**Vulnerable Adolescents Research**

LB is a 14 year old male who has narrowly avoided an out of area placement. LB has grown up with his mother and younger brother. He was recently taken into hospital following incidents of self-harm and a suicide attempt. He briefly moved in with his father upon discharge, but is now being looked after by foster carers. At the time of the interview, LB has been living with the foster family for just over a week and has settled in relatively well, although there are concerns around ‘friends’ living nearby who are a negative influence upon him and his apparent suspicion towards his foster carer (he contracted stomach bug and is now convinced that his foster carer has tried to poison him)

**In-depth knowledge of services and agencies**

LB has clearly absorbed lots of information about how services and agencies work, through his multiple interactions with them. He is almost boastful about how well he knows the ‘system’. He seems to believe that this experiential knowledge has equipped him for a career in a medical setting.

*“I’m writing a long to someone high up in the hospital, CEO or something, regarding mental health training for paediatric medical staff. [Oh really?] Yeah, ‘cause it’s terrible. [Why do you think it’s so bad, what are you going to put in your email?] I’ve got a whole list of things..I know all about it [laughing]..I might as well work there, I actually think I should get a job up there. [Would you like to get a job in a medical setting?] Yeah, I know enough! I’ve got this game which is for student doctors and I get the highest levels on it. So I could be a doctor at my age!”*

*“I’ve got a good knowledge of everything going on. The people on the ward think I should be a nurse or doctor because of how much I know…”*

He holds very polarised opinions of different health services. He has established trusting relationships with the staff on the Children’s ward of DRI, due to their caring approach and continuity of staff presence.

*“Yeah. There are some nurses in DRI children’s wards who I’m quite close to. [What was it about the nurses you found helpful?] They’re just nice. They take time to listen to you. There’s one doctor up there who I also look up to. He’s nice. [Have you got to know them over time?] There’s one who’s my favourite nurse, who I’ve seen pretty much every hospitalisation since September. So yeah, I know her.”*

By contrast, his description of CAMHS seems more process-led, transactional and there has been lots of variation in staff and their approaches.

*“I know how it all works..Before I was in A&E and because it’s mental health, they don’t prioritise you. Go up to the ward and wait for CAMHS and then if they believe I’m mentally stable, they’ll send me home or I’ll be in overnight, where CAMHS will come the next day and do the same..I know how it works.”*

*“I know the Home Treatment team but I’ve had four CAMHS workers at the door who aren’t the Home Treatment team. Michelle is just Michelle, she’s a bit odd. One of them just talks about her husband and relationship issues to me.”*

LB has strong opinions on the police. He obviously felt let down by the school policeman he approached at school, whilst he was being bullied.

*“The policeman at school, when I went to his office with a bloody nose and bruises, was too busy on Facebook! PC Hickell number 247. [I am amazed at your memory!] If I was smart enough I would have reported it to the IPCC! But it’s been over a year so I can’t do that. The person who assaulted got a community resolution order, which was a verbal apology. [So they had to apologise to you?] Which means nothing, does it? [Did you feel like they meant it?] No! It continued anyway after so..”*

He has overheard his mother being negative about the police:

*“she was talking about how bad South Yorkshire Police force are!”*

He perceives police resources as being stretched:

*“They are actually really bad..but that’s partly because of staffing. When I was in PPO, there were only four officers on that night, for the whole of Doncaster..which I don’t think is enough”*

He makes a derogatory comment about PCSOs, although when probed, concedes that his claim is sweeping and unsubstantiated:

*“I don’t like PCSO’s though. Some of them think they have more power than they do. [So which PCSO has given you that perception of them?] None, it’s just general knowledge that some think, not many.”*

Despite his negative perceptions of the Police, he maintains a strong interest. His favourite TV show is ‘The Bill’ and he aspires to being a Police Cadet. However, it seems that LB is more seduced by the idea of this, than applying himself to make it a reality. He emphasizes the challenging nature of the application process, even when it is suggested that staff at JASP could help him. LB is acutely aware of the approaching deadline, but seems to be coming up with reasons not to apply/complete it in time. This may be due to an underlying feeling that it may not work out, following his time in the air cadets or as a possible result of the mixed educational experiences he has had.

*“I’d like to go for police cadets, but it’s like a formal job application that I’ve still not completed and I’ve got to do that by 30th but I don’t have time..they need to find out what GCSEs I’m doing, what qualifications I’ve done, what levels I’ve got [sighs].”*

**Education**

LB’s school experiences are overshadowed by his repeated “hospitalisations” and his negative experiences of being bullied. He reveals little about his time in mainstream secondary school, aside from mentioning the occasion where he spots his teacher “out drinking” with a CAMHS worker.

He is, however, very positive about JASP. He describes the environment there as homely, naming specific staff members and describing strong memories he has made there, such as the smell of fresh bread.

**Perceived altruism**

LB depicts himself as an altruistic person throughout the conversation. He places great importance upon the first-aid course he undertook whilst he was an air cadet, believing that this empowers him to help others.

*“I just naturally like helping people. Like I’m a first-aid trainer. I help people too much to be fair. I care about others more than I care about myself!“*

When suggested that he might take his first-aid training further by engaging with St John’s Ambulance, LB – as with the Police Cadets – puts this off and quickly changes the subject:

*“Well I’ve got to reapply in a year and I haven’t been out of hospital for a year”*

Moreover, his rhetoric is not convincing, as his actions suggest evidence of violent and even sadistic tendencies:

*“And one of the chicks died, because someone dropped it, accidentally. There was blood everywhere. [Did you see it?] Yeah [laughs], I witnessed it..it was quite funny after.”*

*“You know those stairs going down into the bus station, an old lady faceplanted the floor. It was so funny. [Was she alright though?] She was unconscious for about a minute. It was really funny though..She looked about 90 and really weak. She had a walking stick aswell. Still funny though.”*

*“No, I just threaten to punch him. Which I think is fair, if he’s saying stuff like that. ‘Cause if I said that in general society, you would get punched.”*

More concerning still, LB has apparently used his ‘expertise by experience’ to influence other vulnerable young people, during his time in DRI:

*“This guy that was in Mental Health one time, because I knew the whole procedure, I took him through the whole thing, because I’d had that treatment before. Healthcare didn’t like it, but they were surprised how much I knew. [Was it another young person you were talking to?] Yeah, which wasn’t really allowed, but they [the young person] wanted it..[Did it make the young person feel better about things?] They trusted me because they know that I knew what it’s like. Experience helps. Not allowed to do it..One of the nurses said they’ll just not see it while I’m doing it. Because they know it’s helping others. I’ve done it most times I’ve been in hospital.”*

**Aspirations for the future**

If LB is being unrealistic/slightly delusional about applying himself to the medical profession or police force, he does hint at various other interests that he could pursue in the future.

He mentions photography (although he links this with his fascination with the police: “I’d like to get back to London though..to take pictures of Met police cars, because I like photography and emergency services, so why not band them together?). He talks vividly about working with computers, which he seems to have a natural affinity for:

*“Not at all. I’m not arty, I’m the opposite. I like doing stuff on computers. Like programming, building computers. I could make lots of money as well. [Do you like coding?] Yeah. [That’s the future!] Yeah, I know! [laughs] [So you could actually build a computer from scratch?] Yeah, in less than an hour as well.. [are you good at logical things?] Yeah, it’s so easy to build a computer..if you know what you’re doing. Just don’t do it on a carpet or fabric, because static would kill the part. I can spend hours in PC World just looking at the parts.. “*