

Voices of Volunteering: 75 Years of Citizenship and Service

Interview Transcript

Title Page

Ref. No.: MANC

Collection Title: Voices of Volunteering

Interviewee's Surname: Manby

Title: Mrs

Interviewee's Forenames: Christine

Gender: F

Volunteer/Employee Roles and Dates:

Volunteer 1992-Present(2014)

1992-1995, Deputy Emergency Services

Organiser – promoted to Emergency Services

Organiser, Sheffield

1995-1996 – Deputy Metropolitan Organiser,
Sheffield

1996-2000 – Area Emergency Services

Organiser, South Yorkshire

2000-2010 – Regional Emergency Services, East

Midlands and South Yorkshire

2010-Present (2014) – Resilience & Recovery

Volunteer, Sheffield

Date(s) of recording, Tracks (From-To): 05/08/2014 (track 1)

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Interviewer's Notes:

Christine Manby (CM) talks about her voluntary work with WRVS between 1992 and 2014 when the interview took place. She was first involved in a Luncheon club in Sheffield and was later asked to join the Emergency Services (ES) Team. CM comments on being a Deputy Metropolitan Organiser (DMO) in Sheffield and getting involved with children's holidays and hospitals. Then she talks about being Area Emergency Services Organiser in South Yorkshire, some of the emergencies which took place such as Great Heck train crash. CM also comments on becoming a Regional Emergency Services Organiser and taking on Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Derbyshire. Some more recent emergencies CM attended were the Sheffield Floods (2007) and a bomb Scare in Sheffield (2014). CM also talks about her OBE and other recognition WRVS in Sheffield have received for ES. She then mentions how restructures to the organisation have affected ES, Volunteers and her role in WRVS. To conclude CM comments on what the biggest change to the charity has been (in her opinion), Royal Voluntary Service's (RVS) place in Society today, Its future and her most treasured memory of her time with WRVS.

[JENNIFER HUNT]: This is Jennifer Hunt with Christine Manby on the 5th of August 2014 at her home in Sheffield, South Yorkshire. Christine, would you just like to introduce yourself?

[CHRISTINE MANBY]: Yes I'm Christine Manby here in Sheffield with Jennifer, and I am just going to say that actually I've had quite an interesting and chequered career. Mm, I started as a teacher and then eventually when I came to Sheffield joined the WRVS and worked with them for over twenty years alongside doing some teaching. Okay?

[JH]: Yes, and what is your earliest memory of WRVS?

[CM]: [Laughing] My earliest memory is actually when I came to Sheffield my husband had got a job in Social Services, and I had usually been teaching, just part-time because I had four children. And in fact I thought 'Oh yes, well, when we'd come here I'd like to do some work'. And so I looked around for teaching but initially that was going to take a few weeks or months and so in fact then I heard actually a call on the radio asking for volunteers for the first Gulf War. And so in fact what happened was I answered this, I don't know what I thought I was going to do but in fact I got a return phone call. But, as you know, in fact nothing really happened for us to do but they still kept my name on

the books and they asked actually if I would like to come and join in with WRVS. So I went to see the Metropolitan Organiser for Sheffield and said yes, I would, I would help. And, so in fact what I first started doing was helping with a Luncheon Club, so I put my little girl, who was then two in to, well a friend was looking after her. And then I went to the Luncheon Club, weekly. But this went on for about five or six months and I was thinking 'Oh, I wonder if this is really a good idea', but just as, just as I was thinking this actually I got a phone call from WRVS again asking if I would help with Emergency Services. Because, as you probably know, Hillsborough had just happened in '89 and so the person who'd been the Emergency Services Organiser, who had looked after the volunteers there had been quite affected by this. Mm, her name was Joan Reader. And so they, they, they were really saying would I like to come and help her and maybe take over', because she was getting to the age of, of sort of, retirement really.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: Mm, and so that's what I did. They said 'There won't be much to do, you'll only be able to come in once a fortnight if you want to', because at that time, then, I had actually got a teaching job just doing some supply work. And so that's what, what happened really. I went in to the WRVS office in Gell Street, which was quite a big office, but has now been taken over by, I think it's what, a, a chemist's actually.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: Connected to the University. And so I worked there, and this really was quite very interesting really because, went inside the building and it was so organised. It was like the headquarters for all the work that went on within Sheffield. Obviously they looked after the hospitals, they looked after the Luncheon Clubs and other things as well, I think they had some outlets in some of the homes as well. And also they had Social Services who came along and they got all these organised clothing, a clothing department. And, you know, it was all organising sizes, it was, it was just really quite remarkable, you had no idea that that sort of thing happened.

[00:05:04]

And I just went in and worked along with Jo Reader for a few months, and then she went away. She still lives in Sheffield.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: But then I took over some of her training and some of her events. She'd been doing events at St. Luke's Hospice and also I think at Whirlow Farm for a few years and I just took over that sort of work. It was all very new because obviously quite different from teaching. The training bit was, was similar but the rest of it, you know, it was totally different really. But we had actually a number of volunteers because all the volunteers came from the hospital really.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: They were told about Emergency Services and they just sort of offered to do it because they knew it wasn't an ongoing thing, but they, they were, they had been called out quite a few times. But they just really got, you know, into it and they, they, they just volunteered and actually I think some of those volunteers are still with me, although obviously age catches up. But we, we still try and keep, even if they're retired I have a few meetings a year just to keep them interested and also have an active team as well.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: So yes it, you know, it was, it was it was very good really the way things worked then, so.... Can you pause a minute, yes?

[JH]: And before you joined in 1992 what did you know about WRVS?

[CM]: [Laughing] I think the only thing that I knew about WRVS was, we lived in London because I worked, we worked in, a bit in Bradford, a bit in Sheffield, but it was so, after being married, went to, came to Sheffield for about ten months or a year then we moved to Bradford, and then after about two of three years we moved to London to Islington.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: Near there. And I actually had two children by then but I had the third one at The Whittington. And the first that I came across WRVS was really when I went to the hospital for antenatal care and I

used to sort of think 'Oh, I don't like going to the hospital, but it's alright because you'll be able to get a, you know, a cup of tea and a biscuit'.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Quite cheaply.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: But that was the thing that really attracted, not that you couldn't have paid more but it was just so, the service that was there and it was, it was really nice actually. So that was the very first time that I was introduced to WRVS really. Mm, so that went on for a, a good few months but after that, you know, I didn't, I didn't join or anything.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: No, so. Mm, mm.

[JH]: And so you talked a little bit about the Luncheon Club but can you tell me a bit more about your role?

[CM]: In the Luncheon?

[JH]: In the Luncheon Club?

[CM]: Yes, yes. Well after being there for a year or two the Metropolitan Organiser also retired and so I became her Deputy and sort of took over looking after all the things that I'd mentioned about the hospitals and the Luncheon Clubs. And while I was there at the beginning we used to actually go to a church quite near to where Waitrose is now actually.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: And we, we made lunch for about sixty elderly people. And they came on a very regular basis and we came, went there, and we took probably about seven hours of the day really cooking the

meals, serving the meal, clearing up. And then, I don't know, I don't think there was much entertainment actually at the, but they just got a place to chat...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And to talk, and that was really very interesting really for them and, you know, it felt very worthwhile really, yes. But then later I had a slightly different role and I got taken by, around by the Metropolitan Organiser and we were, visited Luncheon Clubs and we often went sort of round Christmas or other times. And yes, it was really good to see all the different ones.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: Because there was, there were, there were several actually in different parts of Sheffield.

[00:10:00]

I think there was one over the, well going towards Norton there was one actually.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And then over in Sheffield 5 as well, so there was quite a cross section so people could go, and it was, it was good, mm. So, but, as I say, they, there were two distinct roles really those, yes.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Of working there and, and then sort of going as a visitor really.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm. And seeing that everything was okay and that the, the Supervisor or Organiser of the Luncheon Clubs was, you know, okay. But they, they had to work really hard, it was quite a, quite hard to actually get it done in time, you know, and sometimes things didn't go straightforwardly but we always thought of a way round, yes [laughing]. But mostly it was fine.

[JH]: And can you tell me about the people who attended the Club?

[CM]: Well, as I say, they were mostly elderly people, but there were some with disabilities as well.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, and so, the other thing that was interesting was that a lot of them got brought by, by transport.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: There were two, two drivers, I think who, one who drove the van, or the minibus, and the other one who actually, you know, helped the people on and off the, off the bus.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: So there was always a way and a means of them getting there.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Mm. Yes, so, and, as I say there were, there were mostly they, they paid a certain amount, I don't know what it was, it wasn't very much.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: But something that they could afford and they, they all seemed to look forward very much to, to attending.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Yes. Mm, mm.

[JH]: And you've already mentioned that it was sort of in a church, down by...

[CM]: Yes.

[JH]: Where Waitrose is, how would you describe that church where the club was?

[CM]: Mm, I think my thoughts about it are that it was quite dark actually inside the church.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: Mm, but people were very happy to come, very chatty, so it was a, a lovely atmosphere.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Mm, of people being able to get together and friends being made and see each other, you know, week after week. If they didn't 'Where's Mrs So and So?, or Mr So and So. Is he ill? Is he alright?', you know, so and the facilities really within the Club, within the church were, well, very different from what they are now.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, but everybody adhered and, and, you know, were very careful about hygiene and food safety, but just so very different from, as I say, what, when we work in places for some emergencies, I want say they're all wonderful.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: But there are some that are really good but, but very, totally different, more archaic really, yes. Mm, because it was used for all sorts - that church.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: I mean it was just once a week that WRVS used it, mm.

[JH]: And who were the other volunteers that were working with you at the club?

[CM]: Mm, I think on the whole what happened really with the volunteers there, they, they were, although there were some, like I was saying to you, there were hospital volunteers who did Emergency Services. Mm, there were also volunteers who were just interviewed for the Luncheon Clubs really so it was, it was slightly more separate. Mm, but they, they were just people who wanted to do that sort of work really. Some wanted to work in the hospitals in retail, some people wanted to, you know, just, just work with food, looking after the elderly. It's, it was their choice really.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, so they weren't forced into it, you know, they, they were asked if they, they'd obviously volunteered for that, like some of the others had volunteered for, for other things in, in the community. Mm. So, yes.

[JH]: And what sort of food were you serving at the Luncheon Club?

[CM]: Fairly basic food we were serving actually.

[00:15:00]

Mm, the, the things that people would like, we, there weren't any sort of new fancy menus, because I think you have to think in terms of what they need and what they like really. So on the whole there might be some sort of casserole, or the, you know, but usually a couple of vegetables and potatoes of some sort or other. Sometimes, towards Christmas, obviously, you had the, the turkey and maybe joints in between. But it, it's obviously it was slightly budget orientated as well. It had to, you know, be, be okay. Mm, and it, I suppose there, there was sorts of bit of vegetarian just in case.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: There were some people who didn't eat meat et cetera. But on the whole there was quite a, a good basic menu that was given each week really. They didn't know what they were going to have...

[JH]: No.

[CM]: Until they arrived, but, mm, yes.

[JH]: And then you were, you've already mentioned you were asked to be the Deputy Emergency Services Organiser, and to get involved...

[CM]: Yes.

[JH]: With Emergency Services.

[CM]: I was, well, yes I was, I was doing that. But I also, as I say, I came, became Deputy Metropolitan Organiser and that, that sort of was slightly different because it, it covered a whole, the whole of the Sheffield services really. I suppose a bit like the Locality Manager now.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, but there was, there was the, the main manager for that, and, as I say I, I did that. But, one other thing that I should say that we did in Sheffield and I got very involved with was the children's holidays.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, we, we did quite a lot of that. Again I think Joan had done, done children's holidays. And it was, I think it was Lottery funded because we were, we had to fill in applications for money in order to take them but the children were actually, we used to take twenty children a year away. Mm, varied really, I think at first we, we took them sort of fairly local, into Derbyshire, and then later got a bit further afield, sort of half way down the country. Mm, but it was somewhere that, it was run actually, the, the camp that they went to, was organised by a, a group in Chesterfield.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Mm, and they sort of, we delivered the children off to them. They looked after them for the week and then we collected them again. Mm, but the, the interesting bit was the interviewing really of, you know, whether they, whether the parents wanted them to go to, all the sort of, you know, forms and things...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: That had to be filled in. Most of them actually were referred by Social Services. And they, a, a lot of the fathers were out of work. Mm, and some, you know, most of them were very appreciative, quite interesting really because you used to go for interviews with two people but some of the places you went to they were quite, quite different, yes.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: There were no carpets, really very needy. Mm, and there was one that sticks in my mind particularly was where we went into somewhere around Sheffield 5 and this, this father, I, I can't remember the mother being around, but father had these children, must have been about four or five and they all looked to go in, you know, steady stages of age. Mm, and we were asking for this, I think it was a nine year old to go with us, but he wouldn't, he wouldn't agree to it at all. Mm, he wanted, he was, he was worried. It was like a, a sort of nest he had really of children there.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: And there were children sort of poddling round in nappies and everything, but, they looked as though they were very needy but it was a feeling that he had this nest of kids.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And he, he wouldn't, he wouldn't pass them over to...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Anybody else's care. Which was interesting really.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Yes, yes.

[JH]: Maybe he was worried that you wouldn't...

[CM]: Yes.

[JH]: Bring the child back.

[CM]: That's right, yes.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: I quite appreciated it.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: Yes, but, but most people were quite agreeable, yes. And that went on for a few years really.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And it worked and then, of course WRVS brought in the, the fact that, you know, children were not allowed to, we weren't allowed to do this any longer so that was cut, yes.

[00:20:03]

[JH]: Mm. And how did you feel about those changes that they made when they started cutting services like children's holidays?

[CM]: Mm, well I suppose, you know, I felt probably a bit sad about the whole thing really because obviously my background is teaching and I've also, when I first started teaching, I started teaching in Bradford, in a poor part of, of Bradford. And I suppose really on the whole I felt what a shame that it couldn't go ahead.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: I could quite realise, because obviously from a teaching aspect I could quite realise that you have to think about, you know, all, all the difficulties and legislation et cetera, but on the other hand I just thought what a pity they were, they were losing out really.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: Mm, but then from a business point of view and also from, you know, an organisational point of view you could see, see that too.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Yes, so yes. [Laughing].

[JH]: And as a Deputy, as Metropolitan Organiser, Deputy Metropolitan Organiser - sorry a District Metropolitan Organiser, you were also involved with hospitals.

[CM]: Deputy.

[JH]: Deputy.

[CM]: Yes.

[JH]: Organiser. You were involved with hospitals as well?

[CM]: Yes, I was actually, yes. And that was really going well it, it was, there, there were services, a lot more services really, or it seems to be.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: In the hospitals now, you know, The Northern General, Weston Park, The Hallamshire, Children's Hospital, they were, we were in there in, in a big way as well. And that one has...

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: Has fizzled away I believe. Mm, and then there were also in different sort of elderly care homes as well. Mm, and they had a trolley service. They were in Jessops too, the old Jessops it was.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Yes. And, so they were everywhere really and so it was quite a, a big thing to look after really.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, but it, it, it kept going and, as I say, the previous Metropolitan Organiser had, had worked really hard at all this and...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Did a very good job. So in a way she passed on a, a very good service really.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm. So we just tried to continue keeping it like that. But then obviously changes have come and, and, and changed.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Different things, yes. Mm, Mm.

[JH]: And how did those changes affect your role at that time as a Deputy Organiser?

[CM]: Mm, well after that actually, I think what happened was they, they, they did away with the Metropolitan Organiser role and then they, they split the services into emergencies, community and, you know, the, the other services, the hospital, they, they were, all became separate. Mm, and that's really when I sort of transferred to the Emergency Services and...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Became an Area Emergency Services Manager, so really from being sort of based in Sheffield...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Then they, they went over to Rotherham and had an Area Office there. So, I don't know, I sometimes thought that, you know, it was a pity that, well for one thing I'd got a small, smallish child it was quite a way to go over to Rotherham.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: And also the main things were done in Sheffield so I think there was quite a bit of feeling really about it being taken to Rotherham. But you could see from the other point of view because I think, I don't know, at that point the university were stepping in and, and wanting to have that plot of land that we had.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Because then they were developing. But even so from the volunteer point of view it was, it was a bit sad really because, you know, you could go within Sheffield down to Gell Street, but the volunteers from Sheffield, which there were a lot...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Really, couldn't really go anywhere at, at that point. But then they did rethink actually a little bit and they did have a little office, I think the university gave them a little office down Wilkinson Street which I went into a little bit too, but it was initially given just to, you know, have a, have a point of, of contact, but it didn't seem to work that well really.

[00:25:00]

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And eventually they gave that up too. Can I have a drink? [Laughing]

[JH]: [Laughing]

[CM]: [Drinking]

[JH]: And how would you describe your role as an Area Emergency Services...

[CM]: Mm...

[JH]: Supervisor?

[CM]: That, that was interesting because then I took over South Yorkshire.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: The Emergency Services, so I, I gathered up some volunteers from Rotherham and from Doncaster and Barnsley and Sheffield, Sheffield had always been the biggest one, the most volunteers. But Rotherham, there were, there were quite a few volunteers worked in the Rotherham Hospital, and they, they, you know, they were quite busy and they joined the, the service and had been in for a while. Mm, but I don't think it had gone quite the same, because obviously Joan Reader had just been within Sheffield.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: So really there were a few that we could gather in but I had to work at getting volunteers from the other areas.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Like Barnsley, because at that point then people were wanting some Emergency Service people from WRVS but we didn't have them necessarily so we had to do a bit of recruiting and training, we did a lot of that really, yes, to, to try and get people together. But, but we mainly got them again from the hospital. Mm, you know, Doncaster Hospital had some volunteers so we probably went recruiting there. And Barnsley as well had had WRVS, they had a house in Barnsley...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: At one point. And I'd, I'd been there visited, it was still obviously going when I was Area Emergency Services Manager. So that helpful but then they closed their clothing department down and everything, and it all...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Started closing in a bit really so that made the, the job a lot harder. Mm, but obviously we, we, we did take on some recruiting as, as best we could really. And then obviously the, being an Area Emergency Services Manager, then they had Darlington Office, you've probably heard about that really, yes.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And so sometimes we went up and there was somebody put in charge of the Area Emergency Services Managers, we had meetings up there every few months, some from Nottingham different people that came from within a, an area of the North East really.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, but, so it made it quite a different sort of job really. But all, alongside I was always fitting this with part-time teaching.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Yes. So that, that's what I'd always tended to do. Mm, but it worked in quite well. And we also did quite a lot of training, we went to Easingwold as well...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: A lot, and sort of became a trainer.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: You know, and then a Senior Trainer and then later on did a bit more for that but we can talk about that later if you want, yes, mm. Mm, so, yes the, as an Area Manager you, you had to manage. And also there was an Area Manager in Rotherham who sort of supposedly looked after everybody, that didn't work awfully well.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: I don't think the personnel were always as good as they might have been, but I don't know the... It, it didn't always blend awfully well and eventually that office did close, yes. But it, it went on for a few years really.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Yes, mm.

[JH]: And can you tell me about any emergencies that you attended or helped to organise volunteers for at that time?

[CM]: Yes, I mean we've, we, we've done an, an awful lot really we, we've always been on the Emergency Services list for Sheffield. Mm, and there were, there were call outs of, of different sorts really. And one, one of the big ones was obviously Great Heck.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, that was interesting because Great Heck it, it was actually between three of us in the North East, so three managers sort of managed the whole thing.

[00:30:08]

Mm, and we, we went, I went on the third day and it had been snowing at that point as well. Mm, and we had this tent there and it was, it was manned quite, you know, with volunteers most of the evening and the night as well, to start with because there had been some casualties and there were

police and everybody there and obviously the, they needed looking after. So they were very grateful and we had a generator that, you know, worked most of the time but I...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: I remember going one, in the morning very early and the, the roof was gradually falling in because of the, the heavy snow that had come and the generator was not, it, it needed petrol so had to go off and...

[JH]: Yes. [Laughing]

[CM]: And get some of that, I remember that was one of my first jobs was to find all petrol for the generator.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: Yes. Mm, but generally between us, between three of us we, we kept that going really, and they were very appreciative. But we were quite near, we saw the actual coaches as they were in the air and, mm, as I say that we were there for some of the time, but I think mainly the day I was there the relatives came to see the scene of the crash. And by that time as well there were other people coming in serving hot food as well, we tended to have soup and sandwiches.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And things that were possible really, but that was very, very essential at the point, yes. Mm, so that was one of them and, and there was Nocton as well.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: That was another train crash that happened at a similar time. Mm, and that was in Lincolnshire, and again we were doing much the same really with the tent and the sandwiches. We had this tent actually that we were able to purchase and it was kept in Darlington, I think in a fire station in Darlington so it was possible for whoever needed it to, to either have it brought down by the main manager of the North East or else you could go up and get it if you'd got the...

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: The time, you know, to do it. But it was it would have been good to have a, a mobile unit but we never aspired to that. We often had thoughts of it but we never made it really because of the cost really.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm. We used to put in requests that that's what should happen but it didn't it didn't materialise, I think The Salvation Army and people like that managed it but we didn't. [Laughing]

[JH]: [Laughing]

[CM]: Yes, so. And then there were obviously, in Barnsley we used to get involved with the police there, they had a big police fair and we used to cater there for about fourteen hundred people actually. Mm, and that was held on an annual basis, somebody just sort of rang me up once and said would you come and discuss it with us, and so we did. And they used to actually, I had a fridge in the garage and they'd come with a police box and take the fridge.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Because I said 'Well we must have all the sandwiches, you know, with a fridge', and they, they didn't have a big enough one.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: So they used to come on an annual basis and, and collect the things that we needed to take over to Barnsley. And, and then we did it, and we had probably twenty, twenty-five volunteers because it was a, a big...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Affair really, yes. And then there were those smaller emergencies that we, we did as well. We used to also get involved, involved with Sheffield Airport, that was when the Sheffield one had an airport.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, and we did a lot of the Civil Aviation exercises with, in, you know, with Sheffield, because they have to do that every so often to practice in case of an air crash sort of thing.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: So, we were, we were involved with a lot of things really. Mm, particularly with Sheffield but and Rotherham we helped at one or two, we had Network Rail exercises as well.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Round there and sometimes we were called out by Rotherham to rest centres.

[00:35:00]

We were called out by all of them really to rest centres at one time or another but, and then the bigger one came when they had the floods all in South Yorkshire, yes. But, but that was the sort of time that we're talking about was really as an Area Emergency Services Manager, mm.

[JH]: Mm, mm. And how did you feel when you were called, called to an emergency?

[CM]: Mm, I don't know, I mean because as you know we were on twenty-four sort of call out, twenty-four hour call out really. All the days of the year we, we were constantly on call. Mm, and you just used to do it really. I think I was very fortunate in a way because, partly because of the teaching, partly because of the training in Easingwold we had which, at one point, there was a lot. And, you know, you could go to conferences there.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, and it wasn't just for the hierarchy it was sort of for Emergency Services.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Organisers. So it was very inclusive so got a lot of ideas and, you know, heard about lots of disasters and it, it was, it was used well really and we, we went probably sometimes at least twice a year sometimes, you know, but, but obviously that eventually petered out.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And it changed as well, Easingwold changed. But that was lovely, you know, just going there and mixing with other people.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And hearing about different things that they did really, yes. Mm, but how I sort of felt, that, that was, that was good preparation.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Mm, and, I don't know you used to, my husband was very, he was very good and he, you know, he'd just sort of turn over or he'd help if I needed it. Mm, but I've still got a box in the garage, you know.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: That we, that we've always had. In fact we had a call out not long ago actually....

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: About, just over a week ago and, you know, always had that ready so you've got the basic stuff ready to go.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And it, it's just part of it really. It was, it was just something I accepted. I didn't feel angry or anything, it was just, just part of what the expectation was really.

[JH]: Mm. And you just mentioned you have the box in your garage, what sort of things do you keep in that box?

[CM]: Keep in basic things really [laughing] keep in insuls obviously per..., other, sort of plastic cups for plates and serviettes and the usual sort of business like that. Mm, chopping boards, plastic chopping boards.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, some knives and some plastic cutlery as well. Mm, and some spare plastic dishes and also occasionally I keep dog food around as well. [Laughing]

[JH]: [Laughing]

[CM]: Because we've, we've been asked for these sort of things, yes, so, and dishes, you know, just, just the basic stuff and washing up equipment. So, and then what we have to do is just sort of, I have tea and coffee et cetera somewhere else because it could go a bit damp in the garage, I don't know

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And then all I have to do is go to the shop and, like the other week just went to the shop and got milk and, as it happened there were some Muslim people there.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: So you have to think about the, what you're providing. And obviously some of the documentation that you might need as well. So yes, so that's, that's basically what, what's there.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: It, it's a, it's a good fall back really and it's ready. I think there's biscuits somewhere as well so you, you can just basically go in to see and assess the situation. Mm, so. [Laughing]

[JH]: And then in, so after being an Area Organiser from 2000 you were promoted to Regional Emergency Services Manager?

[CM]: Yes, it, it, it sort of changed again.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And then we took on a region. Mm, the regions were always a bit of a debate really, because I took Area, mm, Emergency Services Manager for East Midlands, but East Midlands is not really South Yorkshire.

[00:40:03]

[JH]: No.

[CM]: I said 'Well I would like to keep South Yorkshire', that made it easier from my point of view, and so it was split and I just took on Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: As well, yes, so, and then somebody else further down took on the other bit of East Midlands, further...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: From Birmingham area, yes they, they went across. So it worked okay, we, you know,

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: I think Angela was able to sort of divide it off.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Into regions. And then there was the region for the East and the West and, and so on really, yes. So it, it, it was, you know, the, it was quite a, a big thing there because some of that area, well I knew what was happening in South Yorkshire. Nottinghamshire, I, I was quite worked alongside and knew this person from our meetings in the North East and so I knew more or less that her area in Nottinghamshire was pretty good.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Mm, but it, they were also quite demanding were Nottinghamshire. Mm, Derbyshire I didn't know much about to start with but they obviously wanted use of volunteers. I'd heard that they, it got quite a lot of volunteers there. Lincolnshire was actually quite low when I took it over because it had had a, quite a, a bad history, a puckered history really. But somebody had taken over West Yorkshire and then done Lincolnshire as well following and it, it never really worked, it had one person after another as a sort of Emergency Services Manager and, and so they were getting quite fed up and lost a lot of volunteers.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: So when I went there there was probably, I called the first meeting and there were about seven or eight people turned up. And that was sad because they had had a very good...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Lot of people for emergencies. But, but then decided that I would really, you know, make a big thing of that one and, and so I trained some people to be Team Leaders, and then I trained these Team Leaders to train other volunteers and eventually we ended up with about a hundred and twenty in that area. So it, it escalated.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: But you know, it worked. Mm, partly because of an enthusiasm of, of the main Team Leader, she was, you know, she was pretty good and sort of bullied them a bit.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: But in a nice sort of way.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, and so, you know, if, if there was an emergency eventually I could do what you should do is, you know, I got the call out and sent it to her.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And then she could look at the different areas of Lincolnshire and decide, that was the ideal that we were working for but it, in some areas that worked and in some areas it didn't work so well. Mm, Nottinghamshire I inherited quite a lot of quite well trained people.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: But, as I say, Nottinghamshire were, were very demanding. They'd never join up with a contract or anything.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: But they were always calling us out, you know, they, they, they lost out on money left right and centre because, you know, these contracts that were made.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Mm, they could pay up to fifteen hundred or, or something like that, two thousand a year. But sometimes I sent them bills through for about twelve hundred, you know, for, for one event, one emergency.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: So they paid well over the odds but I kept on telling them but, you know, they, they wouldn't do it so I just let them pay, pay as you go really. Mm, but that, and, and they provided, they were very good though Nottinghamshire, they also provided some good training.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Events for volunteers in the in the hall, the City Hall, you know, the, the main hall in, in Nottingham. Mm, and they, we looked after them and they looked after us really and it worked very well. Mm, and Derbyshire, they all were sort of, very sort of wanting our help as volunteers and again that was pretty good really because I did have some very good Team Leaders.

[00:45:04]

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: There who I could call individually, I never had a sort of overall one like in Lincolnshire which I got but I could call individual Team Leaders who'd try and get a team out, you know, so there was a different way, they all worked differently really.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: But you had to know, and you had sense and, and know how they were going to work. But you couldn't, the ideal would have been to have this Co-ordinator in every area, but it wouldn't work it just...

[JH]: No.

[CM]: Wouldn't work. It wouldn't work in South Yorkshire, I couldn't get anybody, but I could get some very good Team Leaders.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Yes, mm, so. But overall it, it worked well and I think we had, really I'm sure Angela may have mentioned, we had the most activity of, you know, of anywhere really.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: It was really, really busy and we also probably brought in eventually the most money really as a, as a region.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, so it, it was just the way it went, yes, yes anyway. But got a lot of enthusiasm. Nottingham Hospital were very good as well, because I used to, to go to Nottingham and sort of, you know, where are you going to have your meetings for the Team Leaders, because I always believed in having Team Leader meetings every few months, three months or something like that. But obviously there was a budget crisis usually. Lincolnshire they were very good, they let us have their, a room free...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: In the emergency planning place. Nottinghamshire, the hospitals let us have a room if, a postgraduate room actually, if it went there. Mm, so that, and that was free, I think both of those were free. Mm, Derbyshire wasn't so good but, but I got over that one. And South Yorkshire, well we did what we could really.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Yes. Mm, and the main thing that I got over any difficulties and getting rooms was I went to the fire stations, I went to loads of fire stations.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And we had equipment. I think, you know, it was suggested that we did, but actually worked and South Yorkshire fire station gave me a little room in the, in their building.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: To keep equipment et cetera and could do some training there if, if needed to. Mm, and Nottinghamshire got one or two there so the volunteers could go and collect the equipment et cetera. And Derbyshire, in Matlock I, I got to the fire station there and they let us have a room for training. Mm, and, as I say, Lincolnshire, the Emergency Planning helped us, so we got over the difficulties, we had many difficulties.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: But... [Laughing]

[JH]: But managed to...

[CM]: We thought...

[JH]: Find a way round?

[CM]: We thought, we thought round it, yes, so, yes.

[JH]: And you mentioned a couple of times that you were keeping equipment in different places. What sort of equipment did you have for Emergency Services?

[CM]: Well, obviously the Team Leaders had boxes which, you know, like I described to you earlier on. But the, the equipment that was kept in the fire stations was bigger equipment really. Mm, so that if it was going, we might have boilers and tea urns and things like that in, in case we needed it. In some, some areas we had five or six of these because sometimes you did have big, big call outs.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: We even had in Derbyshire once or twice on the moors and so we, we had a sort of cooker, you know, and they kept, let us keep their gas, the gas...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Bit there as well. Mm, and we, we just had bigger things that we could bring along like jugs and different bowls and things.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: That we could actually take as, when I'd assess a situation or the Team Leader had that they could bring along. Mm, and maybe we had some extra insuls and things that, you know, in case they ran out. All the things, a sort of second batch of things really. But there were some quite big lots of equipment really just in case, you know, and just generally spare things, and tabards, spare tabards et cetera.

[00:50:04]

So they were, they were spares but very important really in case they were needed, mm. So, and also some of the training things were kept there as well.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Because obviously we had training sessions and needed folders et cetera. And people just can't keep the equipment.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: In their own homes, they, they haven't got the space, and some don't want to either, you, you can understand.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: So you just had to think of a way of, of managing, mm.

[JH]: And how would you describe the training that was given to volunteers?

[CM]: Mm, I think the training was very good really we had a Training Manager in Liz Redfern.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: She, she, but before that we, we'd also had training we, we trained the volunteers in, in order that if they went in they knew what to do. They knew about the call out, they knew the sort of etiquettes of, of working for Social Services, you know, not to go in and go straight and question the, the person in charge, you know, they knew the way to go about doing different things. Mm, so there was that and then there was the basic, you know, what they had to have, what they had to carry with them and be ready to call out, you know, and...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And things like that. So I think the training was, was good, and if it wasn't, we, we did get together with Liz and other, you know, other people and Angela.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And we'd, we'd sort of say, 'Oh this isn't working, that isn't good', you know, we, we sort of re-assessed it really.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: So it was, but mainly the, the manual was, was fairly detailed and, and seemed to work well on the whole, yes. And then when they'd been trained, you know, they got the tabard and I found that easier to give them the tabard.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Et cetera, and told them, you know, what they, they should have. And got a little parking card, which it said on 'WRVS Duty', and I said 'You can't use it to go to John Lewis's'.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: That sort of thing. But yes they, they were quite pleased with, with it, you know, and yes, so. Mm, mm.

[JH]: And did you find that, because during your time as a Regional Emergency Services Manager WRVS went through some changes with change, changing its colours, it's branding.

[CM]: Yes. [Laughing]

[JH]: Did you find that that had an impact on Emergency Services?

[CM]: It, I think it had an impact definitely, because, as you know, volunteers and, oh, I don't say, I, I think all volunteers are a little bit that they don't like change really.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, and WRVS didn't like that either. So we, we sort of went to different parts of the country, told, you know, that we were going to orange and purple and that's what we were going to have. Mm, and we had to sort of sell it to the people and they didn't like it, they the, the, the crux of it is, you know, WRVS were always saying 'We need money, we need money', but then volunteers feel 'Well they're spending all this money on, on changing', and they don't really think that way, you know, about sometimes it's essential to do these things.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And it was hard from our point of view to sell it to them.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Mm, and you lose some because of that. And, we, we fed back about these sort of things but, you know, obviously they, they felt they needed to change, but it just seemed as though, you know, they were changing from one lot, and it, then they had to change all the hospital things and everything to, to match and everything.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: You know, and it's a, it's, it's a lot of money really.

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[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Yes I mean it is hard to sell, yes. But yes we, it went through a few different reorganisations so, like they do it becomes after a few years there's going to be another re-organisation, you know.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And you sort of think 'Oh dear'. [Laughing]

[00:55:00]

[JH]: [Laughing]

[CM]: But, but remain positive about it if, if you can.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And try and do it, but it, it didn't make the job easy particularly.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: Because you lost some good people that you couldn't convince really, you know, that, mm. But yes it, sort of the re-brands. And of course, it's happened more recently, it's gone back again.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: You know, the, and, and people, we were green, sort of lovat and maroon.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And now it's gone back again to the other, you know, and the, it, it just sort of... And they're obviously going to change again so the badges so they say, you know, and everything's going to, to move back to it. And, I, I don't think it goes down awfully well really, no.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: But, but, as I say, it was part of the job to, to get people through that sort of.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: That, and convince them and hopefully you, you did it and saved most people but lost some.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: I mean, mm.

[JH]: And how did you feel about losing volunteers because of those changes?

[CM]: Well I think it's a great pity because some of them were really, really good volunteers that you, you lost that were... We, we did what was called a 'Four Inns Walk' actually, in Derbyshire, that was a big walk. And we had loads of volunteers, they started off in West Yorkshire and walked all over to Derbyshire, so we used volunteers all, all over the place. Mm, and, and that, that was, you know very big. And we got somebody there who, who was into catering and qualified and he made lots of shepherd's pies for people to finish and we lost him, you know, and it...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Somebody who was quite professional he just couldn't take any more. So I was, I was sad that we, we lost some really, really good people. Mm, but yes, you know, sorry you were, you were asking?

[JH]: Mm, sort of how you felt about the changes?

[CM]: How I felt? Well I was, I was sad that we, we lost that, that sort of person. Mm, and I, I just really feel that sometimes [sighing] you didn't really sort of, I was always very okay and I thought Angela was extremely good but it just sometimes felt as though, you know, you didn't have a voice.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: She didn't have a voice sometimes, although she was very strong and very good.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, didn't blame anybody but it just seemed a pity that they couldn't see the wood for the trees sometimes, yes, but, but I think you always feel that.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: With any reorganisation, yes.

[JH]: And, you've already mentioned the Sheffield floods that were, to, happened in 2007.

[CM]: Mm.

[JH]: Were there any other emergencies that happened during your time as a Regional Manager?

[CM]: Mm, yes, I mean we had quite a, a few different ones actually, but the main ones were the floods. Mm, obviously it, the floods actually we, we had so many Rest Centres, we had fourteen Rest Centres overall in the region.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: So they were in every, in every area. I think we had one or two in, in Derbyshire, and Lincolnshire there were two or three. Mm, there were three or four here. And then Nottinghamshire no, you know, four, and then there were more coming up. So that was an enormous thing to, to really sort of manage really, yes. Mm, and it just sort of started off as, you know, that all this rainfall came and all happened in a day what would normally happen in a month, and just flooded the whole area really. Mm, and it, it just brought the reality of, you know, I was taking all the phone calls, you really needed a bigger sort of, an office.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And, and all sorts of things, but, but we managed, we didn't let anybody down. But it was, it was just an enormous affair really yes, and it went on for a long time. And we, we then sort of had to set up Humanitarian Assistance Centre in Catcliffe, and that went on for another month, with more volunteers and, you know, so it, it just went on for, for ages really continuously providing volunteers.

[01:00:12]

And at the same time actually, it was interesting, I was also at, at Easingwold doing a, a course there because there were three of us...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: That were chosen as Associate Lecturers so sort of dancing a bit between the two as well as, as well as doing some of the work there. And we did, we did that for a week actually, we did that for about three or four years sort of lecturing in Rest Centre Management and...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And that, that, that was quite good. Mm, another big one earlier was the Kosovan Refugees, I don't know if you've heard about them, no?

[JH]: No.

[CM]: I hadn't, I hadn't mentioned that one, but that was earlier and we had in, these people came over from Kosovo and they were in South Yorkshire, we had some just round the corner here, we'd about a hundred and odd round here. And Doncaster was a, a big area, that went on again for months, really.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Yes. And Rotherham, so those were, you know, very big ones actually.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, but we're, we're always being sort of called, you know, called out and we were. There was always sort of like Mansfield fires or different things in Lincolnshire and they immediately got on to you.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Mm, and, and called you. One of the big ones as well that we eventually got into was the Doncaster Airport. We, we did a lot for the, you know, after Sheffield closed down...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Doncaster took over, and we were asked to help again with the exercises for the Civil Aviation.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, and so we, we did that for several years until more or less finished in 2010. Because I don't think when the reorganisation came they realised quite what we did, and so I think we lost a few things...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Because of that. But we were always sort of, you know, worked there and...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: That's still going. I don't think it ever got as big as they expected it to, I think they thought that there were going to be flights to America and everything but...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: It still sort of bobbles along.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

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[CM]: But...

[JH]: Because it is quite a small airport, isn't it?

[CM]: It's, it is on the whole but there, there were big thoughts because it at, at one point that's where the Kosovan Refugees were actually for part of the time.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And then they changed it and then they knocked some of it down and, you know, made runways and everything, so yes I think all the time we've been in the, in the loop really.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: We've always sort of... And that, that was the benefit of staying with South Yorkshire really because you can, you know you stayed with them.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Mm, and they, they didn't go elsewhere really, no. Obviously we've always worked alongside Red Cross and Salvation Army and other, other voluntary organisations.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, we used to have sort of voluntary and welfare forums that we went to in Sheffield and as part of the Local Resilience for the LRS in South Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. So I've always had quite a good presence really when I was doing a regional job, but I think it was because of that presence that we kept on a lot of the work that we did. Mm, because I think now they've taken the, the sort of, they've changed it again, you do lose it if you're not there.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Red Cross were always hovering. [Laughing]

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[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: But, and we worked well with them but, you know, if we weren't there they just were ready to jump in.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Yes. So, so we just tried to fly the flag for WRVS really.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm.

[JH]: And do you find with all the changes that have been made to Emergency Services and Resilience and Recovery that we've still got that relationship with other organisations?

[CM]: Mm, I think, yes we have, but I'm talking about it because after reorganisation took place I actually just took it over for Sheffield.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: I wasn't going to do it at all.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: And then the local authority said 'Well can't you just stay for Sheffield'? So I decided I would stay on for R and R for, for Sheffield and, and did that.

[01:05:05]

So I still meet people I've known at meetings, I go to Emergency Planning meetings still, and I go to Humanitarian Assistance Centre meetings so I still meet people that I've known a long time.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: But I have heard from one or two, I just hear now and again from an odd volunteer, in Nottinghamshire I think it, it's lost its presence.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And therefore they don't, they don't get called out. We were always called out, we were the number one.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: In certain places, but, and Derbyshire they've, they've changed, they've got their own volunteers now. Mm, and I was speaking to the person who did a lot of that work, not that long ago, because she came to an exercise in Sheffield and she just sort of said 'Well, after you'd gone we couldn't rely on a response so we did try', but, you know, it was, I suppose it was because we always felt that we you had to be there...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: At the meetings. And the way it was organised you just couldn't, you know, the, taking on hospitals and everything.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: You couldn't do that, I couldn't have done that as a Metropolitan Organiser.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: You couldn't. So they've won some and lost some really.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: Yes. Mm, mm.

[JH]: And have you attended any emergencies recently?

[CM]: Yes I attended one only about ten days ago actually not far from here down, it was a Rest Centre in King Edward School. And there was this emergency down near West Bar and they thought there was a sort of suspicious package, and there were sort of, I believe, about, well eventually thirty people came but they weren't sure how many people might come. Mm, and they, they found then another package as well so eventually the Army did come in and, and blow the package up but they, they kept the people out, outside for, from about three o'clock and they didn't come to the Rest Centre till about nine or ten o'clock so they were kept waiting quite a while. But they were in the Rest Centre about a couple of hours and we provided welfare support for them, there, yes.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: So, yes we, we were called out quite recently. And also we've, we've been involved with two very big exercises in March this year. Mm, we were involved at Owlerton Stadium...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: With the fire service, there there was this supposed car that ran out of control and set part of the building on fire and lots of dead people, acting dead were around. And so they then had us in with volunteers at two sides of the stadium. Mm, that was interesting really because it was, it was quite a hard, sort of two sides and it's quite a big stadium actually I've never been before but it is. And, but, but again we made it work and there were, we were supposed to be providing sort of a lunch for about three hundred people so we decided that we, you know, we worked it out how to do it and did it, and bagged a lot of the food and did that. And then the week after there was one at the Town Hall as well.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: Another exercise so, so we, we did that one. And that was just sort of a Rest Centre, and to see how it, how it went. And I think in the afternoon they had a Friends and Relatives Centre, you know, so, so they're constantly having exercises to keep people ready for, for action. Mm, and last week I

actually went to a debrief on the other one and it all seemed to go very well because we've had to be very aware of, you know, that it was Ramadan, so.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Then, and so we, we had to be aware, and these are the sort of things you have to.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: But we were fortunate really, I was fortunate in, when I was a number of years, a few years ago, you know, we did exams in health and food safety and also, you know, safety, general safety...

[01:10:05]

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: For, for volunteers so. But these are all things that you've had to be aware of really.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm.

[JH]: And do you find that the exercises you do now are very different from when you first started with WRVS?

[CM]: Mm, [sighing] I don't know really, I we've, we've had such a varied lot, exercises are never the same. I mean in sort of Barnsley we, we had ones outside and we've had call centre exercises, we've had chemical spillage exercises, fires so many different ones. So, ah, I don't know really, I don't think they've changed that much really, there's still the basic things that you have to look for.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: The legislation, volunteers have to be trained yes, a bit more but, but not that much more because we've always had to be careful. When we went to St. Luke's Hospice actually we used to

provide for hundreds of people that came to the fair, they were, it was a very big affair that we, we did. Mm, and so, you know, we had to take in lots and lots of different things and be aware of the food safety. Mm, so I don't know, I think you've got to adapt to the situation. We did a big one in Nottinghamshire once at some air base, and they're not the easiest ones because they, they just don't have the facilities always and had to sort of clean the areas, you know, and, and that's not that long ago really.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: Mm, so it, it depends really. Mm, I don't think they've changed dramatically really - the exercises - but people are much more on the ball about, you know, legislation and...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And, and you've got to be aware of that. And so, because of that you have to be as well. Mm, make sure that things go right.

[JH]: And also with your Emergency Service work you received an OBE.

[CM]: Mm.

[JH]: In 2012. How did you feel about that?

[CM]: I was absolutely amazed really yes, I, [sighing] I'd just been out with some friends and came back and saw this, this letter from...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: The Cabinet Office and thought, I didn't, I don't think it registered it was a Cabinet, it just looked like an official letter, I thought 'Oh dear I've gone, I've gone through a red light'. [Laughing]

[JH]: [Laughing].

[CM]: That was my initial thought.

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[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And then I opened the envelope and I just read, you know, that the Prime Minister was putting your name forward to The Queen to receive the OBE.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And I was just, I had to read it about four times, you know, you, you just, it just didn't register at all. So it was a total surprise really.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Yes. And, and you can't tell anybody.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: So, so I thought about it, I thought well I've always told my husband things so in the end I decided I would, but it's so easy to, you know, to, to say, so I told him, but we told none of the children or anything, you know.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: Mm, so nobody knew until it was announced on the, at New Year, yes, so yes it was...

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: It was an absolute total surprise and very nice, yes, so yes. [Laughing]

[JH]: And, have you received any other awards or recognition?

[CM]: Yes, previous to that, well in 2007 I was asked to go to The Albert Hall because of work I'd done in the floods, I think that that, that was what, yes, I think Angela put my name forward. And, so there were two of us, I don't know who, the other person came from the South, I, it was a, a man

that I went with. But that was what I was told because I'd worked, you know, worked quite hard with that. And that was an experience really as well, that was really nice. And sort of all the, all the rehearsing that you do, you know, and you sort of got access to The Albert Hall and, you know, and all the history and The Chelsea Pensioners it's really, really nice, yes, so. And then on the night when The Queen comes and it, it was very nice. Mm, and also got a, we got a Prime Minister's Award for what work we'd done in the floods. Mm, went to Lancaster House for that and there was a reception, we didn't know that Gordon Brown was coming at the time but he, he did, and there was a lot of MPs and people like that, so that was nice.

[01:15:08]

And it was just a reception really. But then locally there were quite a lot of receptions after the floods really...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: That, in appreciation.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: I mean I, I was the one who went but it was really, I think the most important thing, although I got the recognition, I always do that when I go out and, because I still give talks to people.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Mm, about, well I try and keep it current, you know, with the RVS.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: But I always say 'It's not just me it, it's teamwork', you know, without the volunteers we're no, we were nothing really Mm, okay we trained them and that but, you know, they, they all gelled together and they wanted to do the best that they could really. So, but I always, so I always stress that one really, yes, mm. [Laughing]

[JH]: And we were talking about sort of other restructures and things like that, have you been affected by the new hub system that we've got in place?

[CM]: Mm, [laughing] well it's, it's been different.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: Mm, I've had call outs from the Locality Manager - Carol.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, and she's, you know, called me out sometimes. I've also, I usually meet up with Paul a few times a year, well it's been more lately because in fact he asked me to be on a Strategic Board.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: For a bid that they're putting in for, you know, I don't know, you probably know about what's happening.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: But anyhow, they, they're putting this large bid so I, I was invited to it to go there, so I went to a meeting in London not long ago.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And I think the, the bid's now been put in, you see it's for a lot of money over a number of years.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: So I've had quite a lot of contact, I've been with Paul to Leeds as well.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Mm, and, and so, you know, but finally, in fact I only had a phone call from the bid writer yesterday actually and, you know, to keep us in the loop.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Really. Mm, so, yes, so I've, I've had, you know, as I say, contact with Carol, contact with Paul, but more contact with Paul as it happens now because of this, this new work that's coming off possibly.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: But it's competitive so whether they get the bid or not...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: We don't know.

[JH]: And that's for emergency?

[CM]: It isn't, no.

[JH]: Is it for...?

[CM]: It's like, it's for, it's sort of health, yes, and...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: You know, I don't know whether you know anything about it or not. No?

[JH]: Not particularly.

[CM]: Not really, no. No, but it's to do with health for the elderly.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, I don't know that I can sort of say more than that, but, mm.

[JH]: That's fine.

[CM]: It, it, it's, it, they won't know the outcome of it until October/November.

[JH]: Mm. Yes, it does take a...

[CM]: Mm, it takes a while. Mm, but as I say I heard about the update yesterday and there'll be more updates regarding that. But he seems, I think he asked me to do something else as well, but I don't know it was some sort of... But, but I, I just couldn't at the time because I, I'm also involved with the Crown Court in Sheffield, I help looking after witnesses.

[JH]: Oh yes.

[CM]: One day a week, so I can only do a limited amount of, of work.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: But, but so far we've, we've kept the Emergency Services going, but it's getting harder and harder and because of the volunteers.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: You know, I've asked them to sort of pass on volunteers but I don't, that's the only thing, you don't always get them passed on.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: And we do need it. And there used to be somebody previously who would talk to the people about all the services within the area, you know, and get them involved. Mm, but that person

doesn't seem to exist. I, I suppose really it ought to be Carol or somebody like that tells people about other services.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: But it just doesn't...

[JH]: It just doesn't get...

[CM]: Happen, unfortunately, no.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And I mentioned that about three years ago.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: We still don't get any passed on so the service may close in...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Because you can't, if you don't get the volunteers to take it on it won't go on will it, you know?

[JH]: No.

[CM]: I think it's closed in a lot of places, Emergency Services, yes.

[01:20:01]

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: The R and R, because of... But the emphasis is different isn't it, it's on the elderly.

[JH]: It is.

[CM]: Different services, yes.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: So, but things do change, yes. Mm, mm, yes.

[JH]: And in your opinion since you started volunteering, what do you think's been the biggest change to the organisation?

[CM]: Well the biggest change really was the fact that it went back. When I first started it was really sort of like Emergency Services, Hospital Services, Community Services.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And so on. Mm, and then the Emergency Services got a bit of money, or it was, you know, if we needed some insuls and things we got them from the hospital or whatever, but it was still distinctly, you know, run like that. Mm, and then it, it changed again when we, you know, we were definitely sort of more separate. Mm, and now it's, it's sort of gone back together in a way, but [sighing] they, they said that there were going to be more volunteers because of the way it was going to be managed.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: They were going to be crossed over, but I don't think that has particularly happened.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: Actually. Mm, but, you know, obviously we've had one or two different Chief Executives and they all have their own vision don't they?

[JH]: Mm, mm, yes.

[CM]: Mm, but I, I just don't think it's, that it's changed and it, it's much the same as it, it was before really. Mm, that there was one person over a lot of them, over a lot of the services, but they were also, you know, working separately as well, yes, and one person can't actually keep everything going. And I think, you know, I think really, we said this, that Emergency Services was something that was quite professional really. I know the others are.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: But they don't want fools in Emergency Services, they...

[JH]: No.

[CM]: They, what did I say, the local authorities want you to be trained.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: And knowledgeable. And you can't just go in, and I think, you know, the vision was that people would just go in and from the hospitals and they'd be able to pick it up.

[JH]: Yes. No.

[CM]: I don't think that's true. I mean like Angela had a, a lot of experience.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: She knew lots of different things. You can't pass that experience and you can't get, you can just sort of skirt over it but you can lose a lot of people as well. And I think overall that, that's what's happened, is the local authorities have wanted more, more proper knowledge. And I mean I think, I think Red Cross have gone into it a bit more. They've kept as they are haven't they with, with a lot of the management. But I think we've just slightly diluted it, well quite a bit diluted really.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Mm, but you've got to try these things I suppose. Mm, but, but I think that's, that's changed a lot really. And, you know, from my point of view I didn't, when, when the organisation, reorganisation came, there was no way I wanted to take on, or even consider taking on hospitals and all the different things.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: I wanted to do Emergency Services, because you got'd a lot of knowledge and, and that was just sort of, they didn't want that did they?

[JH]: No.

[CM]: You know, it, it, they, they just changed the vision of it all.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, but I think that with certain things you, you couldn't do that. I think I think with community and hospitals and that you could have kept it.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: But I think to get rid of the knowledge that they, they did...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Was not a good idea but, but that's just a point of view.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: But I, you know, I would never say that to, particularly to volunteers or anybody else.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: But I, I do think the knowledge that they lost was, was a bit sad. Mm, mm.

[JH]: Mm. And so where would you say that Royal Voluntary Service, as it is now, place in society is today?

[CM]: Well it seems to be well, well thought of and...

[01:25:03]

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Mm, in quite a, a high position really. I mean I, after going to this Strategic Board meeting in London it was interesting because there were people from Scotland and, you know, from the UK generally and Ireland and everywhere, you, you got a, quite a good cross section. Mm, and, I don't know, and then we're working alongside other people and they seemed to think highly of us as well. As regards other voluntary agencies, within the city, say, I'm not sure that we are thought of as much as some of the other...

[JH]: No.

[CM]: Agencies, organisations. Mm, but nationally we may be. I, I couldn't really say whether we, you know, but it does seem to be very good. I went to the service at St. Paul's, and that seemed to be very well attended et cetera.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Didn't it? So I, I'd have thought it was, it was doing very well.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: But if I had to measure it I couldn't say.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: [Laughing]

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[JH]: And what do you think is the future for Royal Voluntary Service?

[CM]: Mm, well it seems to be making very big bids for lots of money to...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Maybe help with working with, you know, the elderly really in different aspects. Mm, you know, the, the one that I'm involved with at the moment that will be quite a, a big thing if they, if they pull that off, and I'm sure that there are other things to do with the elderly that they'll be able to make bids for as well. Because obviously care homes and things like that, they're not all that's wonderful so they've just got to think in terms of, of what the needs of the elderly are and, you know, try and get money for it. But that, it seems to be the way that they're going, they're not, it, it just seems to me a little bit that they're for the big money. Because I know that, you know, we still have a contact with Sheffield and it wasn't renewed immediate then and the, the local authority had to... Because we used to do it on a regular basis, you know, Angela would ask for them in in...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: January, and out in March. Mm, and it, it had been done previously not too badly, although there'd always had to be reminders. But this year they had to really, really go at it about several months later. It just feels a little bit as are they not interested in the smaller amounts?

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: And I think that, that's a pity because, you know, from one thing you, you sometimes get openings don't you? Mm, and you can't just have your eye on the big money all the time. Mm, and, I don't know, and, and the other thing is I feel as well that they have lost a lot of volunteers.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And there's a lot of paid people, and that's always been a bit of a bone of contention, even, me, you know... [Laughing]

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: A number of years ago, you know, 'Oh, she's, she's come and not so good'. But, but then there was... If, if you had a good Supervisor they could keep that like, you know, we've tried to keep things in control, you can control it. But now, you know, it's, sometimes they get people along who are paid who aren't really suitable.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: And it doesn't always go well. And I know a few volunteers that have just left and they say 'Oh we'll stay with you but we've just had enough of the hospital'.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: You know, so I think it, it's difficult because there are a lot more paid people now.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: They have to, they've got to make it work don't they really?

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: I think you've got to keep an eye on things. And there was one other thing that was interesting about a meeting that was supposed to be happening about three or four weeks ago, they'd spent, sent a lot of letters out to get this meeting in the Sheffield office for something, and they just sent the letters out and nobody turned up - the volunteers.

[01:30:06]

And I thought, 'I've never had that happen'.

[JH]: No.

[CM]: Because, you know, it, they'd sent them out several weeks before, and if you felt something wasn't going right you'd ring them up or something but, but it had just being left, they got this stuff ready and nobody turned up. Now I just thought that, that's a bit sad really, you know, that there isn't that communication and individuality. But maybe that's because of the, the amount of work they have to do. Mm, but I think you've just got to be careful about that.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And so, but, but there's lots of things you could say, yes, but, but that's those are some of my thoughts really.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: Mm. Because, as I say, we still have this meeting that goes on in Sheffield still about three times a year, and we always get at least twenty people come to it. Mm, and they, they've have still got that contact really.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Mm, and I think that's, that's important.

[JH]: You've still got that social world, the meeting outside.

[CM]: It's a social one, but it's also for people who are still active, yes.

[JH]: Yes. Because lots of people have said to me that when they joined WRVS it was all about the camaraderie and the friendship.

[CM]: Yes, mm. I think, I think that's it, and that, that's what I'm saying is that there isn't the communication except for, you know, doing a job or something and, and people like that. And I, I suppose really the people that come to my meetings are people who have known each other a very long time, so they'll, they'll even ring and, you know, give their apologies or something. But we, we've just recently been to the Botanical Gardens, I had somebody got somebody to show them round, I went along, there were about nearly twenty people there and we just went round there, we

usually have one outing like that and then two meetings, updates and update about R and R and things like that, yes. So I just think you've got to be careful, but they've gone away a bit from it all.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: You know, and you can't just have your eye on the money all the time. Mm, and I think they're probably trying to get it back but once you lose it it's quite hard to get back isn't it?

[JH]: It is.

[CM]: Mm. Mm, so. [Laughing]

[JH]: And do you have any other memories or stories about your time with WRVS that you'd like to share?

[CM]: Mm, I'd like to just say that I've had a lot of really good people, and I still, the, the person who's been very, very good, well one's moved to Nottingham and she, she retired and went, but she used to help me ever such a lot doing bits of admin and things, you know, sort of voluntary and et cetera. Mm, and the other person is somebody who always helps with the operational side, Janet Burrows, she's, she's always done ever such a lot...

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: In Sheffield and, you know, she was there the other night actually at the emergency, three or four of us went. Mm, but, you know, she's done, yes, we've had a lot of fun really together as well. Mm, but I suppose really one of the things that interests was about Soyer boilers.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: You may have heard about these?

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Mm, when I first joined I think it was only a year or two afterwards, after that we went up to Easingwold to... It wasn't, it was just somewhere near Easingwold in order to cook meals outside. because these...

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: These Soyer boilers were often used. Mm, but anyhow they were also showing you how to build trench cookers and all sorts of different things. And we had to cook each, we went into different groups and we each had to cook some part of the meal to get, and you get like sort of apple pie, apple crumble and custard, somebody had to do. It all had to be cooked and you had to build the cooker as well so it was quite a, an adventure, but, you know, what fun you had really doing that, horror, but fun, yes. Mm, but the, but that was an interesting one. And people, you know, would, would go and, because you do get quite a lot of volunteers who are on their own and like to go somewhere like that, you know, and do things or, perhaps not now, but, but they did.

[01:35:11]

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: You know, and I think you could interest people. But also at St. Luke's when we first started doing that, because we did that for nearly twenty years I can remember. Mm, and we had Soyer boilers there because we had it on the field and there we had to boil the water because they, they had a big marquee and the water was boiled on, on the boilers because you couldn't take it from the building, because it, it's got bigger and bigger has, has St. Luke's anyhow. Mm, but again we had two people who were really good at looking after the boilers.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: You know, you had to have that, looked after them, kept it going, kept the water going. Mm, and some of these fairs and things were, were particularly happy, happy times really with a lot of enjoyment. And people said 'Oh can', you know, 'can we come next year? Can we, can we do it again?' And Whirlow Farm as well where we used to go, that's an education centre where they raise money for that, we went there for about fifteen years actually, but again they reorganised and, and different things happen. Mm, and eventually, well we, we did all sorts then. There was a farmer in

between that used to invite us and he, he was very pro WRVS and, you know, we, we used to raise money partly for them, but we, we always sort of, took some as well.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: You know, but they used to make a tremendous fuss. And they had lambing times, so it was, so it was sometimes four times during the year. So we, you know, we, we've done such a lot of things, and that's why I think the Sheffield people feel very...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Together really, yes, over the years. But, as I say, it could be a dying breed really.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: Mm, so. But yes, in other places like, as I said to you earlier on about the 'Four Inns Walk', that was another happy event. I think the big events have been...

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: Really quite noted, notable. Mm, and the one in Barnsley, the big police one, you know, where you get lots of volunteers and they all work together and, you know, sometimes you've got to have shifts of people and, and different things like that. But they were always so reliable - the volunteers - and, you know, loved to do everything, yes, so. That I, I think that, that's been one of the most striking things and most happy thing was sort of, you know, being able to help in emergencies or whatever but also having reliable people to work alongside you.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: So I think, that's what I think, yes.

[JH]: Yes. And sort of out of everything we've discussed and talked about today what's your, what, or what would you say is your most treasured memory of being with WRVS?

[CM]: Mm, mmm. [Laughing]

[JH]: [Laughing]

[CM]: I don't know, I seem to have a lot of memories really. Mm, but I suppose really, if I was thinking, I mean lots of different things have happened as I've mentioned to you but really without WRVS I don't think I'd have got an OBE, and I think...

[JH]: No.

[CM]: I think that really sort of built it to a climax, you know, just the, something totally unexpected. And so I suppose really just going to The Palace and treasuring that is probably the most treasured memory.

[JH]: Mm, mm.

[CM]: Yes. But I'd, you know, you've no idea that anything ever like that would ever happen. But as it did, I think I've got to say that bit, yes.

[JH]: Mm.

[CM]: Mm, mm, and, and also having, you know, I think, I, I, when Mark Lever was there it was, it was great. He was a, a really, you know, because he, he actually started at a similar time really.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: And worked through the ranks, and he was very much with us and kept us all, all going. And so, you know, I, I'm glad that I could work at, at the similar sort of time really. Mm, but people you've met over the years as well and working with people, but, as I say, I think, I think that was the ultimate.

[JH]: Yes.

[CM]: [Laughing] Yes.

[JH]: Well thank you Christine for talking to me today, and this will make a really good contribution to our Voices of Volunteering project.

[End of Recording 01:40:36]