities themselves use the function of volunteering as a means to differentiate themselves from others to display an altruistic nature they may hold amongst their students and the values of the University. Nickel & Eikenberry (2013) report that there are certain voluntary organisations that may be adopting corporate strategies in terms of how they operate and are tackling more of a short-term goal rather than satisfying long-term issues which may be resolved by long-term volunteers.

### ***Long-term Volunteering***

Other studies have shown that volunteering as a long-term function may serve better to satisfy the altruistic and prosocial needs of an individual (Aydinli et al., 2015, p.379). It was found that four various cultures that continuation of volunteering was associated with high levels of explicit prosocial motivation and long-term volunteering was sustained with implicit prosocial motivation was also high. The characteristics which determine an individual's likelihood to volunteer has been studied in Psychology and can be determined by the prosocial personality model (Penner, 2002) and the functional approach to volunteering (Omoto & Snyder, 1995) in which both models have a focus on a self-reported prosocial behaviour which is reported by the volunteers. However, Penner (2002) focuses more on an individual's predisposition to be more helpful and empathetic towards others while Omoto & Snyder (1995) focus on other extrinsic motivating factors such as career or social. Aydinli et al. (2015) argue that a key ingredient for sustained volunteering is that of positive prosocial engagement in society which is a planned behaviour and leads to social approval. This quantitative study comprised of 1,082 individuals across four cultures (Germany, Hong Kong, United States and Turkey) across a wide demographic population in terms of sex, age, marital status and education to demonstrate effectively at a human level what is the driver for long-term volunteering. This was the first study which demonstrated that the predisposed behavioural

attributes highlighted above, and long-term volunteering were related across each of the different cultures. This study did not neglect the fact that there were also explicit motivating factors at force regarding the sustained volunteering in participants, but it found that these were often than not linked to the prosocial behaviours and implicit rewards.

### ***Impacts of Volunteering***

Although there are many perceived benefits of volunteering in the sense of the individual's life satisfaction and the benefit which the act has on society, there are also negative consequences which may impact the volunteer's livelihood. Studies have shown that volunteering over a long period of time can have negative impacts such as depression on the volunteer (Morrow-Howell, Hinterlong, Rozario & Tang, 2003; Kim & Pai, 2009) and that these negative effects may increase as the volunteer gets older (Morrow-Howell et al., 2003). Previous research has shown that volunteering can provide valuable improvements in psychological wellbeing (Krause et al., 2017) and as a means to alleviate degradation in mental health. The reasoning for this can be linked to volunteers not seeing the perceived benefits of their work over long periods of time and their satisfaction becomes saturated at a given point (Kim et al., 2009). This subsequently leads to volunteers becoming less motivated which then limits the ability for the volunteering to have a positive impact on them which can lead to frustration and stress. The study conducted by Kim et al. (2009) found that within the first year of volunteering, volunteers reported lower levels of depression compared to those who had not volunteered. There was a relationship between decline in depression over time for participants aged 45 or over compared to those who were aged below 45 who displayed a slower decline in depression and this relationship was between hours spend volunteering and level of depression. This study focused on declines in depression based on the age of the volunteer and found that the older the participant was, the less likely they were to be affected by depression and younger

participants were found to have been more impacted. These higher levels of depression in younger adults can be attributed to conflicting responsibilities in social roles in the life of the individual at a young age and volunteering may be seen as more of an ‘obligation’ for young and middle-aged adults. Also, older adults are likely to gain newer social positions and opportunities as a result of their volunteering, particularly after retirement which may be an added incentive for them to volunteer and therefore reduce their levels of depression. A meta-analysis conducted by Cattán, Hogg & Hardill (2011) focused on the quality of life amongst volunteers in the ageing population (aged 50+) and following analysis of 21 studies, they were able to identify a positive relationship between volunteers and mental wellbeing across all demographics including culture, socio-economic circumstances, age and gender.

### **Rationale for the Study**

Previous research has identified experiences of volunteers varying in age from young to ageing adults, those volunteering solely in depression-based listening services, cross-cultural examinations and the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations behind why an individual may engage in volunteering regardless of the activity. This study aims to focus specifically in a qualitative manner on volunteers who are working in a child-based listening service in Ireland to discover the motivations behind why the volunteer would want their role to be dealing with children as opposed to volunteering in other organisations, and to identify why the volunteer has remained in their role to date. The literature has shown many reasons behind why individual’s volunteer, but this data is not focused on any particular industry which is what this researcher aims to do. Much of the literature focuses on countries outside of Ireland such as the US, UK, Eastern European and Asian countries whose cultural differences may not be applicable to the volunteers in Ireland so they may not be able to be associated within the same category of motivations.

Previous research also aims to identify the self-reported motivations acquired in a quantitative manner which lacks the ability to gain in-depth rich data to truly understand the journey of the volunteer from the beginning of their role to the time of the present study with which this rich data can be used to analyse trends in the personalities, values and viewpoints of each of the volunteers in this specific industry. Based on previous research, it is expected that there will be a general consensus amongst the participants surrounding motivations such as altruism, desire to help others and fulfilling a societal need. However, research has been lacking in information which makes it clear why volunteers stay in these roles for periods of time and it is important to identify any other factors which can explain sustained volunteerism. Therefore, the research question for this particular study is: The initial motivations and ongoing reasons in which people volunteer in these child-centred organisations and does it generate a positive or negative impact on their lives?

### **Research Aims**

The aim of this study is to understand the paths which individuals have taken which have led them to begin their volunteering journey in their role in a child-centred service, and the initial perceptions and goals they had prior to commencing their role. A secondary aim is to identify if those initial perceptions and goals had been met and establish the consequences which volunteering has had on their personal and professional lives and their overall wellbeing and life satisfaction.

### **Participants**

The participants for this study which were recruited were in a non-vulnerable category and were not deceived in any way during the course of the study. There was a requirement that participants must have been in their volunteering role in a child-based listening service for 1



year or more to allow for adequate time to have passed for the individual to understand their role and be comfortable with their function in the organisation. As well as this, this time was adequate to allow for individuals to have made a commitment to their role and shows an intention to long-term engagement.

Participants were recruited by being approached by the researcher in the organisation and providing them with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the study and what it entails (Appendix 1). Included in this was the information required to contact the researcher if they had an interest in taking part in the study. Initially, the researcher intended to interview 5-6 participants for the study, but the final study included 4 participants. However, the information which was provided by these participants was rich enough to accommodate for the reduced number of participants. There was no age limit for those who were recruited but a minimum age required of 18 which is in line with the requirements for volunteers to engage in volunteering with children. Participants were all female and aged between 25-32.

The participants were fully informed of the confidentiality and privacy involved in the research and they were informed that they were under no obligation to engage in the study and if they gave consent to participate, they could withdraw consent at any stage during the study. The participants did not receive any compensation or incentives to participate in the research.

The type of recruitment was convenience, as the researcher also engages in volunteering in a child-based listening service, however, the researcher excluded potential participants which they had already known to avoid any biases taking place in the gathering and analysis of the data.

## **Research Design**

This study was carried out by using a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews of phenomenological case studies. Each interview was recorded using a dictaphone which was obtained by an acquaintance of the researcher. Following the recordings, the interviews were transcribed and analysed. Each interview lasted 20-40 minutes.

The type of analysis used in this study was Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) which is considered as a foundational method to analyse qualitative studies. This method of analysis allows for the incorporation of the broad themes which arose in the data and allowed for the flexibility to analyse these themes. This type of analysis was chosen as it allows for the identification of different themes which may arise in different individuals and allows for the interlinking of these patterns amongst different participants to generate overall themes which can be used to understand general motivating factors and influences in which volunteering has on individuals.

## **Materials**

The materials required were a laptop to prepare documents, a recording device for the interview and information sheets and consent forms which were distributed prior to the commencement of the interview. NVIVO software was also required to allow for analysis of the transcribed material following the interviews.

## **Procedure**

The procedure for each of the four participants remained the same. Following receipt of the information sheet and the participants contacting the researcher expressing their interest to participate, an interview time and date was organised with each individual at an agreed location which was quiet and private to allow for the recording device to gather quality audio and for the interview to remain private and confidential. Before the interviews began, the

researcher provided an information sheet to the participant as a reminder of the purpose of the interview. The researcher also verbally explained what was being investigated as part of the research then provided the participants with a consent form which was signed. The participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw their consent at any stage during the research. The participants were given the option to ask any further questions prior to the commencement of the interview and recording. Once the participant and the researcher were happy to begin the interview, the recording began and was ended when all the necessary questions had been asked and answered. As the interviews were semi-structured, the researcher did deviate from the designated list of questions (Appendix 2) where appropriate during each of the interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

The interviews were transcribed by repeatedly playing sections of the recording and typing the audio into a Microsoft Word Document. These finalised documents were then exported into an Excel file for ease of import into NVIVO for coding. The six steps of Thematic Analysis were followed which included the researcher initially familiarising themselves with the data and interviews. This was done through being present at the interviews and repeatedly listening to the audio recordings of the interviews while transcribing. The researcher was also making themselves aware of the potential themes and patterns which arose. Initial codes were then created which identified interesting aspects which emerged from the interviews. Coding was initially done in a semantic and explicit way to identify meaning in the responses. Deductive analysis was done in which the dataset was analysed in response to the research question. Following coding, themes were created both manually by the researcher and automatically by NVIVO software. These themes were then reviewed and refined to ensure a coherent pattern was found related to the dataset and a thematic map was created (Appendix

3). These themes were then named, and a report of results was produced (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.15-24; Hyland, 2019).

## **Ethics**

In order to engage in this research, ethical approval was required from the Dublin Business School Board of Ethics. This involved submitting a research proposal and ethics form which included information about the study to be considered. This purpose statement consisted of the purpose statement, research question, the type of design to be used, variables to be considered and the methods which would be undertaken. The ethics form required the researcher to become familiar with the Dublin Business School Ethical Guidelines and the researcher also familiarised themselves with the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) Code of Ethics. The form included the research proposal again, the rationale for the study, the design and methods of data collection, the data sample characteristics and the research category in which they were involved which were a non-vulnerable population who would not be deceived. The information sheet, consent form and interview questions were submitted with these forms and the researcher was awarded with ethical approval following the addition of supplemental interview questions (Barrett, 2019).

### ***Ethical considerations***

*Informed consent:* the researcher required informed consent from each participant to ensure voluntary permission to engage in the study.

*Sensitive topics:* topics which arose during the interview which may have caused any distress to the participant were considered. To aid in the event of this, a debriefing sheet was administered which provided the participants with resources which would be available to them if they felt any emotional concerns.

*Respect for the rights and dignity of the person:* the interviews are to be kept confidential and anonymous. The researcher will have sole responsibility for the recordings and transcripts to accommodate this. These files will be stored on an encrypted external hard drive and destroyed using an electronic shredder after 5 years. The participants will have access to these files during this time in line with GDPR guidelines ("Art. 15 GDPR - Right of access by the data subject - GDPR.eu", 2018). The participants had the opportunity to withdraw consent at any stage during the research (Barrett, 2019).

## **Results**

Thematic analysis of the four semi-structured interviews found the emergence of five major themes which are as follows:

- i. Volunteer supports
- ii. Motivators
- iii. Frustration
- iv. Benefits of volunteering
- v. Difficulties of volunteering

These five themes will now be explored and associated with their relative subthemes in which they were derived. An illustration of these themes and subthemes will be shown by using extracts of text from the interviews. These extracts will have punctuation alterations to improve the readability and coherent structure of the response. It is important to identify that these themes were those which were described by the participants in their individual experiences and is not an exhaustive list of themes which may arise for other volunteers' experiences and they are as a result of the specific questions which were asked during the interviews. These themes were created in order to acknowledge the research question.

## **Theme 1: Volunteer supports**

Participant 1: *“It's kind of made easier because in between the calls, you know, you have the people there like, for example, like I said the two to six shift where it's a lot more social you kind of talk about the calls like in the middle of them, you know, kind of have little chats”*

Participant 2: *“they do after confidential counselling.... they've given us a number and everything that we can call that we can quote and we're offered...six sessions of phone counselling. And then there is supervision every few weeks. So they listen to your calls....they check in with you, how you're feeling, how your life's going and what you kind of, you want to achieve, what you, you feel that you're struggling with. And so they do support you in supervision as well.”*

Participant 3: *“within the organization they do have supports in place. Like I think there's a counselling service for us. And then there's, the supervisors do check in with you regularly. Like it's like constant. There is constant, kind of like checking in and making sure you're okay.”*

Participant 4: *“I found the group that we're with really good and you know, everyone's really supportive. And then you've really got like a good bond together, which I think really helps, you know. Like us helping the kids as well because the atmosphere, you know, in the call centre when we're answering them was really nice”*

### ***Organisational and volunteer supports***

The participants describe their supports in their role both from an organisational perspective *“I feel within the organization they do have supports in place. Like I think there's a counselling service for us. And then there's, the supervisors do check in with you regularly”*

(participant 3) in terms of the care of their supervisors and the services available to them in the event it is necessary for them to avail of the service.

There are also supports in terms of their fellow volunteers in the organisation in which the participants have shown to form bonds if not friendships with *“I think I've always been lucky that there's always been a pretty good core group of people there who are very supportive”* (participant 1), *“I found the group that we're with really good and you know, everyone's really supportive. And then you've really got like a good bond together”* (participant 4).

### ***Self-care***

Participants also describe a certain level of self-care which is required of themselves to make sure they are looking after themselves should they have a difficult day in their role, or in order to keep up with positive attitudes *“sometimes I just need to go home, have a cup of tea and a bar chocolate or depending on it, a glass of wine and have a bath just doing things that, you know, just to turn off your mind”* (participant 2), *“I do my own personal therapy so that helps as well”* (participant 1).

### **Theme 2: Motivators**

Participant 1: *“I remember being a kid and wanting to be like when I was going through those feelings of thinking like, oh, my, my parents don't love me....and I do remember thinking like, I really I'd like to ring Childline, but at the time...what would I say to them?”*.

Participant 2: *“I was 100 percent determined. It was something that I wanted to do from when I was young. Like even when I was maybe 16, I always wanted to volunteer with this service....it was something that I wanted to do, and I was going to pursue it no matter what”*.

Participant 3: *“I’ve always viewed children as a very vulnerable group in society and I always had it in my head that I want to do something in relation to children”*.

Participant 4: *“I feel like that kind of like started my want to empower children and to make them realise because I feel like if you get children at a young age, you can really help them with their lives”*.

### ***Childhood retrospect***

There were differing reasons in terms of why the volunteers began their role in this particular service, one of which being that they would have valued the service as a child and they now understand the importance that a listening service can have on the lives of children *“But now kind of working there I’m like, oh god, that actually would’ve been so valuable. Like that would have been really good to actually, like, have my voice and actually say what I was going through”* (participant 1).

### ***Working with children***

Most of the volunteers identified a desire to work with children in either their career or through alternative means like volunteering. *“I wanted to be in a position to work with children”* (participant 4). *“I always had it in my head that I want to do something in relation to children.... they’re just such a vulnerable group of people”* (participant 3).

### ***Career perspectives***

Some volunteers began in their role due to requirements which they may have had to pursue certain career goals or changes *“I think there is a selfish element to it. And there’s like still the want in me to want to help children...In the past two years...I started to study psychology”* (participant 3), *“I was interested in pursuing Child counselling as a career. But to do that, you have to have voluntary care experience”* (participant 4).



### **Theme 3: Frustration**

Participant 1: *“You get kind of annoyed with them.... you would leave after four hours and think, why the hell am I doing this? Like all I'm doing is listening to these like, jokey calls”.*

Participant 2: *“It can be quite frustrating when you know, you either get somebody call and just to abuse you and make remarks against you as a person, even though you know they don't know who we are”.*

Participant 3: *“I've left feeling a range of things from the end of a shift, I've left feeling absolutely frustrated and angry. If you've spent the whole shift getting group calls and abuse hurled at you”.*

Participant 4: *“I guess it was a little bit demoralizing because in a way, at the start, you know, it's natural to think like I'm here dedicating my time and these people are just having fun”.*

### **Prank calls**

Participants describe their typical shift as mostly being prank calls, or what the volunteers describe as ‘group calls’. *“I'd say of your four hours, you're probably getting 90 percent of your calls like that, some weeks, a hundred percent of your calls like that”* (participant 1), *“you do get the pranks and you do get the kids calling just to wind you up”* (participant 2). However, it is understood amongst the volunteers that these types of calls have a certain level of value to the children *“you're kind of just having a joke with them and they can see the value in the service after that you know....they have a positive feeling leaving the call”* (participant 1).

### ***Adult callers/Sexualised calls***

Participants identified that there are a number of adults who call in and abuse the service in a way by pretending to be children or demonstrating sexual fantasies to the volunteers “*you had like a list of the adult callers and a list of all the kind of things that they always said.... They all had their same weird story that they would tell every time they rang.... But that could take 10 minutes and you just listen to their weird sexual fantasies for ten minutes. And it was very off-putting*” (participant 1).

*“An awful lot of adult callers who like to call and pretend to be children. And I never expected that. I mean, not in my wildest dreams did I ever expect that there'd be adults trying to call Childline”* (participant 2).

### **Theme 4: Benefits of Volunteering**

Participant 1: *“It definitely gives you an epiphany”*

Participant 2: *“Being that person is a real privilege to know that this child is trusting you and they're, they're pouring their hearts out because they have no other adult in their life that they feel comfortable speaking to. That is what kind of motivates me to stay. It's the 8 percent”*.

Participant 3: *“maybe just to realise how serious your role is and how much it is important that people answer the phones”*.

Participant 4: *“hearing it first-hand is very different. So I guess it kind of really opened my eyes to the way, you know, the world really is”*.

Participants describe the value of volunteering in both terms of their own personal self-development and self-awareness, as well as being able to identify the value of the service to children who avail of the service.

### ***Gaining life experience***

One participant describes how they were able to bring their experience in the organisation and provide advice and support to parents with whom they were acquainted with outside of the organisation when requested:

“I was talking to one of the parents in work and he was telling me about his son being hormonal and getting bullied in school.... he didn't know what to do. I was able to advise him to call Childline.... he ran up to the bus stop to tell me that he was going to tell his son to call Childline. So that's worth it even to be able to advise parents to tell their child, call Childline because they don't know what to do” (participant 2). With this the participant has the ability to turn their skills which they have developed from their role and communicate those to parents outside of the organisation by which can be used to further develop the lives of children.

### ***Lightbulb moment***

Participants also had what they described as a ‘lightbulb moment’ in terms of realising the control which they have in their lives and over the calls they take *“just analysing my own feelings about it. And what it was prompting in me. And then it was like a light bulb moment. Ever since then, I never got affected by calls like I never got upset or like felt like they were in control because I just kind of thought, no, I have the power over this”* (participant 1), *“it's not for me to understand. It's for me to listen and be compassionate and understanding”* (participant 2).

## **Validation**

When asked what feeling participant 2 has when they help the small percentage of children with whom they have 'serious' calls with, they responded with:

*“There's no real words to describe it. It's just kind of it validates why you're there. And like, okay. But that's why I'm here. You know, it's not about the people who abuse services, it's not about the kids that call just to prank. It's about, you know, that child in that moment who could be on the phone for an hour. And you're like, okay. It's, being in that position. And, it's a privilege. Like there's no other word for it. It's, it is a privilege to be able to listen to that child and just even hearing the words 'thank you.' I feel like somebody's after listening to and that's, that's why you do it. And that's the best feeling. It makes it worthwhile”.*

Participant 1 also describes the feeling after they get a valuable call:

*“Then when you do get your valuable calls, it really just makes you feel good like it does. And that sounds so egotistical. But sometimes you're like, no, I know that I did a good job on that call and I know that kid feels better now having talked to me”.*

## **Theme 5: Difficulties of Volunteering**

Participant 1: *“I don't have much faith in Tusla. We don't really find out what happens when we do referrals....I've had kids....you know, it takes so much for them to open up and say, no, I really want help and I really want someone to come in and do this. And they have so much faith that, you know, I'm asking for the help so it's gonna happen, like and you're just kind of referring them when you're sinking, like your heart is sinking, thinking, oh, my God, how long is it gonna take for someone to come out and assess the situation”.*

Participant 2: *“At this present time in volunteering, it is very difficult, like especially when you have such a busy week and you're giving up your time then to try and help somebody else. And that can be quite demotivating”*.

Participant 3: *“sometimes it can seem like a Saturday when you're working a full time job and in college and stuff, you can be like, oh, but ultimately like, you don't mind doing it and you get enjoyment out of it. In some respects”*.

Participant 4: *“it was a little bit demoralizing because in a way, at the start, you know, it's natural to think like I'm here dedicating my time and these people are just having fun....I think abusing the service is too harsh....It's not the use that you thought the service was intended for”*.

### ***Dedication of time***

Participants describe an array of difficulties in terms of their role, as seen from the above quotes that the volunteers can feel demoralised in relation to giving up their time and feeling as though the children and/or adults may be abusing the service and this seems to be quite dispiriting for the volunteers. However, they do recognise that each call has a purpose and their opinions may have changed throughout their time in the role *“my view of that's changed since because, you know, everyone that you come in contact with in the over the phone, like they could just be seeing how the service works and if you actually do, listen to them and believe what they're saying. So I do actually like, you know, value those calls”* (participant 4).

### ***Calls eliciting personal issues***

Participants explain that sometimes some calls can encourage them to empathise with children and also relate their own life experiences to the topic being discussed on the call, which can cause them to feel some levels of emotional distress *“sometimes they kind of spark*

*something in you that like reminds you of your own life and you feel kind of upset listening to them like some that, you know, you're listening and you're almost crying” (participant 1). “And I guess they'll just like call you names and stuff, but like some of them it's a bit too close to home and you might be having a bit of a low day that day. So it's kind of you're just feeling even more low” (participant 4). However, as stated previously, the organisation and other volunteers provide many supports and the volunteers engage in their own self-care routines to combat these negative feelings.*

## **Discussion**

This study aimed to identify the rationale behind why volunteers begin their role and their reasoning for staying in the role. This was completed by conducting four semi-structured interviews which were analysed using Braun & Clarke (2006) Thematic Analysis. Previous research has identified the experiences of volunteering with adults on a phone line, volunteering on a one-to-one basis and the experiences of young adults. A gap for research on volunteers based in child-listening services was present which allowed for this study to be conducted. The following topics were discussed in the duration of the interviews:

- I. What a typical shift is like;
- II. What feelings does a volunteer have before and after a shift;
- III. Why did they chose a child-based service over adult-based;
- IV. Supports available to volunteers;
- V. What difficulties do they face in their role;
- VI. The positive aspects of their role;
- VII. Why they have remained in their role to date considering the positive and negative aspect which the role has brought to their lives both personal and professional.

Throughout the study it was discovered that there is no typical shift for the volunteers. All participants explained that there was no typical shift and they never knew what to expect. This

inconsistency did not seem to deter them as there was a consistency found in the shift of each participant - their fellow volunteers with whom they shared a shift with.

The participants seemed to have varying motivations regarding their desire to volunteer and initially taking on the role in their organisation, which was that they all had a shared interest in working with children whether that interest came from childhood retrospect, career objectives or requirements or just solely wanting to be there as a listening voice to the children. This ties in with their choice of working in a child-centered organisation rather than an adult-based role, simply because they identified that children are more vulnerable than adults and the organisation in which they volunteer provides the opportunity to empower children and allow children to become equipped with the necessary skills and abilities to allow them to thrive in their childhood leading into their adult lives.

The participants identified many supports in their roles, including the presence of supervisors who check in on them regularly regarding both their role and their lives themselves to ensure that they are able to function well in their role for both their own sake and the children's, as well as being provided their own counselling service. Also, the presence of the volunteers with whom they have developed strong bonds with allow their four-hour shifts to be divided in terms of dealing with the children, having readily available supports to discuss difficult or challenging calls and building the friendships they have made thus far.

Participants identified a number of difficulties in their role, such as the prank or group phone calls which can cause a large amount of frustration, some calls evoking difficult feelings and emotions relevant to the volunteer and the fact that their dedication to the role and the organisation can cause a certain level of strain on their personal relationships and their social lives. However, the participants informed that they have developed adaptations to their lives to allow for them to continue volunteering.

The positive aspects and the reason which they maintain their role seem to overlap in that they began in their role to be there for the children, and the feeling of fulfilment and validation of their work for the benefits which it brings to the children make their work worthwhile. Although the volunteers described having busy schedules in terms of working full time and/or studying, their role has become part of their routine and no participant expressed a desire to leave their role at any stage in the interviews, even though they expressed greatly how difficult their role can be. One topic which seemed to arise quite a lot in the interviews was that of the 'one call' which the volunteers described as the call which made all the prank calls worth it. That call being the one child who needed somebody to listen to them and ended the call with a 'thank you'. This particular topic evoked quite a lot of emotions in the volunteers and many identified this as the reason which they stay.

### ***Weaknesses of the study***

The study could have been provided more insight if there were a larger sample size to interview. However as there were time constraints for both the researcher and the other potential participants more participants could not be facilitated. The sample was also limited to female participants aged between 25-32 which did not show a varied sample. If this study were to be replicated, then the introduction of males and a wider variety of ages may provide more rich data to analyse.

### ***Strengths of the study***

Those participants included in the study provided rich data in terms of their experiences in the role which provided both informative and emotional aspects of their realities both inside and outside of the organisation.



### ***Implications for future research***

This study identifies participants' experiences in relation to their initial motivations for volunteering in a listening service for children. Rich data was provided which allowed for a deep insight into the lives of the four participants and their thoughts and emotions regarding their role. If this study were to be replicated or advanced, the introduction of quantitative research would be beneficial as it would provide data for a larger sample size and would produce statistics which may lead to a further understanding of motivators to begin and stay volunteering with children. Another area of interest may be to understand those individuals who decided to leave their volunteering role at a certain stage as this would provide a different approach to understanding the experiences of volunteers.

### **Conclusion**

The primary aim of this study was to identify and understand the motivations in which participants initially engage volunteering in a child-based listening service and the expectations which the participants had prior to beginning their role. The secondary aim was to identify if their expectations had been met and the impact with which volunteering has had on their lives. Thematic Analysis allowed for an exploration into the experiences of the participants. The areas which were explored were: What a typical shift is like; what feelings does a volunteer have before and after a shift; why did they chose a child-based service over adult-based; supports available to volunteers; what difficulties do they face in their role; the positive aspects of their role and; why they have remained in their role to date considering the positive and negative aspect which the role has brought to their lives both personal and professional.

The analysis produced five major themes: volunteer supports which included both organisational, friendship supports and self-care; motivators including working with children or career prospects; frustration in dealing with certain challenging calls such as pranks or difficult calls; benefits of volunteering including gaining life experience and the validation of

their role and; difficulties of volunteering including calls eliciting personal issues and the dedication of time.

The results illustrate that the study was able to establish those motivating factors in which the researcher was aiming to understand and the expectations which the participants had prior to commencing their role which had been met in some cases and different in others, for the positive. The participants did display a large amount of frustration in their roles in terms of dealing with certain types of calls, dedicating their time while working full time and/or studying, or being somewhat triggered emotionally in the course of their work. However, the benefits seemed to outweigh the difficulties as each of the participants described their role as either fulfilling or worthwhile. Their roles have had some consequences on their lives by forcing them to adjust their social lives or being able to understand their own thoughts and emotions more effectively, but each participant described these changes or realisations as a positive turn in their lives.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Information Sheet**

#### **Formal volunteering in Child listening services: The motivating factors and relative impact on Volunteers.**

I would like you to take part in a research study. Please take the time to read this information carefully to understand why the research is being done and what it involves for you. If you have any questions prior to the study or would like more information you may email myself at [REDACTED]@mydbs.ie.

#### ***Who I am and what is this study is about?***

My name is Caitriona Barrett and I am in my final year of Higher Diploma in Psychology in Dublin Business School. I am completing a Thesis titled '*Formal volunteering in Child listening services: The motivating factors and relative impact on Volunteers.*' The aim of this study is to identify the reasoning in which individuals engage in volunteering in a child-centred organisation and the impact that this role has on their lives.

#### ***What will taking part involve?***

Participating in this study will include a 30-45-minute interview with the researcher. A recording device will be used to allow the researcher to transcribe the interview. A range of topics will be discussed including but not limited to: why you initially began volunteering in this organisation, your reasoning for committing to the role and the effect that your role has on your livelihood and overall wellbeing. Interviews will be conducted in a private room (yet to be decided) with little to no surrounding distractions.

#### ***Why have you been invited to take part?***

You have been involved in your role for more than a year or have completed more than 200 hours of volunteering time. You are aged 18 or over and are actively volunteering at the present time.

#### ***Do you have to take part?***

Participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse any question or participation. You also have the right to withdraw from the interview and/or the entire research without any consequences to yourself.

***Possible risks and benefits of taking part.***

You may experience some psychological discomfort if speaking about a topic which may trigger certain emotions. Regardless of any discomfort felt, the researcher will provide you with documentation which includes information about counselling services and mental health listening services for adults in Ireland. The benefit of participation will be providing the researcher with information regarding your personal circumstances which may contribute to the research in question and any further research conducted.

***Will taking part be confidential?***

Yes. Participants will be prescribed pseudonyms once the transcription begins and this should ensure anonymity of the participants. Only the researcher will have access to the audio recordings. The researcher will have to break the terms of confidentiality if the participant discloses that there is a risk of harm to the participant or another person or if a crime has been committed. A consent form will be signed and retained which will remain non-anonymous as part of the research process.

***How will the information you provide be recorded, stored and protected?***

Interviews will be recorded using a Dictaphone and secondary recording device (smartphone). Data including the recordings and transcription will be stored on an external hard drive which is encrypted and kept for 5 years. Once this time has expired, data will be electronically shredded. The consent forms will also be stored for the same period. Under GDPR law you are entitled to request any information gathered about you at any time.

***What will happen to the results of the study?***

Information gathered will be included in the Thesis and also on a poster presentation for an event which is taking place for Dublin Business School students. The researcher does not have intentions to publish this study.

***Who should you contact for further information?***

Caitriona Barrett (Researcher) – ██████████@mydbs.ie

Rosie Reid (Supervisor) – ██████████@dbs.ie

Thank you.

## **Appendix 2:**

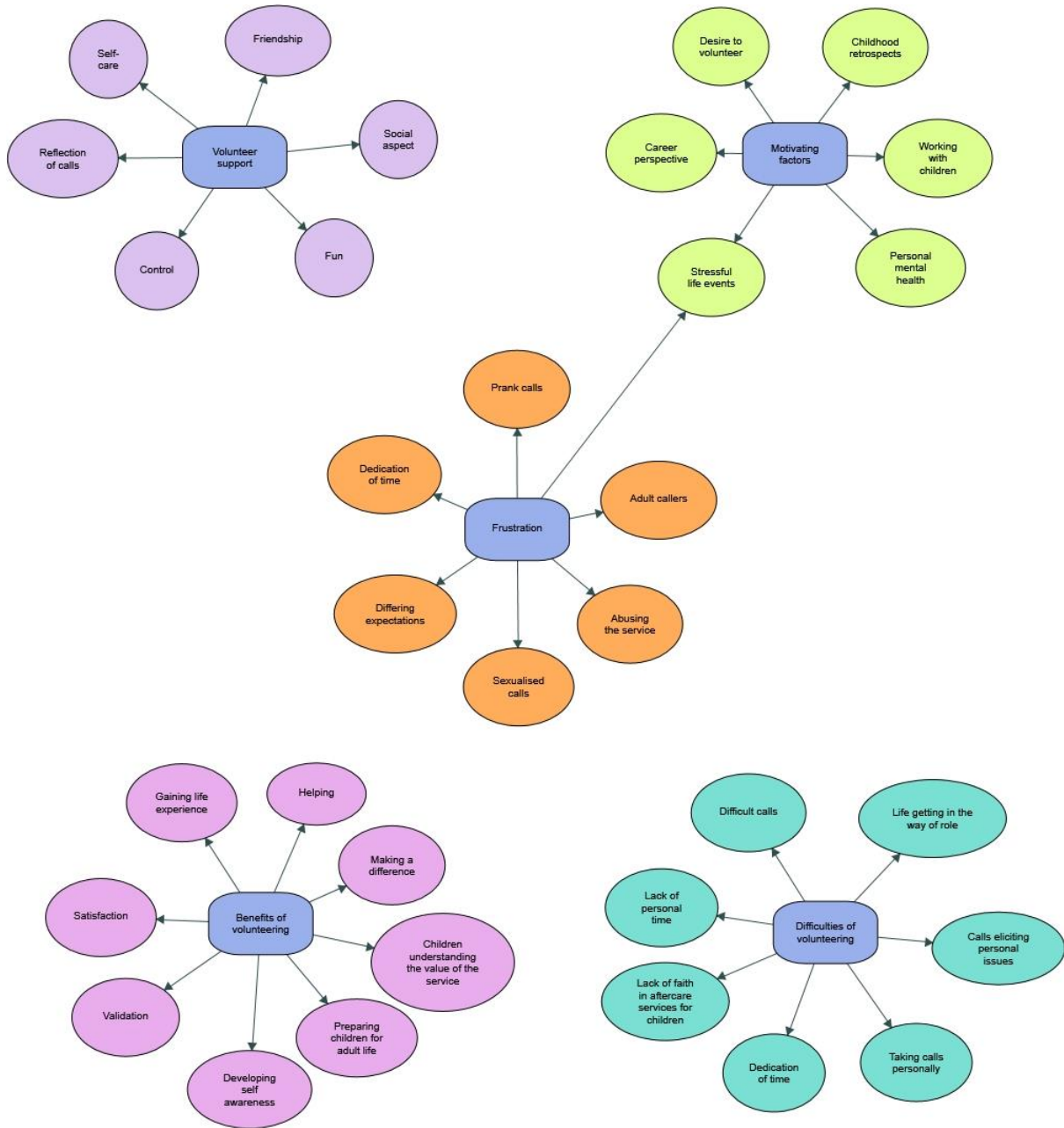
### **Interview Questions**

*Note: This is not an exhaustive list of questions which will be asked during the interview. The interview will be semi-structured to allow for the participant to give an insight into their thoughts and feelings and also allow for a 'flow' of conversation.*

1. How long have you been volunteering in your role for?
2. What is a typical shift like for you?
3. What is it like for you now compared to when you first started?
4. Tell me why you initially began volunteering in this organisation.
5. What were your expectations before you started?
6. Were those expectations met?
7. What has encouraged you to remain in the role?
8. What has changed in the role since you began?
9. What feelings do you have both before and after your shift?
10. What consequences has volunteering had on your personal life?
11. Is there anything about your volunteering journey that you would change?
12. If you could give advice to someone is beginning their volunteering journey now, what would it be?



### Appendix 3: Thematic Map



## **Appendix 4:**

### **Interview Transcripts**

#### **(4.1) Participant 1**

**Interviewer** So how long have you been volunteering in your role for?

**Participant** I have been volunteering. Well, from when I started training, I would have started training summer, this summer it will be four years ago. And then I've kind of been on the phones. I guess I started kind of like sept- in September it will be four years. So, like three and half years, I guess.

**Interviewer** OK. What would be a typical shift like, what would a typical shift be like for you?

**Participant** Like from going in?

**Interviewer** Yeah.

**Participant** So I kind of go in, the good thing about our shift is like it's quite social, like I've been on like a few different shifts so I was on when I first started I was on like the six till ten on a Saturday evening. I was only on that for a few months. That was kind of like a little bit less social. Everyone kind of did their own thing. So, then I was moved onto the two to six and I was doing that full time. And then there was like maybe a six month to a year period where I was split between the two to six and then the four. No, sorry, the two to six and then the six to ten on a Monday night. I don't know. They're all very different. Like all the shifts are very different in terms of, like my main shift now is like the Saturday two to six and that's like quite a, you'd go in and you're kind of chatting away to people kind of at the start chatting between calls, whereas other shifts people don't really talk to each other as much. So, say you go in. I only do phones. I don't do the text, so, log on straight on to the phones. A lot of the time it's kind of what we wouldn't really refer to as prank phone calls, but like testing phone calls where there's a lot of kind of groups ringing and, you know, they're kind of a little bit challenging. A lot of them be kind of sexualised. That can be kind of taking the piss a bit. Just joking around with their friends and then occasionally in the middle of all that. So that's four hours. I'd say of your four hours, you're probably getting 90 percent of your calls like that, some weeks, a hundred percent of your calls like that. It's kind of made easier because in between the calls, you know, you have the people there like, for example, like I said the two to six shift where it's a lot more social you kind of talk about the calls like in the middle of them, you know, kind of have little chats, which just makes it a bit easier when you have those kind of testing calls. And then occasionally you'll get a more serious call or even on a more serious call like in terms of the, it might not be really, really problem focused, but it won't be like a mess call or like a joke call. It will be, you know, someone talking about their day or what's going on, kind of different levels of severity. But I guess a typical shift wouldn't really have very serious issues on a regular basis. You might get like a very serious call maybe once a month. Out of like four. Well, sorry. I actually only do every second week now, so I only do two shifts a month now. But yeah, you might get maybe one very serious call, if at all. So, it kind of varies. Like you might go in some weeks and you get all jokey

calls and then you might go in some week and you can get a lot of like engaging longer calls. So yeah it kind of just varies. There's no like exact way the shift will go.

**Interviewer** And what different feelings, do you have when you get one of those prank calls versus when you've got a serious call?

**Participant** I think it's kind of changed for me, like from when I started. I guess I've been there so long. It's only been like three and a half years. But like, it's changed a lot. Kind of from the beginning, like when I first started, those prank-y jokey calls were a lot more frustrating kind of. You get kind of annoyed with them or kind of like you would leave after four hours and think, why the hell am I doing this? Like all I'm doing is listening to these like, jokey calls. And then you get the serious call. You think, oh, my God, you know, I've gotten like a decent call where I feel like I've made a difference, whereas now I think it's all less so. Like, I don't really. I never, well I wouldn't say never, but mostly don't get frustrated with the jokey calls. Like now in terms of feelings, I'd say I'm more just kind of go with the flow with them. I like to just have a bit of crack with them, like have a bit of a joke because I kind of figured out early on, well maybe not early on, but maybe about a year in that getting frustrated doesn't really do anyone any good. Like it doesn't do me any good. It doesn't do the callers any good. Like sometimes they're calling and they're joking and you're kind of joking back and they're a bit like, oh, because they're not expecting that you're going to kind of go along with it, you know? So even those calls now kind of do give me a certain level of satisfaction, you know, that you're kind of just having a joke with them and they can see the value in the service after that you know? That they're, they're, they're kind of ringing with the intention of kind of annoying you or upsetting you or pissing you off. And then they realize they're not actually able to do that. But it's just kind of a joke. So, it's, it's nice. Sometimes you end the call and they're kind of like all 'you were actually a bit of craic' or 'you were OK' and you're kind of like, OK, good. You know that they, they have a positive feeling leaving the call. Whereas if you get frustrated. Which I used at to start. Like I get really annoyed and they can tell like they can tell in your voice if you're really annoyed with them and then they're not leaving with such a feeling of value leaving. They're kind of just like hah, you know, I got the better of them or whatever. But yeah, like there's no denying with the more serious calls, you do get more of a satisfaction than sometimes they can be upsetting. Like sometimes they kind of spark something in you that like reminds you of your own life and you feel kind of upset listening to them like some that, you know, you're listening and you're almost crying. You're like all oh my God these poor children, you know, but it just takes a while to kind of get to the point where you can switch that, not switch it off, but just not get so upset, like I think at the start I used to kind of end the call, and if it was a really upsetting call, I'd be upset for the evening or I'd still be thinking about it about four days later whereas now I'm just kind of like, OK, well, I'm glad that they got to talk or, you know, and you would still be kind of worried about them or thinking about them. But it's not as draining maybe as it used to be, I guess, because you get a little bit more used to it. But yeah, it kind of depends. Sometimes you just feel really sorry for them. Sometimes you just want to help them, and you know you can't so you will feel a bit helpless, but it's just nice to know that they can call, and they can talk. You know, no matter what's going on, even if it is really bad, you just kind of it's nice to kind of feel like they got a bit of value out of, you know, talking through their problems. So, yeah, I think overall feelings, satisfaction, like I do believe in the

service. I do think it's a good thing. So, yeah, yeah, it can prompt feelings about your own life. Sometimes if they're talking about things, they're kind of like a trigger for you.

**Interviewer** And if you got a call that like you said prompts feelings for you or acts as a trigger, how do you cope with those feelings or have you developed any, have you developed any coping mechanisms in yourself to deal with those things a little bit better?

**Participant** I think I think like I do my own personal therapy so that helps as well that, you know, I'm, again, in the beginning, I think it like the jokey calls say in the beginning, they were prompting a lot of negative reaction in me. And I didn't kind of equate what that was. And I just remember I was getting really frustrated. This is probably about a year in and I was getting really frustrated with them, really upset by the calls, like they were being sexualised, they were being whatever. And then I remember having a supervised session with my supervisor at the time. And she, she kind of said, you know, if you're getting this upset, like it's something in you, it's not the callers, it's you. And I kind of just thought about it like I went home, and I thought about it. I thought what like, why am I getting so triggered by this? And I kind of realized that I had been in like a very emotionally abusive relationship, like just before I started volunteering. And just it was like the feeling that, like, the kids were controlling me almost or like that I was out of control of the situation you know, that they were kind of throwing stuff at me and I was kind of letting it get very personal and kind of taking it all on myself them. So, I kind of just realized, oh, the reason I'm letting this affect me so much is that it reminds me of like not feeling empowered and not feeling like I kind of have control. So, I just remember speaking to her and she was really good. Like I didn't tell her any of that, but I kind of said, yeah, maybe it is something in me like maybe it's like a lack of confidence or whatever. And she just kind of said, you know, just remember that you are in control of this, like you were in control of the phone call. You can end the phone call at any time. If they're trying to get under your skin, you have the power to turn it back around. And it was just really, really valuable. Like just analysing my own feelings about it. And what it was prompting in me. And then it was like a light bulb moment. Ever since then, I never got affected by calls like I never got upset or like felt like they were in control because I just kind of thought, no, I have the power over this. Like I have the power over how other people treat me or, you know, my response to that. So, yeah, I think just having confidence as well, like having confidence on the phone with, you know, when people are trying to get the better of you, I don't really see it that way now, I'm not like, oh, they're trying to get the better of me now. I'm more like, oh, but I have control here as well. Like, I can, you know, push back or whatever, which is good. But yeah, like the upsetting calls, yeah, I guess I just held my own way of dealing with my own emotions around that, like I remember having a kid call and they were talking about like their disabled sibling and it really reminded me of my disabled sibling and kind of like feelings I would have had as a child like around that. My God. I'm getting upset now. No, no. I'm going to cry. But it kind of reminded me of, like, how I would have felt then she was kind of just saying, well I don't really want to discuss what she was saying, but just kind of feelings that she would have had. But I actually kind of went back and I spoke to my mom about it. I kind of just said, oh, I had this kid and, you know, she was talking about her sibling. And it just reading reminded me of like how I used to feel as a kid, like I used to feel kind of like. I don't know, you kind of when you have a disabled sibling like you kind of feel like your needs are kind of secondary, you know, and

like they need to be put first, but then you can kind of end up feeling like your parents don't really care about you. Which is kind of what this kid was expressing. And it just really hit me. I was like, oh, fuck, that's. And it was kind of at a time when I was kind of processing a lot of that stuff myself. And I kind of just thought, oh, God, like. But then, I don't know, it kind of gives you a lot more empathy towards them as well. You know, but then you don't really want to get that across on the phone like, oh, sure you can't say 'oh I know how you feel like I've been through that as well'. But it just yes, sometimes it unexpectedly prompts feelings in you that you hadn't even really known were there or maybe haven't like fully processed. But it's good like it can bring things to the fore. But I think if you're like strong enough yourself or if you're kind of going through like your own therapy or whatever, and you're kind of dealing with your own emotions, like you're able to deal with those kind of feelings where I think maybe when I started, I wouldn't have been as able to do that. You know, it kind of would've triggered me and really upset me. But I think, yeah, just kind of having a lot of self-awareness is good.

**Interviewer** So would I be right in saying, that's in the last three and a half years that you've been in your role, you have built up a lot more resilience for yourself as well?

**Participant** Yeah, definitely. And I think you have to like you can hear it even like I trained a lot of people and I can just hear. I'm just kind of going like oh my God, that was like me at the start. You know, you're just used like a lot of people, like some people who start are grand, you know, they're on, they're confident, they're totally fine like the minute that they get on the phone, like they're just really, really confident. But most people are so nervous when they first go on and the kids can sense that a mile off, they can sense the nervousness they will play on it. They will just like niggle at people like they'll say like one single thing that they're doing wrong the kids will start to niggle at and really poke at and you just kind of see and it's just kind of interesting to watch that because that's kind of what, you know, people who are in like abusive relationships are like bullying in the workplace or whatever kind of like issues with people taking control over other people. It's very interesting to see that kind of play out on Childline because you kind of just see that's how people can get to other people. They can spot a weakness and can, you know, just kind of poke at it. And the only way through that is to be really confident, and not like take it and not let it affect you because they know like they know immediately if it's affecting someone like I see with the kids. They, they know when someone's new as well, you know, and they'll say something, and the person doesn't know how to respond. Whereas for me now, I it's not even just being confident, it's having experience you just no matter what they say. I just have something like I say straight back to them like I'm. It's fine. Yeah. Yes. But yes, I have, I think you have it like you just you have to otherwise like, I wouldn't still be doing it three and a half years later if I wasn't resilient. I would be so upset like every single week leaving, the stuff they say to you I mean, they tell you sometimes 'I'm going to rape you'. Or, you know, awful stuff, they say to you, so you just have to just water off a duck's back. I think, yeah. One of my supervisors that I had the start. She was so good, and she was just like whatever they say, just water off a duck's back. Like, it's not personal, whatever and, I just really took that on and thought, oh, yeah, you're right. It's just you have to be really resilient and just not even let it affect you. Because it's not about you. It's not like if they're saying awful things to you, they

don't know you. You know, you're just an anonymous voice on the end of the phone. It's not about you. So, you just kind of have to learn that.

**Interviewer** If you could jump back to three and half years ago before you started, can you remember or pinpoint a time where you kind of decided that you wanted to volunteer in Childline? Or do you know why you even wanted to do in the first place?

**Participant** I kind of, I had a friend who had done it years ago. She did it for like eight years or something. And that was like when we were much younger, like probably like she did it from when she was like twenty or something. And she had always done it. And like, so I was well aware of the like, it's not the Childline that everybody thinks where it's all abused children. I mean, you know, she was like, it's a lot of piss taking. So, I was very much aware of that. But I don't know, I kind of just it was something I'd always wanted to do for ages. Like I wasn't living in Dublin at the time. So, I wasn't really around a Childline centre that I could have really done it. So then when I moved to Dublin I kind of thought, oh, that's something I might like to do. And then I was going out with someone at the time and he was very the aforementioned controlling person was very much like, oh no, like I don't think you should do Childline like, you wouldn't be good at that. Like, that's not that's not really for you. And I kind of I didn't believe him. I while I was still like, no, no, I think I would be good at that. Like I do you think that would be for me. But I kind of just with him he was so controlling that it was just like if I did it, I'd be getting grief forever. I'd just be listening to whingeing on about it. So, there was no point. But then. So, yeah, I don't really know what my exact reason for wanting to do it is I suppose I just kind of like, like I remember being a kid and wanting to be like when I was going through those feelings of thinking like, oh, my, my parents don't love me and, you know, like they don't have time for me. Like, I see now as a grown-up they had to full time care for my sister, who was very, very high needs. But at the time, you know, you don't really know that. And I do remember thinking like, I really, I'd like to ring Childline, but at the time, my perception was no, but like, what would I say to them? Like, they would think, like, you're not being abused, like you're fine. So, I had that overall perception that everyone has about Childline and that a kid has to be abused or something to ring. I just kind of thought oh think I'm really stupid. But now kind of working there I'm like, oh god, that actually would've been so valuable. Like that would have been really good to actually, like, have my voice and actually say what I was going through or whatever. So, I think that probably was the underlying reason I wanted to do it. But yeah, that when I broke up with the dick, the controlling boyfriend and it was like I was, I had moved to Dublin maybe about a year and a half before and kind of a lot of my friends moved with me and then they. A lot of them ended up moving to Canada kind of at the same time. Then we broke up and then kind of lost a few friends through that because they were kind of mutual friends. Then I was just kind of like, oh, god, I don't actually really have much going on. Like, I don't really have many friends here. Like, a lot of my friends lived in Meath. So, I just kind of thought, well, this will be something that I really want to do. And also, I have fuck all going on. I don't have much going on. And so, I should just I should just. This would just be something for me to do. I was just kind of like this will be a really good way to fill my fill my time and it's something that I've always wanted to do and it might be a way to meet people and, you know. So yeah, I kind of just did it, I don't know for like kind of social reasons. Yeah. And it was like when I started my training. Oh my God. It was so valuable, especially

at that time because I was like going through a breakup and was just feeling really low. And the training was so good that I just learned so much about myself, so much about like it was almost like, like I'd never done therapy before at that stage. It was almost like my first introduction to therapy I was like Jesus. Like a lot of stuff was kind of hitting home. But yeah. So, for that reason, it was good, but I think the main reason I did it was, yeah, I remember as a kid it would have been really valuable for me. And then also. Yeah. It's good to kind of do something like that because it is kind of social like it like, like I said our Saturday two to six shift is really social. Like you go in and it's just like kind of hanging out with your friends for four hours. You know, everyone's really nice and really chatty and still fun. Not like I think we're lucky on that shift because it's not like that on every other shift. Like, like I said, the other shifts I've been on, sometimes you just go in and everyone's kind of looking at the computer and not really talking. But, um, yeah, I think that kind of thing keeps people volunteering. It might not be their reason for starting, but that kind of keeps people there, you know.

**Interviewer** Yeah. And so, you said that your friend had volunteered for eight years, so you knew exactly what to expect. But what in your own words were your expectations of it? Did you expect that it would just all be those prank calls, or did you still maybe have a slight idea that, oh, maybe there will be a lot of abused children calling in? Or what did you think yourself? What did you expect it would be like to take on that role?

**Participant** I was expecting the prank phone calls. I don't think I was expecting quite as many. I think I though like, like I said, you could go through a shift and not get one serious call. You might even go through shift and not even get one kind of. Oh, 'hi I'm just walking to the shop and fancy a chat' call. It might you might get an entire shift where it's all children messing, like, that's all you get. And I don't think I was expecting that. I think I'd kind of thought, OK, well, like at least every week I'll get a serious call. At least every week I'll get at least one. Unlike I think maybe to be honest it's kind of changed. At the start, I think I was getting a few more of those. It's quieter now like the phones aren't as busy as they were when I first started. They used to be hopping like. I mean you would not have a second yourself ever. And sometimes their shifts like that now. But I mean it was every shift. Then you wouldn't have a time to breathe like so because there were more calls and I think you were getting a few more serious calls, whereas now they can be few and far between. And so yeah, I wouldn't say it quite met my expectations, but I definitely wasn't shocked by the level of it. The adult callers as well are kind of another thing. I was kind of expecting them, but not the volume of them that there again was. There's not the same volume now like when I first started. Dear God, we used to get so many of them. They were ringing all the time because we kind of we had to engage with them at the start. They put in a lot of rules around that now where you can end the call on voice recognition very quickly. And so they're not as inclined to ring now whereas when I first started, you have to stay on the phone with them until, so you had like a list of them, you had like a list of the adult callers and a list of all the kind of things that they always said, because they all had tells. They all had their same thing, their same weird story that they would tell every time they rang. But you had to like tick three things off the list. And if you could tick three things off the list, then you could end the call. But that could take 10 minutes and you just listen to their weird sexual fantasies for ten minutes. And it was very off-putting. And so yeah, that again, I was kind of expecting, but

not quite the volume of it but it's as bad for the people starting now because there's not the volume and you can end it a lot quicker than you could back then. So yeah. But expectation wise, yeah, I don't think it was too different than what I thought. But I think I was expecting a little bit more serious stuff. But sometimes there's weeks and you go in and you're not even in the mood for the serious stuff. You're kind of like 'please God don't let me get a serious call because I'm kind of hungover today' or something. So yeah.

**Interviewer** We all have our reasons.

**Participant** Exactly.

**Interviewer** It sounds like there's been a lot of changes since you've started.

**Participant** Yeah.

**Interviewer** So do you think those changes have been for the better? For the worse, or? What do you think about them?

**Participant** I think for the better in terms of that the adult caller thing, I think definitely for the better. Even just in terms of how we approach the kids, it's a little bit more flexible. I think we were a little bit more robotic maybe when I first started, it was a bit more. I can't even think of an example now really. Things you couldn't really say then that you can now you can use 'I' now, for example. Occasionally you can. You couldn't really use that if that you couldn't make it in any way personal. When I first, it was very rigid, it was very, and I think I only kind of learned to get it off by kind of listening to people around me. Like when I first started on that six till ten shift on a Saturday night, there were some people and I'd kind of be listening to them going, oh God you're not really supposed to be saying that, but you know I don't think you can really stick to the script now or it's like I don't you can really stick to the script anyway. But I think there's a little bit more flexibility to move a little bit more off script now than would have been at the start. At the start, you really have to be very much on script. Robotic. No personalisation, no nothing. Whereas I think they're a little bit more flexible now, which I do think is good. Like it's definitely good for the kids because sometimes they would even say that 'oh you's are all the same, like you're all like robots', you know. So, yeah, that's good. Definitely, the adult caller thing that we can hang up on them quicker, that's a massive improvement because dear God, that would get to you just listening to that constantly. Oh, it was awful. It was so creepy. Like horrible. But yeah. Changes wise I guess yeah we're kind of doing more text now, I don't really do it though because I kind of just prefer the phones but we're all kind of dual trained now that we can do text, which is a good thing. Like it's good to kind of move off the phones maybe as well every now and then for a break. But um. Yeah.

**Interviewer** And it sounds like there's been in your role that there's been a lot of points of epiphany or realization for you in terms of, you know, when you realised about your previous relationship, you know, when you're talking to some kids about your family situation, what kind of things do you think with being in your role has had impacts on your life, either positively or negatively?



**Participant** Hmm.

**Interviewer** Or as a whole, do you think it's positively improved it? Or have some negative aspects?

**Participant** I can't think of any negatives, really. Maybe I'm just more used to really, really sexually explicit language now like things I never thought I'd heard before in my life, I thought I'd heard it all. But my God. I've learned a lot. Yeah. So no but I can't think of any negatives. It's, it's all been kind of good like I kind of. I would have suffered a lot with my mental health kind of over the years. And it was I was always very closed off about it, never really wanted to get help or never really wanted to do anything about it and would have kind of seen like asking for help as being weak or, you know, talking to people about my feelings. I like I'd struggle a lot with that. And I think it does come back to, you know, how I grew up with my sister and stuff that very much. I think siblings of disabled children, not all the time but a lot of the time can kind of put their own needs aside. I think I very much did that a lot. And I kind of think, oh, god, I wish her no peace to listen to my problems, you know, whatever. But then I think volunteering in Childline, I just kind of saw the value in that, like the value in talking about things. And sometimes you'd be listening to the kids and they're saying things about, you know, what's going on for them, especially like girls like, you know, crap relationships they're in and stuff. And God, you just kind of think, oh, you just want to scream and just think, no you're worth better than that. Or like oh God, you know, it's so hard sometimes to listen to. But then sometimes you kind of just think to yourself, Oh, God, like I've thought that way in the past, or I've had those, not stupid ideas, but naive ideas maybe about, you know, what other people are doing to, you know, they'll be defending really awful behaviour or something like that. You're gonna think, oh, God, I've done that in the past. You know, it definitely gives you an epiphany, but. I think it's been positive in terms of like I started therapy myself, maybe like a year, a year ago. I don't think I would've done that if I hadn't volunteered in Childline. I don't think I ever would have gone. I was just so closed off to ever, like admitting that there was anything wrong with me or that I ever needed help. And I think it's just about kind of normalising it and just kind of being, you know, and volunteering in Childline has very much made me go, oh, god, no. Like talking about things actually massively helps, like it really does. And you even have kids, you know, when they talk for an hour and they kind of end and say, oh, thanks, I feel so much better now that I've talked about that and you know I realised that in my own life now if I do talk about things, go in and talk in therapy for an hour or meet a friend for a coffee and talk about things, you just feel so much better. So, yeah, I think that's added massive value for me that it's kind of just made me realise that, you know, asking for help isn't weak. It's actually like really good. And like that thing, like the perception of Childline, that you have to have a huge problem to like ask for help or, you know, to what you know, to kind of not make an issue of it. But like even things that wouldn't be seen as massive, massive issues. If it's if it's a big thing to you, then it's a big thing. Because even you know, you're saying things to the kids and you're reinforcing things and you're kind of thinking, God, I don't talk to myself like this. Like I don't speak to myself this kindly or this nicely. And, you know, it's, it's good because it kind of reinforces that in you that you're like, oh, no, this is how I should be talking to myself.

This is like I believe like I believe these kids are really valuable. Why don't I believe this about myself, you know?

**Interviewer** Yeah

**Participant** So, yeah, it's good.

**Interviewer** It sounds like it's been quite transformational for you.

**Participant** Yeah it is very transformational.

**Interviewer** So considering all of the positive things that Childline has brought to you, and even though it did take you kind of like a year to approach those prank calls a little bit differently, why do you think for the last three and a half years you're still doing it? What is it about it that makes you stay?

**Participant** I just enjoy it. I just really enjoy it. I really like, like, again, even I remember at the start, I would kind of sometimes be going in going, oh, god, I really don't want to go in here. But then I'd be leaving and thinking I'm glad I went in. I just don't have that anymore. I never dread going in, I never think, oh, god, why am I doing this on a Saturday afternoon? I'm always happy to go in. I'm always like, oh, bring it on. Like, I can't, I go in and I know a lot of people really hate the prank calls. Sometimes, and sometimes I'm not in the mood for them. Like sometimes I'm really not. I think I, what did I have? Maybe a couple of months go like I'm in college part time now so a couple of months ago, I must have had like an assignment due or in the middle of exams or something. Oh, dear god. I was not in the mood to be in there. And like that has not happened for so long. Like so long. But I knew I could tell by the way I was being on the call as I was so just like, hello. Yeah. Yeah. Like, just so dismissive. I just. It's so rare that I'd be like that. Like generally I go in and I'm like, oh, bring it on. And sometimes I'd even be like I really want a really good prank phone call today just to like, have a bit of craic with them. Because it's fun. Like, I think it's all about your attitude towards it as well. And like my attitude towards them now is I'm just going to have a bit of craic with you. It's not like, God, you're driving me mental like occasionally now, especially after when you're about three and half hours into a shift. And that's all you listen to. You can be a bit like, oh, my God, they're driving me mad but for me, I just noticed there's a huge difference if you go in with that attitude of bring it on. I just want to have a bit of craic here. This is gonna be hilarious. Oh my God. The stuff they're coming out with is gas like it does if you're laughing away at it. You will just feel so much better. Whereas if you're going in there a negative attitude of oh my God, these kids are so bad, like they're so annoying, you're just gonna be in a bad mood. Like you're just gonna be in a bad mood. They're gonna put you in a bad mood. You're gonna be in foul humour but. Yeah. I don't even know again what question you asked me there.

**Interviewer** Why? Why do you remain?

**Participant** Why do I remain there? Because it's a bit of craic. Because it could be a bit a craic. And then when you do get your valuable calls, it really just makes you feel good like it

does. And that sounds so egotistical. But sometimes you're like, no, I know that I did a good job on that call and I know that kid feels better now having talked to me because like God, I was shit like I'd say I was really shit for the first probably six months. Like, you know, when I kind of look back now and think, oh, god, some of those four kids are listening to me with my crap answers and my crap like I didn't know what to say to them. But like I know I'm good at it now. I actually am confident in it. Like I know that I'm really good, and like when they get me answering the phone, I'm glad that they're getting me and maybe not someone who's just starting and is really not confident. And, you know, and as much as it's really important that they start off because we all start off there, like I started off there being really unconfident. But, you know, I'm confident in my ability to answer a call well and do the job well. So, I think, yeah, there's a certain level of satisfaction to it as well. And also, like I said, kind of the social aspect as well as just nice coming in and chatting to those girls because they're all really nice, you know.

**Interviewer** Yeah. And you mentioned a while ago as well a lot of training in there, too. So I imagine you would have probably given advice to people who have started, but if you could go back and give yourself some advice maybe before you started, what do you think you might say to yourself?

**Participant** I think I would say just be confident. Number one, just be really confident in your abilities. And just because, yeah, like I said earlier, if you're not confident. You're gonna feel crap, they're gonna, you know, I think when you're confident to them, I don't know what I'm trying to say, like, It's better for the kids if you're confident and you don't take their shit like it actually is, it's better for them. They if they're ringing and they kind of think they can manipulate you and oh 'I'm just ringing to prank these eejits now and they're just gonna take all the crap that I'm giving them'. If you're kind of confident back, it makes them kind of respect you in a way. It kind of makes them respect you, respect the service and kind of think, oh no, they're actually kind of sound like, you know, they're not, God' they're not actually giving out to me or God she's not actually getting pissed off at me now when I'm telling her that I gonna rape her' or something awful. Although, you know, you will warn them when they're saying stuff like that. But if you say you kind of take all their stuff in a really good natured way, I just think it's better for the service, better for you, better for them to just be very confident and, yeah, good natured about it. Just be, be in a good mood. Have the right mindset like approach it in the right way. Not be kind of rolling your eyes every time you get a prank phone call. Because I see people do that. I see people do that all the time. They get really pissed off at them like, like it's totally understandable they can drive you mental. But I just think you're not doing yourself any favours. You're not doing them any favours because. Yeah, if they get off the phone and they're thinking 'God they're actually sound, Jesus, they actually had a bit of craic with me there' like, you know, they are and they always preach this mantra, but they are. And I do think it's true. They are more likely to kind of think God, Childline are actually pretty sound like I'll ring them, you know, if they have a problem. And that's why I kind of will always say to them, you know, 'do ring us now like you don't have to have a problem to ring us or anything like that'. I just kind of really instil that in them, that if they just want a chat when they're walking to the shop, you know, they can just ring us. You know, if they're feeling a bit lonely at home, they can just ring us and just really get rid of that perception that Childline is only for kids who were traumatized, you know? But yeah, I

think that would be the number one thing I'd tell myself, just be confident and don't let it get on top of you as well. And just kind of have a good attitude really.

**Interviewer** And just one last question. Is there anything about the journey from your training up until now that you would have changed?

**Participant** Ehm.

**Interviewer** Anything major or small?

**Participant** I would have changed?

**Interviewer** I suppose, given what you know now.

**Participant** Yeah. Not really. Now, I've to think about that, now. Anything I would have changed. Like about the service or about?

**Interviewer** Anything at all that you think would have been more beneficial if it had been different.

**Participant** I can't really think of anything.

**Interviewer** That's OK.

**Participant** I'm pretty happy with it. Like, yeah, I think for me, like the main kind of important thing has been the support in there. Like sometimes it's not as readily available, maybe. And that's through no fault of theirs. But I think it's just a funding thing and that like supervisors are obviously really, really busy but. Like I think again, though, it's gotten better. Like when I first started, you might like. Now the supervisors are there. They're there all the time. When you're in on your shift. When I started you'd see the shifts or you could see the supervisor maybe once every couple of months they'd be in, you know, and if you got like a really bad phone call, you wouldn't really have a supervisor to go to and say, oh, look, I've got a referral or this has happened. They just weren't there. Whereas they are now, they're a lot more present. But I think, yeah, I'm pretty happy with it overall, like the level of support now is definitely better. It probably wasn't quite there as much at the start, but I think it is there now and there's a good kind of community feeling. But again, that changes like people come and go like this when so many people that have kind of come and go like the shift and I'm on now on a Saturday, like when I started that maybe three years ago, it was completely different. Like that was completely different people on it then, whereas there's, you know, complete different set of people now. But. Whereas, yeah, you don't really get that on all the shifts. But yeah, I can't really think of anything I would have wanted to change about it. I'll probably think about it tonight at three o'clock in the morning when I'm going to bed. No, I think it's good. I do place a lot of value on the service. I see, when a kid is really struggling and when they ring, if they do get like they do like 90 percent of the time, well, most of the time they do get the odd, like, I remember when I was training and people were training me and I was listening into them. I was kind of thinking, oh, my God. Not everyone is great at it.

You know, there's a lot of people who maybe should leave. Not a lot of people put some people. I can just remember listening into people thinking, oh, my God, you don't even wanna be here. It's so blatantly obvious you hate these kids. Like. But I've never really experienced that in any of the shifts that I've worked on like most people, ninety percent of the time have been great, you know. I think the support is there. I do value what we do. Well, one thing I would say that I'm not so confident in is when we do referrals, I don't have much faith in Tusla. We don't really find out what happens when we do referrals, which is probably for the better because I have zero faith in Tusla and what they do with those kids when we refer them over, that's the one thing that is worrying about it. Sometimes you're referring them over and they're really like, no, I want to help. And, you know, I really, I really want someone to sort this out. You know, like I've had kids who not even in abuse situations would say like parents with like addiction issues. And, you know, it takes so much for them to open up and say, no, I really want help and I really want someone to come in and do this. And they have so much faith that, you know, I'm asking for the help so it's gonna happen, like and you're just kind of referring them when you're sinking, like your heart is sinking, thinking, oh, my God, how long is it gonna take for someone to come out and assess the situation, you know? And yeah, that that is the worrying part of it to me that I don't have faith in the follow up. And that's outside of the ISPCC's control, really. So, there's not much we can do about it. But yeah, that's the one. That's the one shitty part. That's the one part that does make me kind of go, oh my God, these kids are so brave, and you know, they're asking for help. And I just don't really feel confident that, you know, they're gonna get it.

**Interviewer** Yeah so if you were able to follow up with those kids, then I suppose it must feel like if there is a referral like you said, that because that child has opened up to you.

**Participant** Yeah.

**Interviewer** Even though you're a stranger to them, you must feel some sort of attachment to them or something.

**Participant** Oh, you do. You do like you totally do. So long as you're thinking about them, you know, you're really thinking, oh, like I have this kid and she's to ring me every week and not every, well, every second week, obviously. And then she didn't get me for a while. She was like why haven't you been there? You haven't been there. I haven't had her now for about three months. And I was just thinking about her the other day, just randomly walking. I was like Jesus where is that kid? Why haven't gotten her in the last couple of months. Where is she like? You know, and she is a kid who had a lot of difficulties. So, you do. You know, you don't really leave it behind. I think I'm better at leaving it behind. Now, whereas you know, I would be really upset when I first started. Like, I'm better at emotionally detaching. But you do you still worry about them. You really worry about them. You know, you kind of wonder where they are. And I hope they're OK.

**Interviewer** Yeah.

**Participant** Yeah. You just want to take them all in and give them a hug and mind them, but you can't.

**Interviewer** But the service doesn't allow you to do that?

**Participant** Exactly. Unfortunately, not. I'm not allowed to give them my address and home phone number.

**Interviewer** Okay. Well, thank you very much for that.

**Participant** No problem.

## **(4.2) Participant 2**

**Interviewer** How long have you been in your volunteering role for?

**Participant** I've been volunteering since January 2017. So, two years officially and then with the training a couple of months extra.

**Interviewer** How long was your training?

**Participant** Nine weeks? Kind of nine weeks content. And then you go on to do the shadowing for another three weeks and then you're on the phones being supervised for another three weeks. So, all in all, it's 18 weeks? I'm not good with maths so.

**Interviewer** That's okay 18 weeks. And after all of that training, did you feel like you were equipped with the right skills to kind of tackle the role?

**Participant** I think the content that you learn is very important. But it gives you kind of a foundation to build upon. I don't think you're ever really fully prepared for what's going to happen when you take your first call. You don't really know how to manage it like you can, it's the same, anybody can study anything. But when you actually have to put that skill into practice, it brings it onto a whole new level. So, I think while it does equip you with a foundation on, you know, the role plays, it does give you an idea of how to manage a call. It's still when you're there by yourself, it's completely different.

**Interviewer** And how long did it take you to get comfortable with taking calls after you were on your first session on your own?

**Participant** I think it took me at least seven months. So, I would remember every single call that I took for a full seven months. And it did take me a long time to be able to kind of say right, I took that call okay. I know that that child has a good listening service for that time that they're on the phone. So, it did take me quite a long time to build up the confidence and then know that what I was doing on the phone was what I was meant to be doing and trained to be doing.

**Interviewer** And was a kind of a light bulb moment when you were like, OK, I can actually I can do this like to the best of my ability now or was it just continued progression?

**Participant** I think it was kind of a bit of both. Like at the time when I started volunteering for Childline, I was in the last year of my degree, like the last semester of my degree. And it was quite a you know stressful period of my life as well. And you know, I was struggling with depression as well at the time. So, I kind of I think with, you know, my own struggles, that was kind of knocking my confidence a lot and that, you know, I was kind of taking it too personally. And I would, if a child called off and they were crying and you know, they're just like, you don't understand. I took that very personally. It's like, well, I'm trying my best to understand. So I think because of everything else that was going on at the time, it was very difficult for me to you know say maybe I don't understand and the kind of progression then to like, OK, I don't understand what this child is going through. I may try my best to understand

or they may, you know, explain. But it's not for me to understand what they're going through it's for me to listen to what they're going through so that did take quite, it was a progression, but it was also a lightbulb moment that I don't understand. And it's not for me to understand. It's for me to listen and be compassionate and understanding, not to understand. OK.

**Interviewer** And you mentioned that when you started the service, you were going through some personal issues and you were in college as well. Why did you feel like that was the time for you to start?

**Participant** Well, I had wanted to start way back, but I was volunteered and Drogheda at the time. They couldn't actually fill the volunteer training; they couldn't get enough people. So, I was on a list from June and then September came, and they still couldn't get enough volunteers. And then in January, they could finally fill a volunteer shift. So, it just so happened that it happened in my last semester. But even though, you know, it was my last semester, I still wanted to volunteer.

**Interviewer** OK, so you're waiting for about three seasons before, and what was that time like for you in that waiting period? Did you ever have a thought that maybe because you'd been waiting so long that you might try something else or were you determined to go with this particular service?

**Participant** I was 100 percent determined. It was something that I wanted to do from when I was young. Like even when I was maybe 16, I always wanted to volunteer with this service. So, it was kind of just, although it was a long wait, it was something that I wanted to do, and I was going to pursue it no matter what.

**Interviewer** And when you go into your shift, what is a typical shift like for you? Or is there a typical shift?

**Participant** There's no typical shift like I think the understanding from, you know, other people who don't volunteer as that it's very difficult and that you always get the sad calls and that, you know it's only for children who are being abused or have some serious issue going on in their life. But the typical shift is that ninety percent or ninety two percent of children that call, they're fine, they just they call because they're with their friends and they just want to have a laugh. They call because they're bored at home. They call because they've lost a game in Fortnite. It's not really the, like the typical shift is you're just talking to kids all day. It's not like, it's not the norm to actually have the sad kids. So it's generally, you know, it can be stressful, especially when you're there, because, you know, you want to be a listening ear for kids but I think, I think the typical shift is the kids are generally OK.

**Interviewer** Did you, before you started in your role, is that what you expected a shift to be like?

**Participant** No, definitely not. It was explained to us that, you know, you do get the pranks and you do get the kids calling just to wind you up. And you do get the people that abuse the



service. And I wasn't expecting it to be the volume that it is, especially the people that abuse the service, like there was an awful lot of people who like to abuse the service.

**Interviewer** And when you say abuse service what do you mean by that?

**Participant** So there would be an awful lot of adult callers who like to call and pretend to be children. And I never expected that. I mean, not in my wildest dreams did I ever expect that there'd be adults trying to call Childline. So, I wasn't really prepared for that.

**Interviewer** And how did you feel when you came or even learned the reality of what a shift is like with these children calling and they're all OK, and adults calling and abusing the service. How did you feel when you realized, okay, you're not going to be helping people all the time, 92 percent of the time, you're just going to be chatting to someone who doesn't have a problem?

**Participant** At this present time in volunteering, it is very difficult, like especially when you have such a busy week and you're giving up your time then to try and help somebody else. And that can be quite demotivating. They're only listening to a voice at the end of a phone. Like I do try to tell myself, right, this, this child or this person is calling up with this because that's what they've heard. If they can let that out in some way, then I am still helping in a way but it's you know, it is quite demotivating at times when you go into a shift and it's just those constant calls. And you can take that personally, even though you know you don't, you're not meant to, and you're trained not to. It's still very difficult to kind of set that aside and say, I am after spending my whole week working and I'm taking four hours out of the weekend to try and be, you know, as positive and motivated as I can be to continue this shift but it can be very challenging.

**Interviewer** And what kind of thing would motivate you to carry on in your shift of a day or to come in the following week or essentially just to stay in your role?

**Participant** Well, I suppose I have put down the amount that I have been volunteering and so I am now only going in every second week, and now there have been times when I haven't been able to make the second week because of, you know, personal issues or things that are going on at work. And, you know, trying not to bring that in them to a volunteer shift. But I suppose what motivates me is the 8 percent. You know, the kids that could call and they need to be listened to. They need somebody to talk to. They're you know, they're after breaking up with somebody. and they're heartbroken or, you know, they're after coming to the realization that they're, they're gay and they need somebody to speak to. They need to come out to somebody because they've never done it before. The kids that are in care. You know, it's those kids that, you know, genuinely want to talk to somebody. And being that person is a real privilege to know that this child is trusting you and they're, they're pouring their hearts out because they have no other adult in their life that they feel comfortable speak to. That is what kind of motivates me to stay. It's the 8 percent.

**Interviewer** And what feeling does that give you when you're able to, when you have a satisfying call with one of those 8 percent?

**Participant** There's no real words to describe it. It's just kind of it validates why you're there. And like, okay. But that's why I'm here. You know, it's not about the people who abuse services, it's not about the kids that call just to prank. It's about, you know, that child in that moment who could be on the phone for an hour. And you're like, okay. It's, being in that position. And, it's a privilege. Like there's no other word for it. It's, it is a privilege to be able to listen to that child and just even hearing the words 'thank you.' I feel like somebody's after listening to and that's, that's why you do it. And that's the best feeling. It makes it worthwhile.

**Interviewer** And you've, you've been in this role for nearly three years now since your first shift on your own. What has changed from when you started in 2017 to now?

**Participant** I suppose a lot has changed both in my personal life and my working life and my volunteer life. So originally, I was volunteering in Dundalk, or no in Drogheda. And then I moved back to Dublin. So I was, first of all, commuting to Drogheda for twelve weeks while living in Dublin, so I'd be getting up at 9 o'clock in the morning to make the 2 o'clock shift and then I'd be leaving at 6 o'clock and not getting back to Dublin until after 9 o'clock getting home. So, then I moved to the unit in Dublin and just the support alone in Dublin compared to Drogheda like, we'd only have one other volunteer on a shift in Drogheda. And although everybody in Childline is there for the same reason and they're all lovely and understanding, it's having the amount of support and more people on a shift that you can talk to or you know, even just making friends. That's you know, that's changed as well because everybody else in Drogheda they're much older. So being able to kind of be in a group of people my age, that's one really important thing with volunteering. And then obviously working full time, leaving college, and still being able to kind of say, right, I don't want to give this up. I want to continue on with this. I'm trying to be a bit more creative with how I can do it. So, I think life changes. It does make it more difficult to continue volunteering, but it's just about managing your own time and yourself and self-care as well. That you know, make sure that you can find it, manage it at times.

**Interviewer** And you mentioned that there was only one other person in the Drogheda office and then there was a lot more support in Dublin. Would, do you think that if you had stayed in Drogheda more long term, that you wouldn't have lasted as long as you were? Or would it be a case that you didn't know the difference between what the role was like in Dublin compared to what it was like in Drogheda?

**Participant** I'd say I didn't know the difference. Although like as I say, everybody was fantastically supportive. It's just, it's nicer being able to, you know, go back to my family after a Childline shift instead of going to an empty house in Dundalk. I suppose that's the biggest thing as well. You need support when you're volunteering at Childline, whether it's the support of the supervisor, whether it's the support of the volunteers or the support of your family and friends. You do need extra support after a Childline shift. So that's one of the most important things. That was kind of, I didn't know the difference in Drogheda because there's going to an empty house in Dundalk with no support. But then when I got, I got back to Dublin, I realized, like, how much support you actually need to continue with Childline.

**Interviewer** And you said that you need some support after your shift. So, what would your, what would your feelings be like before you start your shift and then once you're finished?

**Participant** Depending on the week, I suppose before you could be absolutely exhausted. And then when you go home, absolutely drained, depending on like what the content of the calls you've taken. There's no way you can kind of predict how you're going to feel after a shift. Some days you can go out there and jump out the door and know that, you know, you've done something, you've made a difference. You, you've been the, you've been the listening service that this child has expected, and you've given that service. And then other days you're just like, why am I here? Why am I doing this? You know, what am I getting from this? What are the people who are calling getting from this? So I think depending on the shift, you could be feeling great before you go in and absolutely terrible when you leave or you could be feeling terrible before you go in and great when you leave. Like that's all to do with personal factors as well. You could have a terrible week and then you go in and even just the volunteers on shift can make you feel so much better. So, the, it is, it depends. Week on week kind of how you're feeling in yourself and how you're feeling with the calls that you're getting. You know, if you're not able to kind of vent about those calls while on shift, you bring them home with you then.

**Interviewer** So it sounds like week on week it can be like, your role can be quite volatile for your emotions, both for the good and the bad.

**Participant** Oh, definitely. And when you're a particularly sensitive person as well, like, I would be quite sensitive. I'm quite empathetic and quite emotional. So, I could get a call with a child, a child in care and they're crying on the end of the phone. I think about that child for weeks, like months. I can even still remember the child that called. She was in care. She was in foster care. And she told me that people only care for her because they've been paid to care for her. And that just even today, I still think about those words that that child said and it just breaks my heart that, you know, she felt like she was only cared for because somebody was being paid foster carers allowance, you know, so it can be quite challenging to separate yourself from the emotional content on the call. So it can, it can play quite heavily on you and especially if you don't let that out with people on shift or with your supervisor because you can't really talk outside Childline about you know what's going on. It's not fair on the child to break that confidentiality. So, you really do have to set yourself aside or else you'd just be so overburdened with the emotions that if you carry with you and your own emotions and managing that.

**Interviewer** And you mentioned that you get a lot of support from the other volunteers and from your supervisor as well. Are there any other supports offered to you or supports that you kind of take advantage of on your own that would help you with those bad days or even or even good days? Because you said that you can't really talk to people outside of Childline because it would breach the confidentiality of child. So, what kind of things would you do for yourself? Not necessarily kind of supports but you mentioned earlier as well self-care. So, what would those supports or, and or self-care be for you?

**Participant** Well, they do after confidential counselling. Now I've never availed of that. But they do kind of, they've given us a number and everything that we can call that we can quote, and we're offered six sessions, six sessions of phone counselling. And then there is supervision every few weeks. So, they listen to your calls. They kind of list, they check in with you, how you're feeling, how your life's going and what you kind of, you want to achieve, what you, you feel that you're struggling with. And so, they do support you in supervision as well. For me, sometimes I just need to go home, have a cup of tea and a bar chocolate or depending on it, a glass of wine and have a bath just doing things that, you know, just to turn off your mind. And if watching a terrible chick flick, and not even focusing on what they're saying, just completely zoning out watching it. That's kind of, you do need to do things like that just to shut your mind off, you know, stop the, the reel of calls going through your head.

**Interviewer** Yeah. And do you think that being in Childline and volunteering spending every week there for nearly three years has that had any positive and or negative impact on your personal life?

**Participant** It's had both. So, when I was going through the personal trouble up in, when I was living in Dundalk, I was going through a breakup. I was moving house. I was moving back to Dublin. I was in a terrible, terrible place in my life and coming into Childline gave me a place that I could just turn off my own life and just be there for somebody else. I didn't have to think about my own life. I didn't have to think about breaking up with somebody. I didn't have to think about moving house. I didn't have to think about college. All I had to think about was the child on the end of the phone. And that gave me an outlet to you know, it's like, well, OK, if I can go into Childline every Saturday and listen to this child, even though I am going through a whirlwind of crap, then, you know, at least I have done something productive in that week. I've gotten myself dressed this week once this week, even if it was only once that week. I have gotten up; I've been there for somebody else. So, it was it was a nice outlet for me to just not be me and to be, you know, my Childline voice, and my listening person, persona even. It wasn't, it didn't have to be me. So, it kind of it made me stronger in that sense. But then as like you start working, like I went from being in college to working full time and then you don't have much time and that can have a negative impact as well, because you want to kind of just shut off after a long week of work. It can be very difficult then to plan things like the social aspect. And it can kind of, I've had people say, well, you know, why would you be volunteering with Childline when you can go out instead? It's like, well, that's not the point. But it can kind of impact your, your close relationships as well. Especially if you had a very difficult day and you don't want to talk to anybody. They don't really understand that. That can be, that can be difficult as well when you're, I suppose when I'm stressed or if something's happened to me, I go quiet. I just don't want to talk to anybody. I just want to be alone. And people can take that the wrong way, especially people in my own life. They kind of take that as me taking an attitude with them when it's not. It's just I want to be quiet and after listening to so many people, I just want to just be in silence. Sometimes that can affect relationships as well.

**Interviewer** And do you think it's worth it?

**Participant** I ask myself this question an awful lot. And sometimes it is. Sometimes it's not. Like with, even recently, like I've been kind of asking myself this question even more and, you know, whether I should continue or whether I shouldn't. And it's like that's not really the right way to look at it. It's like, if I can still be there for somebody, if I can still listen to a child, then anything's worth it. And if I can, like even yesterday, I was talking to one of the parents and work and he was telling me about his son being hormonal and getting bullied in school and you know, he didn't know what to do. I was able to advise him to call Childline. And he was talking about how he doesn't know how to set his ego aside. And like, you can't have an ego when you're raising a child. And so, he thought about it for a few minutes and I went to get the bus home and he ran up to the bus stop to tell me that he was going to tell his son to call Childline. So that's worth it even to be able to advise parents to tell their child, call Childline because they don't know what to do. So, yes, it is worth it. Like, it's always worth it when you know that you've even just that little bit of advice, you know that you can make a difference and you experience the difference that you can make.

**Interviewer** And if you were to put yourself, if you were to go back and tell yourself kind of three years ago what you should kind of do for yourself, why do you take on this role? And if you knew what you knew, if you knew back then what you know now, what would you say to yourself?

**Participant** Just be more, be more gentle with yourself. You're not going to be able to make the perfect call all the time. You're not going to be able to listen to a child and understand perfectly what they're going through. That's, that's impossible. And you're going to have children that challenge you. So, it's not it's never about you. And that's what I tell myself. It's never about you, although it can trigger you and make you remember things that happened to you in the past. It's never, ever about you. It's about that child in that moment, in that minute, in that seconds. It's never about anything else.

**Interviewer** And do you work with children in work? Or did children apply to what you've studied in college?

**Participant** So I study social care in college. So unfortunately, children wouldn't really be part of my job but the kind of, the way I was going, I wanted to be in a position to work with children. But as it fell unfortunately, you know, I haven't been able to. But you know, who knows in the future if I could be able to work with children or not. But with the experience from studying social care in college. You know, I worked I was on placement with children in care as well. So, I have had experience working with kids, too.

**Interviewer** And do you volunteer anywhere else or just Childline?

**Participant** No, just Childline.

**Interviewer** So why a child based listening service over an adult based listening service?

**Participant** Because I think children don't really have, they don't really have, like, logic and reasoning like adults would. Like people can look at children and think of them as, you know,

completely innocent. Nothing ever happens to them. You know, even the old saying children should be seen and not heard. So, you know, there was always so much emphasis on adults talking and adult's mental health. And, you know, stress in the lives of adults and work stress and personal stress. Children go through all that as well. Whatever goes on in the family. Children experience it just as much as the adults do. And, you know, adults try to keep all this from children and to, you know, quote unquote, protect them. But, you know, children see everything that goes on and they have nobody to talk to about it because they're seen as, you know, innocent and they, it doesn't directly affect them. Like an argument between a mom and a dad that couldn't affect the child because they're not involved, but it affects them because the energy that goes on in the house like where, where's a child meant to turn to? You know, parents have their friends. Parents have their family; they have work colleagues. Whereas children, they don't have that. So being able to be an adult and actually listen closely to what a child is saying, that's the most important thing we need to start like promoting children's mental health because a healthy child grows into a healthy adult, an unhealthy child grows into an unhealthy adult. So if we start listening to children now, then we won't have a need for you know, promoting adult mental health because in the past, if a child was listened to, they'd have healthy, you know, they'd have a healthy structure in their brain. They'd be you know more able to take on a lot more stress because it was all managed from childhood. And, you know, they would, they would know then as adults when to seek help and when not to seek help. We start that from the very beginning. Then, you know, it goes on. And they, healthy children become healthy adults. You should that's, why, you know, children-based listening rather than an adult based listening.

**Interviewer** That's great thank you so much.

**Participant** No problem.

### (4.3) Participant 3

**Interviewer** So how long have you been volunteering in your role for?

**Participant** I've been volunteering for just under a year. So, I started training last January and I trained for three months. I started, I think in April. So maybe 10 months, in and around then yeah.

**Interviewer** OK. And what would a typical shift be like for you then?

**Participant** Well, I do the Saturday shifts, which ended up suiting me a lot more. I think there are four-hour slots. So, I find during the week because of the content you do that on the day when you're here, it's too heavy after a day of work. So, I come in on a Saturday, 2 o'clock and then you just log in and I'm trained on phones and online. So initially I started a lot with online because I was more comfortable that way. But then now I've switched to phones because I feel like it's a lot more interactive and I don't know I think I just enjoy it more. But ehm, yeah. So, you'd come in. You could be quiet for an hour initially, but I think the final two hours of my shift are usually the biggest, busiest. So then, yeah, you take the call. You write up the details and yeah.

**Interviewer** OK. And what was your training like in terms of how they would prepare you for the calls or any online chats that might come in?

**Participant** So there's training was excellent. They, like you have a certain amount of training you have to attend. I think it was something like 80 percent or maybe even higher and they did very good training in relation to calls so they did a lot of theory beforehand and preparation, it kind of gave you scenarios, you acted them out. And then what I found the most beneficial and the call training was listening to other people, people's calls. So, like I still remember distinctly hearing the first child on the other line of a call when they were choosing them at random for us all to shadow in the class. And it was so surreal and crazy, but it kind of just prepared you for what was to come. And then taking your first call was the scariest thing ever because you just thought you were gonna do everything wrong. I think that's inherently within everyone that you're just gonna mess it up, and you're going to ruin the child's life for something like that. But as you get practice, you know that's not the case. And then in relation to online training, that was probably a bit easier to train us in because we could look at the chats and it's a bit more, I don't know what the word I'm looking for is, they'd like give us different scenarios again and then they kind of be like, what would you say to this person in this scenario? And but it was easier to look at so he could look at the search history. Whereas when we were kind of training for the online, we were kind of hoping that we would get an engaging call, whereas there'd be a bit more of a chance of getting an engaging chat. And you can also go through the history of a chat and point out what's good and what's wrong. And I also find it helpful, like when I first started, like when a supervisor would go through with me like this is what you did well, this what you did wrong and you can see it there in front of you, whereas on calls kind of like you could be doing something wrong consistently but not really have picked up on because if someone's not listening at that point in time and doesn't call you up on it, then you're not really going to remember that. Oh, yeah. I said, what? Yeah.

**Interviewer** And what were your expectations before you kind of started your training and started actually engaging in your role?

**Participant** My expectations were not true to what it was. I don't think I think initially when I started, I really thought we would be helping the kids and advising them and telling them what to do. Having gone through all the training and having listened to everyone on the phones and having done the phones myself, I now understand it's the complete wrong thing to do. First and foremost, I think I realized because it's like I'm not qualified. I don't have the qualifications to be giving out advice to this child. And. In terms of empowerment, I feel like that's stronger than telling them what to do. Being like you should do this, you should do that because it's all like kids don't need to be told what to do. They're in school. They have people in their lives who are telling them what to do. And what really hit home with me in training was when they were like, it is a listening service and you're just here to listen. And I think that really rings true as you go along, because like sometimes they're going through the worst things and they're not ready to come forward and say something. They're not ready to go to the police. But. So just reminding yourself that you're just there to listen. Is, is quite important because I don't know so it's very different to my expectations initially. And I did think kind of like, oh my God, I'm going to be helping everyone and blah blah blah and also in relation to the calls you get, because a lot of them can be, group calls and things like that I didn't, I don't think I expected to be dealing with as much as that but how I've, over my time, how I figured I should like, although I expected to be getting more like kids calling, crying and everything all the time and in reality, getting group calls. I think. What was my point? I think the one or two calls you got that are engaging make it all worthwhile. And, you know, you have to consider every call, which is what they drill through to us in training like there could be one kid within that group that is having an issue. And if even if they know that you're not going to just hang up on them or give out to them, that might help them to call you.

**Interviewer** OK. And so obviously, like your expectations were different from the reality of the situation. But would you kind of. Would you, would you change anything about that? Would you change anything about the way it is now so that your expectations would be kind of met in terms of like maybe initially you would have wanted to give advice to the children or anything like that? Like is that something you feel like that you're lacking or missing out on?

**Participant** Like in terms of practice, like. Do I think there should be anything changed in the way?

**Interviewer** No. No. Just for yourself. Do you think you prefer to be able to give children advice, or?

**Participant** Sometimes, yes. Like. Sometimes all I want to do is like be like, don't do it and you're great. And I just want to tell of all the things that I feel like a parent should be telling them. Yeah. And sometimes I feel at a loss because I'm like, this person is telling you how horrible their life is. They have nothing, no one to go to, nothing to do all you want to do like your, your natural instinct is to tell them how much they're loved and how much like kind of



just be a parent to them in some kind of way. But that is really challenging sometimes on the really difficult calls. But ultimately, it needs to remain consistent. And I'm kind of reminding myself of that's as well. It's like well, if I'm doing that for one person, why wouldn't I do it for another person? I think there have been one or two times where I've slipped up and I've been like, no, you're this, you're that like but sometimes like who you are as a person just takes over and you can't really help that. You can kind of like acknowledge it afterwards. But there are definitely sometimes where, I would like to be giving them advice and I would like to be telling them some things because I don't feel like they have anyone else to be telling that. And it feels like a bit of a waste but.

**Interviewer** Yeah, and do you do any other volunteering outside of this service?

**Participant** No, I didn't. I used to volunteer for a charity called Wells for Zoe, which is a charity in Africa. So, I was like on that committee in school. And then we went over there teaching. So that was but that was like a stint of four weeks I was over there. So, um, that was, um. It wasn't similar in any way, really. But It's kind of opened. We worked a lot with children. I was just kind of like I feel like that's kind of like started my want to empower children and to make them realize because I feel like if you get children at a young age, you can really help them with their lives. And. They're just such a vulnerable group of people as well. But yeah, no, I just did Wells for Zoe for three years and we just fundraised to carry out events and I went over for four weeks teaching. But that was, that was it.

**Interviewer** And would that be the reasoning that you chose a child based listening service instead of adults because you feel like children may not be as well-equipped as adults to get to deal with their problems?

**Participant** Yeah, I've always viewed children as a very vulnerable group in society and I always had it in my head that I want to do something in relation to children. But I didn't really know what and I kind of. I kind of just went initially I like, I should be a primary school teacher. And then I actually realized, no, I don't want to be a primary school teacher. But I always wanted to play some role in like children, like their development and protecting them and kind of stuff. I think it was always like Childline was always around, like you'd always hear about Childline and you'd always like. And I was like, that sounds like a good thing to do. And it was always on my mind to do it. I don't know if Wells for Zoe necessarily inspired me to do it. I think I'd always had it in me that I wanted to work with kids and in some, with, in some capacity. But I didn't know, in what capacity. So, I think the fact that I, you'd always hear Childline in school and on noticeboards and like in the shop and everything like that. So, it's constantly drilled into you, oh, there is a service and maybe they need volunteers.

**Interviewer** Yeah. And in the time in your role, what kind of changes do you think that volunteering has had either like positive or negative impacts on your personal life? And professional, so your life in general really.

**Participant** Well, OK. In my professional life, I feel like it may have hindered it a bit because I work, I work in a trade union and I speak to nurses every day. But my job is to

summarise their issues and to talk to them. And just kind of get it done quickly and to the point whereas now I find myself engaging in active listening in work, which I don't know is very beneficial. Sometimes you can have an nurses for hours on the phone to you and you just kind of want to Childline them as well, but I don't know if it's been beneficial in that aspect. But I think in my personal life I definitely am more of a listener than I was. I was very much an advice giver. All I did, I thought all my advice was right and I was correct and that's what people needed. And I even feel like now just listening. I just really recognized the power of listening. Whereas before, I don't think I think, I always had this idea that people wanted to be fixed and people wanted their problems solved. And I would always be like oh well you should do this and then you can fix that. But it's like people, like inherently people know what to do and they have resources available and sometimes they just need to listen. So, I think in my personal life, definitely engaging in active listening and not advising people because I don't really feel they need it, or they want it. I feel like even it's just wasted energy. So, I definitely listen a lot more. Also gives you a bit more of an appreciation for things. I think we always have. I think until you're actually on the phone to someone who's going through a horrific situation, like obviously your friends go through things and family do. But when you're listening to some of these children on the phone and there's something you've never heard before, it kind of gives you a new perspective on how lucky you are. And I don't think like I do think that everyone's problems are relative. But it does open your eyes a bit to the fact it's like some horrible things go on in society and it kind of gives you more motivation to like I don't know, it like motivates you to kind of like keep going. And although sometimes it can seem like a Saturday when you're working a full time job and in college and stuff, you can be like, oh, but ultimately like, you don't mind doing it and you get enjoyment out of it. In some respects.

**Interviewer** So what kind of feelings would you have both before you start a shift and after you finish the shift?

**Participant** Before, before starting a shift, kind of like hopeful nearly that like you hope you'll get some engaging calls and like. You know, sometimes they're fun. So sometimes that you're gonna have a bit of fun on the calls as well because, it's not all like doom and gloom. It can be like they can just be having a bit of fun on the phone and so I think yeah hopeful and maybe that you might have a bit of fun. Sometimes you'd be like, I feel like when I'm in college and work, I feel like. Sometimes I'm coming and I'm just tired and I'm just like, it's something I'm doing again and I'm like, oh, I'm wrecked but ultimately I'm never not happy that I did it. So, at the end of a shift, I've left feeling a range of things from the end of a shift, I've left feeling absolutely frustrated and angry. If you've spent the whole shift getting group calls and abuse hurled at you and everything. So, I've left feeling. And quite if also another element is that you can leave feeling quite sad. If you've had two really heavy calls and there's no resolution, there's no like they have someone in their life to talk to and they will be OK eventually if they if you have two heavy calls like that you kind of just leave feeling sad.

**Interviewer** Yeah.

**Participant** But then in the same respect. You can be feeling really happy if you have, if you have some engaging calls. Because, they'll just, it makes you feel like what you're doing is

worthwhile. So, you're like if you have a few engaging or even one engaging call, you're like, I know I've helped someone or try at least listen to someone. So, yeah, kind of a range of emotions, but. Different extremes.

**Interviewer** Yeah. And based on, I suppose, the fact that initially in January of last year before you started volunteering, you thought you'd be giving advice. Obviously, that wasn't the case. That's kind of changed your personal life in terms of how you interact with people in work and in your in your personal relationships as well. So, you started volunteering with children because you always thought that they were more vulnerable. Why is it that you want to continue volunteering in the organization?

**Participant** I think there is a selfish element to it. And there's like still the want in me to want to help children. But as. In the past, I'd say two years, I've kind of started to realize that I want to kind of go forward in a career in psychology, and I started to study psychology. And I feel like from a selfish perspective, it's a good way to realize. Are you able for these things, even though you're not advising and you're not in the role of a psychologist or a counsellor or anything, you're kind of able to see is this. It's kind of one of the only things you can do without a qualification. That allows you to be exposed to these circumstances and horrible things people might be going through, and I think it's a great learning curve because if I didn't enjoy it or if I didn't like it or gained something, I'd better feel like I could do it. That would be like, well, you shouldn't maybe be going into this field. So, there's two elements to it. There is the practice element, that you don't need a qualification for it to be doing it. And you can actually try and use your knowledge and like, expose yourself things you're not going to be exposed to otherwise. And then there's also. You do. You still want to help the vulnerable children.

**Interviewer** And based on what you know now, when the experience that you've had in the role for the last year. If you could give yourself on the advice to yourself before you started, would there be anything you'd say or anything you might do differently if you could change things?

**Participant** One thing I might do differently. I think I'd think of it as more of a job than I did in the beginning. Like a shift you have every week. I think initially when I started, I was quite flaky with I was like it was summer and I was like, Oh, I'm going on holiday for these two weeks. I'm doing that and I was like, I didn't take it as seriously as my official job in relation to my shifts, especially at the beginning. When you're starting, you're only going to learn. When, when you're practicing every week and I sat down with Joan because I remember, sorry I sat down with the supervisor. I sat down with her and I was kind of like, I think I need to go to every second week from now on, and she was like, she was like, what are you talking about? She was like, like you've only done this many shifts. She was like, if you're going to learn, you need to be doing every week and it might not be a good time. And she actually the supervisor said she was like, this might not be the right time for you to be doing it. You have a lot on obviously with your job and college. And then she, it kind of hit home with me because I was like right I either have to give it up or just commit to it for now. And then I was like, that's when I realized I really wanted to keep doing it. And that's when I kind of like got myself in gear. But yeah, kind of like to advise myself in the beginning, that take this.

This is a job. People are relying on you. You need to, learn your skills and practice them, you're not just going to, you'll lose them if you don't practice them. I think although that sit down was very daunting. I was like, oh, OK. I think it taught me a big lesson about all of it. So. Yeah, maybe just to realise how serious your role is and how much it is important that people answer the phones.

**Interviewer** Yeah. And last question. You mentioned that there's a wide range of emotions that you might feel on a shift, whether it be happiness or sadness or frustration or anger. What kind of supports do you think you have both in the organization and outside and kind of like things you might do for yourself as well just to make yourself feel a little bit better if you do find that you have kind of a frustrating day full of anger or sadness or anything like that?

**Participant** Well, I feel within the organization they do have supports in place. Like I think there's a counselling service for us. And then there's, the supervisors do check in with you regularly. Like it's like constant. There is constant, kind of like checking in and making sure you're okay. And I think the welfare practice as well has improved a lot from what I've heard in the previous years. So the fact that you're able to, if a call is triggering you, you are able to end it, I think that's very important for you as a person to have the knowledge in, because otherwise you could be damaging yourself. And I think it's a good, it's a good thing that they've done introducing that. In relation to outside. So if I leave a shift, if I leave a shift at like 6 o'clock, I'll watch something really mindless or I'll watch something that I love, like something that doesn't require much attention but is always a feel good show. Or I'll go and meet one of my friends or I'll do something like that. I'll never really like, go home and watch something depressing on my own. Like I'll always be doing something or going to something. I do think I found when I did the later shifts, I think there's a big difference between the day shifts and the later shifts because you're going to sleep with those thoughts and I think I made an active decision for my own mental health to not be going and doing the really late shifts every week because you don't really have a chance to unwind unless you stay up late like you finish the shift at 10 o'clock. So. Like, chances are you're not going to unwind from that and your dream, you're well, your dreams, your sleep is going to be affected. So, I think, yeah. 6 o'clock I think this is the perfect time to be finishing because you get a chance to like relax and then you also feel like you can relax. Like I'd never go in and study or do work or anything after this. I feel like my Saturday is completely dedicated to this shift and. That's like I can do what I want before and after and because. I feel like, not that I've earned it, but like that, like, you know, you have to look after yourself as well. Yeah, like self-care is quite important. I think they do emphasize that a lot in the training and everything like that and I think it's so important that they do that because if there wasn't as much of an emphasis on your own self-care and them actually caring about how you feel, you'd kind of feel used or something, you would feel like, oh, well, no one really cares. It's all about the children. Whereas you're just, like you're important. Yeah.

**Interviewer** Is it worth it?

**Participant** Yes. It is. Definitely.

#### **(4.4) Participant 4**

**Interviewer** So how long have you been volunteering in your role for?

**Participant** So I started the training program in September 2018 So that was it. Yeah. 20. Yeah, 2018 So and that was a two months training and so since then. So, you're in a year and a half.

**Interviewer** OK. And how have you found it?

**Participant** It's different from what I thought it was going to be because I guess you know, the way they advertise it you would think, you know, it's just all about, you know, hard cases with children. And I kind of wasn't expecting as much of the, I guess, test calls that we get. But then also how fun it can be kind of like exploring your imagination, you know, when they tell a story or whatever. I actually find that I really enjoy those which I like wasn't kind of like expecting. So yeah.

**Interviewer** And when you say test calls, what do you mean by that?

**Participant** I guess people would generally call them prank calls. So, you know, just having the kids having a bit of a mess or a joke, which is fine. And then as well, I found the group that we're with really good and you know, everyone's really supportive. And then you've really got like a good bond together, which I think really helps, you know. Like us helping the kids as well because the atmosphere, you know, in the call centre when we're answering them was really nice.

**Interviewer** And what was it that you had initially expected, all of the calls to be like kids with problems or something like that compared to these test calls or to like children pranking or something? What was that like for you when you actually realized that it was more so like that?

**Participant** Initially, I guess it was a little bit demoralizing because in a way, at the start, you know, it's natural to think like I'm here dedicating my time and these people are just having fun and not like, I think abusing the service is too harsh. That's just I guess you. It's not the use that you thought the service was intended for. But then I guess my view of that's changed since because, you know, everyone that you come in contact with in the over the phone, like they could just be seeing how the service works and if you actually do, listen to them and believe what they're saying. So I do actually like, you know, value those calls, whereas at the start kind of in a way didn't really see the point in them, because you just if you just think, oh, they're prank calls. There's nothing more to them.

**Interviewer** And you said that you did two months of training, so did that training prepare you for these prank calls or did it just prepare you for the genuine calls so to say of kids with problems?

**Participant** I think it prepared you for all of them, to be honest. They had really good training on you know how to handle like kind of people who were of a confrontational or

subjects that you might find difficult. I would say, though, that I would have preferred if there was a bit more LGBT education in the training, because that's, you know, something that kids might want to talk about. I'm not I don't because we included very much. But other than that, I think the training was very good and very comprehensive. And it did. I guess just kind of handle all lot of calls in the same way. And it's just putting those boundaries in, which would be kind of the same for every call.

**Interviewer** And do you think that there is a common theme of LGBT across the calls that you're getting?

**Participant** No, I've only ever gotten one call, which was someone who was from LGBT community, as far as I could tell. That was a topic that they want to discuss. It was a girl talking about her girlfriend. But I guess you would know what people's, you know, orientation or gender identity is over the phone. And I think it's kind of easy for people just to presume say, oh, and do you have a girlfriend, boyfriend rather than, you know, kind of just presume that for them, which is just, I guess, in these things to. But I think the important thing that maybe they could include in the training going forward.

**Interviewer** Do you think that there's a lot of presumptions made about kids that are calling?

**Participant** I wouldn't say so, no. I think that the we have the monthly meetings with the like line manager, so it's a good time to reflect on how you can do calls and then for time we were also doing kind of like reflective practice sheets, which I think was good to kind of assess how you were doing. And if you did have any unconscious biases going on to recognize those, which I guess is important in any kind of listing service, counselling situation, to actually understand your unconscious biases and if that might be influencing what you'd be saying. But I don't think well, I guess I can't speak for other people but for me personally, I don't think that it has influenced my handling of calls talking to the kids.

**Interviewer** And what would a typical shift be like for you?

**Participant** So a shift would be two to six. So, you just come in and then we, I would generally on the phones. I'm dual trained so I can go online as well. And then some days it's really quiet. Other days it's pretty manic. You hang up and then the next phone call comes straight through, but, yeah and then it's nice you get to chat people in between calls and catch up with everyone. So, it's a fairly relaxed atmosphere. And I do really enjoy it. And then it kind of breaks up the day for me bit and. Yeah.

**Interviewer** Okay. And you said that you would be kind of like talking to people in between calls and stuff like that. Is that the other volunteers there?

**Participant** Yeah, that's all the volunteers there. Yeah.

**Interviewer** Okay. And do you think that those being, those people being there and breaking up the calls would be like a big factor in your day then as well, as well as actually taking the calls for the kids?

**Participant** Yeah, I think so, because I guess it's. I think if you were just in a cubicle of your own, it would be very hard to stay motivated. Just continue to come back. I think it's the relationships with people that you build that kind of make you want to come back and also how much you enjoy, you know, facilitating the service as well. But I think that it's also good in a way that you can kind of get immediate kind of, not feedback, but like reflection on a way on a call. And you can kind of just quickly run through what you've, what the call is about or whatever. And then maybe they could have heard from that person before and said, oh, you know, maybe it's a follow on from a topic they were talking about with them before. So, you can kind of get a fuller understanding of what's going on for that child. Especially with GDPR and stuff like that. Now, you can't really follow up on case studies, which is fine. Obviously data protection is really important, but I guess that kind of word of mouth with us is kind of good as well to kind of keep track of frequent callers.

**Interviewer** Yeah. And with these frequent callers, would they call back with the same issue that they would have called back on a previous call or would it be, you know, like you said earlier, about these kind of groups of kids and stuff that we call, what would kind of be the more common theme across like the frequent callers?

**Participant** I guess the frequent callers that will call up, they would generally have a common theme running through them and say, for example, some people that would come to mind its they would always talk about family issues, other people, it's always about the girlfriend, other people, it's always about, this one person, this one person, one kid who calls up and you always just talks about farming and he's just having a bit of fun. So, you know, some people just like they I don't know they might just find a particular topic that they want to get off their chest all the time or it kind of comforts them frequently revisiting that. But then other people, they just might find a particular topic for them to talk about.

**Interviewer** Okay. And do you volunteer in any other services at the minute?

**Participant** I do, I do St Vincent de Paul, home visit, volunteering. So that's, we would all meet together on Tuesdays before and then we'd kind of discuss case studies that we're going to go visit and case studies, I should say people. We should go visit people. And then we kind of discuss like their situation what might be the best way to help them. And then after that, we'll just divide it up and then we'll go out and visit them. So that will be about four to five hours of an evening. And then. And I do Childline as well.

**Interviewer** And I suppose I'll ask first, why did you decide to start volunteering with St Vincent de Paul?

**Participant** I guess because, I wanted to get more face to face kind of experience with people because over the phone, I think it's a really good like experience but I think face to face it's kind of I guess unless you're an actual health care professional, it's difficult to get that kind of experience and it's kind of as well making a direct impact in people's lives. And I kind of just wanted to kind of build my skills like kind of face to face, which I guess is totally different, cause you have to think about your body language, you know, your facial expressions and

things like that rather than just what you're saying. And even then, the way you conduct a phone conversation is totally different than the way you do it a person.

**Interviewer** And did you start that before or after the child listening service?

**Participant** I started that after. So, I started that last October.

**Interviewer** Okay.

**Participant** Yeah.

**Interviewer** And in this service, then, why did you decide that you want to volunteer here?

**Participant** Initially it was because I did an undergraduate in human genetics and then I was interested in pursuing Child counselling as a career. But to do that, you have to have voluntary care experience. So, I was thinking kind of what I don't just want to do something just to kind of have it tick a box. I actually want to do something that I enjoy. So, I've always kind of had a bit of like an affinity with kids, like I always got on with them really well. So, I thought I think that I'd be able to kind of get a good rapport with kids. So, I thought that Childline would be a good fit.

**Interviewer** Okay.

**Participant** And I knew that they did intensive training as well at the start. So, I knew that after that, I'd be kind of comfortable with actually dealing calls and things like that.

**Interviewer** And how has volunteering in Childline affected your personal life? And professional life.

**Participant** I guess in a way, my personal life, I do have to fit it around things like, you know, it's a Saturday, I volunteer. And, you know, that's when most people go out and socialize. So, I kind of would just have to fit things around that a bit more, it's not too much of a burden. But sometimes I would have to reschedule a shift if, you know, like an important kind of social event that I want to go to is coming up. And that's more important to me. So, I think it's getting that balance as well is important. But I don't think it's impacted my life like too much. But I guess in a way, it's kind of open my eyes to how people's lived experiences are very different and people's home lives are very different because I had quite, I guess like a regular, like, you know, steady upbringing when I was a kid. And I, you know, you know, these things go on. But, you know, hearing it first-hand is very different. So, I guess it kind of really opened my eyes to the way, you know, the world really is. I guess how naive people can be especially with kids and how people don't really advocate for kids enough is something that really struck me since then especially you know, you hear all these different news articles about things that have happened and cases and stuff that go through the courts. And you just be wondering who where was the person advocating for that kid? People probably would have known what was going on, but no one wants to be that person to speak



up. It's a big burden to do. So, I think the kind of really emphasized to me the importance of just like, you know, advocating for vulnerable people, not just kids.

**Interviewer** So you've kind of realized that like hearing a lot of these negative stories both outside and inside Childline considering that you had like a relatively normal, like you say, upbringing. That's not the case for most people. So, what was that realization like?

**Participant** I guess it was just, I don't think it was shocking. Like I kind of knew, you know, that stuff like that happened. But I kind of it was just a bit jarring sometimes the way some kids can feel so low and disaffected about, you know what their life is like and how, you know, in a way they're quite powerless because, you know, they're not adults, they can't, you know, just up and move themselves out of a situation like that. You know, on their own, they need someone to help.

**Interviewer** And what were your expectations before you started volunteering here?

**Participant** I guess I kind of just wanted to. Initially it was just to kind of get the experience was the initial motivator of why I wanted to do it, which I guess isn't really, I guess more people may have more of a noble, bit more of a noble reason. But. So that was the initial reason. So, I guess I didn't really have any expectations other than I guess I'd learn the skills and kind of understand the area a bit more.

**Interviewer** And, why did you stay?

**Participant** Because I just I really love to. I fell in love, like, you know, answering the phone to the kids. And you, you just have that direct connection with people. And, you know, there's something really powerful by just being able to lift up to the phone or, you know, the online service as well. They can just write in and someone's there to listen to what you have to say. And they're not going to judge you. And I think that that's just a big and powerful thing to be able to help, like give that to people, to someone to just sit there and listen unconditionally, which I think I'm being biased as well, because I think it's hard to, even as adults, oftentimes, if you go to someone with a problem, it's hard to talk them about it because you're worried what they might think of you. You're worried, you know, and they might have, give you advice that mightn't necessarily be, you know, appropriate for the situation. And I think that's a good thing that, you know, in Childline we don't give advice, it's, you know, we let them decide what they want to do. And I think that, that kind of pressure, in a situation and just opening up, is really amazing because oftentimes, you know, you know, talking about a subject that might be hard to talk about is a lot of pressure on someone to do. And, you know, they might face, they don't really know what people might say or think of them. Whereas I guess it's just, you know, free space to talk.

**Interviewer** Yeah. So, what kind of feelings would you have maybe before a shift and after a shift?

**Participant** Before a shift, sometimes it's pretty miserable outside. I think it's probably gonna be really busy now because they're all stuck inside. But other times then I'm just, you know,

happy to come in and catch up with everyone. And then I guess sometimes after shift, you can just feel bit tired. Other times it's totally fine and then sometimes, honestly, I'll excuse the language I get pissed off, to be honest, because of just some of the way that people talk to you. And I guess they they'll just like call you names and stuff, but like some of them is a bit too close to home and you might be having a bit of a low day that day. So, it's kind of you're just feeling even more low. But then, you know, the next day it's fine.

**Interviewer** Yeah. And when, when you got those calls that affect you negatively, what kind of supports are in place or what kind of things do you do yourself to make yourself feel better?

**Participant** Am I guess the, they do have like a listing service for Childline volunteers and staff to call up and talk about things as well. So that's available. And then also, I guess I just do more things to relax when I go home.

**Interviewer** Yeah.

**Participant** Watch a bit of Judge Judy, mindless TV.

**Interviewer** Fair enough, If it makes you feel better of course. So, you said a while ago that volunteering on a Saturday kind of takes up a little bit of your weekend and you have to adjust your like, social plans and stuff like that. Outside of kind of like adjusting plans, has volunteering in Childline had any consequences either positively or negatively on your personal life in terms of the way that you act with different people? Like what kind of career steps, you want to take? You know, even how sensitive you'd be to emotions or anything like that?

**Participant** I guess I don't really talk about this much. But I kind of, it let me reflect a lot on my own family life and I kind of realized that I hadn't really, I kind of knew all along, but I didn't really notice that my mom has alcohol problems. But that was kind of a hard thing to realize.

**Interviewer** And has Childline given you the skills to equip yourself to dealing with those things that you've realized?

**Participant** I did, because I actually did call some helplines myself and had a talk about it and I kind of got everything off my chest. But I realize it's kind of, it's her life. You know, we've a great relationship otherwise, but know it's up to her to kind of deal with her own problems. And I just have to 'live my own life' sounds quite harsh, but you know, I'm always there for her and stuff like that. But it's just, you know, her problems are her own and they're not mine. So, which is, you know.

**Interviewer** So do you feel you're able to detach yourself a little bit from other people, more so now than you would have been able to do before?

**Participant** Detach in what way?

**Interviewer** Detach emotions from you, like your own emotions from being able to be rational in certain situations, like if a child called in with an issue you're able to like you said earlier children aren't as rational as adults are, so, you have to be able to sit there and talk to him and talk to them and go through their feelings and emotions and things like that. So, do you think that like maybe talking to kids in that way, you're able to also apply those thoughts to yourself?

**Participant** Yeah, I guess that the way I kind of, it was like I was wilfully blind, to be honest in, you know, you just kind of, you know, don't really notice what's going on. And I think in a way, when I do talk to kids, now I really, especially when I'm talking about emotions, I really like to talk about, you know, the step by step of exactly like how their emotions are changing. I feel like that kind of really intensive reflection on the kind of progression of someone's changing of feelings in relation to situations or when things happen, can kind of help you kind of reflect on, pinpoint exactly what is the trigger for you to experience those emotions, because oftentimes kids, they just know they're feeling sad or they know they feel angry, but they don't really know why exactly. They just, you know, the, kind of. So I like to kind of discuss like the you know, how what they were just be going from normal, and then they go into this really kind of angry state, you know, what kind of examples of stuff that might happen? And then I kind of explore around that. You know, just for one example. Yeah.

**Interviewer** Yeah. And in terms of the organization itself and the way your role is structured and what your typical shift is like, how has that changed even if it has or hasn't since you've started?

**Participant** The actual role itself hasn't changed. But, we do, I've done, well, we, the ISPCC took over Teenline. So, we now take teen line calls. And then I also did additional training. And I answer phone lines to the missing service hotline, which isn't a very frequently used service. But it's still there to be used. And I'm trained to answer those calls. So, I guess I've done additional training but in terms of how the service works. It hasn't really changed, but there is more pressure on volunteers because the staff who used to be there throughout the day now they're only there on from the evening to the morning. So kind of twelve hour night shifts and some on the weekends sometimes but, so I guess there's a lot more reliance on volunteers to show up to shifts and things like that, which is fine but I do think that in a way it was good because not that you wouldn't say you weren't coming, but the flexibility of not always having to show up for your shift kind of I think kept a lot of volunteers going because that flexi-, you know, I know other listening services. They kind of have a really low tolerance for that. But I think that, you know, things happen in people's lives. You have to sometimes have that kind of flexibility to keep people on board.

**Interviewer** And if you could say to yourself before you started your volunteering here, based on the knowledge and experiences that you've had now, if you could say anything to yourself. What would you say?

**Participant** I would say just be more comfortable to be yourself on the phone because I guess, you know, you do still have your fake name that you use to answer calls, which does

help to kind of detach a bit, which I think is kind of important to put that barrier in place but I think, hang on what was the question again?

**Interviewer** If you could, if you could say anything to yourself before you started?

**Participant** Oh yeah. I would just say, like, you have it pretty good to be honest.

**Interviewer** Yeah?

**Participant** Which I kind of didn't really appreciate as much like as fully as I kind of do now.

**Interviewer** Okay. That's great. Thank you so much.