

Stuart

Officer survivor study

Transcript and analysis

Introduction

Stuart is a single man in his early thirties who lives and works in the city. He is bright, articulate and welcoming – but there's a slight air of despondency about him. His parents separated when he was a child and he lived with his mother and younger brothers before leaving home. Stuart keeps in touch with his family and remains closest to his mother, although they do not always see eye-to-eye.

Stuart had been a constable for about ten years and had recently returned from a career break in [country], which was not at all successful. He had hoped that [country] would give him a fresh start to find personal contentment and a new sense of belonging within his 'tribe'. Unfortunately, Stuart's mental health deteriorated whilst he was in [country] and this impinged upon his work and friendship groups abroad. After several setbacks, he had little choice but to return to the UK. He was devastated and despondent. He did not have a job, nor a proper home, and he felt that many of his friends had moved on with their lives without him.

Returning to the police became Stuart's main goal. He needed structure and purpose in his life and money to support himself. Stuart disclosed his mental health challenges to the police as he thought this was the right thing to do. He now believes that his honesty in this respect damaged his chances of returning to work as the police appeared to be reticent and unhurried in processing his application. Stuart harboured deep negative feelings against the 'brutal' police doctor and the 'faceless' occupational health (OH) system, which he believed to have conspired against his return.

Having endured several suicide attempts over the years, Stuart was saved by the individual kindness of a senior police colleague whom he had met by chance during a suicidal episode. She kept in touch and this inspired him to write to everyone he could think of to help get reinstated

into the police. This proved successful and he now has a new manager and a new role, tailored to help his recuperation. Stuart also has a new home and despite two further suicidal episodes, he is now rebuilding his life.

I met Stuart at his home and the interview lasted three hours. The analysis of the resultant transcript identified the following inter-related personal experiential themes: (1) Abandonment and the isolation of an outsider; (2) Detriment of otherness and importance of one's tribe; and (3) Brutalized by OH procedures but inspired by compassion.

Personal experiential theme 1. Abandonment and the isolation of an outsider.

Being quiet and shy, especially within groups of people that he does not know well, are principal traits of Stuart's personality that he believes to have emanated from his childhood experiences. He recalled feeling socially awkward throughout his school years and the breakdown of his parents' marriage during his teenage years sapped his confidence to speak-out: 'I've spent thirty-two years, thirty-two or thirty-three years, holding everything in. Not speaking to anyone because I've not really had anyone I can speak to and I've, I've kept everything within me, all the bad stuff' (P31.1). He felt lost and betrayed by the absence of his father and he resented his mother's subsequent anger and exasperation at being a single parent: 'So, growing-up my parents, my mum and dad split-up. My mum was very angry all the time and abusive. My dad wasn't really around, and when he was supposed to be he never showed-up and then whatever. And then, I didn't have friends at school...' (P31.2). This new family dynamic meant that Stuart had little choice but to become the resident babysitter for his younger siblings. This, too, arrested his development of teenage friendship groups as he rarely left the family home and retreated into an insular world of pop music and television. An escapist behaviour that Stuart recognised as destructive but one that he had maintained to the present day.

In recent years, Stuart had tried to develop his confidence and coping mechanisms to speak out more but this was not something that he is comfortable with. His unhappiness at school was repeated at police college where he found the collective mentality and behaviour of his fellow students, who were mainly young men, reminiscent of the 'playground': Yeah. I was quite nervous and shy. It [police college] was actually a bit like going back to school. There is definitely a playground mentality. And, I'm not one of the lads. Never have been one of the lads. It's, you know, I don't know much about sport, you know, it's just not on my radar' (P2.1). His playground reference suggested an inequitable culture where the strongest survive and alliances are formed to further the prevailing ethos - or rally against it - in order to endure. Stuart was never 'one of the lads' and this made it difficult for him to find common ground with the 'alpha' males when he joined his team as a probationary constable. He highlighted their binding camaraderie, both in and outside of work, which centred upon sports, drinking, and smoking. These were incompatible with his non-sporting interests, which included good food, good coffee and pop culture. Thankfully, Stuart's sexuality was never an issue for him at work but, as before, his perception of the presiding machismo culture encouraged him to seek alliances with less vociferous individuals on his team who shared his values of understated professionalism and hard work.

Stuart's identification of so-called in-groups and out-groups within his professional life centred upon one's length of service in the police and relative social standing amongst peers. This is discussed in greater detail in the next personal experiential theme, but being a low service officer at the time, Stuart sought a specialist role to help bypass his predicament and raise his professional prestige. Stuart was selected for the Criminal Investigations Department (CID), which would have automatically elevated him in the eyes of many of his uniformed colleagues. Stuart's secondment to CID was cut short, however, when he marginally failed his trainee detective constable (TDC) examinations. Understandably, this was a significant blow to his confidence, which was further compounded by an imminent return to a uniformed team with a poor reputation for machismo behaviour: 'So, after I did my stint, I did three years in CID and then I went back to team, I was told I had to come out of CID because I failed the TDCs. I was told I was going back to team [number] [laughs ironically]. And team [number] have had a terrible reputation for bullying, for isolation, for being just, yeah, particularly bad. And so I was dreading it...' (P5.2-4). His enduring sense of not fitting in and inequality were also apparent in his comprehension of this rejection as another officer, who did not work as hard as him but 'talked-up' his achievements and seemingly did fit in, was permitted to stay in the department: 'I was leaving [CID] but there was this other guy who had failed four times, and he got to stay, and he kept getting to stay, but he was always talking about "How he was doing this, and getting this done, and got this, and got this result" and, I think that's where the inadequacy really started to sort of work' (P6.7). His enforced return to uniform intensified his feelings of failure and he chose to take an unpaid career break rather than face the chagrin of joining a new and intimidating team.

Stuart considered himself an outsider in the police and felt compelled to start a new life in [country]. This, he now believed to be an ill-judged decision to reinvent himself and find contentment and acceptance for whom he really was – or, more accurately perhaps - the person he longed to become. For a number of reasons, things did not work out for him. Poignantly, Stuart recalled meeting his mother who had learned of his numerous misfortunes whilst abroad and had visited him in [country]. Past experiences had led Stuart to doubt his mother's ability and motivation to comfort him and so he remained 'distant' and 'insular' towards her in order to help protect himself from further disappointment. As ever, he felt awkward and uncomfortable in her presence. An unexpected anxiety attack, however, caused him to disclose his suicidal ideation to her, contrary to his better judgement: 'And so, I was really quiet, really distant and very insular with my mum. I didn't tell her until three days before she was leaving and I said "Look, I've got something to tell you. I've been going through this, that, and the other" [suicidal thoughts]. And she told me to 'Pull my socks up.' And that's why I didn't tell my mum because I kinda suspected that was the sort of response I would get. And so I couldn't wait for her to go, at that point' (P21.2). Stuart was now in deep despair. The realisation that his dream of a fresh start was ending in recurring failure and humiliation caused the simple task of buying a coffee to become the catalyst of a suicidal episode. His mother's advice to pull his socks up confirmed his misgivings towards her and he could not wait for her to return to the UK. But, this meant an unreliable but hitherto persistent and symbolic lifeline had now been severed in Stuart's lifeworld.

Stuart's emotional strength and resolve were also rocked by the sudden ending of the loving relationship with his partner. Friendships were essential to Stuart's wellbeing. He felt anchored and reassured in the presence of like-minded people. But, his partner had also been his best friend. His soul mate with whom he had formed a deep seated friendship for several years before becoming romantically involved. The nature of the split was especially damaging to Stuart. He was left in no doubt that the complexity and instability of his personality were to blame: 'When I got back my boyfriend then split-up with me he said it "was too much for me" he "found it too difficult to be with me." And, which was a real blow because this guy I was with, we were best of friends for three years, and we finally admitted our love for each other, after three years of friendship...' (P23.3). Stuart was simply 'too difficult' to live with. There was a profound and hurtful honesty to this judgement, which lingered with Stuart still: '...and then for him to break-up with me because I was too much was a bit of a kick as well because, you know, we were friends first and foremost so, in my mind, you know, I just wanted him to be my friend, let alone my boyfriend. So that was a bit, that's something I'm still, sort of, not really over...' (P23.4). At times of emotional adversity, he would look to his partner and best friend for comfort and support. He had lost this essential lifeline, too. Yet again, Stuart felt abandoned and isolated with few prospects on the horizon. He had run out of money, friends, and options. He now had little choice other than a humiliating return to the UK.

Coming home was never going to be easy for Stuart. He was depressed, physically exhausted, and his mental health was failing. He had come to regret his 'quick' decision to flee to [country] in search of a new beginning. He had made a snap decision to run away from the hurtful realities of his life at home and now he wondered if he was making the same mistake in reverse: '[S]tart from fresh. I was very apprehensive about that. I know that, because I don't think it was medication wasn't working, it was the fact that I felt so displaced here [city]. I think it was more of the, the, the I'd gone from living in [country] and it was quite a quick decision to, to then, you know, and I was in a state of depression, certainly in the last month of [country], and I think it was kind of a mixture of that with this quick decision to come back to the UK' (P25.2). He also knew that any chance of returning as the all-conquering hero who had turned his life and fortunes around had evaporated. He arrived back in the UK on a cold winter's day. There was no greeting party nor 'fanfare' to welcome him. He had no proper home, no job, and no prospects. Poignantly, he also thought his former friends had moved-on in their lives without him: 'Come back to the UK, there was nowhere for me and it was, there was no like welcoming of open arms. There was nothing like, you know, my friendships moved forward whilst I'd been away and that sort of stuff. Felt very alone' (P25.3). Stuart was now truly an outsider. His dreams of salvation were over. He felt abandoned and isolated with depleted options for emotional and practical support.

Table 1. Transcript extracts for Personal Experiential Theme 1

Abandonment and the isolation of an outsider.	Page/line	Extracts

Overwhelmed by insecurities and unhappiness.	P31.1-3 P2.1-3	<p>I've spent thirty-two years, thirty-two or thirty-three years, holding everything in. Not speaking to anyone because I've not really had anyone I can speak to and I've, I've kept everything within me, all the bad stuff. So, growing-up my parents, my mum and dad split-up. My mum was very angry all the time and abusive. My dad wasn't really around, and when he was supposed to be he never showed-up and then whatever. And then, I didn't have friends at school...</p> <p>Yeah. I was quite nervous and shy. It [police college] was actually a bit like going back to school. There is definitely a playground mentality. And, I'm not one of the lads. Never have been one of the lads. It's, you know, I don't know much about sport, you know, it's just not on my radar.</p>
Outsider aggrieved by injustice.	P6.7 P5.2-4	<p>And when I failed the TDCs [detective exams] the second time, by very, very minimal failing, I was told I was leaving [CID] but there was this other guy who had failed four times, and he got to stay, and he kept getting to stay, but he was always talking about 'How he was doing this, and getting this done, and got this, and got this result' and, I think that's where the inadequacy really started to sort of work.</p> <p>So, after I did my stint, I did three years in CID [Criminal Investigations Department] and then I went back to team, I was told I had to come out of CID because I failed the TDCs. I was told I was going back to team [number] [laughs ironically]. And team [number] have had a terrible reputation for bullying, for isolation, for being just, yeah, particularly bad. And so I was dreading it...</p>
Always felt let down by mother.	P21.1-3	<p>I started having panic attacks at work and my mum had come over, actually, she had come and visited me, she didn't know anything. And, I didn't tell her anything, and then I had a panic attack in, while I was away with her in Melbourne and I was going to walk away and jump, go in front of a tram. I was just, and then, this was like, because I had a panic attack ordering coffee [laughs ironically].</p> <p>And so, I was really quiet, really distant and very insular with my mum. I didn't tell her until three days before she was leaving and I said 'Look, I've got something to tell you. I've been going through this, that, and the other' [suicidal thoughts]. And she told me to 'Pull my socks up.' And that's why I didn't tell my mum because I kinda suspected that was the sort of response I would get. And so I couldn't wait for her to go, at that point.</p>
Abandoned by soul mate when needed most.	P22.3-4	<p>[W]hen I got back my boyfriend then split-up with me he said it 'Was too much for me' he 'Found it too difficult to be with me'. And, which was a real blow because this guy I was with, we were best of friends for three years, and we finally admitted our love for each other, after three years of friendship but I had been in a relationship prior.</p> <p>He had been in a relationship and it never quite worked until then, and then, and then for him to break-up with me because I was too much was a bit of a kick as well because, you know, we were friends first and foremost so, in my mind, you know, I just wanted him to be my friend, let alone my boyfriend. So that was a bit, that's something I'm still, sort of, not really over...</p>
Returned to UK depressed and isolated.	P25.1-3	<p>[S]tart from fresh. I was very apprehensive about that. I know that, because I don't think it was medication wasn't working, it was the fact that I felt so displaced here [city]. I think it was more of the, the, the I'd gone from living in [country] and it was quite a quick decision to, to then, you know, and I was in a state of depression, certainly in the last month of [country], and I think it was kind of a mixture of that with this quick decision to come back to the UK.</p> <p>Come back to the UK, there was nowhere for me and it was, there was no like welcoming of open arms. There was nothing like, you know, my friendships moved forward whilst I'd been away and that sort of stuff. Felt very alone.</p>

Personal Experiential Theme 2. Detriment of otherness and importance of one's tribe.

Despite his initial posting to what he considered to be a 'really good' team, Stuart mostly considered himself an outsider at work. Being a probationer, and therefore professionally inexperienced, was one reason for him thinking this. Stuart recognised the institutional significance that officers routinely placed upon one's length of service and the assumed level of knowledge, experience and respect that this often bestowed. This unwritten rule presented a perceptual but none-the-less genuine obstacle for Stuart because no matter how hard he worked to prove his worth there was no escaping his lowly position on the team: 'But I kind of, I went on to a really good team and I gelled with them really well, and I worked really well, but I think, like, all teams, certainly, there's a hierarchy, of, and if you're not, a certain, certain way or if you're not a certain, if, regardless of your work ethic, you'll be judged and placed somewhere in this hierarchy' (P2.4). The pervasive nature of this particular culture was made clear by his exasperated reference to the assumed significance of one's warrant number (unique identification number issued sequentially to each officer upon joining the police): '...the first thing anyone does is check your warrant number. And, it equates to whether or not, I think that, actually, it's whether or not you should know something' (P2.8). Stuart did not appreciate being categorised nor 'judged' in this way. This was especially so when it became clear to him that there were longer serving officers on his team whom he considered to be idle and routinely took advantage of their social standing within the team: 'I was paired-off with a guy, an area car driver [very experienced PC], and although he had an old warrant number he wasn't that well liked on the team, because he was seen as lazy' (P3.4). The team's collective criticism of the officer's unprofessional behaviour, despite his older warrant number, provided a degree of hope for Stuart. But this was scant consolation when having to endure his misconduct first hand and on a regular basis: 'And, I, I mean, I literally did everything. Like I did all the writing for like everything, the arrest, the booking-in procedure, everything. You name it, I mean, he was known for smoking all the time...(P3.4). As a young and inexperienced officer, Stuart had neither the gravitas nor confidence to openly challenge the injustices he felt when posted with the 'lazy' area car driver. But, internally, Stuart railed against the assumed power deferential that some of the more experienced officers routinely used against him.

In addition to his warrant number, Stuart also felt disadvantaged by the extroverted personalities and the shared machismo interests that bound together the 'alpha males' on his team. He observed their bonding, both professionally and socially, whilst they smoked cigarettes together and talked about women and sport. Stuart believed that these activities reinforced their shared values and collective identity whilst excluding others like him whose personal interests laid elsewhere. He associated smoking with laziness and he detested the collective machismo values and behaviours exhibited by those who spoke the loudest and lewdest on his team: 'And then, but then there's this, well, then there's the, the personality-wise, so, you know, you've got the smokers who are outside, who are, you know, they, they are, you know, the guys will be talking, because it's very alpha, the teams, and I think even still, it's still a very male dominated place to be and my team only had like three females' (P3.1).

This was simply not Stuart's way and he felt unnerved by their collective power and disrespectful behaviour. This was especially so when their abuse was directed towards a supervising sergeant who did not meet their ideals either: '...there was one sergeant who on the team who was totally disrespected. Just, they just laughed at him. They, you know, they just, and then when he wasn't around talk about how he looks and how he stands how he talks, but they would do it, I say banter it's, they would all laugh and joke and they would try and get someone else involved in the conversation and it goes back again to what I was saying that how if you don't join in then they are, they won't, it's almost like they don't trust you to, to, you know, have their back. Yeah, it's very, yeah, I don't really know how to describe that sort of, they would probably think it was banter and I don't see it as banter at all. I see it as bullying...' (P9.5). In this enlightening vignette, the nuanced complexity of Stuart's professional predicament became clear. He was never going to be 'one of the lads' and he fundamentally disagreed with their outspoken prejudices and intolerance. But, by not joining in with their so-called 'banter' he was effectively confirming his otherness, which further ostracized and isolated him.

Stuart's costly but seemingly ennobled perception of otherness was also apparent in a Taser ('less-lethal' electric weapon used for officers' self-defence) incident he recalled involving colleagues from his new 'machismo' team. The legitimate use of reasonable force to help prevent crime and to keep the Queen's peace remains a complex and often contested civic function that is instrumental to the unique office of constable. As custodians of this entrusted position, officers must account for their conduct to ensure that their actions (or sometimes inaction) are proportionate, lawful, and necessary in the circumstances. Allegations of wrongdoing in this (and every other) respect are closely scrutinised and findings of guilt may result in dismissal from the service. Accordingly, a decision to use force should not be taken lightly. With this in mind, Stuart was understandably appalled when he witnessed the celebratory behaviour of the 'alpha males' following their repeated use of Taser on a violent, but mentally ill, suspect: 'There was about, around about ten of them, all men, and there was this one incident where they, I was in the office, obviously, one incident where they Tasered this guy, this, this mental health, mentally-ill guy, six times, and when they came back for being dismissed [end of shift] they were in the, they were in the, the office, essentially like celebrating this, what had happened, that, you know, that they, the six of them got to use their Tasers on this one, on this one guy' (P8.1).

Again, Stuart recognised the socially binding effect of their joint celebrations and his non-participation in this respect placed him firmly outside their group. He was proud to state that he had never used his baton or irritant spray on duty, preferring to talk to suspects to help gain their compliance: 'I did three years out on the street on team, and I never, ever used any of my personal protective equipment. Not once. And, that's not because I didn't go to aggressive situations or, you know, that sort of incident, it's just that I was always able to use my language and the way I spoke to people and the way interacted... (P8.3). Stuart was keen to point out that he was not adverse to using force if absolutely necessary. Nor had he had avoided violent situations to deliberately maintain his preferred ideals. He was simply an officer who had the capacity and capability to engage with people and de-escalate the situation: 'Yeah, like, I could just, you know, even if I had to run after them

to detain them, I'd be chatting with them by the end of, by the time we're waiting to be booked-in. It's just, I don't have that aggressive thing in me, I mean I'm sure if I had to, like, then I will...' (P8.4). This, too, marked him out as different from the alphas who did not share his view on policing. Interestingly, through his mandatory training, Stuart would have known that the ability to use tactical communication (e.g. calm, rapport, control) to help defuse conflict, wherever practicable, was a high level skill recognised by leading 'use of force' subject matter experts (National Personal Safety Manual, 2021).

The perception of having one's back - or not - as the case might be was clearly very important to Stuart and indeed his colleagues. Stuart had thought through the machinations of this concept and, in particular, how it related to the his new and unwelcoming 'machismo' team: 'That is the kind of problem that, that team had and if you didn't participate in those celebrations you were seen as someone 'A' to keep an eye on, that you wouldn't have their back whether, you know, you agreed with it or not, and I think because I didn't join in with any of the, not just that particular celebration, but with any of their talk, you know, it was crude it was about like about females, about women...' (P8.1). Stuart expanded upon this point and demonstrated his disgust towards the alphas' inappropriate behaviour and, in particular, their misogyny. This was not so-called banter, it was unacceptable, disrespectful and nauseating. This snap-shot in time had remained with Gary. It crystallised his understanding of the 'them and us' problem and defined the alphas' behaviour on his new team: '...it was what they would probably describe as banter but I would describe as really terrible banter really, if they're going to, if it is banter, just inappropriate stuff and it's just, and that, it was just that to me was, it stayed with me as a prime example of how to, if I was to describe that team, that incident, that particular moment where they're celebrating this Tasing' (P8.2).

Not all was lost in Stuart's view. He had seen many examples of professionalism from individuals whom he admired. His personal difficulty was actually relating to them in a meaningful way - and them relating to him - whilst being true to himself. There was simply little common ground between them upon which to start a conversation, that was not awkward, and make the connections necessary to build shared understanding, trust and friendship: 'Yeah, I guess it's for me, it's finding common ground with my colleagues. It's, there's a stereotype of that I, you know, that gay men don't like sport, or don't, or don't know what, you know, not necessarily don't know what they're talking about, they're more feminine-type personality. I've never really had an issue with being a gay man in the police, certainly not on my first team, and not in CID. It's just that finding common ground with a straight guy who rugby is his life and, you know, finding somewhere where you can kind of, it's more that they can kind of respect you, me, as oppose to me, because I respect anyone who is good at their job and that will have my back on a job or whatever, or who's just a decent person' (P10.2-5). Whilst it is quite possible that Stuart was unaware of his own stereotyping within this passage, his message was clear. He believed that there should be more emphasis in the police regarding an individual's professionalism and decency – and less upon one's social standing and length of service. Knowingly or not, Stuart was alluding to himself, or at least people like him, in his thinking. He had strived to become a hardworking and respected officer, but this was never going to be enough within the current culture of policing.

Stuart was also keen to state that he had found friendship and mutual respect outside the alpha group on his new team. In particular, he admired and thought fondly of a female colleague who shared his values of hard work and fairness. She was a more experienced officer who was respected for her professional ability and diligence but, crucially, she put little store in alpha groups nor one's warrant number and looked at individuals for whom they really were: '...the female [officer] I was talking about from my first team that I really liked working with she would always say that she loved working with me in particular because I was able to talk to people. Even if they were in crisis due to mental health or, you know, a teenager who's a suspect for a robbery or something' (P8.3). Stuart appreciated this and he welcomed her recognition of his ability to talk to the public and share common ground. Stuart was proud of his communication skills, which he used to help gain the trust and compliance of suspects, some of whom were no doubt initially aggressive and unyielding. These were the subtle arts he admired most and quite probably the ones that he longed to be afforded by those in both assumed and substantive positions of power within the workplace.

Stuart used the word 'tribe' to describe the friendship groups that he felt most comfortable with. This was his personal sense of belonging and sameness, which were inextricably linked to, and defined by, his otherness. The ebb-and-flow of this dynamic process was captured in Stuart's fleeting mention of a fellow colleague whom he befriended at police college many years before. Back then, they shared the common camaraderie of being new recruits in a socially sanitized and closely monitored training environment, each intently focussed upon passing-out successfully and joining an operational team patrolling the city streets. Following their graduation, and by complete chance, both officers were assigned to the same operational team. But, their friendship slowly diminished as they settled into their respective workplace 'tribes' and were inevitably socialised by their intra 'them and us' conditions: 'I mean, one of the guys I trained with ten or eleven years ago, he and I got on really well in training. We're very different people, and when we joined the team, he, we kind of weren't so close because he, he kind of found his tribe. It's about tribes really. And you find your tribe and the people you connect with. And, yeah, and we're still friends now, but it's, we don't hang-out like we used to do' (P10.6).

Stuart accepted the flux of this process and compared it to his current tribal position, which no longer fulfilled the fluctuating requirements of his mental wellbeing: 'Yeah. Well this goes back into my tribe, like, we've all got to find our tribes in our, in our lives, work, personal, whatever, we all, you know, people who you connect with on whatever level and, I love my, my friends dearly but I need to find none of them understand what it is I go through. And, and that shows with how they interact with me. So, I need to find a, a new, I'll have that tribe always, but I also need to find another tribe that I can connect with in that sort of level where I can, you know, yeah, just connect with really' (P49.2) It was not clear if Stuart had out-grown his current tribe – or perhaps they had moved away from him? But Stuart's need to 'connect' with people was very clear. He was now looking for a new tribe to help provide the new levels of support and understanding that he believed he, and importantly his condition, deserved.

Table 2. Transcript extracts for Personal Experiential Theme 2

Detriment of otherness and importance of one's tribe	Page/line	Extracts
Railed against prejudice of unwritten peer hierarchy.	P2.1-8 P3.1	<p>But I kind of, I went on to a really good team and I gelled with them really well, and I worked really well, but I think, like, all teams, certainly, there's a hierarchy, of, and if you're not, a certain, certain way or if you're not a certain, if, regardless of your work ethic, you'll be judged and placed somewhere in this hierarchy.</p> <p>[T]he first thing anyone does is check your warrant number. And, it equates to whether or not, I think that, actually, it's whether or not you should know something. And then, but then there's this, well, then there's the, the personality-wise, so, you know, you've got the smokers who are outside, who are, you know, they, they are, you know, the guys will be talking, because it's very alpha, the teams, and I think even still, it's still a very male dominated place to be and my team only had like three females.</p>
Having your back - unsettled by discrimination and inequality.	P3.4 P9.5 P10.2-5	<p>I was paired-off with a guy, an area car driver [usually a very experienced PC], and although he had an old warrant number he wasn't that well liked on the team, because he was seen as lazy. And, I, I mean, I literally did everything. Like I did all the writing for like everything, the arrest, the booking-in procedure, everything. You name it, I mean, he was known for smoking all the time...</p> <p>[T]here was one sergeant who on the team who was totally disrespected. Just, they just laughed at him. They, you know, they just, and then when he wasn't around talk about how he looks and how he stands how he talks, but they would do it, I say banter it's, they would all laugh and joke and they would try and get someone else involved in the conversation and it goes back again to what I was saying that how if you don't join in then they are, they won't, it's almost like they don't trust you to, to, you know, have their back. Yeah, it's very, yeah, I don't really know how to describe that sort of, they would probably think it was banter and I don't see it as banter at all. I see it as bullying.</p> <p>Yeah, I guess it's for me, it's finding common ground with my colleagues. It's, there's a stereotype of that I, you know, that gay men don't like sport, or don't, or don't know what, you know, not necessarily don't know what they're talking about, they're more feminine-type personality. I've never really had an issue with being a gay man in the police, certainly not on my first team, and not in CID. It's just that finding common ground with a straight guy who rugby is his life and, you know, finding somewhere where you can kind of, it's more that they can kind of respect you, me, as oppose to me, because I respect anyone who is good at their job and that will have my back on a job or whatever, or who's just a decent person.</p>
Sickened by collective machismo mentality.	P8.1-2	<p>There was about, around about ten of them, all men, and there was this one incident where they, I was in the office, obviously, one incident where they Tasered this guy, this, this mental health, mentally-ill guy, six times, and when they came back for being dismissed [end of shift] they were in the, they were in the, the office, essentially like celebrating this, what had happened, that, you know, that they, the six of them got to use their Tasers on this one, on this one guy.</p>

		That is the kind of problem that, that team had and if you didn't participate in those celebrations you were seen as someone 'A' to keep an eye on, that you wouldn't have their back whether, you know, you agreed with it or not, and I think because I didn't join in with any of the, not just that particular celebration, but with any of their talk, you know, it was crude it was about like about females, about women, it was what they would probably describe as banter but I would describe as really terrible banter really, if they're going to, if it is banter, just inappropriate stuff and it's just, and that, it was just that to me was, it stayed with me as a prime example of how to, if I was to describe that team, that incident, that particular moment where they're celebrating this Taser-ing.
Anchored by contra personal values.	P8.3-4	<p>I did three years out on the street on team, and I never, ever used any of my personal protective equipment. Not once. And, that's not because I didn't go to aggressive situations or, you know, that sort of incident, it's just that I was always able to use my language and the way I spoke to people and the way I interacted, and the female I was talking about from my first team that I really liked working with she would always say that she loved working with me in particular because I was able to talk to people. Even if they were in crisis due to mental health or, you know, a teenager who's a suspect for a robbery or something.</p> <p>Yeah, like, I could just, you know, even if I had to run after them to detain them, I'd be chatting with them by the end of, by the time we're waiting to be booked-in. It's just, I don't have that aggressive thing in me, I mean I'm sure if I had to, like, then I will...</p>
Wellbeing determined by flux of tribe.	P10.4-6 P49.2-3	<p>I mean, one of the guys I trained with ten or eleven years ago, he and I got on really well in training. We're very different people, and when we joined the team, he, we kind of weren't so close because he, he kind of found his tribe. It's about tribes really. And you find your tribe and the people you connect with. And, yeah, and we're still friends now, but it's, we don't hang-out like we used to do.</p> <p>Yeah. Well this goes back into my tribe, like, we've all got to find our tribes in our, in our lives, work, personal, whatever, we all, you know, people who you connect with on whatever level and, I love my, my friends dearly but I need to find none of them understand what it is I go through. And, and that shows with how they interact with me. So, I need to find a, a new, I'll have that tribe always, but I also need to find another tribe that I can connect with in that sort of level where I can, you know, yeah, just connect with really.</p>

Personal Experiential Theme 3. Brutalized by OH procedures but inspired by compassion.

Following his enforced move from the CID, Stuart suffered an unrelated physical injury that placed him on recuperative duties away from his new team: 'And so I joined that team and I, actually I, when I joined that team I'd injured myself off-duty so I was put onto the Misper role [Missing Persons] whilst I was recovering. And, I just had no interaction with anyone on that team. The governor [inspector] sent me an email to say that I would be a Misper officer, and that was my role, so I went straight into that' (P5.5). His dislike of their machismo reputation suggested that he was not averse to this temporary role. But, it isolated him and diminished the opportunity for him to make friends and acquaintances on the new team. This was a pattern of avoidance behaviour that Stuart had been accustomed to since childhood, but he knew very well that being on the outside of one's community is often an uncomfortable place to be. This is especially so in the police where teamwork and a sense of belonging are essential to help deliver an often stressful and sometimes dangerous service, which is not always appreciated, nor accepted, by some sections of society.

Although Stuart chose to remain aloof from his new colleagues, his indifference, which was reciprocated by some within his new team, extended into his commute to work when he was openly shunned by some colleagues on the train: 'I probably had an handful of, I was there for eighteen months, almost, and I probably had a handful of interactions with the governor and the, I remember going, getting the train to work, and being on the train, and then some, a group would get on at say [railway station], see me on the train, and move away, move into the next carriage. They, because I went, I think prob[ably] because I went straight onto [the] Misper role, they just didn't, like, give a toss really. They just, they didn't need to interact with me...' (P5.6-7). This was very hurtful to Stuart and, importantly, outside his control. In addition, communication with Stuart's new inspector, who was responsible for his welfare and day-to-day duties, consisted of a 'handful' of perfunctory conversations and emails over an eighteen month period. This made Stuart feel irrelevant and disregarded and his insights in this respect highlighted the unintended but potentially damaging outcomes of personal isolation, reduced personal agency, and loss of confidence when officers are placed on recuperative duties away from their usual place of work.

Having returned from his unsuccessful career break in [country], Stuart felt that he was now in dire straits (both financially and emotionally) and had little choice but to re-apply for the post of police constable that he had so hastily rejected some months previously. His personal troubles had not gone away and he felt morally obliged to disclose his worsening mental health in his application to re-join the police. When he did not hear back from the police for several months, he fantasized that 'faceless' administrators had rejected his application on the grounds that his mental health presented too many difficulties for them to reconcile: 'I had, so I had already applied, I had already told the police that I was back, I told them in January. I told them before that I was coming back, that I was coming back. So, I, and the I, I was totally honest with them, I told them that I've got some issues so I'm probably going to need to see occupational health before I get posted, that sort of stuff. Then, I didn't hear anything from, in February, from them in March' (P25.6). This made Stuart feel helpless and worthless and he rationalised his predicament by concluding that they would not select him when they had so many healthy applicants to choose from: 'And that's why I kind of was almost sure that I was, you know, there is someone somewhere is processing people returning from career-breaks or recruitment or whatever, whatever HR department does that, that I, you know, that oh this one has issues, that maybe he just sort of put that there why I do this, that, and the other and, you know, time carries on. It may not have been that case, of course, but it's not how it felt' (P28.4). Upon reflection - as an officer now re-employed by the police - Stuart had moderated this belief through an acceptance of his paranoia at that time, but he still considered his honesty in this respect a potential misjudgement that may well have placed him on the 'back burner' and delayed the processing of his application: '...I had this suspicion when I applied to come, when I, when I told them that I was coming back, that I had this suspicion that they're not gonna, they're just gonna push me, put me on the back burner because of my problems. That I'm not going to be, you know, why would they want to bring someone back when they've got these problems?' (P26.4).

When Stuart was finally contacted by the police, he was invited to attend an occupational health interview to assess the appropriateness of his return. The recollection of this particular meeting was still very painful for him. Stuart recalled vividly the police doctor's haughtiness as she

talked down to him with no bedside manner. He also recalled his extreme frustration when their meeting, which was effectively life-or-death for him, was needlessly interrupted by strangers who were trying to fix the doctor's computer: '...she said "You're not fit for office work, you're not fit for any work". That was, she was very, it was quite brutal. There was no sort of bedside manner if you like, it was very cold, and I was, I was just, I don't know how to describe it, in complete distress, I was just in crisis, I was going, getting worse and really worked-up and really sort of, because she kept bringing people into the office, trying, because she wasn't getting on with the system or something, on the computer system. And then she was asking for advice. But she had brought two different people in the office and it was just a bit like. And I just got up and said 'I can't be here, I cannot be here anymore, I'm getting really upset, getting really worked-up.' (P26.2-3).

The police doctor's apparent disregard for Stuart's fraught sensibilities and her concluding assertion that he was 'not fit' to return to the police repeated on a loop in his mind: 'That's, that was like a narrative in my mind and, I just, I remember leaving [police HQ in city] in complete and utter distress, shaking, I was just what's the point? I've got nowhere to go. I've got nothing to do. I'm gonna just have six-months of like, and it was just the way she kept saying "You're not fit, you're not fit". It was just, like it was just so demeaning almost and I had, that was in mind constantly on repeat' (P27.1). Stuart was in no position, emotionally or professionally, to challenge the doctor's coldness and callous mismanagement of the meeting. It became too much for him to bear and he stormed out of the meeting in tears. He went straight home to drink vodka and take pills in an attempt to take his life. Stuart awoke under police guard in hospital, which understandably was very unsettling for him. Interestingly, Stuart's overriding emotion was that of guilt. He knew very well that his colleagues would have been more gainfully employed policing the city's streets, rather than being in a hospital room child-minding him: 'And I went back to [area in city] went straight to buy a bottle of vodka, went straight home, and just started popping all these pills and drinking and then passed-out and then the next thing I know is I sort of, I don't really remember the police knocking down the door or anything, but I just remember being in the hospital and being, like for four days constant watch like at the hospital guard, which I thought was really, surprising actually. I was quite surprised by that and I felt awful, I felt like I'm wasting their time' (P27.2).

This negative experience, however, led to an unexpected and much valued outcome that assuaged Stuart's conscience and formed part of a series of minor, but extremely powerful, altruistic events that helped to restore his faith in human compassion. Firstly, the officers who were minding him kindly offered to give him a lift home when he was released from hospital. And, secondly, one of the officers took the time to call in on him at home the following day to check that he was okay. Stuart knew that these officers, whom he did know previously, would have been very busy answering a never ending list of calls and that these were personal acts of kindness, rather than something that they were directed to do by a supervisor: 'And then I said "I'm not going" I actually said "I'm not going to [name of mental health unit]" and so the officers took me home and then they came the next day, or one of them came to check on me the next day to see if I was alright, which I thought was really nice' (P27.7). This philanthropic quality formed the very essence of his appreciation and was instrumental to his fledgling

recovery. Accordingly, the impromptu and enduring kindness of a (previously unknown) police inspector, who attended Stuart's suicidal episode on a city bridge, had remained with him until the present day. The inspector, who had learned that Stuart was an ex-officer, took the time to keep in touch with him and encourage his efforts to re-join the police: 'I think with the, the, the second attempt, which saw me at [city] bridge, there was an inspector [name], she actually, for some reason she was made aware of what had happened and that I was, you know, an officer on a career-break, and so she, she sort of remained in contact' (P28.2). Once again, Stuart was warmed and heartened by the kindness of selfless individuals and this reinvigorated his campaign to return to the police service: 'She spoke to me on the phone she made a contact in the email every so often, and she was trying to see what she could do her end. And, I think that's why I ended-up getting this appointment with occupational health' (P28.3).

Stuart's renewed vigour was finally rewarded when he was subsequently invited to re-join the police as a constable. He was thankful that his welfare needs were now being recognised by what he considered to be a hitherto uncaring organisation; and that he had been assigned to a bespoke return-to-work programme without the day-to-day stressors of his previous operational roles. This included the appointment of a supervisor who was both cognisant of, and encouraged to, accommodate Stuart's additional welfare needs: 'Like, my current line manager, I asked him, I didn't know him from Adam, and I asked him, I met him once, and I spoke to him once on the phone and then I asked him if he could come with me to my appointment in July for my doctor. And he said 'Yeah, absolutely.' And, he checked-in with me once a week and I feel like if I have concerns or an issue, I can go to him' (P36.3). These developments in accepted supervisory practice were not only vital to Stuart's ongoing sense of recovery, but they were now part of the corporate well-being plan (albeit limited to identified officers in crisis within the programme), and not wholly dependent upon random acts of altruism. Stuart's personal growth in this respect was demonstrated in his newly found confidence to seek practical and emotional support from his new supervisor, which was given freely and fairly. Stuart now felt that he had his own 'back' covered through his new supervisor's willingness, capability and capacity to help him feel relevant and included. This was something that he had never felt empowered to request in the past without fear of ridicule, rejection, and ultimately jeopardising his personal standing within his team. Additionally, Stuart was reassured that his new supervisor was both accessible and influential with the authority to introduce a supportive environment that would not be undermined by so-called alphas nor their unwritten rules. Stuart knew very well that there were still many challenges ahead of him. But, for the first time in his career, he possessed a concrete lifeline that was both legitimate and authentic, and this empowered him.

Table 3. Transcript extracts for Personal Experiential Theme 3

Brutalized by OH procedures	Page/line	Extracts
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but inspired by compassion.		
Untrusted and isolated by recuperative posting.	P5.5-7 P6.1	<p>And so I joined that team and I, actually I, when I joined that team I'd injured myself off-duty so I was put onto the Misper role [Missing Persons] whilst I was recovering. And, I just had no interaction with anyone on that team. The governor [inspector] sent me an email to say that I would be a Misper officer, and that was my role, so I went straight into that.</p> <p>I probably had an handful of, I was there for eighteen months, almost, and I probably had a handful of interactions with the governor and the, I remember going, getting the train to work, and being on the train, and then some, a group would get on at say [railway station], see me on the train, and move away, move into the next carriage. They, because I went, I think prob[ably] because I went straight onto [the] Misper role, they just didn't, like, give a toss really. They just, they didn't need to interact with me...</p>
Discrimination following mental health disclosure.	P25.6 P28.4	<p>And at this point, I, and it was on this day, that's right, so on that particular day in April I had, so I had already applied [to re-join police after career break], I had already told the police that I was back, I told them in January. I told them before that I was coming back, that I was coming back. So, I, and the I, I was totally honest with them, I told them that I've got some issues so I'm probably going to need to see occupational health before I get posted, that sort of stuff. Then, I didn't hear anything from, in February, from them in March.</p> <p>And that's why I kind of was almost sure that I was, you know, there is someone somewhere is processing people returning from career-breaks or recruitment or whatever, whatever HR department does that, that I, you know, that oh this one has issues, that maybe he just sort of put that there why I do this, that, and the other and, you know, time carries on. It may not have been that case, of course, but it's not how it felt.</p>
Helplessness and despair of OH procedure.	P26.3-5 P27.1-2	<p>That I've got six more months of not doing anything and not getting anywhere that, that, and that although I know it's not the job's problem like as in that I, that I went into crisis when I was away, like, it wasn't, it just felt like oh, you know, and I had this suspicion when I applied to come, when I, when I told them that I was coming back, that I had this suspicion that they're not gonna, they're just gonna push me, put me on the back burner because of my problems. That I'm not going to be, you know, why would they want to bring someone back when they've got these problems?</p> <p>...she said 'You're not fit for office work, you're not fit for any work.' That was, she was very, it was quite brutal. 2 There was no sort of bedside manner if you like, it was very cold, and I was, I was just, I don't know how to describe it, in complete distress, I was just in crisis, I was going, getting worse and really worked-up and really sort of, because she kept bringing people into the office, trying, because she wasn't getting on with the system or something, on the computer system. And then she was asking for advice. But she had brought two different people in the office and it was just a bit like. And I just got up and said 'I can't be here, I cannot be here anymore, I'm getting really upset, getting really worked-up'.</p> <p>That's, that was like a narrative in my mind and, I just, I remember leaving [police HQ in city] in complete and utter distress, shaking, I was just what's the point? I've got nowhere to go. I've got nothing to do. I'm gonna just have six-months of like, and it was just the way she kept saying 'You're not fit, you're not fit.' It was just, like it was just so demeaning almost and I had, that was in mind constantly on repeat. And I went back to [area in city] went straight to buy a bottle of vodka, went straight home, and just started popping all these pills and drinking and then passed-out and then the next thing I know is I sort of, I don't really remember the police knocking down the door or anything, but I just remember being in the hospital and being, like for four days constant watch like at the hospital guard, which I thought was really, surprising actually. I was quite surprised by that and I felt awful, I felt like I'm wasting their time.</p>

Heartened by random acts of altruism.	P27.7 P28.2	<p>And then I said 'I'm not going' I actually said 'I'm not going to [name of mental health unit]' and so the officers took me home and then they came the next day, or one of them came to check on me the next day to see if I was alright, which I thought was really nice.</p> <p>I think with the, the, the second attempt, which saw me at [city] bridge, there was an inspector [name], she actually, for some reason she was made aware of what had happened and that I was, you know, an officer on a career-break, and so she, she sort of remained in contact.</p>
Empowered by compassionate managers.	P28.3 P36.3	<p>She spoke to me on the phone she made a contact in the email every so often, and she was trying to see what she could do her end. And, I think that's why I ended-up getting this appointment with occupational health. When I got out of hospital I remember sending this email in April to HR, Occupational Health Mailbox, [inspector previously mentioned], there was someone else, and I was like, I don't know what else to do and so I wrote this email saying 'I need to go back to work, I've been told I'm not fit for six-months' this is like and I'm like, you know, 'I need this', I need to just sort of, 'I'm not in a financial, financially good situation at the moment', like now and blah, blah, blah. And I was pretty direct in the email.</p> <p>Like, my current line manager, I asked him, I didn't know him from Adam, and I asked him, I met him once, and I spoke to him once on the phone and then I asked him if he could come with me to my appointment in July for my doctor. And he said 'Yeah, absolutely.' And, he checked-in with me once a week and I feel like if I have concerns or an issue, I can go to him.</p>

Experiential statements

Abandonment and isolation	Page/line	Key words
<p>I've never fitted in.</p> <p>I didn't enjoy school and police training was like returning to school.</p> <p>I don't feel part of the police family. It's macho culture engenders ingroups and outgroups. I'm on the outside.</p> <p>I'm not one of the lads so I wasn't accepted by the alphas males on team.</p> <p>CID offered me a way out of the playground mentality. I could work hard there and be accepted for who I am.</p> <p>I was distraught when I was sent back to uniform. It was so unfair.</p> <p>I'm the one who becomes isolated and abandoned.</p> <p>I felt isolated growing-up. This made me sad and arm-cutting provided temporary relief.</p> <p>Stressed by mum's visit. Didn't always see eye-to-eye. She wasn't very loving and empathetic towards me.</p> <p>Devastated when partner finished with me. He was my best friend.</p> <p>CID rejection and a punishment posting to the worst team was a 'punch in the gut' and reinforced my decision to leave.</p> <p>No fanfare when I returned to UK. Friends and their lives had moved on. I had returned a failure without a story to tell.</p>	<p>P2.1-2</p> <p>P4.5</p> <p>P3.1</p> <p>P5.2</p> <p>P5.3</p> <p>P31.2</p> <p>P21.1</p> <p>P22.4</p> <p>P6.5</p> <p>P25.3</p>	<p>Nervous and shy.</p> <p>I'm on the outside.</p> <p>Not accepted by in-group.</p> <p>Out of uniform status.</p> <p>Dreading it.</p> <p>No one to talk to.</p> <p>Never there for me.</p> <p>Not really over it.</p> <p>Knew what team was like.</p> <p>Alone.</p>

Otherness and importance of tribe	Page/line	Key words
<p>I fight for what I feel is right in the police</p> <p>I do not agree with the alpha mentality that's often linked to length of service. The alpha's banter openly disrespected their colleagues, including seniors, and others were encouraged to join in. I would not. The alphas openly celebrated their macho experiences and values, it bound them together. I maintained my values by trying to talk to suspects, rather than using force. This made the alphas suspicious of me. Supervisors are also subject to subtle bullying. They either become one of the boys or lone wolves.</p> <p>My tribe is my strength – it's who I am.</p> <p>Finding my tribe is essential. It reinforces shared values and gives me a sense of belonging. I didn't know who my tribe was until I came to [city]. I had found my tribe in the CID. It was then cruelly taken away from me. New team was not my 'tribe' and I felt trapped in a role I could no longer perform. I love my tribe but they don't understand me fully. I need to find a new tribe to connect with.</p>	<p>P3.4 P9.5 P8.1 P8.4 P5.1</p> <p>P10.4 P11.4 P12.3 P13.2 P49.2</p>	<p>Working hard. Disrespect. Tasered this guy. Not one of them. Blurry line.</p> <p>It's all about tribes really. Didn't know anyone gay. Enforced career break. I didn't belong here. New tribe.</p>

Brutal OH and unexpected kindness	Page/line	Key words
<p>The kindness of individual colleagues gives me hope.</p> <p>Having 'your back' is very important in police work. I don't have time for people who don't do this, irrespective of your tribe. Officers gave me a lift home and looked-in on me the next day. I didn't know them, and I was really touched by their kindness. Female inspector kept in touch, she cared about me as a fellow officer. This made me feel good and gave me hope. Female inspector's kindness inspired me into positive action. I wrote to everyone to get myself back to work. New sergeant didn't know me but he was aware of my position. He came to a medical meeting. I really appreciated that.</p> <p>I was helpless in a brutal and faceless OH system.</p> <p>Being placed in a recuperative role isolated me from my new team - but I'm not sure I would have engaged anyway. I disclosed my illness to the police doctor and I was devastated when she said I wasn't fit to work for six months. I couldn't face another six months without working and pleaded with police doctor. She wouldn't listen. It was brutal. I was just a number in a faceless HR process. I had no control and felt vulnerable to the whims of HR admin staff. My honesty with the police doctor had cost me my job. I felt cheated and had nowhere to turn.</p>	<p>10.3 27.7 28.2 28.3 36.3</p> <p>P5.5 P26.1 P26.2 P28.4 P26.5</p>	<p>Decent person. Really nice. Remained in contact. I need this. I can go to him.</p> <p>Isolation. You're not fit for work. Brutal police doctor. On back-burner. Cheated by police doctor.</p>

Exploratory notes

I've never fitted in	Page/line	Key words
I didn't enjoy school and police training was like returning to school.	P2.1-2	Nervous and shy.
I don't feel part of the police family. It's macho culture engenders ingroups and outgroups. I'm on the outside.	P4.5	I'm on the outside.
I'm not one of the lads so I wasn't accepted by the alphas males on team.	P3.1	Not accepted by in-group.
CID offered me a way out of the playground mentality. I could work hard there and be accepted for who I am.	P5.2	Being out of uniform gave me status.
I was distraught when I was sent back to uniform. It was so unfair.	P5.3	Dreading it.
Brutality of OH processes	Page/line	Key words
Being placed in a recuperative role isolated me from my new team - but I'm not sure I would have engaged anyway.	P5.5	Isolation.
I disclosed my illness to the police doctor and I was devastated when she said I wasn't fit to work for six months.	P26.1	You're not fit for work.
I couldn't face another six months without working and pleaded with police doctor. She wouldn't listen. It was brutal.	P26.2	Brutal police doctor.
I was just a number in a faceless HR process. I had no control and felt vulnerable to the whims of HR admin staff.	P28.4	On back-burner.
My honesty with the police doctor had cost me my job. I felt cheated and had nowhere to turn.	P26.5	Felt cheated by police doctor.
Frustrations with NHS processes	Page/line	Key words
[Country] healthcare is efficient and joined-up with their mental health services. This is not the case in the UK.	P20.3	Efficiency of [country] healthcare.
I was incensed by the doctor who disregarded my diagnosis in [country] and took me off all the meds I was on.	P24.5	Taken off meds overnight.
The UK doctor didn't believe me. My enduring and life-threatening illness had been de-medicalised in one stroke.	P24.6	Not interested in [country] diagnosis.
Like work, NHS better at dealing with physical injury.	P40.2	NHS great for cancer.
NHS throw drugs at you in the hope that some of them stick.	P40.4	They don't have time.
Abandonment and isolation (work)	Page/line	Key words
Being shunned by colleagues on the train affected my confidence. I could have made more of an effort, but I didn't want to.	P6.1	They didn't give a toss.
CID rejection was a crushing blow. I had worked hard but I didn't self-promote like others. Perhaps I should have done.	P6.4	Not self-promoting cost me.
I didn't agree nor join in with their banter. This made me unpopular and I felt further isolated.	P10.1	Bullying.
CID rejection and a punishment posting to the worst team was a 'punch in the gut' and reinforced my decision to leave.	P6.5	Knew what team was like.
When I do reach-out, it's like I'm opening Pandora's Box and all the years of pain come flooding out.	P31.5	All comes flooding out.
Abandonment and isolation (outside work)	Page/line	Key words
I felt isolated growing-up. This made me sad and arm-cutting provided temporary relief.	P31.2	No one to talk to.
Stressed by mum's visit. Didn't always see eye-to-eye. She wasn't very loving and empathetic towards me.	P21.1	Never there for me.
Devastated when partner finished with me. He was my best friend.	P22.4	Not really over it.
No fanfare when I returned to UK. Friends and their lives had moved on. I had returned a failure without a story to tell.	P25.3	Alone.
I've always felt I would die through suicide. I thought about this a lot in my teens - but had no one to talk to.	P31.3	I thought about it a lot.
Police culture – team values	Page/line	Key words

Being new, I had to work harder than the 'old sweats' who didn't do much. I do not agree with the alpha mentality that's often linked to length of service. The alpha's banter openly disrespected their colleagues, including seniors, and others were encouraged to join in. I would not. Some women officers struggled to fit in too. They had to become part of the in-crowd - or be very good at their job – like me.	P2.6 P3.4 P9.5 P3.3	Lazy old sweats. Working hard is more important. Disrespect. Struggled to be accepted.
I've been the victim of subtle bullying, which is normalised by the machismo culture.	P4.6	Alpha male attitude.

Police culture - using force	Page/line	Key words
The alphas openly celebrated their macho experiences and values, it bound them together. The culture encouraged officers to use force in order to fit in with the alphas. It was celebrated. I maintained my values by trying to talk to suspects, rather than using force. This made the alphas suspicious of me. Police work centred upon decisiveness and domination. They didn't agree with my non-confrontational approach to policing. I could use force if I needed to.	P8.1 P9.1 P8.4 P9.2 P9.3	Tasered this guy. In order to fit in. Not one of them. They don't see any other way. I would get involved.

Police culture - managers	Page/line	Key words
Supervisors are also subject to subtle bullying. They either become one of the boys or lone wolves. I had no confidence in the supervisors or Fed rep, they were part of the 'boys' club.' Some supervisors avoid the difficult conversations with their staff, which causes issues to fester. I bumped into the inspector recently. I hadn't seen him for years, I felt physically sick with anxiety. Colleague who asked the clumsy question was reported by someone. I was happy to talk to them and help them understand.	P5.1 P7.1 P39.2 P7.2 P11.6	Blurry line. In each other's pockets. Avoid difficult conversations. He probably didn't even recognise me. Someone overheard and reported him.

Police culture – altruism	Page/line	Key words
Having 'your back' is very important in police work. I don't have time for people who don't do this, irrespective of your tribe. Officers gave me a lift home and looked-in on me the next day. I didn't know them, and I was really touched by their kindness. Female inspector kept in touch, she cared about me as a fellow officer. This made me feel good and gave me hope. Female inspector's kindness inspired me into positive action. I wrote to everyone to get myself back to work. New sergeant didn't know me but he was aware of my position. He came to a medical meeting. I really appreciated that.	10.3 27.7 28.2 28.3 36.3	Decent person. I thought [this] was really nice. She remained in contact. I need this. I can go to him.

Escapism	Page/line	Key words
I was anxious about seeing colleagues on the train – so I hid myself away and put on earphones to block the world out. Prospect of joining the worst team was debilitating. A career break offered me an escape. This was an anxious time for me. I needed respite, and a career break was a big decision, but I had no support from work. When my money was stolen, my career break was no longer a respite, it was now a fight for survival. I'm now more mindful of my unhelpful escapism of TV and music. They do not help in the long run.	14.1 6.2 P13.4 14.3 41.1	Stuck in cycle. Punch in the gut. No support. Honeymoon ends. Need to work on this.

Embattled self – different me	Page/line	Key words
Looking back to a different person who was socially confident and enjoyed the company of others. I can't remember much about my happier times on team. I'm no longer that person. I don't recognise the person who left for a new start in a new country. I couldn't do it now.	1.4 P13.1 P13.5	Was very outgoing, people person. Don't recognise that person. Can't remember that person.

I'm trying to remember the competent officer I used to be. I'm not that person now. Proper laughing is returning. Little flashes of the old me.	P32.4 P42.1	Completely different person That's hopeful.
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Embattled self – my tribe	Page/line	Key words
Finding my 'tribe' is essential. It reinforces shared values and gives me a sense of belonging.	P10.4	It's all about tribes really.
I didn't know who my tribe was until I came to [city].	P11.4	Growing-up didn't know anyone gay.
I had found my 'tribe' in the CID. It was then cruelly taken away from me.*	P12.3	Leaving CID enforced career break.
New team was not my 'tribe' and I felt trapped in a role I could no longer perform.	P13.2	I didn't belong here.
I love my tribe but they don't understand me fully. I need to find a new tribe to connect with.	P49.2	New tribe.

Embattled self – CID rejection	Page/line	Key words
Losing my CID post was crushing and I'm not over it yet.	P42.3	Kicked-out of CID.
I was good at my CID role. The selection process was unfair favouring those who talked-up their work.	P42.4	It's not me.
Perhaps I should have spoken-out more in CID, but that's not my style.	P43.1	Others spoke up. Different rules.
I had found my 'tribe' in the CID. It was then cruelly taken away from me.*	P12.3	Leaving CID enforced career break.
Losing CID role was major but Pandora's Box would have opened-up at some point. My challenges are wider than work.	P43.3	It was going to happen.

Embattled self - existential concerns	Page/line	Key words
I thought more about my own finite existence following a colleague's death on duty.	P12.2	She was the same age as me.
I'm still anxious at work. I feel an imposter when I speak.	P42.2	Dripping shirt.
Things are improving for me but I worry about the next 'bump in the road.'	P50.1	Deal with it better.
I was now just existing – not wishing to be alive.	P23.8	Don't see much point.
My meds stabilize my moods but I don't feel anything really.	P51.1	Dull.

Embattled self - depression	Page/line	Key words
I didn't realise that I was depressed before my career break. My awareness and ability to cope is improving slowly.	P13.6	Now know as depression.
I was depressed but I don't lock myself away in a dark room, but my work colleagues noticed my changing personality.	P17.3	Pit of depression.
I didn't think about suicide particularly at this point, but a partner's deceit reignited powerful teenage anxieties.	P18.3	Sent me over an edge.
Psychotic episode in café following release from hospital. I felt everyone was having fun. I wasn't, it was all over for me.	P19.3	It was all over for me.
I'm scared to be alone. I'm not in love with life.	P41.3	Will I always feel like this?

Improvements	Page/line	Key words
Supervisors should be better trained to help recognise the signs of depreciating mental health.	P33.3	I know this is a big subject.
Mental health is a massive part of police work following the austerity cuts in social services. Even more reason for training.	P45.2	More training.
Putting the onus on me to ask for help is not right. I don't want to come to the attention of my peers or managers.	P36.2	How are you?
I would like to help improve mental health awareness at work. But I don't feel strong enough yet. Time is passing me by.	P46.1	Overwhelming.
Since returning from my career break, I've noticed an improvement in the awareness of officers' mental health.	P39.3	Better e-learning.

Suicidal episodes	Page/line	Key words
Fourth overdose followed. I had texted a colleague who raised the alarm. They broke down my door and took me hospital.	P25.4	Four days in hospital.
Police doctor's repetition 'you're not fit' was demeaning and debilitating. I was finished. Went straight home to drink.	P27.3	Constantly repeating in my mind.
Police doctor took away my last hope. I had nothing more to live for. I drunk vodka and took pills. I awoke in hospital.	P27.4	Utter distress. Shaking.
Nurse was blunt with me and I didn't like this. I had always been an emergency before, now felt I was wasting their time.	P30.2	Just left on my own.
I was aware that I was taking officers away from their busy duties and I felt bad about this.	P27.5	I felt awful.

Initial notes

Not fitting in	Page/line	Key words
Didn't enjoy school.	P2.1	Nervous and shy child.
Police college/probation felt like a return to school.	P2.2	Like going back to school.
The playground was an especially unhappy place. I didn't fit in with the popular kids.	P2.3	I felt vulnerable.
I was near the bottom of the playground hierarchy at work because I wasn't one of the lads.	P2.4	Not one of the lads.
I'm not one of the lads so I wasn't accepted by the alphas males on team.	P3.1	Not accepted by in-group.
I am a gay man who doesn't like sport, they didn't like pop culture – we had little common ground.	P3.2	No common ground.
I don't feel part of the police family. It's macho culture engenders ingroups and outgroups. I'm on the outside.	P4.5	I'm on the outside.
CID offered me a way out of the playground mentality. I could work hard there and be accepted for who I am.	P5.2	Being out of uniform gave me status.
I was distraught when I was sent back to uniform. It was so unfair.	P5.3	Dreading it.

OH / healthcare process	Page/line	Key words
Being placed in a recuperative role isolated me from my new team - but I'm not sure I would have engaged anyway.	P5.5	Isolation.
I was impressed by the promptness and accessibility of the [country] healthcare service.	P18.4	UK is poor by comparison.
I didn't gel with one of the psychologists and my medication wasn't right. Suicide ideation followed.	P18.5	Importance of care continuity.
[country] healthcare is efficient and joined-up with their mental health services. This is not the case in the UK.	P20.3	Efficiency of [country] healthcare.
I was incensed by the doctor who disregarded my diagnosis in [country] and took me off all the meds I was on.	P24.5	Taken off meds overnight.
NHS care was initially good.	P24.1	Found help.
The UK doctor didn't believe me. My enduring and life-threatening illness had been de-medicalised in one stroke.	P24.6	Not interested in [country] diagnosis.
How can I go from seven different meds to zero overnight?	P24.8	This isn't right.
I was on high doses of mood stabilizing meds – you cannot expect me to simply start afresh with nothing.	P25.1	Doctor's diagnosis isn't right.
Depressed and defeated returning from [country] and to stop my meds overnight was unthinkable? Don't you believe me?	P25.2	Why are you doing this?
I disclosed my illness to the police doctor and I was devastated when she said I wasn't fit to work for six months.	P26.1	You're not fit for work.
I couldn't face another six months without working and pleaded with police doctor. She wouldn't listen. It was brutal.	P26.2	Brutal police doctor.
Police doctor was very cold in her delivery. She was hard and unprofessional, interrupting our meeting to fix her computer.	P26.3*	Unprofessional police doctor.
This is my life we are talking about and you're not listening.	P26.3*	Police doctor didn't listen.
I lost control of my emotions and walked out of the meeting. She was brutal and it was all too much for me to cope with.	P26.4	Walked-out on brutal police doctor.
My honesty with the police doctor had cost me my job. I felt cheated and had nowhere to turn.	P26.5	Felt cheated by police doctor.
I was shaking and utterly distressed when I walked out of police doctor's meeting.	P27.1	Utterly distressed by police doctor.
Narrative repeating in my mind was why would they want me back with these problems? I was useless.	P27.2	Police doctor made me feel useless.

I was just a number in a faceless HR process. I had no control and felt vulnerable to the whims of HR admin staff.	P28.4	On back-burner.
Gobsmacked that someone in the faceless HR system had pressed a button and I was now back at work with back pay.	P28.5	Revised OH decision saved my life.
I felt so vulnerable with faceless people making life-changing decisions.	P28.6	Felt vulnerable within faceless OH.
I'm now back on the same medication as before. It's not quite right but I feel more reassured.	P29.1	Reassured to be back on meds.
At the touch of a button, I was assigned a new department, manager, and back pay. I was thrilled.	P30.3	Still challenges ahead.
Police doctors' language should be more empathetic. They're sometimes rude and brutal.	P35.1	Not really confidential [in office].
Police doctor repeating 'You are totally unfit for work' was very hurtful and I couldn't get it out of my mind.	P35.2	You catastrophise things.
I was forced to find my own support outside work. This isn't right.	P38.3	I'm not getting the support.
Like work, NHS better at dealing with physical injury.	P40.2	NHS great for cancer.
We could learn from [country] joined-up approach to mental health treatment.	P40.3	[Country] joined-up.
NHS throw drugs at you in the hope that some of them stick.	P40.4	They don't have time.

Abandonment and isolation	Page/line	Key words
Being shunned by colleagues on the train affected my confidence. I could have made more of an effort, but I didn't want to.	P6.1	They didn't give a toss.
My imminent career break meant I remained in my isolated role. I understood their reasons for this but I felt ostracised.	P6.3	I was an outsider.
My isolation wasn't picked-up by supervisors. Why would it be?	P7.4	Isolation unlikely to be noticed at work.
CID rejection was a crushing blow. I had worked hard but I didn't self-promote like others. Perhaps I should have done.	P6.4	Not self-promoting cost me.
CID rejection and a punishment posting to the worst team was a 'punch in the gut' and reinforced my decision to leave.	P6.5	Knew what team was like.
I didn't agree nor join in with their banter. This made me unpopular and I felt further isolated.	P10.1	Bullying.
Trapped in horrible job, with no support. I was isolated, desperate and heading for a breakdown.	P16.1	Trapped.
My stay at the facility was longer than planned and this irritated my manager. This upset me further.	P20.4	[Country] manager losing patience.
Stressed by mum's visit. Didn't always see eye-to-eye. She wasn't very loving and empathetic towards me.	P21.1	Never there for me.
Couldn't cope with my manager's impatience. I resigned in anger, they wanted nothing more to do with me. Abandoned again.	P21.5	Resigned from café.
Devastated when partner finished with me. He was my best friend.	P22.4	Not really over it.
Spent Christmas, birthday and anniversary alone in Perth – and it got to me.	P23.1	Lonely and isolated.
Job offer in Perth gave me a boost but at the last minute they rescinded their offer.	P23.2	Let down again.
A friend from work offered me her empty flat. This was great news as living at nan's was not great.	P24.2	Mum had given my old room away.
Mum had given my old room to her partner's daughter. I couldn't say anything but this meant I had to stay with nan.	P23.5	I was being selfish – but it was my room.
Devastated and now displaced and unwanted living with nan who was barely existing herself.	P23.6	Living with nan was not good for me.
Those who were helping me are now no longer helping me. Abandoned by NHS.	P24.7	Abandoned by NHS.
No fanfare when I returned to UK. Friends and their lives had moved on. I had returned a failure without a story to tell.	P25.3	Alone.
I applied to re-join the police. My depression was quite bad so I decided to disclose it to them.	P25.5*	I needed to work.
This seemed to be the right thing to do – but now I'm not so sure. I think it delayed my return.	P25.5*	Why would they re-employ me?
I didn't share my anxieties with my mum straight away because she wouldn't have reacted well.	P21.3*	Difficult relationship with mum.
I was hurt when she [mum] told me to 'pull my socks up.' I was glad when she returned to the UK.	P21.3*	Mum unempathetic to my plight.
Relieved that dad paid for my flight back to UK. But had I failed?	P22.2	Dad got me home.
Shared my 'selfish' feelings about the spare room with mum. She understood and I was pleased to move home for a while.	P29.2	Mum understood about the room.
I still don't get on that well with mum, but we need each other. I care less about her partner, who doesn't like me either.	P29.3	Partner not impressed.
I felt isolated growing-up. This made me sad and arm-cutting provided temporary relief.	P31.2	No one to talk to.
My childhood was always a bit random since my parents split. I had no one really to turn to.	P31.1	Kept all the bad stuff within me.

I've always felt I would die through suicide. I thought about this a lot in my teens - but had no one to talk to.	P31.3	I thought about it a lot.
My sadness and isolation when growing-up makes it difficult for me to reach out to others even now.	P31.4	No friends at school.
When I do reach-out, it's like I'm opening Pandora's Box and all the years of pain come flooding out.	P31.5	All comes flooding out.
Things weren't working-out and I needed to move to my own place.	P32.1	Losing control.
The first half year in my flat was 'chaotic' and 'horrendous' – I was losing control. I couldn't get a grasp of anything.	P32.2	Couldn't grasp anything.
This half year is better and that's due to work, which isn't taxing but provides structure and a means to live.	P32.3	Surprised how quickly I remembered.

Police culture	Page/line	Key words
Being new, I had to work harder than the 'old sweats' who didn't do much.	P2.6	Lazy old sweats.
It's wrong to be judged by your length of service. Being a hard worker is much more important to me.	P2.7	Wrong to be defined by length of service.
Some women officers struggled to fit in too. They had to become part of the in-crowd - or be very good at their job – like me.	P3.3	Struggled to be accepted.
I do not agree with the alpha mentality that's often linked to length of service.	P3.4	Working hard is more important.
I get on better with my female colleagues because they accept me for who I am. We have more in common.	P4.1	I'm more accepted by female colleagues.
This upset me because I was a good officer.	P2.5	Lazy old sweats.
It's sad that one of my female colleagues seemed to feel she had to sleep with colleagues to become popular.	P4.2	Professionalism is more important.
I felt empathy for another female colleague who wasn't accepted by the alphas and was 'picked apart.'	P4.3	She was 'picked apart.'
The alphas are stereotypical beer drinking, sport loving machismos who socialise together in and outside work.	P4.4	Machismo culture normalised behaviour.
I've been the victim of subtle bullying, which is normalised by the machismo culture.	P4.6	Alpha male attitude.
Supervisors are also subject to subtle bullying. They either become one of the boys or lone wolves.	P5.1	Blurry line.
I couldn't face going back to team - the worst team. An aggressive team.	P5.4	Couldn't go back to team.
The manager's emails distanced me further. We had little interaction. He didn't know me.	P5.6	Impersonal nature of emails.
I had no confidence in the supervisors or Fed rep, they were part of the 'boys' club.'	P7.1	In each other's pockets.
The alphas ignored me when they came into the office. I suppose I ignored them too, and my anxiety spiralled.	P7.3	My anxiety spiralled.
The alphas openly celebrated their macho experiences and values, it bound them together.	P8.1	Tasered this guy.
The alphas' banter was often crude and inappropriate. I ignored it, which kept me on the outside.	P8.2	Inappropriate banter divided us.
The culture encouraged officers to use force in order to fit in with the alphas. It was celebrated.	P9.1	In order to fit in.
Preferred to use communication rather than physical force. I valued others who shared this view.	P8.3	I preferred to talk to people.
I maintained my values by trying to talk to suspects, rather than using force. This made the alphas suspicious of me.	P8.4	Not one of them.
Police work centred upon decisiveness and domination. They didn't agree with my non-confrontational approach to policing.	P9.2	They don't see any other way.
I could use force if I needed to.	P9.3	I would get involved.
The alpha's banter openly disrespected their colleagues, including seniors, and others were encouraged to join in. I would not.	P9.5	Disrespect.
Being gay hasn't been a problem for me in the police, but I often have trouble finding common ground with male officers.	P10.2	They like rugby. I like pop culture.
Having 'your back' is very important in police work. I don't have time for people who don't do this, irrespective of your tribe.	P10.3	Decent person.
Being gay was not the problem for me in the police.	P11.1	No issues being gay in police.
Colleagues sometimes ask inappropriate questions, but I know that they're being clumsy rather than malicious.	P11.5	Clumsy, but not malicious, questions.
Colleague who asked the clumsy question was reported by someone. I was happy to talk to them and help them understand.	P11.6	Someone overheard and reported him.
Anyone can report anything at work. I would rather look at their intentions and try to educate them.	P11.7	Educate rather than report.
I sound ridiculous when I try to be aggressive. That's why I use comedy to help gain control of suspects.	P12.1	I don't sound aggressive.
Yet again, I was being exploited by managers and circumstances. Code of conduct in the police, employment regs. in [city].	P16.3	Exploited by work rules.
I bumped into the inspector recently. I hadn't seen him for years, I felt physically sick with anxiety.	P7.2	He probably didn't even recognise me.

Officers gave me a lift home and looked-in on me the next day. I didn't know them, and I was really touched by their kindness.	P27.7	I thought [this] was really nice..
Female inspector who dealt with my suicidal episode contacted me as she was aware I was an officer on a career break.	P28.1	Kindness of senior officer.
Female inspector kept in touch, she cared about me as a fellow officer. This made me feel good and gave me hope.	P28.2	She remained in contact.
Female inspector's kindness inspired me into positive action. I wrote to everyone to get myself back to work.	P28.3	I need this.
Very impressed with new manager who takes time to talk (not just email) to agree best way forward. This is what I need.	P30.4	New line manager explained role.
Very reassured by new manager who agreed to attend NHS meetings with me to assist the process.	P30.5	Told him everything.
The work self-referral system is ineffective because people in despair often don't want to talk.	P33.4	Don't want to talk.
People don't always mean it when they say their door is always open.	P34.2	Doesn't mean you are there.
I dealt with a mother who killed her two children. Horrendous – but there was no welfare support offered.	P35.4	It's not normal.
I dealt with a lot of paedophilia in the CID and there was no support.	P36.1	No support.
New sergeant didn't know me but he was aware of my position. He came to a medical meeting. I really appreciated that.	P36.3	I can go to him.
Having a supervisor you can trust is very reassuring. I now feel confident to go back to him if I need to.	P36.4	Trust in supervisor.
Having my sergeant with me at the NHS meeting was reassuring and he could speak for me if I missed anything.	P37.1	I'm not very clear.
Like many men, I'm not very good at talking about my problems. A supervisor who knows your background is crucial.	P37.2	Men don't talk.
What officers see isn't normal – so they get pissed at the end of the shift. It's the culture.	P37.3	Get pissed.
Team officers are like kids in a class. That's police culture. Supervisors need to be aware of dynamics to help protect others.	P39.1	Supervisors avoid difficult conversations.
Some supervisors avoid the difficult conversations with their staff, which causes issues to fester.	P39.2	Avoid difficult conversations.
Understandably, supervisors don't always know what's going on in officers' lives.	P39.4	Social media.
Being bi-polar seems worse than being gay in the police. Colleagues don't seem to understand it so well.	P43.3	Treated differently.
I think they are more used to gay colleagues than bi-polar colleagues. They don't know what to say to me.	P44.1	Don't talk at all.
I feel my illness is likely to limit my opportunities at work. What would the Daily Mail say about giving me a gun?	P49.1	What are my restrictions?

Escapism	Page/line	Key words
Prospect of joining the worst team was debilitating. A career break offered me an escape.	P6.2	Punch in the gut.
I would have resigned, but a career break gave me a chance to sort myself out and possibly return.	P13.3	Chance to sort myself out.
This was an anxious time for me. I needed respite, and a career break was a big decision, but I had no support from work.	P13.4	No support.
I was anxious about seeing colleagues on the train – so I hid myself away and put on earphones to block the world out.	P14.1	Stuck in cycle.
I felt initially good on my career break – but it was a 'honeymoon' period.	P14.2	Honeymoon starts.
When my money was stolen, my career break was no longer a respite, it was now a fight for survival.	P14.3	Honeymoon ends.
I resigned from the café to move nearer to friends. Am I repeating my escapist behaviour?	P15.3	Resigned from café.
Emotional drudgery – [city] had become the new [old city].	P16.2	[City] became new [old city].
Reflected upon my unhappy life in [country]. This was not how it was supposed to be.	P17.1	Unhappy in [country].
Break-up made me re-evaluate the reasons why I went to [country] in the first place. I had hardly seen the country at all.	P22.5	New reason to travel.
I was now re-motivated to travel and achieve my goals.	P22.6	Motivated to travel.
This was all too much for me to bear. I made the decision to return. I had failed.	P23.3	Failure.
I was now running back to what I had run away from.	P23.4	Failed again.
I desperately didn't want to fail but I knew I needed a sensible plan if I was going to return to [country].	P22.3	Escape to a new life again.
I'm now more mindful of my unhelpful escapism of TV and music. They do not help in the long run.	P41.1	Need to work on this.
Out of the house, I block the world out with music although I know this is wrong.	P41.4	My major escape.

Embattled self	Page/line	Key words
Looking back to a different person who was socially confident and enjoyed the company of others.	P1.4	Was very outgoing, people person..
No prior ambition to join the police but thought I would be good at it.	P1.2	I was confident then.
Finding my 'tribe' is essential. It reinforces shared values and gives me a sense of belonging.	P10.4	All about tribes really.
I didn't know who my tribe was until I came to city.	P11.4	Growing-up, didn't know anyone gay.
First gay couple in EastEnders was a big deal for me. Growing mainstream awareness and acceptance helped me come out.	P11.3	Anxiety of coming out.
I thought more about my own finite existence following a colleague's death on duty.	P12.2	She was the same age as me.
I had found my 'tribe' in the CID. It was then cruelly taken away from me.	P12.3	Leaving CID enforced career break.
I can't remember much about my happier times on team. I'm no longer that person.	P13.1	Don't recognise that person.
New team was not my 'tribe' and I felt trapped in a role I could no longer perform.	P13.2	I didn't belong here.
I'm aware of subtle homosexual discrimination in a 'hetero-normative world.'	P11.2	Hetero-normative world.
I don't recognise the person who left for a new start in a new country. I couldn't do it now.	P13.5	Can't remember that person.
I didn't realise that I was depressed before my career break. My awareness and ability to cope is improving slowly.	P13.6	Now know as depression.
I thought my policing skills and integrity would be easily transferable in [country]. But, this was not the case.	P14.4	Lost professional self.
I was existing in [country] but not living. My confidence was draining away.	P15.1	Existing, not living.
Having to chase low paid, dead-end jobs in an unfamiliar country took its toll on my emotional and physical resilience.	P14.5	Adventure was now a nightmare.
The café work was tough. I had poor life / work balance and it was eating away at my soul. Was this really worth it?	P15.2	Was it worth it?
Red tape limited my employment opportunities in [country]. I felt increasingly vulnerable, but couldn't fail again.	P15.4	I couldn't fail again.
Described as moody and criticised my behaviour. I resented this and pushed back. This was not the support I needed.	P16.6	Resented lack of support.
Struggling to cope mentally but thought I could hide it. They knew, and wondered which version of me they were going to get.	P16.4	Hid my struggle, but friends knew.
Aware my mental health was deteriorating. I was now having more bad days than good.	P17.2	More bad days than good.
I was depressed but I don't lock myself away in a dark room, but my work colleagues noticed my changing personality.	P17.3	Pit of depression.
Overwhelmed by a friend's gift. I wasn't strong enough to thank her and react as I ought to have done.	P17.4	Unworthy of her kindness. Self-loathing.
My breakdown was the nadir and I knew I had to do something.	P18.1	I had to do something.
I was diagnosed in [country] with bi-polar. At least now I knew what I was up against and could start treatment.	P16.5	Now knew what I was up against.
I hardly ever went to the doctor.	P18.2	I'm now dependent upon the doctor.
I didn't think about suicide particularly at this point, but a partner's deceit reignited powerful teenage anxieties.	P18.3	Sent me over an edge.
Arm cuts released black clouds from my head. Soothing my emotional pain and chaos.	P19.1	Re-started arm cutting in [country].
Psychotic episode in café following release from hospital. I felt everyone was having fun. I wasn't, it was all over for me.	P19.3	It was all over for me.
Self-admission to care facility was agreed with work. Not letting people down was important to me.	P20.2	Not letting work down.
I was now just existing – not wishing to be alive.	P23.8	Don't see much point.
Fellow patient shouted abuse at me. I should have been able to deal with this, but I couldn't. It really got to me.	P27.6	My emotional resilience had gone.
I'm trying to remember the competent officer I used to be. I'm not that person now.	P32.4	Completely different person.
I need to take better care of myself, curtail old habits of hiding away listening to music or binge TV.	P33.1	Find myself going back.
I'm more accepting of my [limited] options at work due to illness and I realise that I may never be truly happy.	P33.2	Some jobs I'm not able to do.
I often don't want to talk when I'm in crisis - but I would like others to try and understand what I'm going through.	P34.1	Friends could try harder to understand.
I don't like the label 'mental health.' It affects everyone.	P34.3	Unhelpful label.
I must find new ways of coping with my anxieties. Need to push my boundaries.	P41.2	Scared of own thoughts.
I'm scared to be alone. I'm not in love with life.	P41.3	Will I always feel like this?
Proper laughing is returning. Little flashes of the old me.	P42.1	That's hopeful.

I'm still anxious at work. I feel an imposter when I speak.	P42.2	Dripping shirt.
Losing my CID post was crushing and I'm not over it yet.	P42.3	Kicked-out of CID.
I was good at my CID role. The selection process was unfair favouring those who talked-up their work.	P42.4	It's not me.
Perhaps I should have spoken-out more in CID, but that's not my style.	P43.1	Others spoke up. Different rules.
I'm not suited to distance learning, which affected my CID exams.	P43.2	No one to help you.
Losing CID role was major but Pandora's Box would have opened-up at some point. My challenges are wider than work.	P43.3	It was going to happen.
I'm treated differently outside of work. Fewer invitations out and told to make myself 'scarce' if I have a moment.	P44.2	Didn't take it to heart.
I don't lock myself away when I'm in crisis. I tried to mask my feelings but I now know people see my mood changes.	P44.4	Written all over my face.
I'm irritated by friends who don't take the time to learn about my issues.	P45.1	Why don't they read-up on it?
I don't yet have the skills to recognise my spiral towards suicide.	P47.1	Unable to pre-empt.
I have a lot of pride, which can prevent me from reaching-out for help.	P47.2	Invisible pride. Cloak.
I need to remind myself of who I used to be and why I joined the police in the first place.	P48.1	Progression to PC.
I'm now more serious than I used to be.	P48.2	Friends still party.
I would think about promotion in the future. My experiences would help me be a better supervisor – but not at the moment.	P48.3	Thanks for that.
I love my tribe but they don't understand me fully. I need to find a new tribe to connect with.	P49.2	New tribe.
Things are improving for me but I worry about the next 'bump in the road.'	P50.1	Deal with it better.
Suicide remains an option - but I look forward to the day it doesn't.	P50.2	Take option off the table.
It was a big thing for me to throw away my excess medication. It symbolised my improving strength.	P50.3	In head, still an option.
I take heart that I can deal with things that would have sent me into a spiral previously.	P50.4	Less impact.
My meds stabilize my moods but I don't feel anything really.	P51.1	Dull.
Not feeling is okay at the moment – I miss having fun but one drink too many could hurt me.	P51.2	Not erratic.
I sometimes feel down after having a drink – so it's not worth it at the moment.	P51.3	Low.
Moderation is the key to help my anxiety.	P52.1	Fine line.
I'm passionate about food and coffee. I should concentrate of these more as healthy coping strategies.	P52.2	Less binge TV.
Social media can be very harmful to some people. I have to come away from it from time-to-time.	P40.1	Harmful social media.

Improvements	Page/line	Key words
Supervisors should be better trained to help recognise the signs of depreciating mental health.	P33.3	I know this is a big subject.
Having to tell security why I'm at reception [for treatment] belittles me.	P35.3	They should stop this from happening.
More mental health training is needed at work to help identify those that need help.	P34.4	Awareness.
There's some good e-learning on line.	P34.5	Improvement since returning.
Putting the onus on me to ask for help is not right. I don't want to come to the attention of my peers or managers.	P36.2	How are you?
I didn't know about the Blue Light Champion. This needs to be advertised more.	P38.1	Blue Light Champion.
Supervisors should be there to help – but I was frightened of my first inspector, so it's down to their personalities.	P38.4	Pack mentality.
Since returning from my career break, I've noticed an improvement in the awareness of officers' mental health.	P39.3	Better e-learning.
I'm frustrated with unhelpful preconceptions of bi-polar. This can be improved.	P44.3	More awareness.
Mental health is a massive part of police work following the austerity cuts in social services. Even more reason for training.	P45.2	More training.
I would like to help improve mental health awareness at work. But I don't feel strong enough yet. Time is passing me by.	P46.1	Overwhelming.
Job looked good on paper – but it's not so good in reality.	P1.3	Looked interesting.
PCSO role didn't have the same opportunities as police. I wanted to better myself and this was the obvious step.	P1.4	Progression.

I was right about the team because it was subsequently disbanded. Not had much to do with the Fed, but when I did need their help they said they couldn't help me. Fed didn't even refer me to the Blue light Champion. I would like to play a part in reforming work's approach to mental health.	P9.4 P38.2* P38.2* P40.5	Intimidating alphas. Couldn't help. Not even Blue Light Champion. Not sure how.
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[Country] work culture	Page/line	Key words
It took inner-strength to disclose my suicidal episode to my manager. I resumed work the following day as they needed me.	P20.1*	Unwilling to let work down.
I think she cared more about the café then my welfare. I had no employment rights.	P20.1*	Felt vulnerable at work. No rights.
My manager's impatience with my illness was making things worse. I wasn't doing this on purpose – I'm ill.	P21.4	[Country] manager losing patience.

Suicidal episodes	Page/line	Key words
First overdose. I was found semi-conscious by a housemate. I was reaching out for help.	P19.2	First attempt.
Second suicidal episode but I didn't really mean it, not like before.	P23.7	Second attempt. Reaching-out for help.
Started a good day – but I ended up taking tablets, walked to a bridge and climbed over the edge. But I couldn't jump.	P24.3	Reaching out for help.
Fourth overdose followed. I had texted a colleague who raised the alarm. They broke down my door and took me hospital.	P25.4	Four days in hospital.
Cannot remember if police attended but I went to hospital.	P24.4	Hospitalised.
Police doctor's repetition 'you're not fit' was demeaning and debilitating. I was finished. Went straight home to drink.	P27.3	Constantly repeating in my mind.
Police doctor took away my last hope. I had nothing more to live for. I drunk vodka and took pills. I awoke in hospital.	P27.4	Utter distress. Shaking.
Surprised and embarrassed to awaken to a police guard in hospital. I didn't care for much at the time.	P27.5*	Surprised and embarrassed by attempt.
I was aware that I was taking officers away from their busy duties and I felt bad about this.	P27.5*	I felt awful.
Panic attack when out with mum. I felt a strong urge to run and jump under a tram.	P21.2	Urge to jump under tram.
Overdosed and tried to hang myself at mum's home. Embarrassed to say I cannot even recall the trigger.	P29.4	Cannot even recall trigger.
I'm slowly recovering, but the suicidality is part of me and my upbringing. This frightens me.	P30.6	Suicidality is part of me.
Walked into A&E after final suicidal episode. They weren't impressed and I had to wait around until they had time for me.	P30.1	They had no time for me.
Nurse was blunt with me and I didn't like this. I had always been an emergency before, now felt I was wasting their time.	P30.2	Just left on my own.

Interview transcript

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
<p>1. Looking back to a different person who was socially confident and enjoyed the company of others. I'm no longer that person.</p> <p>2. No prior ambition to join the police but thought I would be good at it. So I was confident then</p> <p>3. Job looked good on paper – but it's not so good in reality.</p> <p>4. PCSO role didn't have the same opportunities as police. I wanted to better myself and this was the obvious step.</p>	<p>Researcher: (00.00) The researcher gives a general introduction, having explained the purpose of the interview and completed the necessary paperwork for informed consent and participation. Stuart (participant 13) is invited to describe what attracted him to the police service.</p> <p>Stuart I, a friend of mine, who is an officer, and was an officer at the time, suggested that the PCSO [Police Community Support Officer] role might actually be really good for me because of the type of person I, I was at the time. Very outgoing, ¹ people person. And prior to the police, I worked in retail and cater[ing], food and hospitality, so I was very people based. ² And I read about the role on line and I was like yeah this is really interesting, I liked it on paper and so I applied, ³ and yep, got the, got the job as a PCSO and. Yeah, natural progression really ⁴. I had never desired to be a police officer. I mean, quite a few people actually told me growing-up that I would make a good police officer. I, yeah, it was never kinda a desire, ⁵ but, but the problem with the PCSO role is it's very flat-line, there's really no room for manoeuvre there, or growth, and after I think it was two years I applied to be a PC and the year later I was in training. ⁶</p> <p>Researcher: (01.53) Where were you posted to?</p> <p>Stuart [Borough in city]. And specifically [ward] in [borough in city] as a PCSO and then as a PC I was posted to [ward].</p> <p>Researcher: (02.11) Can you tell me about your experiences as a probationer?</p> <p>Stuart Yeah. I was quite nervous and shy. It was actually a bit like going back to school. There is definitely a playground mentality. ¹ And, I'm not one of the lads.</p>	<p>*Denotes more than one underlined entry.</p> <p>1. Prior sense of self was a very social, outgoing, people person. Now it's different.</p> <p>2. Worked previously in people focussed roles.</p> <p>3. Job sounded good on paper – suggesting reality is different.</p> <p>4. Natural progression or going with the flow?</p> <p>5. No prior desire to be a police officer. Although told he would be good at it.</p> <p>6. Limited career progression as PCSO.</p>

1. Didn't enjoy school – nervous and shy.	Never have been one of the lads. ² It's, you know, I don't know much about sport, you know, it's just not on my radar. ³ But I kind of, I went on to a really good team and I gelled with them really well, and I worked really well, but I think, like, all teams, certainly, there's a hierarchy, of, and if you're not, a certain, certain way or if you're not a certain, if, regardless of your work ethic, you'll be judged and placed somewhere in this hierarchy. ⁴ And, I joined the team with three other probationers. So, there were four of us from my training that went onto the same team. So, and we all kinda went quite differently, fitted-in quite differently on team. Yeah.	1. Nervous and shy with school reference.
2. Police college/probation felt like a return to school.		2. Felt he didn't fit in as 'not one of the lads.'
3. The playground was an especially unhappy place. I didn't fit in with the popular kids and felt vulnerable.		3. Not knowing about sport hindered his socialising with male work colleagues.
4. I was near the bottom of the playground hierarchy at work because I wasn't one of the lads.		4. Worked well on good team but judged within team hierarchy, irrespective of work ethic.
5. This upset me because I was a good officer.	Researcher: (03.41) You said it was like a playground and a hierarchy. Can you tell me a little more about that?	5. Ever present self-defining significance of how long one has been an officer. 'Old sweat.'
6. Being new, I had to work harder than the 'old sweats' who didn't do much.	Stuart Yeah, so there's, <u>there's this attitude of, and it still exists now, ten years' on, this attitude of your warrant number, is, is essentially your, your initial standing as your sort of, you know, if you've got an older warrant number then you are one of the old sweats, who don't, don't have to do too much,</u> ⁵ you, you know, <u>if you are paired-off with them then you are going to be doing all the work, all the paper[work], the writing, the arrest, and you're just, and they'll just sort of mingle around [laughs]. So, if you get an arrest in you'll be booking them in, you'll be in the writing room, and they'll be outside having a smoke or chatting, or whatever, eating.</u> ⁶ And then, so that, <u>not to say everyone with an old warrant number is a good police officer, that doesn't sort of equate.</u> ⁷ But there is a definite, sort of, I don't know how to describe, to sort of give an example of, it's almost like <u>the first thing anyone does is check your warrant number. And, it equates to whether or not, I think that, actually, it's whether or not you should know something.</u> ⁸ And then, but then there's this, well, then there's the, the personality-wise, so, you know, you've got the smokers who are outside, who are, you know, they, they are, you know, the guys will be talking, because it's very alpha, the teams, ¹ and I think even still, it's still a <u>very male dominated place to be</u>	6. Less experienced colleague is expected to do the humdrum work while the old sweat has a smoke.
7. It's wrong to be judged by your length of service. Being a hard worker is much more important to me.		7. Time in the job is an automatic indicator of being a good officer.
		8. First thing colleagues do is to check a new person's warrant number to get an idea of their supposed standing within the team.

<p>1. I'm not one of the lads so I wasn't accepted by the alphas males on team.</p> <p>2. I am a gay man who doesn't like sport, they didn't like pop culture – we had little common ground.</p> <p>3. I think some of the women officers on my team struggled to fit in too. They either had to become part of the in-crowd - or be very good at their job.</p> <p>4. I do not agree with the alpha mentality that's often linked to length of service. Working hard and being professional is far more important to me.</p>	<p>and my team only had like three females. ² And <u>they</u>, I think, from my perspective, <u>that they really struggled to fit into team because they were judged in a more superficial way.</u> ³ I, you know, a lot of, I mean, <u>I'm a gay guy,</u> ⁴ and <u>a lot of, of the males never, sort of, engaged in conversation with me because, again, I don't know anything about rugby or, I don't have any interest in sport, so finding common ground is not so easy.</u> ⁵ So, it was a bit like, <u>like at school when you're, you know, if you sit at the front of the class you are deemed as the geek, if you sit at the back of the classroom you're sort of seen as more disruptive and a bit of a clown and, you know, the popular kids sit at the back of the, the class and it's very much like that on team.</u> ⁶</p> <p>Researcher: (07.01) The dynamics you've explained, can you give an example that sticks out in your mind of where you've been paired with somebody with more service that you, and how that's equated to a particular job that you've then had to do?</p> <p>Stuart Good question. It's a long time ago now, so [pause] I can't think of a specific job but I mean, there was, I was paired-off with a guy, an area car driver [usually a very experienced PC], and <u>although he had an old warrant number he wasn't that well liked on the team, because he was seen as lazy. And, I, I mean, I literally did everything.</u> ⁷ Like I did all the writing for like everything, the arrest, the booking-in procedure, everything. You name it, I mean, he was known for smoking all the time but, yeah, I can't really think of a specific job.</p> <p>Researcher: (08.36) That's fine. You also mentioned the three females that were on the team, what's your sense of their experience?</p> <p>Stuart Well, again, I mean, <u>I'm a man, I'm a male, so I, I, it's you know, from my perspective, I mean I always got on with the females that were on team. I get on with females generally a bit better, I, there seems to be, that females, because</u></p>	<p>1. 'It's very alpha on teams.'</p> <p>2. 'Very male dominated', only three females.</p> <p>3. The females struggled on team.</p> <p>4. Early sharing of his sexuality helps provide context to females' struggle and his perspective, generally.</p> <p>5. He was different to the alphas. Without sporting interests, there's little common ground. He was always going to be on the outside.</p> <p>6. School parallel – he was a geek who sat at front of class.</p> <p>7. Being lazy is frowned upon, out-trumping warrant number status.</p>
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<p>1 I get on better with my female colleagues because they accept me for who I am. We have more in common.</p> <p>2. It's sad that one of my female colleagues seemed to feel she had to sleep with colleagues to become popular. It's far better to prove yourself through hard work and professionalism.</p> <p>3. I felt empathy for another female colleague who wasn't accepted by the alphas and was 'picked apart.'</p> <p>4. The alphas are stereotypical beer drinking, sport loving machismos who socialise together in and outside work.</p> <p>5. I don't feel part of the police family. It's macho culture engenders ingroups and outgroups. I'm on the outside.</p> <p>6. I've been the victim of subtle bullying, which is normalised by the machismo culture.</p>	<p>they're put into this, this category of, ¹ I don't really know, so you'll have, <u>so we had three females, yeah, I think three. One who was fantastic at her job. Very well respected by the team because she just got on with it and didn't, she was a driver, she went to all the calls, like if she was free she'd always up, I loved working with her actually. And she'd been in the job for ten years by the time I joined.</u> ² And, and then <u>there was another girl who, wasn't, wasn't seen as being very good, but she was always out with the boys. So, she was also out whenever they went out for drinks after work. And she was always, and she had slept with two or three of the guys.</u> ³ It kind of, <u>from my perspective, it looked like that's how she was getting respect from, from the male counterparts.</u> ⁴ And, but really, they were just being stereotypically boys really, guys, and a lot of bitching, you know, and behind the back talk. And then there was another female who was just picked apart because she, she was, she just didn't fit with what they wanted, <u>didn't gel with her.</u> ⁵</p> <p>Researcher: (11.15) When you say 'they', who are they?</p> <p>Stuart <u>They are the, the, the top of the hierarchy, so the older sweats, the, the boys, the lads who get together and go to cricket games or rugby games and they're very social outside of work, very social inside of work.</u> ⁶ When, when, when police, <u>when people say the police are one big family and, you know, when something awful happens to one of us, you know, there's this attitude that we're all together in this one thin blue line, but actually, in reality it's not quite like that. You know, it's, there's bullying, even if it's subtle.</u> ⁷ Like, there's still an element of you don't fit in. And so, it's, <u>it's the majority will always outweigh because they, you know, especially with, well, especially with, in the police it is a male dominated environment and there's an alpha male attitude with the police that you need to be an aggressor, intimidating, yeah. That sort of stuff.</u> ⁸</p> <p>Researcher: (12.53) Was that attitude shared by the supervisors?</p>	<p>1. Identified as male. Generally got on better with females owing to their <i>categorisation</i> of him [being gay].</p> <p>2. Pen picture of the three female colleagues: Strong personal identification with first who was a hard-working driver with experience [positive status].</p> <p>3. Less personal identification with second, who wasn't so good at her job, but she socialized with the boys after work. This made her popular with them and, therefore, accepted.</p> <p>4. Sleeping with the alpha males was how she got their respect.</p> <p>5. A sense of empathy for the third female who also didn't fit in and was 'picked apart' by the in-group.</p> <p>6. Interest in sports, drinking and socialising bound the in-group together.</p> <p>7. Police may be perceived as a family, but this is not the reality. There's bullying.</p> <p>8. Bullying can be subtle. The machismo environment engenders / normalises forms of aggression and intimidation.</p>
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<p>1. Supervisors are also subject to subtle bullying. They either become one of the boys or lone wolves.</p> <p>2. CID offered me a way out of the playground mentality. I could work hard there and be accepted for who I am. Being out of uniform gives me status beyond by service.</p> <p>3. I was distraught when I was sent back to uniform. It was so unfair.</p> <p>4. I couldn't face going back to team - the worst team. An aggressive team.</p> <p>5. Being placed in a recuperative role isolated me from my new team - but I'm not sure I would have engaged anyway.</p> <p>6. The manager's emails distanced me further. We had little interaction. He didn't know me.</p>	<p>Stuart <u>On my first team there was one supervisor that was like that, had sort of the, the, the, the line between manager, supervisor and friend was very blurry to him and some of the others on the team. Yeah, that was, but the others were not so much and my inspector, at the time, was very much a lone wolf, almost, because he was very, he only really dealt with the team when he needed to. And, he, it's not like he was lazy, he oversaw the team. He did his job a bit like very well, people didn't really like that, but, and he wasn't particularly, or not to us anyway, particularly friendly with the, with the sergeants. There was quite clearly a line between us and, him, the sergeants and then us, there was quite clearly, ¹ you know, but when I, I don't know if I can jump ahead? So, after I did my stint, I did three years in CID [Criminal Investigations Department] ² and then I went back to team, I was told I had to come out of CID because I failed the TDCs [Trainee Detective Constables]. I was told I was going back to team [number]. [Laughs] And team [number] have had a terrible reputation for bullying, for isolation, for being just, yeah, particularly bad. ³ And so I was dreading it, ⁴ because I, I sort of knew a couple of people, but not very well. And, of all the teams that I want[ed], that I, you know, if I could pick I certainly wouldn't, it would be at the bottom of my list. This reputation had been there for quite a while, and we're probably talking, well, six-years at least I would say. Mostly men, mostly aggressors, they were always the team, there was always people getting complaints against, for being too aggressive on the streets or what-have-you. ⁵ And so I joined that team and I, actually I, when I joined that team I'd injured myself off-duty so I was put onto the Misper role [Missing Persons] whilst I was recovering. And, I just had no interaction with anyone on that team. The governor [inspector] sent me an email to say that I would be a Misper officer, and that was my role, so I went straight into that. I, I probably had an handful of, I was there for eighteen months, almost, and I probably had a handful of interactions with the governor ^{6,7} and the, I remember going, getting the train to work, and being on the train, and then some, a group would get on at say [railway station], see me on the train, and move away, move into the next carriage. They, because I went, I think prob[ably] because I</u></p>	<p>1. Stereotypical blurred lines of supervision: sergeant who wants to be one of the boys [Pc with stripes] and the lone wolf inspector [aloof and driven].</p> <p>2. I sense the CID role was status-forming for P13 and offered a means to improve his professional stock.</p> <p>3. Double punishment. Ironic laughter at being sent back to uniform when marginally failed his exams. And to the team with the worst reputation for bullying.</p> <p>4. Personal sense of dread. The CID escape plan had back-fired and he was now heading for inevitable isolation / bullying from the worst team.</p> <p>5. Established reputation of male officer aggressors getting public complaints. An anathema to P13 who is a more reflective, communicative officer.</p> <p>6. Placement to a lone, non-operational role [following injury] isolated P13 from his new team and lessened the opportunity for socialisation and acceptance.</p> <p>7. Email is often the default means of communication between busy managers and their team.</p>
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1. Being shunned by colleagues on the train affected my confidence. I could have made more of an effort, but I didn't want to.	went straight onto [the] Misper role, they just didn't, like, give a toss really. They just, they didn't need to interact with me ¹ . unless they had to go and get DNA sample or something from a Misper. But then when I recovered, the governor kept me as Misper officer because I was going on a career-break but it was about a year where I was fit to go out on the street, but he just kept me as the Misper officer. Because he, his, his rationale was he didn't want me to get involved in anything where I may need to go to court, while I was off. And, but in reality I think, it's certainly not how it felt. It certainly felt like I was being just isolated and ostracised from the team. And, it just sort of re-confirmed why I needed to go on this career-break and needed to just leave. ³ Because, if I hadn't I would have just quit the job for sure. It was, it was just too much. It was like being back at school for me. I hadn't, didn't have a very good experience at school, at all, and it just going into work with that same feeling of dread and anxiety, and my confidence took a massive knock because I just felt like it, I felt very inadequate as a, as a police officer ⁴ and, you know, certainly, I think, it kind of, really certainly started when I was told I was leaving CID because I was doing great work in CID. And I know that what I was doing was, is, is very good work and, but I wasn't shouting it from the rooftops, I wasn't making a song and dance of it. I wasn't telling anyone, I was just getting on with my work and getting on with, you know, and, but it wasn't particularly noticed. ^{5,6} And when I failed the TDCs the second time, by very, very minimal failing, I was told I was leaving but there was this other guy who had failed four times, and he got to stay, and he kept getting to stay, but he was always talking about 'How he was doing this, and getting this done, and got this, and got this result' and, I think that's where the inadequacy really started to sort of work, ⁷ and when I was told I was going to team [number] that was really like [laughs] a punch in the gut ⁸ because I knew what that team was like, and had heard, and that was from the top. That was from the inspector, the inspector had the boys' club, and on rest days they would go and play golf together, and they were in each other's pockets, constables and sergeants, and so, if that's what the inspector is like, then it's, it's giving carte blanche to everyone else. And it was	1. Shunned by his new colleagues who travelled on the same train. Subtle bullying, passive aggression. 2. He couldn't face joining his new team and a career break offered a temporary solution. 3. Planned career break meant that his non-operational role was extended, confirming his perceived status as an outsider. There was good rationale for this, but it felt like continuing public exclusion and reinforced his decision to leave. 4. A cycle of work-related dread and anxiety, as in his schooldays, culminated in powerful emotions of isolation and inadequacy. 5. CID rejection self-identified as the origin for mental anguish, but there are strong parallels with much earlier unhappiness in school. 6. Made sense of rejection through personality trait of principled introversion, quietly achieving his goals without public self-promotion. 7. Failing CID by 'very minimal' margins is an important element for P13's personal comprehension. His focus is contextualised by the inequality of the colleague who failed more times, but was successful because he self-promoted his work. 8. Ironical laughter. Being posted to new team was a 'punch in the gut.'
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<p>1. I had no confidence in the supervisors or Fed rep, they were part of the 'boys' club.'</p> <p>2. I bumped into the inspector recently. I hadn't seen him for years, but I felt physically sick with anxiety. He probably didn't even recognise me as I was little consequence to him.</p> <p>3. The alphas ignored me when they came into the office. I suppose I ignored them too, and my anxiety spiralled.</p> <p>4. My isolation wasn't picked-up by supervisors. Why would it be?</p>	<p><u>very, very uncomfortable.</u> ¹ And I, I would be in the office at [place] in, you know, on night duty doing my Misper, doing, you know, my Misper role and they would come into my, not my office, but the office I was in, and I was always the only one in there, but because there was a TV on in there they would come in and just, you know, get their, have their food, and just be sort of belligerent and obnoxious and <u>very uncomfortable and because I set a standard of not actually speaking-up, and because my confidence was quite low, and I never spoke-up and said and challenged anyone, so it kind of furthered their, the carte blanche of being, you know, giving them, just letting them do it,</u> ² you know, you know, do it or whatever. It was, yeah. And funnily enough, <u>I saw the, the inspector last week for the first time in four-and-a-half years and I had this [laughs], immediately this, like, my stomach turned, like, just awful, like just, and I just put my head down. I really didn't want him to see, see me, and to just probably try and be nice or like, the prob[ably], the actually, the ironic thing is he probably wouldn't even know who I was.</u> ³</p> <p>Researcher: (22.23) Was there anybody you could talk to about these issues, which affected you so deeply?</p> <p>Stuart <u>No. No one.</u> ⁴</p> <p>Researcher: (22.41) Are there any self-help groups within the organisation that you know about that might help?</p> <p>Stuart Not at the time, no. No, not at the time. <u>There was a Fed Rep [volunteer officer who advises on work and welfare issues, usually in addition to their policing role] on the team, but he was one of the lads, one of the group.</u> ⁵ The sort of, to give you an idea of what this particular team was like, there is quite a large number of them. <u>There was about, around about ten of them, all men, and there was this one incident where they, I was in the office, obviously, one incident</u></p>	<p>1. Demonstrates the importance of and challenges to impartial leadership. 'Boys' club' reference portrays a <i>them and us</i> scenario, with P13, yet again, on the outside.</p> <p>2. Communal office (with TV) was open invitation for <i>alpha</i> colleagues to enter and disregard P13, whose isolation and anxiety rendered him unable to speak-up for himself. His failure to do so reinforced their behaviour.</p> <p>3. Deep-rooted anxiety when chance meeting with inspector, after many years, elicited a negative emotional response. As before, P13 avoided the situation and mused that the inspector probably wouldn't have remembered him anyway.</p> <p>4. Isolation in the workplace is an uncommon complaint in the police service. It's more likely to feature in a bureaucratic 'tick-box' risk assessment for lone-working, rather than a welfare protestation. Accordingly, there is little corporate recourse for officers affected by ostracism. They often suffer in silence and the cycle is perpetuated.</p> <p>5. Fed reps are peer-volunteers who provide gateways to support – but the local rep was 'one of the lads' and was, therefore, an very unlikely ally for P13.</p>
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1. The alphas openly celebrated their macho experiences and values, it bound them together. This was wrong and I did not understand them at all.	where they Tasered this guy, this, this mental health, mentally-ill guy, six times, and when they came back for being dismissed [end of shift] they were in the, they were in the, the office, essentially like celebrating this, what had happened, that, you know, that they, the six of them got to use their Tasers on this one, on this one guy. ¹ That is the kind of problem that, that team had and if you didn't participate in those celebrations you were seen as someone (A) to keep an eye on, that you wouldn't have their back whether, you know, you agreed with it or not, and I think because I didn't join in with any of the, not just that particular celebration, but with any of their talk, you know, it was crude it was about like about females, about women, it was what they would probably describe as banter but I would describe as really terrible banter really, if they're going to, if it is banter, just inappropriate stuff and it's just, and that, it was just that to me was, it stayed with me as a prime example of how to, if I was to describe that team, that incident, that particular moment where they're celebrating this Tasing. ² I mean I was, at that point, seven years as a police officer, and, I did three years out on the street on team, and I never, ever used any of my personal protective equipment. Not once. And, that's not because I didn't go to aggressive situations or, you know, that sort of incident, it's just that I was always able to use my language and the way I spoke to people and the way interacted, and the female I was talking about from my first team that I really liked working with she would always say that she loved working with me in particular because I was able to talk to people. ³ Even if they were in crisis due to mental health or, you know, a teenager who's a suspect for a robbery or something. Yeah, like, I could just, you know, even if I had to run after them to detain them, I'd be chatting with them by the end of, by the time we're waiting to be booked-in. It's just, I don't have that aggressive thing in me, I mean I'm sure if I had to, like, then I will, ⁴ but I just, you know, there's training that I just, this is why the job is so, this is where I think people will join the job who have got these skills and capabilities of just using their gob, but because in order to fit in they see how the, the, those that are self-professed, popular people are, and they're alpha and they're sort of intimidating, that they have to be	1. He did not understand, nor was party to, the pack mentality of the alpha males in the team. Their celebrated use of Taser unified them, and excluded him. 2. It wasn't just the celebration, it was their inappropriate [crude and misogynistic] 'banter' that bound them as a group. Participation was key to social inclusion. 3. Conflict management through verbal de-escalation was important to P13. It helped to define him through the separation from others. This principled position was authenticated by the <i>respected and hard-working</i> female officer he'd mentioned earlier [P4.2]. 4. Personally important to maintain elements of his pre-police self by talking to suspects, rather than using force. P13's policing experience led him to qualify this as force is sometimes unavoidable.
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<p>1. The culture encouraged officers to use force in order to fit in with the alphas. It was celebrated.</p> <p>2. To the alphas, police work centred upon decisiveness and domination. They didn't agree with my non-confrontational, reflective approach to policing.</p> <p>3. But I could use force if I needed to.</p> <p>4. I was right about the team because it was subsequently disbanded.</p> <p>5. The alpha's banter openly disrespected their colleagues, including seniors, and others were encouraged to join in.</p>	<p>that way. They see that they have to be that way. They can't just be their own way. ¹ I don't want to say everyone changes the way they are, but I think it's the, and those people feel like, those officers who are sort of in that class, like I was describing the six, the six of them that Tasered, they don't see any other way, they see that, that way of policing is the right way of policing and that's the way they, and the way I would do it is the wrong way and that my sort of temperament is incorrect for being a police officer. That I shouldn't be a police officer because I'm actually, I'm calm and non, non-confrontational, ² despite, if I had to be, I would be confrontational, I would get involved and I can detain someone and use the training that, you know, I've been equipped with. And I have done. But, I just don't need to Taser someone. If they had a knife, yeah, I probably would, but like it's I just haven't found myself in that situation. So, that team in particular was a pretty, and funnily enough three-months after I went on my career break they disbanded that team completely. They moved them all off and rebuilt it with new people. ^{3,4}</p> <p>Researcher: (28.38) You mentioned the banter within this team, can you give examples of that?</p> <p>Stuart Yeah, so I guess it would be like, the, <u>the talking about women sexually, you know, a few of them had slept with the same female officer and they would compare notes almost.</u> ⁵ There was, it was usually always about other people on the team, or other people actually in, in, in [city borough] who were, you know, <u>there was one sergeant who on the team who was totally disrespected. Just, they just laughed at him. They, you know, they just, and then when he wasn't around talk about how he looks and how he stands how he talks, but they would do it, I say banter it's, they would all laugh and joke and they would try and get someone else involved in the conversation</u> ⁶ and it goes back again to what I was saying that how if you don't join in then they are, they won't, <u>it's almost like they don't trust you to, to, you know, have their back. Yeah, it's very, yeah, I don't really know</u></p>	<p>1. Many of those who become officers with good communication skills like P13 must change (and use force) in order to fit in.</p> <p>2. Many alphas [including the Taser officers mentioned at P8.1] perceived his calm, non-confrontational approach as simply wrong and not conducive to policework.</p> <p>3. P13 qualifies his position with the caveat that he would use force if he had to. It's probable that researcher's [then] professional position had some bearing on this reality check— it was simply that he hadn't been in that situation thus far.</p> <p>4. Self-verification - the problem team was disbanded after he left for career break.</p> <p>5. Misogynistic 'banter' included <i>almost comparing notes</i> following sexual encounters with female colleagues.</p> <p>6. Inappropriate banter also included verbally disrespecting supervisors behind their backs to curry favour with in-crowd peers. Those present were encourage to participate or else be shunned.</p>
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1. I didn't agree nor join in with their banter. This made me unpopular and I felt further isolated.	how to describe that sort of, they would probably think it was banter and I don't see it as banter at all. I see it as bullying ¹ really but.	1. 'Banter' is actually bullying and its unifying nature perpetuates the problem. This process contributed to P13's psychological pain and anxiety.
2. Being gay hasn't been a problem for me in the police, but I often have trouble finding common ground with male officers. I don't like rugby and they don't like pop culture.	Researcher: (30.57) You mentioned being a gay man in the police service, can you tell me about the difficulties or the complexities, if that is the case?	2. Finding common ground and awareness of the stereotypes are key to the challenges of being a gay man in the police.
3. Having 'your back' is very important to me in police work. I don't have time for people who don't do this, irrespective of your tribe.	Stuart Yeah, I guess it's for me, it's finding <u>common ground with my colleagues. It's, there's a stereotype of that I, you know, that gay men don't like sport, or don't, or don't know what, you know, not necessarily don't know what they're talking about, they're more feminine-type personality.</u> ² <u>I've never really had an issue with being a gay man in the police, certainly not on my first team, and not in CID.</u> ³ <u>It's just that finding common ground with a straight guy who rugby is his life and, you know, finding somewhere where you can kind of, it's more that they can kind of respect you, me, as oppose to me,</u> ⁴ <u>because I respect anyone who is good at their job and that will have my back on a job or whatever, or who's just a decent person.</u> ⁵ But, it's having that common ground of something, you know, sort of, something of conversation, conversationally, and I find that's quite tricky, you know. I mean, one of the guys I trained with ten or eleven years ago, he and I got on really well in training. We're very different people, and when we joined the team, he, we kind of weren't so close because he, he kind of <u>found his tribe. It's about tribes really. And you find your tribe and the people you connect with. And, yeah, and we're still friends now, but it's, we don't hang-out like we used to do.</u> ⁶ And I think that's where, and then I've always aligned myself with the females more, and I think that's just, not really sure why but it's, it's the things that I like, typically, you know, <u>a straight guy who's rugby is their life is not going to like pop-culture, for example,</u> ⁷ is something that I love, then they may not quite know what I'm even talking about. But the same vice versa when it comes to rugby.	3. Being gay in the police hadn't been 'an issue' for P13. This was reassuring for the researcher who recalled a less tolerant culture earlier in his career.
4. Finding my 'tribe' is essential. It reinforces shared values and gives me a sense of belonging.	Researcher: (34.00) Did you feel comfortable talking about your sexuality, or was it just not an issue within the police service?	4. P13 used his own stereotype of <i>straight man who likes rugby</i> when talking about his respect for decent, hardworking colleagues.
		5 Got my 'back' [to protect] has been mentioned of three occasions since the start of the interview [P8.2, P10.1, P10.5] highlighting the importance he attached to teamwork, despite people's differences.
		6 'Tribe' is also repeated emphasising the importance of social groups, which are mutually supportive, defining and offer a sense of belonging. P13's colleague had 'found his tribe' and they had subsequently drifted apart socially. There was a sense of personal sadness in this, which had parallels with the 'use of force' socialisation processes mentioned at P9.1.
		7. Respective knowledge of rugby and pop culture served to demonstrate his sexual identity. Stereotyping was useful for P13 to get his perspective across.

1. Being gay was not the problem for me in the police.	Stuart Yeah, I think, yeah I don't think it's an issue. Not an obvious one, anyway. And for all of my problems, the, the, the gay thing quite low at the bottom of the list. ¹ It's not something, I mean I've been very fortunate, I've not really had any, any issues with anyone because of it really. Aside from a couple of things, I think I've been quite fortunate but I think, I mean there's this book called <u>Straight Jacket</u> , which I haven't read yet but my, a friend of mine told me that it's, that it's really sort of eye-opening because it's about growing-up gay but with, and the problems that come with it even if you're not totally aware of them. ² And I think there's kind of an element of truth there that, you know, it's a, it's a heteronormative world we live in, you know, it's the representation of straight people is obviously number one, like it's everywhere. But then, there's this, this narrative throughout our, like my life where, where I remember when <u>EastEnders</u> had its first gay couple and it was like such a big deal. And that the coming-out is such a big deal and we have to, we have to make this, not song and dance of it, but like a, make a point of saying to your parents and to your family and your friends that 'I am a gay man', where you don't have to do that when you are a straight person. It's a given. ³ So those things, I think, have an impact in a person's mind without really being too obvious. I think these are subtle things that end up happening and that, you know, I mean <u>when I was grew-up I didn't know anyone gay</u> and then I sort of went to [city] and found my tribe, and again, I go back to tribe. In the police, I mean I never had any homophobic abuse ⁴ or, I had one guy, one officer, when I was a PCSO that said to me, asked me why I 'Chose to be gay?' I wasn't offended because I mean he was quite religious and he, we used to work together quite a lot but we always had quite interesting conversations. And, I'm always open to having a conversation with someone, even if I don't understand or agree. ⁵ It's just <u>someone else overheard and reported him</u> . ⁶ And, but you know, it is an inappropriate to ask but, at the same time, you know, <u>unless you're told, and given an example, a reasoning, then you don't particularly know any different</u> . ¹ Yeah, yeah definitely. But I don't, yeah I don't, no, I don't, I haven't noticed, I think the gay, the only thing really is myself because I think naturally I am not a super	1. Being gay wasn't the issue for P13, indicating that his personal problems arose from elsewhere. The mention of 'not an obvious one' acknowledges the subtleties of discrimination, even if initially one is unaware or accepting of them within a 'hetero - normative world.'
2. I'm aware of subtle homosexual discrimination in a 'hetero-normative world.'		2. The book <u>Straight Jacket</u> , although unread at the time, opened his eyes to hidden and sometimes unintended prejudices.
3. First gay couple in <u>EastEnders</u> was a big deal for me. Growing mainstream awareness and acceptance helped me come out. A personal anxiety many straight people are oblivious of.		3. The first gay couple in <u>EastEnders</u> had a positive and lasting impact upon P13. Coming-out to family and friends was an additional and significant challenge, which many straight people have little knowledge or understanding of. This storyline helped him cope and accept his self, for himself.
4. I didn't know who my tribe was until I came to city.		4. P13 grew-up not knowing who or what his sexuality was or meant. In city, he found his 'tribe.'
5. Colleagues sometimes ask inappropriate questions, but I know that they're being clumsy rather than malicious.		5. Prior knowledge of a colleague's clumsy and uninformed question didn't offend P13 as he knew there was no malice, and he enjoyed 'interesting' conversations.
6. Colleague who asked the clumsy question was reported by someone, it wasn't me. I was happy to talk to them and help them understand.		6. The reporting of this arguably well-intentioned but inappropriate question, which was overheard by another, demonstrates a major shift in police culture. [As in the criminal fraternity, and perhaps in society as whole, <i>snitching</i> is often frowned upon, in public at least. Alternatively, it's a brave and positive challenge to inappropriate behaviour. Either way, this represents the changing culture of acceptability within the service].
7. Anyone can report anything at work. I would rather look at their intentions and try to educate them.		

1. I sound ridiculous when I try to be aggressive. That's why I use comedy to help gain control of suspects.	<u>confident person, and I'm very self-conscious of mannerisms and my, the way I speak, my voice and the sound of my voice. And, when I do try, and I think this is why, where the pro is of my ability to talk to people I think is because I, I, when I</u>	1. Officers have always had a strict code of conduct. What's acceptable and what's not develops as society and societal politics develop. Sometimes there's a degree of unintended lag, followed by a so-called knee jerk reaction, which can lead to officers' bewilderment and ill feeling when genuine mistakes are punished. Especially when deemed for political ends.
2. I thought more about my own finite existence following a colleague's death on duty.	<u>try and be aggressive I am aware that it doesn't come across as aggression and it's sort of, so I try and make it a comedy kind of purposely because I'm aware that I don't think anyone is going to take me seriously trying to be like, where if I try and</u>	2. Contrary to his disclosure, P13 appears a confident and articulate individual. His use of comedy, from a conflict management perspective, is actually a very effective tactical option / skill set for gaining rapport and control.
3. I had found my 'tribe' in the CID. It was then cruelly taken away from me.	<u>put a comic spin on it, 2 then I can at least break the ice there with that but I think that's the only thing when it comes to the gay stuff that, that, that I, it's within myself and the things that I'm self-conscious of, I would say.</u> Researcher: (38.55) Could we now move towards your career-break. What was the motivation that led toward that? Stuart So , I, <u>I can remember the day, I, I applied for my career-break the day I was told I was going to team [number]. I, if I was, if I had to, if I was going to remain in CID I wouldn't have taken a career break. That much I know. So, when I found out I was going to team [number] I applied for the career-break, I, I was pre-empting really. 3 But the year before, a friend of mine, who was also a police officer, she died on duty chasing two robbers, her heart just stopped and she died there and then. And, that kind of changed my sort of, it was, it was, I had been thinking about sort of what I was kind of, it gets you thinking about your life. She was, she was twenty-nine, so she was the same age as me and so it was kind of like, it was kind of a, it was always in my mind because she lived her life to the full. 4 And, then when I found out that I was going to team [number], that was in October, I, that was, that was the, the, the thing that I needed to, to make that decision. 5 I did not want to go from CID, I really enjoyed it. I really, I think I was really good at it, personally. 6 And, it's funny now because I don't remember, I don't have much of a recollection of being that person during that, really for the first, my first six-years as a constable, which is why I think I was struggling to remember a particular incident because my memories of being a good police officer have kind of escaped</u>	3. Rejection from CID was a significant turning point for P13. He enjoyed his work and it elevated him, taking away many of the anxieties of his matcho and aloof team. It was the basis for his career break decision. 4. Existential crisis / questions caused by the sudden death of a friend. They were the same age and her demise emphasised both the fragility of life – and making the most of one's life. 5. Being posted to the bad team provided the push he needed to explore (world and himself). 6. CID became his professional <i>tribe</i> , which had now been taken away.

1. I can't remember much about my happier times on team. I'm no longer that person.	me, I don't recognise that person I used to be ¹ so, and that's because of the stuff I've gone through in the last couple of years but when I went to team [number] it just confirmed that <u>I didn't belong here</u> , ² this wasn't, I'm, and I, to be honest, I wouldn't have known how to, <u>if I didn't go on a career-break I don't know how I would have got out of that situation, out of that team, out of, and where to go because I knew I couldn't do my TDCs for another eighteen-months.</u> ³ And, I knew I could be on that team for eighteen-months. <u>So, if I hadn't gone on a career-break I would have quit, without a shadow of a doubt,</u> ⁴ and because <u>I had no support,</u> ⁵ I mean I had a line manager, but he wasn't someone I could go to, and the Fed Rep on my team was not someone I could go to, and, when I went on a career-break I was almost certain that I would never come back to the police. Because of how unhappy I was for those, those twelve to eighteen-months that I was on team [number].	1. Partial memory erasure of his formative years as an effective and performing officer meant that he did not recognise his former self. He was different now and running out of options.
2. New team was not my 'tribe' and I felt trapped in a role I could no longer perform.		2. Bad team was not his <i>tribe</i> .
3. I would have resigned, but a career break gave me a chance to sort myself out and possibly return - although that seemed unlikely at the time.		3. Trapped in a role he couldn't do.
4. This was a particularly anxious time for me. I needed respite, and a career break was a big decision, but I had no support from work.		4. Resignation or career break? Career break provided respite with future options.
5. I don't recognise the person who left for a new start in a new country. I couldn't do it now.	Researcher: (42.43) And your career-break, I think you mentioned you did some travelling?	5. Lack of support (no impartial Fed rep, no understanding line manager) cemented P13's decision to take career break.
6. I didn't realise that I was depressed before my career break. My awareness and ability to cope is improving slowly.	Stuart Yes, so I went to, I spent a month in [country] and then went on to [country]. I, a friend got married in [country] so that's the reason I went there and then I went off on my own to travel and, again, I don't recognise, I can't remember that person, that version of me that did that because I can't think that I would be able to do that now. ⁶ It's, it's really weird. And, there was a bit difficult[y] in [country] I, so, whilst I was working at team [number] and leading-up to the career break I got myself into a bit of a state of depression. That I now know as depression, at the time I didn't recognise it. I had moved back to my mum's to save money. ⁷ Initially, I had moved back to save money to buy a hou[se], a place to live and then I, then that went out the window and I went on the career-break. And, I got myself into this situation where I was travelling two-hours to work and then travelling two-hours home from work, and at the same time hating work and having this anxiety of being, going to work and then obviously the experience	6. Fragmented self. Felt dislocated from that more confident person who left for [country] and [country]. 7. Looking back, he now realises he was ill with depression.

<p>1. Commuting to work was drudgery. I was anxious about seeing colleagues on the train who would ignore me – so I hid myself away and put on earphones to block the world out.</p> <p>2. I felt initially good on my career break – but it was a ‘honeymoon’ period.</p> <p>3. When my money was stolen, my career break was no longer a respite, it was now a fight for survival. Significant shift in mental and physical welfare.</p> <p>4. I thought my policing skills and integrity would be easily transferable in [country]. But, this was not the case.</p> <p>5. Having to chase low paid, dead-end jobs in an unfamiliar country took its toll on my emotional and physical resilience. My restorative adventure was now a nightmare.</p>	<p>when I was on the trains, so I would purposely sit somewhere else on the train so they, I wouldn’t see them because they, you know, they didn’t engaged and they moved away and what-have-you. And, I was stuck in the cycle ¹ and I remember, I do remember that now, so when I went to [country] it was quite exciting but then a couple of things happened. I injured myself in [country], ended in hospital for a day and then I had, unbeknown to me, I had three-thousand [country] dollars stolen. ² I had separate money for [country] to [country] and that was on a card and I, so I didn’t need to, I never needed to check it, and then when I got to [country] that’s when I found out. And I was like ‘Oh no’. And that was my savings, five-thousand dollars I think it was, and that was, so then I had to immediately find work. ³ And, that was really difficult. I, I thought I would be alright because of the policing, I thought that would show that I’m a, I’ve got integrity, that I’m trustworthy, and professional. But no one knew where to, so the recruitment agencies didn’t know what box to put me in. And, what sort of work I could do, ⁴ and then I applied for jobs and never got any. I spent three-months delivering leaflets in the height of summer, six-days a week, and it was sometimes you get given this map and a GPS tracker thing so they know you’ve been down all the roads. And it was like, sometimes it was ten-hours and it was like sixty-dollars. It was horrible. ⁵ And I did that for three-months just to pay for my, where I was staying and to eat basic, basic, basic food. I don’t know if you’ve ever been to [city] but it’s, it’s very, very hilly. And that was really hard work, and then I got in a café, south, two and a half hours south of [city]. And, a friend of mine lived in this town and, so I got a job there because I, she asked me if I was free to look after her two dogs for three-months. And I said ‘I was’ so I moved down there and got the job almost straight away. And then after a month they made me the manager because they didn’t have one, and so my policing experience sort of kicked-in by being sort of decisive and organised. And, then they wanted to sponsor me. And that was at the point, I had never gone out to [country] to be sponsored, to have an [country] dream. I had never had an [country] dream, ever. It was never my intention. My intention was to just travel, see, and then sort of find myself again,</p>	<p>1. ‘Stuck in the cycle.’ Anxieties of work and drudgery of commuting compounded his depression. Avoided colleagues on train as a coping measure.</p> <p>2. <i>Honeymoon</i> period in [country] cut short by injury and theft of cash.</p> <p>3. Theft caused major shift in career break dynamics. No longer a respite adventure. Now a survival challenge with a new cycle of old problems in a foreign land.</p> <p>4. Policing skills are often not as transferable as some might think. His policing self, based upon integrity and accountability, had diminished.</p> <p>5. Series of dead-end jobs in an unfamiliar environment took their toll on his emotional and physical resilience.</p>
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<p>1. I was existing in [country] but not living. My confidence was draining away.</p> <p>2. The café work was tough. I had poor life / work balance and it was eating away at my soul. Was this really worth it?</p> <p>3. I resigned from the café to move nearer to friends. Am I repeating my escapist behaviour?</p> <p>4. Red tape limited my employment opportunities in [country]. I felt increasingly vulnerable, but couldn't fail again.</p>	<p>find my confidence, get some confidence back, ¹ and, yeah, I then just took the opportunity. And, <u>I was there for nearly two-years, working at this café, managing this café.</u> But, I had no social life, and, again, I was finding myself in this sort of position where I was working, but to what end? ² I was not really, I had some friends in [city] that I would go and see at the weekends, but, you know, it was a two-and-half hour journey, but I had no, no life in, in this town. And so I kind, I made a decision to resign from that job and move to [city]. ³ And, just hope that I found a job there because the way their, their visa situation works is that when I got sponsored I could only, I could only work in that specific job role as café manager. But, then you have to find a company who is allowed to sponsor you and that are willing to sponsor you and then the government have to approve it. So, there were a few hurdles. So, I had applied for a bunch of jobs and had a bunch of interviews and I got through to a couple of them to different stages. And, so I was kind of comfortable moving to [city] because I was quite, there were two jobs that I was close to getting. And then that fell through and I was like 'Ah'. One of them fell through. And then the other one was a small independent place, and it was horrible. Really, really intense. My trial there was really, really intense. Very full-on. A bit crazy. ⁴ There was just a lot happening. And then I waited to hear, but in the meantime I had gone for another job and then got through. And then I had a trial at that one. So there was this. This was sort of, so this was, sort of, I don't know when it was, mid-January or something, and I then got offered both of the jobs. And, I took the independent one, the one that was intense because I thought I would have more opportunity with the government approving that one than the other one, which was kinda a, a mid-sized corporation. And, they had told me that there is a risk that the government would say no, so <u>I went for the smaller one didn't I and started work there.</u> It was chaotic, the owner, kinda, essential lied to me. The hours, the conditions, and what was expected of me was to do sixty to seventy hours a week. Not get weekends off. I was eligible for annual leave but every time I requested it, it got denied, because she would get rid of staff left, right, and centre. ¹ It was just, I can't even describe how [laughs] how intense that</p>	<p>1. He was merely existing and not living his [country] dream, nor rediscovering his former confident and content self.</p> <p>2. After two years of hard work in café and poor work / life balance, his existential demons were flourishing.</p> <p>3. Cycle of behaviour – resignation from the café and a move to a new city was the answer.</p> <p>4. Honeymoon period in [city] cut short by job restrictions.</p>
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<p>1. Yet again, I was trapped in horrible job that wasn't what was promised, with no support. I was isolated, desperate and heading for a breakdown.</p> <p>2. Emotional drudgery – [city] had become the new [old city].</p> <p>3. Yet again, I was being exploited by managers and circumstances. Code of conduct in the police, employment regulations in [city].</p> <p>4. I was struggling to cope mentally but thought I could hide it from friends and colleagues. They knew, and wondered which version they were going to get that particular day.</p> <p>5. I was diagnosed in [country] with bi-polar. At least now I knew what I was up against and could start treatment.</p> <p>6. Partner and friends described me as moody and criticised my behaviour. I resented this and pushed back against them. This was not the support I needed.</p>	<p>was. And, yeah, that's kind of when I sort of had my breakdown. I had, so I started feeling like I did when I was over here, the depression, when I was on team [number], the depression I was having, the, the routine I was having, and I was isolating myself from family and friends, just like living in my mum's spare room. And I was doing the same in [city], 2 I was working all these hours, it was, I'm supposed to be the manager and I couldn't, I wasn't allowed to manage. But the thing was because I was sponsored by them, I had no, I had really little choice in anything because, and you are kinda stuck between a rock and a hard place. And they know that, the, the people that sponsor you know that, so they take advantage of that. 3 Not all of them, but she did. And I was exhausted, and I just yeah, it was just, I started to just go through these moods again. I mean, I think I always had, so all through my life I've, people would, not my friends but certainly ex-partners would have all described me as moody. And, I was, I was a bit like that in, in, at work in [city] that I was, you know, some staff described me as 'Not knowing what version of me they were going to get from one day to another.' 4 And, I mean, it's not all, I won't put it all on the job itself, because I think it's, I was exhausted but at the same time I now know that, you know, I've been diagnosed with bi-polar. 5 So, I don't know if you want me to go into?</p> <p>Researcher: (54.22) Go where you want to, this is really good.</p> <p>Stuart So, I was seeing someone in [country]. Yet I was described as moody, he was kind of trying to control me a bit, say, I was always criticised by how I was, how I behaved, or talked, or whatever to friends and I tried to not have any of it. And then he, he was, had access somehow to my social media and my phone. And, I found out some like some stuff like he'd, on my phone, he'd been able to, like, nothing incriminating to me but just the fact that he was doing that 6 and then, at the same time I'm working seventy hours a week and my boss was relentless. And, then I started questioning this whole, I came, I started questioning why I even in, in [country] the first place. And why I was doing, why I was, what was my goal?</p>	<p>1. Trapped in 'horrible' job that wasn't as promised, with no support [parallels with police].</p> <p>2. Return of depression, work drudgery, and social isolation. [City] had become the new [old city].</p> <p>3. Controlling and exploitative managers diminishing P13's control. Omnipotent Code of conduct in the police, and sponsorship regulations in [country]. Repetition of external anxiety cues.</p> <p>4. Self-recognition of moody disposition evidenced by ex-partners and colleagues. Negative realisation of multiple selves.</p> <p>5. Disclosure of bi-polar diagnosis represented increasing trust within interview. [N.B the researcher was a police manager].</p> <p>6. Untrusting, unfulfilling relationship further compounds work / life balance.</p>
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<p>1. Reflected upon my unhappy life in [country]. This was not how it was supposed to be.</p> <p>2. Aware my mental health was deteriorating. I was now having more bad days than good.</p> <p>3. I was depressed but I've always been driven to deliver my work commitments. I don't lock myself away in a dark room, but my work colleagues noticed my changing personality.</p> <p>4. I was emotionally overwhelmed by a friend's gift. I wasn't strong enough to thank her and react as I ought to have done. I was unworthy of her kindness and full of self-loathing.</p>	<p>What was my endgame? Because I had lost touch with myself again. I had lost space, and I was never supposed to be here for as long as I had be[en], was at the time, and the doubt, the fear, because I had all of that over here quite a while prior to leaving and then I was experiencing it all again. ¹ And so leading-up, this was in 2017, so really that whole year was the start of, even maybe 2016, the, the, that year was, certainly as I was working in this particular café that it was just my mental health was really going back to the way it used to be and then got, and then some, and then it got worse. And I, was finding that my moods were, I would [56.55] have like maybe three good days a week, and then four bad days. ² And then I was like the good days just got shorter and shorter and shorter and in the end I was having no good days whatsoever and I was just in this pit of depression. But my, my, my depression doesn't result in me in a dark room in bed. If I've got commitments, I've have to follow that through, I don't want to let anyone down. But they won't get the best version of me. But, I wasn't thinking that at the time. I wasn't thinking that the best version, you know, any version of me, was, that I, I actually almost thought that no one noticed. ³ So, it was kinda like I, because I was getting-up and going to work and I was serving and making coffees and what-have-you, that no one noticed the bad moods, which isn't true. That wasn't true at all. And then it was my birthday that I, in 2017, so the end of 2017 [date] 2017, I'd had a bad day at work and then I went home and my friend had, the one I, I had stayed down South, she had snuck into my apartment and set-up and dining room table and chairs as a birthday gift. And it was, like, obviously, it was such a lovely gesture, such a lovely gift. And, I was just really shocked, and, but not happy, like, I wasn't happy. I was really upset and I couldn't, I remember it like yesterday, I couldn't quite understand what was happening and why it was happening. I didn't deserve it. Like, I had done to, to deserve this, this wonderful gift and surprise. ⁴ And, she wasn't there, and I just went into despair I couldn't, and that's when I knew that something was wrong. And, I couldn't, again in hindsight I know that I wasn't right for a long time. But I, at the time, I wasn't acknowledging it. I didn't even, I just thought, you know, this is just it, this is, I mean, I've been like this for</p>	<p>1. Behavioural cycle of existential anxieties. <i>This is not how it was supposed to be.</i></p> <p>2. Regression of mental health – more bad days than good.</p> <p>3. Good days got shorter due to worsening depression, but still personally driven to deliver work commitments. Subsequent realisation that people around him noticed the changes in his personality.</p> <p>4. Felt undeserving of friend's gift and kindness – manifestations of self-loathing and unworthiness.</p>
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<p>1. My breakdown was the nadir and I knew I had to do something.</p> <p>2. I hardly ever went to the doctor.</p> <p>3. I didn't think about suicide particularly at this point, but a partner's deceit re-ignited powerful teenage anxieties.</p> <p>4. I was impressed by the promptness and accessibility of the [country] healthcare service.</p> <p>5. I didn't gel with one of the psychologists and my medication wasn't right. Suicide ideation followed.</p>	<p>most of my life but, it just got worse and, so, I had this breakdown. I call it my <u>emotional breakdown</u>.¹ And then I called my GP and I got an appointment that day. <u>That's the first time, actually it's the second time I've ever gone to the doctor about it.</u> ² The first time was 2007. No, 2008. 2008, 2009, when I, I think I had just joined as a PCSO. <u>But, the, the guy I was with for three-years had cheated on me, for a long time, and I found out at Christmas time and that kind of sent me over an edge. But, I wasn't suicidal. And then. But, it kind of kick-started stuff that I hadn't felt since I was a teenager. And this time, I was just, like I wasn't suicidal but I was definitely in despair.</u> ³ I just didn't unders[tand], didn't know what was happening. So, he put me on medication and referred me to a psychologist and then to see a psychiatrist who, sorry, in [country], I don't know if it's the standard in all GPs but in my GP they had a psychiatrist that worked there every other Wednesday. And, so, I saw her and I literally, I saw her for a year every other Wednesday. And, it was amazing to see someone consistently and she would, and to see someone so regularly and to change medication if it wasn't working and what-have-you.⁴ And I, I, then, what happened? So then I was, yeah, so I was on different medications, then I started, I had different therapy, <u>I saw a psychologist who I didn't really gel with. I saw her like five or six times. Then I did this thing called dialectical behavioural therapy. I started that, but then seven months after I first went to the doctor, I had my first suicide attempt. I started to go downhill again. So, the medication was not right, we weren't, it wasn't, after seven months we still weren't getting the, the thing right. I had been diagnosed with depression, anxiety disorder, and borderline personality disorder, which I think over here they call it emotional unstable personality disorder, I think.</u>⁵ Which is why I was doing DBT and, but I done like kind of a taster, a six-week taster course or something. And <u>I'm trying to remember what happened during that period to make me suicidal. I can't recall, but I, prior to that I was self-harming. So, I had been self-harming since, so I had my suicide attempt in July 2018, but in March and April I was self-harming even though I was see the psychiatrist and I was seeing, I was seeing a psychologist. I was not getting help for, it's not help but I wasn't getting</u></p>	<p>1. Emotional breakdown was a milestone in P13's comprehension of his illness. It represented a nadir where something had to be done.</p> <p>2. Subtle disclosure of how few times he's seen the doctor perhaps portrays a projected self that's not given to hypochondria.</p> <p>3. No ideation at this point, but partner's deceit reignited strong teenage anxieties.</p> <p>4. Emphasis on prompt, accessible, and continuous [country] healthcare to contrast with less favourable UK healthcare.</p> <p>5. Didn't 'gel' with psychologist and medication 'not right' precipitated first suicide attempt. List of mental health diagnoses followed. These suggests P13's cognitive rationale of poor medication leading to suicidal ideation.</p>
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<p>1. I had periods of arm cutting as a teenager, and I was now repeating this behaviour in [country]. The cuts released black clouds from my head. Soothing my emotional pain and chaos.</p> <p>2. First overdose. I was found semi-conscious by a housemate. I was reaching out for help.</p> <p>3. Short psychotic episode in café following release from hospital. I felt everyone was having fun. I wasn't, it was all over for me.</p>	<p>the right help to tackle the broader issues. So, I was cutting my arm because like <u>the, the, the chaos, the darkness inside my head would get really, it's like all the colour drains from your sight. Like it's, I don't know how to really describe it it's just this big rolling cloud of, black cloud of thunder and lightning in your mind and you just sort of like, it hurts and I had experienced self-harm as a teenager and decided to start cutting my arm thinking that that would help, and it did. It did help release the, the, the cloud from in my brain, in head to, it almost, it was almost like it came from here [pointing to his head] and out of the cuts.</u>¹ So then, when I, when I took an overdose in July 2018 and I took an overdose of the medication I was on, and my housemate found me, oh, and I drank, I was drinking alcohol as well, and he found me at home again [65.05] in despair, and I was slurring, and I wasn't making any sense. 2 He could see from the table that there was tablet packets open and so he called an ambulance. I spent three days in, no I went to A and E in [city] and then they had this thing there called, it's a peck unit, I can't remember what peck stands for but it's like a respite unit for those, for people that have attempted suicide or self-harm to the point where they've gone to hospital, or if they're in crisis and they go to hospital and it's like this, it's attached to the A and E department it's a small ward with six beds and there's mental health nurses and they just, if you, it's a voluntary place, so you can volunteer to go there and I did. It was my first suicide attempt. And I, I, yeah, I said 'Sure'. Like, I felt very weird, out of body, I felt very strange. And so I, I spent two days there before I was allowed to leave, for, on the third day. <u>And I remember going to a coffee shop and getting a coffee and just being so spaced, like there was, like people around me laughing and joking and socializing and I'm, I remember thinking like it's all over me. Like, I can feel like it's written all over me and it was very weird.</u> 3 Then, then I came out of hospital. But, while I was in hospital my, my boss was away and so I called her when, because they were just getting back from holiday, and I called her to say, told her what had happened. And so she went, she said, you know, for me to get better and that she would go straight into work. And then, I went to see them when <u>I got out of hospital at work</u></p>	<p>1. Not getting help for 'broader issues' perpetuated arm cutting, which first arose in teenage years. The cuts released the dark clouds from his head.</p> <p>2. First overdose of prescribed medication and alcohol. Found semi-conscious by housemate. Reaching-out for help?</p> <p>3. Out of body experience in coffee shop following release from hospital. Everybody was having fun around him – and his despair was evident for all to see.</p>
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1. It took inner-strength to disclose my suicidal episode to my manager. I resumed work the following day as they needed me [unwilling to let people down]. I think she cared more about the café then my welfare. I had no employment rights.	and they asked me to come back the next day, into work. And I said 'Sure', she said 'We really need you', so I said 'Okay.' So I went straight back to work like everything was normal. And, I then said, I saw my doctor, my psychiatrist, who said 'Maybe I should go into', you know, 'the psychiatric hospital' there. And, I said, I said 'I think that might be a good idea.' So I told my boss that I was going to go into hospital. I was going to put myself in there. But I would do it two weeks' time so that, because at the same time my housemate was going, coming back to [city] to see his family so I would have been on my own. So, I spoke to my housemate, spoke, yeah, my boyfriend actually at the time, and I saw, told my boss that in two weeks' time I was going to put myself into hospital. She was like 'Okay.' So I did it so that, you know, everyone, I had all the bases covered, work was going to be fine, because we could arrange the roster and get cover and what-	1. Disclosed suicidal episode to work and was asked to resume duties the following day; 'we really need you' – manager's disregard for welfare and clear focus upon commercial productivity, homing in on P13's willingness to deliver his responsibilities within a precarious employment market with few rights.
2. Self-admission to care facility was agreed having first sorted out my employment responsibilities. Not letting people down was important to me.	have-you. And then, I went into the hospital for two weeks. While I was in there, there was therapy every day. You had to go to the therapies otherwise you weren't allowed to go on leave. And I had a psychiatrist who I saw every day. And, towards the end of the two weeks he diagnosed me with bi-polar, type two. ² He said 'I think you've got bi-polar.' I had to do this test. And, thankfully, he knew my psychiatrist from my GP so they, they conversed and she agreed, she agreed with his diagnosis as well. ³ So, because of that he wanted me to stay in for another two weeks whilst they work on the medication. So I said 'Yes' and so I told my boss who was not particularly happy with that, but said 'Okay' and then I saw, so during that time I was allowed leave and went to, to visit, because the hospital was quite near work so I went to see them and then they sort of had a go at me about being in hospital for so long, and that was really distressing. ⁴ And, so, leading-up to all of this in, prior, in 2018, I was having, I started having panic attacks at work and my mum had come over, actually, she had come and visited me, she didn't know anything. And, I didn't tell her anything, and then I had a panic attack in, while I was away with her in Melbourne and I was going to walk away and jump, go in front of a tram. I was just, and then, this was like, because I had a panic attack ordering coffee [laughs]. Really weird, because I made coffee, I work, I worked in a	2. Self-referral to inpatients was agreed. A small delay permitted both domestic and work commitments to be addressed, which demonstrated P13's ability to plan and deliver his responsibilities in relative crisis.
3. [Country] healthcare is efficient and joined-up with mental health services. This is not the case in the UK.		3. Joined-up treatment, with good communication, led to bi-polar diagnosis and enhanced inpatient care.
4. My stay at the facility was longer than planned and this irritated my manager. I was clearly emotionally vulnerable and this upset me further.		4. Longer stay as inpatient caused friction with manager, which upset P13 when already emotionally vulnerable.

1. Stressed by mum's visit. Didn't always see eye-to-eye. She wasn't very loving and empathetic towards me.	café. I knew what I was ord[ering], like, it was horrible. ¹ And so, I was really quiet, really <u>distant and very insular with my mum. I didn't tell her until three days before she was leaving and I said 'Look, I've got something to tell you. I've been going through this, that, and the other'.</u> And she told me to 'Pull my socks up.' And that's why I didn't tell my mum because I kinda suspected that was the sort of response I would get. And so I couldn't wait for her to go, at that point. ² And, so, anyway, so I had to, very similar attitude, <u>so my boss claimed to be very supportive but at the same time when I was in hospital, after we had, after I, she was having a go at me and I was sort of biting back, I was getting all worked-up and very hysterical and just like, you know, and immediately when I got like that I had no coping mech[anism], like coping strategy to help me deal with those, these, these moments.</u> ³ I went straight back to the hospital and had everything removed from my room. I wasn't allow[ed], you know, all my leave was revoked and, because I was at risk, and the I spoke to [72.16] my boss a few days later and said 'If I didn't come out of hospital to go back to work there would be consequences.' And so, I said 'Well let there be consequences, I'm not coming out of hospital.' And, then I resigned. So, when I got out of hospital they didn't want me back, at the shop, the café. They didn't want to see me, they didn't want me to work my notice, they didn't, they said they didn't want me there at all. ⁴ So, now I've come out of hospital. I've just been diagnosed with bi-polar as well as the other things, I'm on a lot of medication. I was on something like seven different tablets and I had no job [laughs]. And, I obviously had, I was renting a place, you know, it was just, you know, yeah, I mean, thankfully I had savings but, that was, that was pretty crazy. So, when, so then I tried to find a job, but trying to do that whilst having, going through this, sort of, mental experience that I was going through was quite tricky. <u>Having, again, this, the confidence essentially beaten out of me because, you know, I wasn't good enough to, to sort of be supported by my boss in the café. You know, and so I just felt that I wasn't very good at, at managing a café all of a sudden. I wasn't very good, what can I do? I can't do anything, you know, this narrative was going through my mind.</u> ¹ Trying to find	1. Mother's visit bought additional stress as he had concealed his illness from her. Ideation episode during her stay and panic attack when ordering coffee. This was particularly worrying to him as he was obviously well-versed in café procedures.
2. Panic attack when out with mum. I felt a strong urge to run and jump under a tram		2. As anticipated, mother's reaction wasn't helpful and he was pleased for her to return to the UK.
3. I didn't share my anxieties with my mother straight away because she wouldn't have reacted well. I was hurt when she told me to 'pull my socks up.' I was glad when she returned to the UK.		3. Manager's patience was also wearing thin and P13 lacked the resilience to manage the growing conflict.
4. My manager's impatience with my illness was making things worse. I wasn't doing this on purpose – I'm ill.		4. Abandoned again. A further stay in hospital increased work tensions, resulting in his dismissal.
5. I was getting hysterical and couldn't cope with my manager's impatience. I resigned in anger and was upset when they wanted nothing more to do with me. Abandoned again.		

1. I'm a worthless human.	another job wasn't working. <u>My dad flew me back to, because I had told my mum</u>	1. Debilitating narrative of worthless human
2. Relieved that dad paid for my flight back to UK. But had a I failed?	<u>and dad what had happened, and that I was in hospital at this point and my dad</u>	running through his head. His 'confidence had been 'beaten out' of him.
3. I desperately didn't want to fail but I knew I needed a sensible plan if I was going to return to [country].	<u>flew me back to here [city] to sort of, well, just to see me, I guess, and make sure I</u>	2. Feelings of abject personal failure accompanied his return to UK. These powerful feelings would ultimately motivate his return to[country].
4. Devastated when partner finished with me. He was my best friend.	<u>was okay and whatever, and kinda just stayed in-doors for two weeks and went</u>	3. Time in the UK allowed him to take stock and plan, but a relationship break-down meant the loss of a partner and long-time best friend. As before, he was 'too much' for his ex-partner, which must have been devastating so early on in his planned return to conquer [country] (and himself).
5. Break-up made me re-evaluate the reasons why I went to [country] in the first place. I had hardly seen the country at all.	<u>back and kind of came back feeling like, almost like it was a test to see if I could</u>	4. The emotional pain of this break-up still resonated in the interview.
6. I was now re-motivated to travel and achieve my goals.	<u>come back to, to England, without feeling like I had failed. And, I came back, and</u>	5. The break-up caused him to re-evaluate the reasons for travelling to [country]. He hadn't actually travelled further than his jobs permitted. He was now re-motivated to achieve his goals.
	<u>then went back to [country] and it was like if I don't find a job in two weeks then,</u>	
	<u>you know, I've got to plan. I've got to sensible here. I've got to plan my, my, the</u>	
	<u>money I had left and I had to sort of, and when I got back my boyfriend then split-</u>	
	<u>up with me he said it 'Was too much for me' he 'Found it too difficult to be with</u>	
	<u>me'. And, which was a real blow because this guy I was with, we were best of</u>	
	<u>friends for three years, and we finally admitted our love for each other, ³ after</u>	
	<u>three years of friendship but I had been in a relationship prior. He had been in a</u>	
	<u>relationship and it never quite worked until then, and then, and then for him to</u>	
	<u>break-up with me because I was too much was a bit of a kick as well because, you</u>	
	<u>know, we were friends first and foremost so, in my mind, you know, I just wanted</u>	
	<u>him to be my friend, let alone my boyfriend. So that was a bit, that's something</u>	
	<u>I'm still, sort of, not really over, ⁴ but. It kind of, when that happened, it kinda</u>	
	<u>confirmed that I probably should come back, so I decided to go on a, a, a whistle-</u>	
	<u>stop tour of [country]. Because, actually, I went to [country] to travel and to</u>	
	<u>experience, like, a culture over there and a new life, and I hadn't actually really</u>	
	<u>left [city]. I got to [city], but hadn't really left [city]. So, I decided to do a whistle-</u>	
	<u>stop tour and then apply for jobs where I was going to stay. ⁵ Got a job interview</u>	
	<u>in Perth. A, a friend I trained with in the police he transferred from the [police] to</u>	
	<u>[country], and I stayed with him. I got offered the job. I, but at that point, I was, I</u>	
	<u>was dog-sitting for him because they were, because it was Christmas time so they</u>	
	<u>were over here seeing his family. So I was on my own, and my birthday I was on</u>	
	<u>my own, and it was like the anniversary and, I became very sensitive and allowed</u>	
	<u>it to affect me. ¹ I got the job anyway, so that was a, a boost. And then I was</u>	
	<u>waiting for a start date and have the paperwork go through and then three-weeks</u>	

1. Spent Christmas, birthday and anniversary alone in Perth – and it got to me.	later I was told ‘Actually, we’re not going to hire you.’ And so, and I was then a week away from my three-month period of where I, it had to find a job or I could be at risk of going, being told to leave the country. And I just made the decision	1. To be alone at Christmas, on your birthday, and in a country where he was an outsider would have been an especially emotionally challenging time to an already depleted self.
2. Job offer in Perth gave me a boost but at the last minute they rescinded their offer.	there and then to, to come back. ³ And so, I came back, and then four days after I got back, I attempted suicide again. I was, so when I came back there was no- where aside from my nan’s for me to go. And my nan is, she’s very depressed and	2. A rare emotional boost of finding work was short lived when the job offer was rescinded a few weeks’ later. Yet another significant blow, in a litany of emotional trauma spanning much of his adult life.
3. This was all too much for me to bear. I made the decision to return. I had failed.	she’s, doesn’t leave the house, she doesn’t, she just, you know, sleeps and eats and what have you in the living room. But, it was the only place for me to go ⁴ to and so I felt a bit, so my mum’s place, her spare room had her partner’s daughter	3. This was the final straw. He was no longer strong enough to stay in [country] . He was now <i>running back</i> to what he had initially <i>run away</i> from.
4. I was now running back to what I had run away from.	in. And I almost, like it was almost, it’s a bit selfish I guess because I almost felt like, she could of kicked her partner’s daughter out, not kicked her out but I don’t mean it that way, but like, I don’t know, or my dad, like my brother moved to my	4. Home was no longer home. Staying with an elderly, depressed relative, in a small flat was his only option.
5. Mum had given my old room to her partner’s daughter. I couldn’t say anything but this meant I had to stay with nan.	dad’s, and so my dad could of, and so I kinda felt a bit unwanted. I was very displaced and felt very out of sorts. ⁵ And it was just a, it wasn’t I don’t think really a serious attempt. Not like the one in July. It was just a case of, it was all a bit	5. I felt empathy for his predicament and understood his ‘selfish’ reasons for wanting his old room back. To feel displaced and unwanted is a heavy burden to bear at the best of times, but at that time, it must have felt immense.
6. Devastated and now displaced and unwanted living with nan who was barely existing herself.	much and didn’t know what to do. So I, and to be honest, I’ve not been in love with the idea	6. A second suicidal episode – but this was deemed less ‘serious’ than the previous attempt. He was reaching-out for help in a prolonged crisis.
7. Second suicidal episode but I didn’t really mean it, not like before.	[80.06] of being alive. ⁶ Even on my good days, at that point, so I was just existing. And then, I was either existing or wanting to die. It was never, and that’s still the case today. That’s not a, it’s not a, I don’t, I’m not, yeah, I’m not in love with the idea of being alive. I, I, I don’t see much point, and I don’t, and I certainly didn’t then. And it was quite, that was quite [an] impulsive decision to do that overdose. I had actually, purposely kept hold of excess medication, because actually what	7. It’s uncomfortable to hear a young person [any person] tell you they don’t want to live. His <i>attempts</i> may suggest a degree of indecision but there was resignation and honesty in his voice. This may have been an impulsive act, but its causation was firmly embedded.
8. I was now just existing – not wishing to be alive.	had happened was because I was coming from [country] to here I needed to make sure I had enough medication to, to last me whilst I get seen here and to go through the, the motions here because I thought that they mind change things, they, they might not, but, so I had six-months’ worth of medication ⁷ in one go [laughs]. And, I didn’t take all of it in one go. I definitely wouldn’t be here. ¹ But, I took an overdoes then four days after I arrived back. I was in [outer city] hospital.	

1. NHS care was initially good.	Then I was under the crisis, the mental health crisis team there, who told me. I	1. Chose not to take all the medication in one
2. A friend from work offered me her empty flat. This was great news as living at nan's was not great.	<u>can't really remember what they told me but they, yeah, so I had to see them every other day. Whether they came to where I was living or they, I went to them</u>	go. This suggests reaching-out for help.
3. It started as a good day – but I ended up taking tablets, walked to a bridge and climbed over the edge. But I couldn't go through with it.	<u>– I had to see them every other day, like a nurse. ² Then, my friend, she had an empty apartment in [city]. And, so she offered me to move there. Have my own space, like, and, you know, I've got, I had my, well she's my best friend, who I</u>	2. NHS intervention was good and ongoing.
4. Cannot remember if police attended but I went to hospital.	<u>referred earlier to as being the female cop who I really enjoyed working with. ³ We became best friends and so it, she lived in [city], I thought when I go back to the police I'll end up back where I left. I thought I would be placed, posted back to that area. So, I thought that would be great and would be a new lease of life and</u>	3. A life line and rare good fortune. Best friend [hard working female officer P4.2] offered him her empty city flat.
5. I was incensed by the doctor who disregarded my diagnosis in [country] and took me off all the meds I was on.	<u>so. I then, really bizarrely I was actually having a good d[ay], what I call a good day, wasn't having any particular urge or suicidal thoughts and then I went to bed. And</u>	4. What started out as a good day ['no particular urges or suicidal thoughts'] ended, without obvious reason, in an overdose and a walk to a city bridge. He climbed over – but he couldn't go through with it. He was now back in hospital.
6. The UK doctor didn't believe me. My enduring and life-threatening illness had been de-medicalised in one stroke.	<u>this was two weeks after the, the, the first attempt here, and I lied in bed and all of a sudden it was like no, I don't want to, I don't want to do this. Took another overdose. Drank some vodka and walked to [city] bridge and climbed over and, and I, was, the whole time I walked there I was going to. I was so sure I was going</u>	5. Unable to recall if the police attended or not suggests delirium and/or diminished recall owing to event repetition or wishing to forget.
7. Those who were helping me are now no longer helping me. Abandoned by NHS.	<u>to jump and then I climbed over and I was like 'No I can't do this', you know, and I climbed back over and just broke down. ⁴ Called an ambulance and I think the</u>	6. Incredulous at doctor's decision to cease his medication and a sense of disbelief at their refusal to acknowledge [country] mental health diagnosis. He felt he wasn't being believed. His deep rooted, enduring, and life threatening condition was no longer medicalised and, in this sense, he'd lost credibility in the eyes of those who could help.
8. How can I go from seven different meds to zero overnight? This isn't right.	<u>police came to that one, I can't really remember. ⁵ And I went into hospital in [city] and became under their care, their mental health crisis team. And, so I had to see them, yeah, about every few days they would come to me. Then I was told to take</u>	
	<u>come off all medication. They, they, I saw a doctor there and they, he said that I'm 'not to take anything' and that 'I'm not diag[nosed]' like they 'Won't diagnose me with anything', they 'Won't acknowledge'[country], [city's] diagnosis', they weren't 'interested in my paperwork I had from [city]'. They weren't interested in</u>	
	<u>contacting my doctors there to get any information, they just wanted, their rationale was to take me off all these seven different meds ⁶ and, when I say that I</u>	
	<u>was on 900 milligrams of lithium, 300 milligrams of lamotrigine, both of them are mood stabilizers, and I was on two different anti-depressants. And then I was on</u>	
	<u>diazepam, I was on, what else was I on? I was on something else. Anyway, they</u>	

1. I was on high doses of mood stabilizing meds – you cannot expect me to simply start afresh with nothing.	<p>were high doses, all of them, and they just took me off all of it and said they ‘Wanted to see how I was.’ Just to, you know, just to start, start from fresh. ¹ I was very apprehensive about that. I know that, because I don’t think it was medication wasn’t working, it was the fact that I felt so displaced here. I think it was more of the, the, the I’d gone from living in [country] and it was quite a quick decision to, to then, you know, and I was in a state of depression, certainly in the last month of [country], and I think it was kind of a mixture of that with this quick decision to come back to the UK. 2 Come back to the UK, there was nowhere for me and it was, there was no like welcoming of open arms. There was nothing like, you know, my friendships moved forward whilst I’d been away and that sort of stuff. Felt very alone. ³ And then they took me off all medication and then I did, in April, so I hadn’t seen a doctor from, from February to April. And, even in April I hadn’t seen a doctor. I took another overdose and I, it was quite a large overdose, and more vodka, and a friend of mine, he’s a sergeant in Sutton, he messaged me and I replied, I don’t recall but it didn’t make any sense whatsoever, and then I stopped replying and so he went into panic mode. Didn’t know where I lived, had to try and find, because I hadn’t long like, really only [name of another friend] and, knew where I lived,⁴ and so he was trying like hard and the police did the door in and found me unresponsive. Not, well, I was unconscious, I wasn’t, I was breathing. And then I was taken to hospital and I spent four days in.</p> <p>[87.34] hospital on a constant watch, by the police at this point. ⁵ And at this point, I, and it was on this day, that’s right, so on that particular day in April I had, so I had already applied, I had already told the police that I was back, I told them in January. I told them before that I was coming back, that I was coming back. So, I, and the I, I was totally honest with them, I told them that I’ve got some issues so I’m probably going to need to see occupational health before I get posted, that sort of stuff. ⁶ Then, I didn’t hear anything from, in February, from them in March. Then I, then in April I got, I got an appointment to see a doctor, occupational health, and it was this day, it was the 17th or something of April, saw the doctor,</p>	<p>1. Disclosure of the variation and high dosages of meds served to justify his <i>diagnosis</i>. This was no trifling matter to simply ‘start afresh’ just to see how he would fair.</p> <p>2. His apprehension wasn’t just about the stopping of the medication. It was more to do with his feelings of displacement having returned from [country] depressed and defeated.</p> <p>3. There was no fanfare upon his return. There was nothing to celebrate and his friendship groups had moved on. He was ‘alone’ once more.</p> <p>4. Fourth overdose followed two months later. He was messaging a friend who raised the alarm when he failed to respond. The friend, a colleague, didn’t know where he lived, which subtly intimates that this wasn’t a cry for help – but it’s likely he would have been aware that the friend would access police records / mutual friends to locate him.</p> <p>5. Disclosure of police breaking down his door to find him unconscious portrays the gravity of this overdose.</p> <p>6. He had applied to resume his police duties but his condition was such that he felt compelled to disclose his mental health issues. I was initially heartened by this honesty [and hopefully not naivety] as I believe many officers of my generation would not have disclosed this information for fear of being treated adversely in the workplace.</p>
2. Depressed and defeated returning from [country] and to stop my meds overnight was unthinkable. Why are you doing this? Don’t you believe me?		
3. No fanfare when I returned to UK. Friends and their lives had moved on. I had returned a failure without a story to tell.		
4. Fourth overdose followed. I had texted a colleague who raised the alarm. They broke down my door and took me hospital.		
5. I applied to re-join the police. My depression was quite bad so I decided to disclose it to them. This seemed to be the right thing to do – but now I’m not so sure. I think it delayed my return.		

1. I disclosed my illness to the police doctor and I was devastated when she said I wasn't fit to work for six months.	occupational health, told her what I had been going through. She said 'You're not fit for work, you're not fit for work for six-months.' And it was just a flat six-months and I said, and I told her 'I need to go back to work' I need to go, you know, whether it be a slow return to work, phased-in return, you know, office or whatever, I need to have some purpose in my life because I don't have it. And I wasn't getting an income, ¹ like I was working for my brother for, like worked with my brother for a couple of days. Had whatever savings I had over from [country]. Worked as a labourer for my brother a few days when I was feeling alright. And that was it, I said 'I need to get back into work.' And I said 'Not just for money, I need to just get back into a routine and like having some sort of purpose' and she said 'You're not fit for office work, you're not fit for any work.' That was, she was very, it was quite brutal. ² There was no sort of bedside manner if you like, it was very cold, and I was, I was just, I don't know how to describe it, in complete distress, I was just in crisis, I was going, getting worse and really worked-up and really sort of, because she kept bringing people into the office, trying, because she wasn't getting on with the system or something, on the computer system. And then she was asking for advice. But she had brought two different people in the office and it was just a bit like. And I just got up and said 'I can't be here, I cannot be here anymore, I'm getting really upset, getting really worked-up.' And then I walked out and then a counsellor tried to stop me and I said 'No, I've got to go. I've got to go. I can't be here' and I, I, I so upset to find out I was not going back to work for six-months. That I've got six more months of not doing anything and not getting anywhere ³ that, that, and that although I know it's not the job's problem like as in that I, that I went into crisis when I was away, like, it wasn't, it just felt like oh, you know, and I had this suspicion when I applied to come, when I, when I told them that I was coming back, that I had this suspicion that they're not gonna, they're just gonna push me, put me on the back burner because of my problems. ⁴ That I'm not going to be, you know, why would they want to bring someone back when they've got these problems? That's, that was like a narrative in my mind and, I just, I remember leaving [HQ in west of city] in complete and utter distress,	1. The researcher's scepticism was borne out when the police doctor said he was 'not fit for work for six months.' This was devastating for P13 who needed the purpose and structure resumption of work would bring – not to mention a means to live and pay the rent.
2. I couldn't face another six months without working and pleaded with police doctor. She wouldn't listen. It was brutal.		2. His pleas for a phased return were met by 'You're not fit for office work, you're not fit for any work.' He describes the doctor as 'brutal.'
3. The police doctor was very cold in her delivery. She was hard and unprofessional, interrupting our meeting to get her computer fixed. This is my life we are talking about and you're not listening.		3. The doctor's delivery was very cold and she kept bringing people into the office because she was having IT issues. This was all too much for P13 who walked out of the meeting as the prospect of six months doing nothing was too much to bear.
4. I lost control of my emotions and walked out of the meeting. She was brutal and it was all too much for me to cope with.		4. P13 now shared the researcher's suspicion of discrimination owing to his mental health disclosure.
5. My honesty with the police doctor had cost me my job. I felt cheated and had nowhere to turn.		

1. I was shaking and utterly distressed when I walked out of police doctor's meeting.	shaking, I was just what's the point? I've got nowhere to go. I've got nothing to do. I'm gonna just have six-months of like, and it was just the way she kept saying 'You're not fit, you're not fit.' It was just, like it was just so demeaning almost and I	1. Utterly distressed and shaking he left the police HQ with the narrative: <i>why would you bring someone back with these problems?</i> Repeating in his mind. He felt demeaned by the way she kept saying 'You're not fit.' He went home and started to drink heavily. His fifth overdose followed later that day.
2. Narrative repeating in my mind was why would they want me back with these problems? I was useless.	had, that was in mind constantly on repeat. And I went back to [area in city] went straight to buy a bottle of vodka, went straight home, and just started popping all these pills and drinking and then passed-out and then the next thing I know is I	
3. Police doctor's repetition of 'you're not fit' was demeaning and debilitating. I was finished. I went straight home and started to drink.	sort of, I don't really remember the police knocking down the door or anything, ¹ but I just remember being in the hospital and being, like for four days constant watch like at the hospital guard, which I thought was really, surprising actually. I was quite surprised by that and I felt awful, I felt like I'm wasting their time. It was	2. He had a hospital guard for four days, which surprised him. [It's likely that the risk adverse nature of the police realised that this would be classified as <i>a death following police contact</i> should he have died or suffered life changing injuries.] P13 felt sincere regret at wasting his colleagues' time, especially as this was within a protracted period of public order police work across [city], which had taken many officers away from their homes and usual duties for a number of weeks.
4. Police doctor took away my last hope. I had nothing more to live for. I drank vodka and took pills. I awoke in hospital.	during [protracted major public order operation] so like everyone was off doing that and, you know, the team was obviously already like and I just felt very uncomfortable. I got it, I understood why, it was just I felt really awful that I had made that, ² and then I was offered to go into the [name] mental health unit	
5. Surprised and embarrassed to awaken to a police guard in hospital. I didn't care for much at the time but I was aware that I was taking officers away from their busy duties and I felt bad about this.	attached to, once they had checked, because of what I'd overdosed on, it was having an effect on my sort of reactions and movements. So, once I got the all clear from that they offered me to go to [name of mental health unit], which I did agree, and I went there. I, so the officer had been waiting for me to into there, and then the hospital guard would have stopped, but I went there and I was	3. P13 was verbally assaulted by an unwell man whilst in hospital. Some might think this should be <i>water off a duck's back</i> for police officers. However, the reality is the repetition of such assaults can actually heighten one's susceptibility to the exposure.
6. A fellow patient shouted abuse at me. I should have been able to deal with this, but I couldn't. It really got to me. My resilience had gone.	confronted with this guy who was very unwell, who was really sort of in my face and it was just all a bit, sort of, again all a bit much and all I wanted to do at that point was go home. Go to bed and just forget that this all happened. ³ This was in	
7. The police officers gave me a lift home and looked-in on me the next day. I didn't know them, and I was really touched by their kindness.	April. And then I said 'I'm not going' I actually said 'I'm not going to [name of mental health unit]' and so the officers took me [94.38] home and then they came the next day, or one of them came to check on me the next day to see if I was alright, which I thought was really nice. ⁴ And, that's when I sent an email to everyone and anyone. I had, I think that's, might be my timeline is a little bit wrong, but that's when I sent an email, I think with the, the, the second attempt, which saw me at [city] bridge, there was an inspector [name], she actually, for some reason she was made aware of what had happened and that I was, you	4. Visibly touched by the kindness of unknown colleagues who gave him a lift home and then looked in on him the following day to check that he was okay. [Philanthropic acts, no matter how small, resonate with colleagues and the public alike. I sense P13 will not forget this going forward in his career].

1. Female inspector who dealt with my suicidal episode contacted me as she was aware I was an officer on a career break.	<u>know, an officer on a career-break, and so she, she sort of remained in contact. She spoke to me on the phone she made a contact in the email every so often, and she was trying to see what she could do her end. And, I think that's why I ended-up getting this appointment with occupational health. ¹ When I got out of hospital I remember sending this email in April to HR, Occupational Health Mailbox, [inspector previously mentioned], there was someone else, and I was like, I don't know what else to do and so I wrote this email saying 'I need to go back to work, I've been told I'm not fit for six-months' this is like and I'm like, you know, 'I need this', I need to just sort of, 'I'm not in a financial, financially good situation at the moment', like now and blah, blah, blah. And I was pretty direct in the email. I think I said this is what, you know, this is what happened after I was told I was not fit for work for six-months and that I need help. And that very day, I was posted back to work. So not back to work as such but they resumed you back from career-break on that day. ² They, because that should have only taken three-months anyway, and I was in my fourth-month. So, I was resumed back from my career-break, I had another appointment made to see the counsellor. I had another appointment made to see, ah no, I'd been given a line-manager. I'd been given a department, and I had been put on back-pay from a week be[fore], prior. And paid that space in advance. All that done of that day I sent the email. It was quite astounding, I was really, like, gob-smacked that, that's what it took. ³ And that's why I kind of was almost sure that I was, you know, there is someone somewhere is processing people returning from career-breaks or recruitment or whatever, whatever HR department does that, that I, you know, that oh this one has issues, that maybe he just sort of put that there why I do this, that, and the other and, you know, time carries on. It may not have been that case, of course, but it's not how it felt. ⁴ And yeah, and so I had returned to work in a sense that I was put straight away onto sick, whilst my line manager got in contact with me in, in May. So this is yeah, this would have happened right at the end of April and then I, then my line manager got in contact with me in May, and then I met him in May. Then I saw the psychiatrist finally, and then the mental health crisis team,</u>	1. The officers' act of kindness inspired P13 to send emails to 'everyone and anyone.' Critically, he wrote to an inspector who dealt with his attempt on the [city] bridge, as they had remained in touch.
2. Female inspector kept in touch and I could tell she cared about me as a fellow officer. This made me feel good and gave me hope.		2. He also wrote to HR and OH and was candid when describing his plight. Remarkably, he was reinstated that day.
3. Female inspector's kindness inspired me into positive action. I wrote to everyone I could think of to try and get myself back to work.		3. 'Astounded' and 'gobsmacked.' That day he was assigned a new department, given a new line manager, and immediate back pay for the past week.
4. I was just a number in a faceless HR process. I had no control and felt vulnerable to the whims of HR admin staff who might put me on the back-burner.		4. Helplessness of being a mere number within a faceless and removed HR process. He felt that his disclosed mental health issues relegated him to the back burner. People's futures were at the whim of who? Admin staff?
5. Gobsmacked that someone in the faceless HR system had pressed a button and I was now back at work with back pay. This saved my life.		
6. I felt so vulnerable with faceless people making life-changing decisions.		

<p>1. I'm now back on the same medication as before. It's not quite right but I feel more reassured.</p> <p>2. Shared my 'selfish' feelings about the spare room with mum. She understood and I was pleased to move home for a while.</p> <p>3. I still don't get on that well with mum, but we need each other. I care less about her partner, who doesn't like me either.</p> <p>4. Overdosed and tried to hang myself at mum's home. Embarrassed to say I cannot even recall the trigger.</p>	<p><u>who put me back on some medication.</u> ¹ And then told me I would be referred to the recovery team. But I wouldn't hear from them until August. And, so I'd, I'd actually only seen, at that point, I'd only seen two doctors. Two psychiatrist, no, one psychiatrist two times since I got back from [country] , and that's, that's after three attempts. Then, I went into crisis again in June, June? Yeah, June, and I moved back to mum's in May after that, after the April incident, I moved back to mum's. Because she then said, well, no I said to her that I had thought given that she knew that I wasn't well when I came back from [country] <u>that she would have spoken to her partner' dau[ghter], her partner and her daughter, and his daughter, that, that I may need the room and whatever and she, she agreed that she didn't do that and she would do that. So then, when, that was all fine.</u> ² I moved back to mum's. <u>I don't get on with her [laughs], her partner was not impressed I don't think. I don't get on with him.</u> ³ <u>And, I went into crisis again in June. I can't remember what tipped me there. There's, there's usually triggers, sometimes there's been just a, like a, an urge like a, impulse, sometimes you know. I don't know, I can't remember, but something happened in June and I took another overdose and then tried to hang myself. As you can see, I'm quite tall and there really was nowhere to hang myself. I tried off the banister and then, then broke it and that was, that was it. I was just like, I can't even do this [laughs]. She [mum] wasn't there, she was at work.</u> ⁴ <u>Then I just walked to, because it's just up the road from the hospital, and I walked to accident and emergency and I was in hospital. They left me in the waiting room for hours. I then left, and then they, the hospital sent an ambulance to come and get me again. And when I say I was left for hours, it was twelve hours I was just left waiting. It was like, and, and then, I didn't see a doctor. I was there for another twelve hours, I think. Then I, so I then contacted, they contacted the [city] crisis team. They didn't contact me, so I [102.35] contacted them when I came out of hospital and said 'I need to see someone' and then I saw a nurse. And said 'I need to see a doctor, I need to see someone who can make decisions about medication and about' I said 'I've just done this' and she said 'I don't know what you want us to do, about this.'</u> I said 'I</p>	<p>1. Now back on medication - although his symptoms hadn't changed.</p> <p>2. Shared with mother his 'selfish' feelings about the spare room. She agreed and he moved back <i>home</i>.</p> <p>3. Laughed when he said he didn't get on with his mother [but sense they need each other]. More serious when stating he didn't get on with her partner [whose daughter had just lost the spare room].</p> <p>4. Sixth overdose and attempted hanging soon followed - but he was too tall to hang off the bannister [laughs]. This was an impulse but couldn't recall the 'trigger.' [I was surprised / saddened by this as it sounded like he was making good progress for the first time in a long, torturous, journey].</p>
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1. Walked into A&E after final suicidal episode. They weren't impressed and I had to wait around until they had time for me.	<u>want you to get me to see a doctor so I can talk about my medication because it's not working. It's not good enough that in May I'm told this is what you'll take and someone will be in touch in August.' Like, it's just, it's not, you know, 'I'm just left on my own to deal with this with no professional support from, from you guys really.'</u> And she went 'Well, the crisis team only look after people for three-	1. Having walked into A&E off the street, he did not receive the timely medical attention he was now presumably accustomed to. This frustrated him and he was met with short-shrift from the nurse who was equally unimpressed.
2. Nurse was blunt with me and I didn't like this. I had always been an emergency before, now made to feel I was wasting their time.	<u>months and then you go to a recovery team' and I went, and she said 'You've been with us for six-months' and I said 'But I've been in crisis', I said 'I don't really understand', I said 'Is it not crisis that I keep, that I ending-up doing this again?'</u>	2. P13 was impressed and reassured by his new line manager's support. He had met his mother and attended NHS meetings. This approach led to a shared understanding of what needed to be done. [Critically, only the patient is permitted to talk during appointments with the senior police doctor, which appears absurd to me].
3. At the touch of a button, I was assigned a new department, manager, and back pay. I was thrilled - although I knew there would be challenges ahead.	<u>and she said 'Well, you're going to the recovery team, so you're not really', I went 'But I'm not at the recovery' and it was just back-and-forth. ¹ And then, I told my line manager and my line manager actually visited mum while I was at [city HQ] to get my warrant card and so I spoke to him on the phone because he'd been told</u>	3. Acceptance of his 'suicidality' from within, since childhood.
4. Very impressed with new manager who takes time to talk to me (not just email) to agree best way forward. This is what I need.	<u>what happened. And, he, I think I had an appointment. Yeah, two weeks' later I had an appointment to see a new doctor at [city HQ] and my line manager came with me. And I told him everything that happened just two weeks before and what-have-you, and told him what happened at the last doctor's appointment</u>	
5. Very reassured by new manager who agreed to attend NHS meetings with me to assist the process.	<u>there. The, my line manager explained [current policing role] and the role I would be doing if I was able to go back and he was like 'Yeah, absolutely' you know 'Let's work out a plan to get you back into work' and, you know, he said 'This, this, this I</u>	
6. I'm slowly recovering, but the suicidality is part of me and my upbringing. This frightens me.	<u>think will be a great thing for you.'</u> And, so, that's why I'm on a phased return now and, I go back at the end of next month to discuss how it's been and to see what, how we progress thereafter. ² I'm sure there stuff I missed in the last, whole thing, but this is an unusual like, it's unusual for me, it's obviously it's unusual to have, I mean I've had four suicide attempts this year, and one last year. But the suicidality in me has been with me for quite a long time. I've always had these things and Borderline Personality Disorder, that's, that's come from childhood. That's developed throughout my upbringing. And, and, I guess that's probably why I struggled as a teenager to, to deal with my emotions ³ and whatever and I actually a likened, I say what, my example of what the last couple of years have been like is I've spent thirty-two years, thirty-two or thirty-three years, holding everything in.	

1. My childhood was always a bit random since my parents split. I had no one really to turn to.	Not speaking to anyone because I've not really had anyone I can speak to and I've, I've kept everything within me, all the bad stuff. So, growing-up my parents, my mum and dad split-up. My mum was very angry all the time and abusive. My dad wasn't really around, and when he was supposed to be he never showed-up and then whatever. And then, I didn't have friends at school and, so, as soon as I	1. History of parents splitting-up, 'angry' mum who he couldn't talk to and unreliable father. No friends at school. Became a [child] baby-sitter to his younger brother, which was convenient for mum. This isolated him as a teenager, keeping 'all the bad stuff' in.
2. I felt isolated growing-up. This made me sad and arm-cutting provided temporary relief.	turned old enough my mum got me to look after my younger brother because she knew that I didn't go out ever, or whatever, so she took advantage of that sort of stuff. [She] Never spoke to me about how I was getting on at school, never, nothing like that, so I never had, from growing-up, never anyone that I could talk to. So I just kept everything to myself and just escaped by listening to music or whatever and I, you know, ¹ I self-harmed and I, never did a suicide attempt in my teens, in my twenties, but I thought about it a lot and I actually thought that how I	2. Arm cutting led to first suicide attempt in his teens. Ruminated upon his death and suicide had been, for as long as he could remember, the way he 'would end up dying.' Crucially, he'd had no one to talk though these terrible thoughts.
3. I've always felt I would die through suicide. I thought about this a lot in my teens - but had no one to talk to.	would die. For some reason I always thought that's the way I would end up dying anyway, but I, I just never had, throughout my life, ever had someone to talk to and, I try, ² I have tried a couple of times, like I, I tried to, so my, it's a bit complicated but my brother, one of my brothers had a daughter. But she was taken into care at birth because my brother and his, that, the, the woman at the, the girl at the time were wanted for burglary and they lived in squalor, and so I tried to adopt her, you know. Something like a twelve-month process and it failed. I failed and I was a PCSO at the time and I, my line manager said I 'Should go and speak to someone' so he referred me to someone in, a counsellor in Occupational Health. So I tried to and I went to I think maybe two sessions, one or two sessions and I just didn't, it was very abnormal to me. ³ So when it came, you know, fast-forward thirty-two, thirty-three years later and on my birthday I go and have this breakdown at the doctor, and it all comes flooding-out. And what's happened is I've opened Pandora's Box. ⁴ And so the first half of last year was really difficult because I was trying to navigate, even though I was seeing someone regularly, I was trying to navigate all these emotions and stuff that was happening, which I'm not [109.08] used to. And, it got the better of me July last year, and then after that, when I went in to the psychiatric unit and sought help and what-have-you, I	3. An unsuccessful adoption process led to [police] OH counselling. Although willing to participate, the process of opening-up was 'abnormal' to him and he didn't complete the course.
4. My sadness and isolation when growing-up makes it difficult for me to reach out to others even now.		4. 'Fast-forward' to present day and his breakdown at the doctors where all the years of pain came flooding out. He had opened 'Pandora's Box.'
5. When I do reach-out, it's like I'm opening Pandora's Box and all the years of pain come flooding out.		

<p>1. Things weren't working-out and I needed to move to my own place.</p> <p>2. The first half year in my flat was 'chaotic' and 'horrendous' – I was losing control. I couldn't get a grasp of anything.</p> <p>3. This half year is better and that's due to work, which isn't taxing but provides structure and a means to live.</p> <p>4. I'm trying to remember the competent officer I used to be. I'm not that person now - but I'm more accepting of this.</p>	<p>started to feel that I got, I was getting control over it, but, I, I, my job and then all, you know, and so then it brought a whole load of new problems, and then I moved here. ¹ So, the first half of this year has just been chaotic. Like, I thought the first half of last year was bad, but this year was horrend[ous], like it was even worse. And, I just couldn't get a grasp of it anything again and I was just losing control all of the time. And I, that's not how I've ever been. I've always, sort of, it's not really control is it when you, submerge, it's not really being in control of your emotions, that's, it's, probably the opposite but it's, they're not all out flooding around. ² So now I'm in the second half and I am beginning to feel better. And a lot of that is because I am going back to work, and it may not be because the [current police role] isn't taxing. ³ I've been kinda surprised at how quickly I've remembered certain things. <u>Certain systems and what-have-you, but I don't, I try, I'm trying to remember the police officer I used to be, because I feel like that was a completely different person. Like, I don't remember, initially, like initially when I first started I remember being quite shy and, you know, a bit quiet and what-have-you. But, I think, I can't remember, like I was pretty competent. I mean, I cannot, I cannot envisage me walking into an interview room now and confidently interviewing a suspect for something and, like, I can't, I cannot, it's, it's almost like I, it's someone else. It's very strange. So, yeah, I liken it to Pandora's Box, and that I've been trying to push it all back in again and where I'm not getting that it's bursting again and, and now I'm in a place where I'm trying to get my head round the fact that I'm probably going to be like this forever. Like, for the rest of my life and, and I'm fully expecting, I'm just almost waiting for the next crisis moment. ⁴ But, also I'm trying to be mindful of the fact that I don't want to go back into the place that I was before I left the job on the career break. That place where I went to work, hated it, hated going to work, hated being at work, felt useless and inadequate and literally the confidence beaten out of me. And then going home from work and stuck in this routine of, you know, watching TV and I'm finding myself going back sort of into that way. It's hard to explain really but it's sort of, I mean, I do three days a week now. ¹ And, I don't really know how I'm going to</u></p>	<p>1. He moved to his current flat. His emotional problems were up and down, but generally worsening.</p> <p>2. First half of this year were 'chaotic' and 'horrendous.' 'Losing control all the time', which was new to him as he was able to 'submerge' his emotions previously.</p> <p>3. This half of the year is better, and 'a lot of that' is due to work, which 'isn't taxing.' [Recuperative roles must not be too stressful, but purposeful to the officer].</p> <p>4. Fragmented self - 'I'm trying to remember the police officer I used to be, because I feel like that was a completely different person.' No longer feels able to 'confidently interview a suspect' and acceptance that he's 'probably going to be like this forever.' Awaiting the next crisis.</p>
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1. I need to take better care of myself, curtailing old habits of hiding away listening to music or binge TV.	<u>progress. Not yet, so much in work, you know, like I say, [current police role] is not taxing, but I don't know where I want to go in the job. I don't know if I can go anywhere in the job. I feel like, there's probably parts of the job that I will not be able to do, because of my diagnosis but, and will I ever be happy again? And, yeah, I don't know. It's weird.</u> ²	1. Personal growth – he doesn't want to return to the pre-career break hatred of work and feeling useless. He's now aware that he must take responsibility for his lifestyle and not slip back to his old ways of isolated escapism e.g. music and binge TV.
2. I'm more accepting of my [limited] options at work due to illness and I realise that I may never be truly happy.	Researcher: (113.50) P13 is thanked for providing such an insightful account and is invited to suggest how the police service can improve its identification and care of officers in crisis?	2. Acceptance that his condition may limit his options within the police. Acceptance that he may never be truly happy.
3. Supervisors should be better trained to help recognise the signs of depreciating mental health. But I know this is a big subject.	Stuart Yeah, I mean, I think, I think that, I mean, <u>I think there needs, whether it be,</u> I mean, look, I've only been back for two months or something, so this may already exist, some of these thoughts may already exist but the line manager, some input of recognising signs of someone going down the path of crisis or prior, you know, that, you know the problem is it's so vastly different for everyone. There is some similar things I think, you know, where someone who is throwing themselves into work fully, completely, all the time, like being full on or to someone who is withdrawing, there's these, you know, there are a few things that line managers, because, because of the nature of the beast, it's not something that's, when I'm in crisis I don't talk. And that's why I end up going down the root of suicide being an option. ³ And, there's the other prob[lem], you know, there's so much, there's, so complicated, if, <u>if someone's attempted suicide, they are a hundred times more likely to commit suicide. And so, you know, it's so easy to say that there's the In Despair button on, on the intranet where you can call, or The Samaritans, or Mind, but there isn't, what do you do when, because the reason, one of the reasons why people end up attempting or actually going through with it, because I think statistically they, they reckon that people that do commit suicide, that mind change, they change their mind before and it's too late or something.</u> ⁴ Probably not worded that right, but, for me I, <u>I need almost to be coerced into talking when I'm in crisis. Right now, I'm not in crisis. But, I'm not</u>	3. Supervisors need better training to identify the red flags. This is qualified with the caveat that there are a myriad of issues 'because that's the nature of the beast.'
4. The work self-referral system is ineffective because people in despair often don't want to talk.		4. The police 'in despair button' or the national voluntary support networks are fine – but very often people in crisis choose not to speak, and then it's too late.

1. I often don't want to talk when I'm in crisis - but I would like others to try and understand what I'm going through.	happy, I'm not sad, I'm just, I'm just you know, I'm not, but I'm not in crisis. And if I were in crisis I [119.35] wouldn't be able to do this ¹ and, and, what I, and I say this to my friends as well, that I just need someone to check-in and be, you know, see how things are going and, you know. Make me feel like I can talk to you and that you are, you are there and your door is always open and you know, because it's, it's one thing saying those things, and another thing meaning those things and, just because you say you're always there it doesn't mean you are always there ² and, you know, there's so many, it's so complicated mental health. Like mental, I mean I don't even like the phrase mental health, that affects every single person on the planet. ³ But it's, it manifests in so many different ways, and it needs to, I kinda feel like the job, the, the line managers and inspectors and what-have-you, they, there's needs to be some sort of input on awareness, how they can, not awareness in the topic because I think that, that is around, but awareness in how to recognise the signs and then how to speak to someone. ^{4*} Someone put on the intranet a couple of weeks ago a really good external training package, which was excellent actually. I went, it was twenty minutes long and it was really, really good.	1. In crisis, P13 needs to be 'coerced into talking.' He wouldn't be able to do this interview in crisis.
2. People don't always mean it when they say their door is always open.		2. Meaning it when you say 'your door is always open.'
3. I don't like the label 'mental health.' It affects everyone.		3. Personal dislike of the phrase [label] 'mental health' as it 'affects every single person on the planet.'
4. More mental health training is needed at work to help identify those that need help.		4. * Supervisors, staff, Fed reps need more training to help identify symptoms and to be competent / empathetic when talking to those in need.
5. There's some good e-learning on line.	⁵ But, and it doesn't just stop at line managers. ^{4*} I mean, when I was going through my, the start of my, the start, the first half of this year in April, I, it was after April, that my Fed rep got in contact with me and it was the same Fed rep that was on the team [number]. That was quite confronting. And, and, because I had asked someone to get me in contact with the Fed rep, I didn't expect it to be him but, he said there was nothing he could do. 'There was nothing the Fed could do to help me get back to work.' So I was like 'Okay'. ^{4*} And funnily enough, he now works in my department, the department I am in as well [laughs]. I don't know, but it's, it was a bit of a surprise to see him in there as well, and it's sort of like, I don't, I don't really converse with him. But yeah, just typical isn't it, but. So I think, like, there's like, and then, there goes, and then there's Occupational Health. I know that's outsourced now. But it really, a doctor, who, I don't know if it was just a, a fuck-up on her part on that particular day or if that happens on a regular basis the way that she was choosing, because language is really important,	5. There are some good e-training products on the intranet.

1. Police doctors' language should be more empathetic. They're sometimes rude and brutal.	because, you know, if you've got BPD you catastrophise, you can catastrophise things. And, so, and that can just be purely based on how someone words something and you will take, you know, that will go into your brain and all of a sudden become the biggest thing that, when actually. So, her going 'You are totally unfit for work', like her language. She kept repeating it and then she was getting people into the office to, to, you know, it was not really confidential. And not even that, every time I went to [city HQ] before, prior to having my warrant card back. ¹ They never had my name on the list. Occupational Health never, even though I asked, they never put my name on the list, security. So, they would have to call, and then they would ask me on the phone 'Why?', or they would ask the security guard, guard, and then they would ask me 'Why' I was there. And, I didn't particularly want to say 'Oh, I'm here for counselling or I'm here for' whatever, it was really sort of, like there was no, it's not that sort of, confidential or discreet. And it was really, and I said that to them a couple of times. I said, you know 'I don't want to be', you know, 'I'm sure I'm not the only person. I don't want to have to say on the phone while there is a queue of people behind that I'm here for counselling.' And, it was, they were a bit blasé about it. It was a bit, well, you know, and I think that's, you know, that's pretty important because Occupational Health should be the most understanding area, you know. If you're seeing a doctor they should be really fully aware of. But I mean, again, this might be different now but when I was on team, when we dealt with something pretty horrific, there's, you know, there's a few things I can think of, like there was a mum who killed her two children. Absolutely horrendous. There was nothing afterwards, at the end of the shift. You know, there was no line manager pulling you into the office to see how you were – or not even the next day, nothing. And that wasn't just for that particular incident. That was for all the, the pretty horrendous stuff. That may be different now. But, that is, that's where I feel like, you know, it's not normal. I know that we do, we've chosen to do a job that is, that is like that. ³ That is confronting with some really awful things. But it's not normal. And, and the same in the CID. The only, the, the, with CID there's more	1. Police doctors should be trained to use empathetic language, without compromising their clinical decisions. [Some police doctors have a reputation for being 'rude' and 'brutal'. Is this a strategy / defence mechanism when dealing with officers who are generally perceived to be forthright?]
2. Police doctor repeating 'You are totally unfit for work' was very hurtful and I couldn't get it out of my mind.		2. Officers shouldn't have to state why they are there (e.g. for counselling) whilst gaining entry in a public / police reception. When this was raised OH, they were unhelpful. They should be the most understanding of officer's needs.
3. Having to tell security why I'm at reception [for treatment] belittles me and they should stop this from happening.		
4. I dealt with a mother who killed her two children. It was horrendous – but there was no welfare support offered. 'It's not normal.'		3. P13 dealt with a mother who had killed her two children. 'Absolutely horrendous.' But there was no support offered to the officers concerned. [This is routinely an outsourced self-referral e-system].

<p>1. I dealt with a lot of paedophilia in the CID and there was no support. 'It's not normal.'</p> <p>2. Putting the onus on me to ask for help is not right. I don't want to come to the attention of my peers or managers.</p> <p>3. My new sergeant didn't know me but he was aware of my position and when I asked him to come to a medical meeting with me he agreed. I really appreciated that.</p> <p>4. Having a supervisor you can trust is very reassuring. I now feel confident to go back to him if I need to.</p>	<p><u>like, there's, you know, more like paedophilia stuff that's, where, you know, you rate, you have to rate images and what-have-you. But, it's, there's nothing. There's no, that's not normal.</u> ¹</p> <p>Researcher: (126.25) Did you have to do that?</p> <p>Stuart Yeah and it's not [normal].</p> <p>Researcher: (126.28) As a PC, you still had to do that?</p> <p>Stuart Yeah, yeah, as T/DC, yeah [Trainee Detective Constable]</p> <p>Researcher: (126.35) Without support?</p> <p>Stuart <u>Yeah, it's not normal. Like it's, those things there's no one to, and because I at the time kept everything within I never went and sought help. And it's almost like the onus is on you to, to ask for help, not for your line-manager to recognise that you, or even be aware that you attended this really awful job today and that I'm going to take half-an-hour to, I don't know, time – it's a luxury but it's, you know, to, to spend, you know, twenty minutes or whatever to speak to an officer who did go to, you know, this job and deal with this particular job, or deal with this particular case, whatever, and say look 'How are you? Is there anything I can do for you?' and at least then you'll feel like, and it won't happen overnight, but if that happens regularly you will genuinely feel like you can go to this person.</u> ² Like, my current line manager, I asked him, I didn't know him from Adam, and I asked him, I met him once, and I spoke to him once on the phone and then I asked him if he could come with me to my appointment in July for my doctor. And he said 'Yeah, absolutely.' And, he checked-in with me once a week and I feel like if I have concerns or an issue, I can go to him. ³</p>	<p>1. Classification of 'paedophilia stuff.' 'That's not normal.' No routine support offered other than outsourced self-referral.</p> <p>2. The 'onus is on you' to ask for help. P13 bottled things-up and may not have wished to come to a manager's attention within a busy CID officer where he hoped to succeed.</p> <p>3. P13 now has the confidence to ask his new line manager for support [manager joined him in the NHS meeting P30.2.]</p>
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<p>1. Having my sergeant with me at the NHS meeting was reassuring and he could speak for me if I missed anything.</p> <p>2. Like many men, I'm not very good at talking to others about my problems. Having a supervisor who knows your background is crucial.</p> <p>3. What officers see isn't normal – so they get pissed at the end of the shift. It's the culture.</p>	<p>Researcher: (128.20) Good.</p> <p>Stuart And that's something that's evolved over a period of time, you know, if, I wouldn't of been able to do it the first time he said that to me, or maybe not even the second time, but the fact that he said 'Yes' to come to the doctors with me, because again I was quite conscious that I didn't want to get stressed again, and I know what I'm like. <u>I feel like (a) I bang-on and (b) I may not, I feel like I'm not very clear so I, I mean that may not be the case but I do fe[el], but when I spoke to him, you know, when I speak to doctors and what-have-you I feel that oh I'm all over the place.</u> ¹ So, that sort of interaction with you line manager over a period of time, and it's especially prevalent in males, that, you know, that as I'm sure you're aware the male suicide rate for under forties is the biggest killer for under forty-fives, so, it's, males, there is, there is a reason for that, and <u>men aren't talking.</u> And, the onus at the moment is you need to seek help, not help needs to come to you, almost, or you need to feel like you can, without judgement. Because, that's the key thing. Because, I think men, I certainly feel like if I, the job doesn't know about you're his[tory], you know, your history, your up-bringing, your, the things you've gone through in your life. They don't, it doesn't know about that, it only knows about what you've done in the job. Like, your line manager only knows about the jobs you go to, and, and, you know, hopefully they know what jobs you go to, or what you investigate. So, I think it's, that to me is really important, because if they can be aware of that and build that rapport with their, their, their staff, especially us men, I think, will feel like we can open-up and it be discreet and non-judgemental, then that would be, I think, especially important. ² I think. Because, like I say, every single day officers are going out to these awful things. It's not norm[al], they're not normal situations and end-up, end-up happening is they go out and get pissed. You know, you have a particularly bad shift, you know, it's a kind of a, culturally in the job, you go out to the pub afterwards and you, you know. That's, and I think that probably still happens, I don't know. Maybe. ³</p>	<p>1. Importance of having a 'friend' present in welfare meetings who can help the communication. [Critically, only the patient is permitted to talk during appointments with the senior police doctor, which appears absurd to me].</p> <p>2. P13 refers to men generally not speaking about what's troubling them. Better communication with managers, as in his case, could help improve this.</p> <p>3 Because men generally don't open-up, they 'get pissed' after a bad shift.' I think that probably still happens.' [The drinking culture in the police has diminished significantly over the researcher's 30 year career. Drink drive values, officers commuting following the selling-off of marital quarters and section houses, and the erosion of teams have contributed to this].</p>
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<p>1. I didn't know about the Blue light Champion. This needs to be advertised more.</p> <p>2. I haven't had much to do with the Fed, but when I did need their help they said they couldn't help me. They didn't even refer me to the Blue light Champion.</p> <p>3. I was forced to find my own support outside work. This isn't right.</p> <p>4. Supervisors should be there to help – but I was frightened of my first inspector, so it's down to their personalities.</p>	<p>Researcher: (131.05) Is there anything from a Federation point of view that can be improved?</p> <p>Stuart I think, I've had very little interaction with the Fed. Aside from that particular officer who said that there was nothing they could help me with. <u>At that point, I wasn't told about the Blue Light Champion thing, which I now know exists.</u></p> <p>¹ There's no, there's no, I wasn't, there almost maybe could be a, a standard information-sharing type tool that, say, <u>he called me, he'd obviously found out what had happened, why I'd been in hospital, and he, and when I said you know, 'I just want to get back to work', there was 'Nothing I can do' and then that was it. That was the end of the conversation. There was no sort of like well 'Maybe I can get in contact, get you in contact with the Blue Light champion' if he wasn't one already. I don't think he was, or is. Because, I, I don't know much about the Blue Light Champions but I think that they have, they're equipped with information about where they can, where you can be guided towards and what help is there</u></p> <p>² in with Mind and, you know, and that sort of stuff. Because, I had to do it all on my own. Like, I've, I've not got the support from the NHS so I've gone to do it myself. I've contacted Mind myself and have a therapist with Mind and that sort, like I've gone and done my own, like, on my own. Because I'm not getting the support there and certainly didn't at the start of this year get any support from the job, or Occupational Health specifically. ³ I mean, <u>you can't change people's personalities. You know, when I talk about that particular governor on Team [number] and then I happen to [him] see last week, first time in four-and-half years, and the feeling I got the moment I saw him was awful and, like that, how to you change that? You know, how do you, that's, you know, I don't think people realise. But, that I think is police culture is this, it, I don't think that will ever go away this pack mentality of, because it's just human nature.</u></p> <p>⁴ You know, if you, if you have a <u>team of thirty people that's like a class of thirty kids, you know, they have, they're going to have pockets of, but what you need is line managers to be more aware of the dynamics within the team before it gets out of hand and reign</u></p>	<p>1. No prior knowledge of the Blue Light Champion [officers' welfare].</p> <p>2. Limited contact with the Fed, but the one time he asked for help the rep said there was nothing they could do. Why didn't he refer P13 to the Blue Light Champion? P34.4.</p> <p>3. P13 found his support [Mind] when it wasn't forthcoming from the police or NHS.</p> <p>4. Standards of support will vary depending upon line managers' personalities. The fear engendered by the [bad] team's inspector was highlighted as a poor standard. P7.3.</p>
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<p>1. Team officers are like kids in a class. That's police culture. Supervisors need to be aware of the dynamics to help protect the vulnerable like me.</p> <p>2. Some supervisors avoid the difficult conversations with their staff, which causes the issue to fester.</p> <p>3. Since returning from my career break, I've noticed an improvement in the awareness of officers' mental health.</p> <p>4. Understandably, supervisors don't always know what's going on in officers' lives.</p>	<p>it in. ¹ <u>But the problem you have with line managers, or I have, I find, not all line managers obviously, but it's that they don't want to have the difficult conversations with their, their, their officers. You know, they're difficult conversations, you know, where you need to reign an officer in maybe or you need to pull-up an officer. They don't want to do that. They're quite happy to be in that role and be paid that little extra bit of money but, when it comes down to, being a bit, you know, toeing the line with an officer or two, that's when it gets sort of like, that's what I found anyway.</u> ² Not all, but not all line managers. So I think ultimately awareness in the job. But, like I say, <u>since I got back, in the last three months, I've seen so much on the intranet about mental health awareness, suicide prevention day, there's a huge change from when I left. Absolutely, like, complete one-eighty [degrees], totally different. Yeah.</u> ³</p> <p>Researcher: (135.46) [The researcher outlines the new landscape of help available in the police service and how that might affect future research - and mentions his early recollections of colleagues in crisis and how he simply didn't understand the severity of the issues and made adverse personal judgements when he was a police constable in the early 1990s].</p> <p>Stuart That's funny because I, <u>I still have those judgements myself</u> ^{4*} and I, and I'm going through, I'm going through, what I've been going through, but it, it, I wouldn't say it's not made me any more sympathetic, I just, I think it's engrained that, it's like, you know, I don't know, I can't really pick-out a specific example. But there's been, like, even when I watch TV sometimes and I'll, oh, well, what the hell's going on, you know, why? Like, and then actually I'm like actually I'm re-questioning myself, you know. And also I've worked in hospitality and I've had the raving, not the raving hump, but I've been in a really bad place or, <u>and you don't know what's happening, you don't know what's going on in people's lives</u> ^{4*} and especially even in today's world where <u>social media is such a big part of people's lives that, you know, people post all these wonderful things, which have an effect</u></p>	<p>1. School kids analogy with teams - some officers will misbehave and managers need to control this before 'it gets out of hand.'</p> <p>2. Some managers shy away from those difficult conversations with officers who need pulling-up.</p> <p>3. Noticed improved mental health awareness on intranet since his return.</p> <p>4* P13 and researcher not always understanding of colleagues' plights. 'You don't know what's going on in people's lives.'</p>
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1. Social media can be very harmful to some people. I have to come away from it from time-to-time.	on someone who is already neuro-diverse. They, there's, you know, it's just so much, you know, I have to come-off social media for a period of time every so often and then reintegrate, ¹ but it's engrained that there is, like, the stress or	1. Potential harmful effects of social media. He has to 'come off' social media at times.
2. Like work, NHS better at dealing with physical injury.	mental wellbeing is lesser than physical health. You know, and my experience of the NHS is that mental health isn't taken as seriously as, as physical health. You	2. NHS bias towards physical injury. Good cancer treatment. But if suicidal, left in a room for 12 hours.
3. We could learn from [country's] joined-up approach to mental health treatment.	know, if you had cancer and your, the NHS are great, very, very good, but if you've got, if you're suicidal they leave you in a, in a waiting-room for twelve hours. ²	3. [Country's] mental healthcare – good access, good continuity of treatment.
4. NHS throw drugs at you in the hope that some of them stick.	Yeah, it's no person's fault. I mean, I'm currently going through a complaint with [place] NHS service and have an appointment tomorrow with them, with someone, but, it's not a person's fault, they're, it's just, it is funding, it's, it's the framework for sure, like I say, in [country] I had the psychiatrist work out of my GP's office every other Wednesday. She's in the community, you, you know, you	4. NHS 'throw' drugs at you 'because they don't have time' and hope something 'sticks.'
5. I would like to play a part in reforming work's approach to mental health.	see the GP as the first port of call anyway, and then they say well 'You can see doctor so-and-so on Wednesday, or we'll put you in for an appointment.' And then you've got this person, continuity, where, you know, if medication isn't working, because they didn't throw it at you willy-nilly over in [country], ³ where they throw it at you here. They throw it and hope it sticks, because they don't have the time. ⁴ But it is, it is the framework and something I sort of want to go into. I think, I'm quite passionate about it, obviously, so I kinda want to find how I can sort of advocate for mental health reform in this country. I don't know quite how I'm going to do that yet but I want to go into, because I know my experience is not an isolated experience. ⁵ But yeah, going, going back to the job, yeah, I think, and from my, from my rolling thoughts that's what I think it's more awareness and recognising signs in officers.	5. Lessons to be learned here and reform is something he's interested in playing his part in.
	Researcher: (141.01) [The researcher thanks P13 for his insightful and comprehensive account and mentions that he's made some notes during the interview, which he would like to raise. He also normalises officers' confidence in general, their anxieties and the need to sometimes adopt social masks to help achieve their professional and personal goals. This leads a question asking if	

1. I'm now more mindful of my unhelpful escapism of TV and music. They do not help in the long run.	there's anything P13 can do additionally, especially when he's not at work, to assist his recovery?]	1. Binge watching TV used to be his escapism prior to career break. Aware that he's slipping back into his old ways – but it no longer makes him happy.
2. I must find new ways of coping with my anxieties. Need to push my boundaries.	Stuart Well, well no, but it's, it's funny because, you know, <u>when I mentioned about going back into the way I was before I went on my career break. And, I'd work, and go home, then work, and then go home. And when I was home I'd watch TV, and binge watch shows on Netflix or whatever, and I'm finding myself doing, because that's what I would do today, you know, I've got to go to the supermarket, but that's, yeah, for me, what I need to work on is, is finding the things that make me happy again. Because, the things that used to make me happy don't, don't really, doesn't really get me to that point anymore. ¹ So, and I, for example, I used to love going round second-hand record shops and going through the records and, yeah, going through the records and, you know, I could spend hours. I used to be able to spend hours, you know, and I try to that. ² I try and do a bit of self-care, but, ultimately, I'm too scared to be left alone with my own thoughts, in my own world, because I don't find my own world to be that interesting. So, and that enjoyable. And so that goes in, kinda links-in with the whole not being in love with being alive, is that, and I'm worried that I'll never feel like that and. And, no, sorry, I'm worried that I'll always feel like that, and if that's the case that actually feels like it might be worse than going into crisis. ³ You know, and, and, I don't know, so what I do is end up watching Netflix and I binge watch and that's my escape. I'm like transported into the world there and when I leave here and say I go to the supermarket I'll put earphones in my ears, or when I go to work I'll have, listen to music and, I mean, music is one of my major escapes and I can be walking down the tunnel of [city] train station on a busy commuter time and I feel like I was the only person there. And that's what I like. ⁴ Like, I just, I need, I need to step out of my boundaries a bit more and. You know, there's stuff that I'm certainly finding, the good thing since I've been back at work is that I'm getting these moments of the old me. ⁵ And that's the, where I'm laughing at something. Like proper laughing, genuinely, which I hadn't done, hadn't done for</u>	2. Aware he must find old and new activities that bring happiness.
3. I'm scared to be alone. I'm not in love with life.		3. His escapism is linked to 'not being in love with being alive.' 'Too scared to be left alone' with own thoughts, within his uninteresting world.
4. Out of the house, I block the world out with music although I know this is wrong.		4. Out of the house, he blocks out people with music. He's 'transported' into another world.
		5. Needs to push boundaries to rediscover his previous [more confident, content] self. 'Old me.'

1. Proper laughing is returning. Little flashes of the old me.	such a long time. And, so these little flashes of the old me are coming back and that, that is hopeful. I just need to start, stepping-out of my own shell a bit more ¹ and becoming a bit more, because I still get really nervous about going to work. I mean, I get so anxious about it I'm like, my shirt is dripping wet by the time I get into work. And it's like, you know, it could be a day like today. It's not, you know, particularly warm, but I get so worked-up about it that, you know, and feel like oh someone's going to notice. And I remember this when I was a PCSO at Ward Panel meetings and having to talk to the community about the, the latest crime trends or what-have-you, the latest problems, and I would think, and I would reckon, you know, referring back to the [chief], you know, that she would need to take a moment, and that's probably true, is that I having this fear that someone in the crowd, in the community, is going to turn around and say 'You don't know what you're talking about. You have no idea.' And that's, that's not just, that's, that's been amplified in the job. But that's come from childhood for me, that's come from the fact that I've never been good enough, felt like I've never been good enough, yeah. And, I've had nowhere to go to, to get guidance and support from anyone. ² So, it's, yeah, that's where it's come from and then there's been situations, situational in the job where, you know, and I would like to think that if I wasn't very good at my job, or I hadn't been very good at my job, someone would pull me up and say 'You're not doing great.' And the only time that sort of happened is when I was kicked-out of CID. I say kicked-out, but when I was told I was going back to team. I failed the T/DCs. That was a real indicator that I wasn't very good, because I failed the T/DCs. But, in reality I know it was because, that is, that it was protocol at the time, and, but it was one rule for one and another for another ³ so it was, you know, if I'd just gone in to the governor's office and said 'Look' you know 'I've literally just sent someone to prison for eleven years' but I didn't tell anyone that. I just, I went to court, did the job, he went down for eleven years and then I just went back to the office and didn't say a word. You know, if I just started, and I do think to myself, I really should just, if I started, that's not really me. ¹	1. 'Proper laughing' is returning. 'Little flashes of the old me.'
2. I'm still anxious at work. I feel an imposter when I speak.		2. Still anxious about work. When public speaking, feels someone will expose him as an imposter. A childhood fear that he was unable to find help with.
3. Losing my CID post was crushing and I'm not over it yet.		
4. I was good at my CID role. The selection process was unfair favouring those who talked-up their work.		3. Felt he's good at his job, but the CID failure remained a painful and crushing event. He made sense of this through the inequality of the selection process, which rewarded those who talked-up their work.

<p>1. Perhaps I should have spoken-out more in CID, but that's not my style.</p> <p>2. I'm not suited to distance learning, which affected my CID exams.</p> <p>3. Losing my CID role was a major disappointment but my Pandora's Box would have opened-up at some point. My challenges are wider than work.</p> <p>4. Being bi-polar seems worse than being gay in the police. Colleagues don't seem to understand it so well.</p>	<p>Researcher: (151.59) [The researcher picks-up upon general anxiety issues, which can often improve with experience and asks P13 about the so-called failure of his T/DCs].</p> <p>Stuart <u>I'm not textbook, look, I'm not a textbook learner. I had the books, really tried, but my ability to retain a lot of that information, it was fine at [police college], because we had trainers. And you can do that, you know, but it was, and I did the three-day course, which was great but then [I] still sat at home trying to, you know, it's just, yeah, a difficult, quite a difficult when it's like self-learning.</u> ²</p> <p>Researcher: (154.42) [Researcher repeats his general observations of P13's obvious personal abilities and asks if things would have been different if he had passed his T/DCs?]</p> <p>Stuart <u>I think so, possibly, I think, I mean, I do think that the Pandora's Box was going to come out at some point. And I do think that would, that, I, at some point it was definitely going to happen. It's just, it happened while I was away. And, and it kind of, yeah, and so, I mean, my problems haven't just been from my policing and being in the job, they, you know, and it would be the same with most people I would have thought.</u> ³ That, so that's why I think awareness is really essential to recognise, you know, key things. And certainly, the way things are said and, yeah, what-have-you, but, <u>there's still a lot of judgement. I mean, I, I said to my friend actually at the weekend that I've been judged, I've been treated, not judged, I've been treated differently more since people have learnt that I'm bi-polar and what-have-you then I have been when I came out as gay.</u> ⁴</p> <p>Researcher: (156.03) In a more positive way with bi-polar?</p> <p>Stuart No, no.</p>	<p>1. Pondered if he ought to have spoken-out more in CID – but that wasn't his style.</p> <p>2. Not suited to distance learning and this affected his CID exams. Police College was easier as they had trainers. [Police trainers in police stations had been phased-out in recent years to save money].</p> <p>3. Things may have been different if he'd passed CID exams – but 'Pandora's Box' would've emerged at some point. His problems went beyond his job.</p> <p>4 He'd been treated differently [adversely] since disclosing he was bi-polar – more so than coming-out as gay.</p>
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<p>1. I think they are more used to gay colleagues than bi-polar colleagues. They don't know what to say to me.</p> <p>2. I'm treated differently outside of work. Fewer invitations out and told to make myself 'scarce' if I have a moment.</p> <p>3. I'm frustrated with unhelpful preconceptions of bi-polar. This can be improved.</p> <p>4. I don't lock myself away when I'm in crisis. I tried to mask my feelings but I now know people see my mood changes.</p>	<p>Researcher: (156.08) In an adverse way?</p> <p>Stuart <u>Yeah, so that with my friends and, like, like people don't know how to talk to me. They say they don't talk at all.</u> ¹ They don't, you know, I, you know, my anxiety, I tell them that I'm anxious. <u>That I don't, that I'm not invited out to things.</u> <u>There's just, there's been, because I mean, I went to a friend's wedding in July and she told me prior to, if I was going to have a moment to make myself scarce. And, I know what she meant. It was just the way she said it and thankfully I knew what she meant so I didn't take it so to heart. It was delivered in such a poor way that, and it's because they, people don't know how to talk to someone.</u> ² And, also, bi-polar, people think is, is, you know, quite extreme. <u>They see it as, some people see it as people lashing-out one minute and then crying the next. They, they don't, and, and part of my sort of thing, and I said this to my friend over the weekend, I said, especially with my close friends and people close to me, and even actually this is something that should really [be] at workplace, is a, a more awareness of, of the differences in the different ailments of mental health.</u> ³ You know, they do differ, they come out differently. You know, there's bi-polar 1 and bi-polar 2 and there's depression, and depression isn't, you know, like, like I said earlier, that for me depression isn't hiding in my bedroom and calling-in sick to work. I've never, ever called-in sick because I've been depressed. I've gone to work with depression thinking that no one can notice. And in reality, it's written all over my face. Like it's written in my actions. The fact that I'm not saying anything or that I'm short or irritable or what-have-you. ⁴ And anxiety, the, the, people think they know what these things are. But in reality, I think they would be surprised to find out, and if you don't know, if you, and because you think you know, or they think they know what they are, they think they already know how to, to, to deal with that. Whereas my friends have already, <u>my friends in particular have already shown that they don't know how to deal with that. But they haven't also taken the time to learn about it or just read-up about it, you know. Well, you know, this is what, my friend's got bad anxiety at the moment, so what can I do to help? And so, yeah</u></p>	<p>1. His illness meant people often didn't know what to say, or said nothing at all.</p> <p>2. His illness limited his invitations out. At a friend's wedding he was asked to make himself 'scarce' if he was 'going to have a moment.'</p> <p>3. People often think bi-polar is 'lashing out' one minute and 'crying' the next. There should be more mental health awareness in the police.</p> <p>4. People often think depression is 'hiding' in your bedroom and 'calling-in sick.' P13 does neither. He withdraws and becomes irritable – thinking he's masking it, but it's plain for all to see.</p>
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<p>1. I'm irritated by friends who don't take the time to learn about my issues.</p> <p>2. Mental health has become a massive part of police work following the austerity cuts in social services. Even more reason for more training.</p>	<p><u>1. and I think that's something actually in the job that would be really helpful, because I know officers have training days, and being, you know, training in mental health, because, because it's actually a massive part of the job in itself on the street, because it has a fall-out effect from the NHS and the fact that it's not controlled again within the framework of the NHS so it spills out into the streets and in, you know, missing people and suicide and suicide attempts and vagrants and, you know, all the like, it's you know, and domestics even.</u> ² You know, they, they reckon a lot of the males who commit domestic violence offences are, have boarder line personality disorder, because they don't know how to deal with their emotions. They, they don't, there's no, you know, so it's, it's, it's so in, in society, but people, because it's just this bracket term of mental health. There's this one bracket term, and it's not, [researcher agrees], yeah, so if you're moody you're bi-polar. Yeah.</p> <p>Researcher: (160.37) That's interesting. One last thought I would like to leave you with because I hope that this is a positive experience [P13's name], I don't mean to just take a couple of hours out of your life.</p> <p>Stuart No, no, that's fine.</p> <p>Researcher: (160.44) It's been incredibly enlightening for me, and I'm coming towards the end of my career, so you see things slightly differently I suppose, but I just see you in a role – and sack the people on Team [number], I know that's in the past, but I've got no time for people like that. I know that it exists and to a degree, lesser or more, I was probably part of that back in the day. That was, as you say, part of human mentality or pack mentality. But, you said about using your skills, your tactical communication out on the street. That is so, so important and I find it very difficult to get across to [police] students how important that is. It's far more important than your CS, or PAVA now, or batons et cetera, so that's a real, real plus that lots of people on Team [number] wouldn't have had. So please don't</p>	<p>1. He's irritated by his friends who haven't bothered to learn about anxiety.</p> <p>2. The 'fall-out' from the NHS has caused mental health to become 'a massive part of the [police] job.' Further reason for more police awareness.</p>
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<p>1. I would like to help improve mental health awareness at work- but I don't feel strong enough yet. I know time is passing me by.</p>	<p>ever lose that. And then just to touch upon a point that we started-off talking about, how best can you use these skills because you clearly need to have some structure in your day? You are an achiever, a grafter, and I feel you need to achieve, so I just wonder with the two days off that you've got in your five-day working week, whether you could give some thought to what you could do either, and I'm thinking in the job possibly? I'm thinking in the Fed possibly? Now is the climate for mental health awareness. You've got a head start on lots and lots of people, or even whilst you're in the job, if you decide the job isn't right for you - because you need to be happy, you must be happy, what else could you do? Is there some sort of counselling work?</p> <p>Stuart Yeah, I find those thoughts really overwhelming. ^{1*} So, like, I don't, I don't know what it is, I know I could run my own café, for example. I could do that. But, I don't, and I think I would enjoy it, but, I'm not balanced enough, quite. Like, we haven't got my medication right, I know this, but I also don't want to be on medication forever. And I'm hoping that's not going to be the case. And I'm told, you know, when I go through a crisis moment I'll be better equipped to dealing with those moments, which I, I'm sure I will be. <u>So, when I really, if I sit down and start thinking about, what it is that I, you know, what it is that I, that potentially might make me happy in the future I'm like what, this is way too much. Yeah, it's quite over-whelming.</u> ^{1*} But, I suppose <u>the flipside is that I don't, you know, I could find myself in, for the now, and not thinking about the future and then finding myself, you know, twenty, when can I retire? Twenty-nine years' time or something, twenty-eight years' time, I don't know, less than that, but I'll still be sort of, not looking, do you know what I mean? Like, like, because before you know it, time just goes. It just goes.</u> ² So I am aware, like I do want to work in mental health in some, I think, I think as a side hustle almost. Not as in a, not as in an income per se but certainly <u>I do want to be involved in the [police], with the [police] mental health. I definitely, my friends say that when I talk about it, when I'm like this. And I talk about it, there's a passion and because of that, and I do feel</u></p>	<p>1.* P13 was visibly overwhelmed by my suggestions of future roles within the police. I was concerned that I had misjudged the situation.</p> <p>2. He acknowledged that he didn't want <i>time to pass him by</i>.</p>
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<p>1. I don't yet have the skills to recognise my spiral towards suicide.</p> <p>2. I have a lot of pride, which can prevent me from reaching-out for help.</p>	<p>that, so I do want to get to a place where I can do that, and I can do that consistently. I mean, it's like anything, the best things you can talk about is what you know about. ¹ Like it's not really, you know, if you, and that's, and yeah, really that's.</p> <p>Researcher: (165.17) If there is a motivation to do some good.</p> <p>Stuart Yes exactly.</p> <p>Researcher: (165.21) To save some people in the future, making their lives a little better than your experiences were?</p> <p>Stuart Yeah, because I don't ever want to feel like I, I did the four times this year that I, you know, that led to those, that point. <u>I don't want to feel like that again. And, I'm scared that I will.</u> But that's because I'm not equipped with the tools yet to deal with pre-empting or recognising a spiral. ² So the good thing actually now is that since I've been back at work, and I've got a purpose. I'm at work and I'm, I'm, I'm, you know, putting on, you know, skeleton crime reports. I'm making sure that I'm doing the best skeleton crime reports I can do because, and I'm in contact the people who have called police who haven't had a police officer respond there and then, you know, and those sort of things. ³ That sort of impact, I kind of, yeah, like you say, I am very, I do want to achieve things. I do want to be able to, <u>I've got a lot of pride, which is one of the reasons why I don't open-up well when I'm in crisis because I, you know, there's this, somehow this thing that's invisible pride, cloak thing.</u> ⁴ But yeah, I'm not sure quite what yet.</p> <p>Researcher: (166.56) Just have a think about it. I don't want to overload you. This is just a [me and you] conversation, you've got insights that lots of people won't have and if you're motivated to help people then that is a very positive things to do. That might even map out your future.</p>	<p>1. He was open to some kind of future mental health involvement within the police.</p> <p>2. After four attempts this year, he was scared of a relapse as he didn't yet have the tools to recognise his 'spiral.'</p> <p>3. 'I've got a lot of pride.' Can prevent him from opening up.</p>
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<p>1. I need to remind myself of who I used to be and why I joined the police in the first place.</p> <p>2. I'm now more serious than I used to be.</p> <p>3. I would think about promotion in the future. My experiences would help me be a better supervisor – but not at the moment.</p>	<p>Stuart Yeah. <u>I have to, I have to remind myself why I, I, I became a PCSO, why I progressed into PC, you know, constable role. And that really is because I like people and I like to, you know, although I have isolated myself away from a lot of people in my personal life, ¹ I do enjoy being social and having conversations and I've noticed that personality side of me has changed. I'm much more serious about things now than I ever was and that's not just about mental health but like politics and like the serious stuff that's happening in this world and climate change, whereas a lot of my friends have, have, are still in this where they go out and get pissed and party and I'm not into, you know, I know, I know myself well enough to know that how that affects me in the long run so it's kind of, so I am moving forward. I know that.</u> ²</p> <p>Researcher: (168.25) Good. Personally, I think if promotion is something you think about in the future, it may not be right for you now, but you will become a very good supervisor because of your experiences.</p> <p>Stuart <u>Thanks for that. But this is where, because I, I do need to speak to my line-manager and understand what, what my restrictions are in, in the job now?. Like I know I'm never going to go to firearms. You know, I know that. And because I'm not allowed to do nights anymore, I don't know if that means I can't go back to team.</u> ³</p> <p>Researcher: (169.12) I don't think the job would want to put itself in that situation. Because it's all about saying what you can do.</p> <p>Stuart Yeah</p> <p>Researcher: (169.17) I wasn't aware of the firearms piece, but.</p>	<p>1. Reminds himself of who he used to be – and the reasons why he became a PCSO in the first place.</p> <p>2. Still enjoyed being social and conversations - but now more serious with interest in world affairs - while many friends still partying and getting pissed.</p> <p>3. Appreciated suggestion re promotion [when time is right]. Concerned about his future limitations in the police owing to illness.</p>
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<p>1. I feel my illness is likely to limit my opportunities at work. What would the Daily Mail say about giving me a gun?</p> <p>2. I love my tribe but they don't understand me fully. I need to find a new tribe to connect with.</p>	<p>Stuart <u>That's an assumption actually. I don't know that for sure. Like, I say it like I know it but I just, I just think, from a, from a regulations sort of, you know, you only have to shoot someone, as I say, in that example, I know on average it's three shots fired a year or something by firearms' officers, but the press would only need to get.</u> ¹</p> <p>Researcher: (169.48) Would you want [to go to firearms]?</p> <p>Stuart No, I don't [laughs]. No, I don't.</p> <p>Researcher: (169.52) When I was a young cop I wanted to be in [firearms], it used to be called [code name] then, and that's what I aspired to do. I used to like driving fast cars, but as soon as you get married and had a family I suddenly thought that could be my child. I'm blatting [police term for response driving to an emergency call] down here going to a crappy 'suspects-on', which are probably not going to be there anyway. I think you've got to a stage now you've left the kids behind who still want to party and you just have other goals.</p> <p>Stuart <u>Yeah. Well this goes back into my tribe, like, we've all got to find our tribes in our, in our lives, work, personal, whatever, we all, you know, people who you connect with on whatever level and, I love my, my friends dearly but I need to find none of them understand what it is I go through. And, and that shows with how they interact with me.</u> ² <u>So, I need to find a, a new, I'll have that tribe always, but I also need to find another tribe that I can connect with in that sort of level where I can, you know, yeah, just connect with really.</u> ³</p> <p>Researcher: (171.09) And life hopefully will be more fulfilling for you?</p> <p>Stuart <u>Yeah, I hope so. I mean, it's going in the right direction. You know, there's no, there's no denying that. I'm definitely going in the right, in the right way. Yeah,</u></p>	<p>1. Acceptance that his limitations are self-perceived – although his concerns re the press finding out [so called <i>Daily Mail test</i>] have face validity.</p> <p>2. Importance of finding his tribe. Loves his current tribe but they do not understand what he's going through - and this is confirmed by the way they treat him.</p> <p>3. He will keep his current tribe, but he needed to find a new tribe that understands him better.</p>
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<p>1. Things are improving for me but I worry about the next 'bump in the road.'</p> <p>2. Suicide remains an option - but I look forward to the day it doesn't.</p> <p>3. It was a big thing for me to throw away my excess medication. It symbolised my improving strength.</p> <p>4. I take heart that I can deal with things that would have sent me into a spiral previously.</p>	<p><u>it's just a matter of maintaining and not being too affected when, and it is a when, the next bump in the road comes along or when, say, the medication doesn't work, stops working or whatever. Whatever happens, and it will happen. It's just that I need to be able to deal with it better,</u> ¹ and not.</p> <p>Researcher: (171.48) Is it too glib, and this is just for my own education, as I said to you we all have anxiety, even the most alpha male, I know that through my studies. But is it too glib for me, when I feel down and it might be stuff, you know, my wife had cancer and thankfully she's come out the other end, but, you know, it was a terrible past eighteen months, but I always just told myself that things would get better. And, generally they do. I take it that you get in to such a bad place that you can't even tell yourself that?</p> <p>Stuart It's not believing it. But yeah, no, that's true. It's, the problem is, one of the biggest problems is that <u>suicide remains an option. I look forward to the day it doesn't. When I can take that off the table.</u> ² I've made the right steps. In July, no in June, after I did that last overdose what-have-you, <u>I actually got rid of all my excess medication. Disposed of it all. So I only have what I need. So that I took that option away from me, and that was a really big moment. But, in my head, it's still an option. Something will happen.</u> ³ Something even, I'm trying to think of an <u>example, but something minor that would sent me, it used to, would have sent me into a spiral for a few days, now will only last that day, or half of that day. It has less of an affect or impact on my overall life.</u> ⁴</p> <p>Researcher: (173.57) Is that because cognitively you're dealing with it better?</p> <p>Stuart Yes and medication, I think there's, I mean, I'm on a, <u>I'm on a mood stabilizer, which is supposed to bring my low mood up and my higher moods down, so I'm not so erratic. So, my general feeling generally is that I don't feel anything, and then I will go down, but I never really go up, which is kind of.</u> ¹</p>	<p>1. Things are going in the right direction - but he needs to be able to negotiate better the next 'bump in the road' that comes along.</p> <p>2. Suicide always remains 'an option' but looking forward to the day that changes.</p> <p>3. Disposed of excess medication to help prevent physical option of suicide – although the option remains alive in his head. This was a 'really big moment.'</p> <p>4. Things that would have sent him into a 'spiral' now only last a day – so less impactful overall.</p>
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<p>1. My meds stabilize my moods but I don't feel anything really.</p> <p>2. Not feeling is okay at the moment – I miss having fun but one drink too many could hurt me.</p> <p>3. I sometimes feel down after having a drink – so it's not worth it at the moment.</p>	<p>Researcher: (174.31) It's just existing isn't it?</p> <p>Stuart <u>Yeah. It's dull, like, I, I miss, you know, and so I am tempted by going out and getting drunk because I know that I'll feel, even for a few hours, dancing and having a good time, but I also know that the next day, and it's a very fine line from, from, because it is a depressant, it's a fine line from being really excited and enjoying yourself, and it will only take one more drink to go the other way.</u> ²</p> <p>Researcher: (175.11) Or one comment?</p> <p>Stuart <u>Yeah, yes, yes. And then going, and then the next day I know that, I don't really have a hangover, it's just my mood is really low. So, it's not worth it, but, so it's sort of, yeah, kind of miss, that why I like TV and going to, I go to the cinema on my own, because for two hours I can just escape to this world of, of fantasy or whatever it is that I'm watching.</u> ³</p> <p>Researcher: (175.38) I get that, I'm smiling because I was saying to [name] my wife, I said 'What is it you're watching?' Is it Peaky Blinders or something?</p> <p>Stuart Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.</p> <p>Researcher: (175.49) And she just gets, she said 'This is just', she's moved on because before that it was Kardashians, and before that it was Friends, before that it was some American programme with a mum and her daughter, her daughter was growing-up along the way, you probably know it, I can't remember what it's called, but for her, that's her escapism and I think that's important, isn't it.</p> <p>Stuart Yeah, yeah.</p>	<p>1. Medication helps to stabilize moods – but 'I don't feel anything.' Sense of sadness at this.</p> <p>2. Dull feeling is necessary at the moment as safe. Misses going out, dancing and getting drunk – but knows this may lead to a downturn the next day. A 'fine line' not to be crossed at the moment.</p> <p>3. Feels down after drinking and one comment could cause upset. TV and going to the cinema alone are currently safer options of escapism.</p>
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<p>1. Moderation is the key to help my anxiety.</p> <p>2. I'm passionate about food and coffee. I should concentrate of these more as healthy coping strategies.</p>	<p>Researcher: (176.03) But I feel it's also important to just have a plan, without over.</p> <p>Stuart <u>Yes, it's moderation, it's like anything, and that's why I need to sort of balance, when does it stop being enjoyable to watch episode after episode after episode of something? When is it then being a chore and a, a purposeful avoidance compared to just, you know, going to and, and watching, you know, and so what I'm trying to do is allowing myself to watch three episodes of something and then go and do something else. ¹ Whether it be going to the shop or going to get a coffee or you know, and since I've been living here I, one of my passions is food. So I like going in [for] coffee. Coffee, I love very good coffee. So, I go and try a new coffee place and, and, you know, do that, and get out and, then I escape with the music, so I need to start taking those [earphones] off and just hearing the noises of the, the, around me. ²</u></p> <p>Researcher: (177.16) The researcher outlines the importance of Stuart's insights and thanks him for his time and contribution. Interview ends.</p>	<p>1. Awareness that moderation is the key to his escapism. Mindful that binge TV can become aimless 'avoidance' and a 'chore.'</p> <p>2. Trying to adopt healthier coping strategies such as shopping for good food and coffee, which he's passionate about. The unplugging of his earphones will be a future step to help engage with the world around him.</p>
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