

CHAPTER 15

I had no job, when I left the job that I had as training officer for Disability Information Greater Glasgow, and ended up going into social work training at Glasgow Caledonian University in 2008. This course was a post graduate course. It was one year in duration, and it was part university and placement based. I started a placement in 'Adult and Elderly Services' at Glasgow City Council, where for the first couple of weeks I got on very well with my mentor, whose name was Douglas Gray. We had great conversation, we got on like a house on fire, we had a great number of shared jokes and I informed him of my reasons as to why I wished to be a social worker. He told me that I had made a wise decision and that I would not regret it. I thought to myself, "what a great guy". I thought to myself, "Why couldn't the nursing mentors have been as good as the social work team". I didn't just get on with my mentor but I got on with other staff in the office as well. There was a carry-on kind of guy that had you in stitches, that I also thought highly of.

It was on the Thursday of the second week of being on placement that I was out with Douglas Gray, driving from one client's home to another; and he asked me what made me wish to become a social worker after doing a degree in molecular biology as he was driving. I told my mentor that I had grown up living with disadvantage all my life and that I had used statutory services all my life, as I had lived with epilepsy since childhood and that making it to where I was had been a nightmare for me despite being seizure free during awake hours since 1998. I told my mentor that society had disabled me more than epilepsy had. I went on to say that there are many societal ills that people with disability find themselves up against and that I wished to pursue a career helping people overcome these societal ills. I continued by saying that I could not think of any better career than social work for someone wishing to help those with disability overcome many of the societal ills. I said that social work was both community as well as meeting unmet needs of others and therefore it was a great career for anyone with a self-empowerment ethos.

On the Friday of the second week of this great placement my mentor asked me if I wanted to do a day down at one of the other social work offices in the local area. I said, "yes" to this and he gave me the phone number of the office to arrange to go down there for a day. It was a Friday afternoon and I phoned the other office, which was an elderly social work office. A lady answered the phone and said they would be pleased to have me for the day, and that I was more than welcome. I was given instructions to pass on to my mentor when I was on the phone to the other office arranging this visit. These instructions were for me to be there for a certain time on a certain day. I informed my mentor of these arrangements, and my mentor on the day of the arranged visit said after my arrival at work, "Come on, let's take you down to the other Shettleston Office" as he picked up his coat and briefcase and said, "My colleague will be coming down with us as well". This other person, whose name I can't remember, was really comical in the car while I was being driven down to the other office. When we got to the other office my mentor did a kerb side park. My mentor said, "There you go" and I got out the car. My mentor then said to me, while I was standing on the kerbside with the door open and he sitting in his driving seat, "We will see you later on back at the office, after you have spent the day at this office and you can tell us how you got on". I replied by saying, "Thanks for the lift and will see you back at the office" shutting the car door. I walked up the path to the office and looked over my shoulder and saw a side-on view of my mentor pull away, where he looked tense and anxious as he put his car into first gear and drove off like a criminal trying to get out of the area as fast as he possibly could. I will never forget his body language, and the way the car just drove off like a car wanting to get out of the vicinity as soon as possible, and without delay. I thought, "Strange" and walked up the path to the office door and rang the bell. The person who answered

the door said, "Hello, can I help you?". I said that I was Tim Bone the social work student who had been invited to come down today to work at this office. I was told that they had no record of this. They said, "Sorry what's your name?". I answered, and they said, "Come in". I entered the office and made the lady aware of the phone call that I had given on the Friday of the previous week when it had been arranged for me to work from this office on this day. The lady said that she had no record of this phone call that was made. The lady who had let me in was now on the phone to my mentor enquiring as to why a student social worker had arrived on their door step claiming that it had been arranged with himself over the phone for him to come down today and spend the day in their office. My mentor had said over the phone that he was no wiser than her and that he had only been acting under the instructions that I had given him. The office I was standing in denied ever receiving a phone call from me and passing instructions onto me, for me to pass on to my mentor. I was collected and brought back to the office. Upon our return to the office, I sat at my desk which was in another room to my mentor's desk. After about ten minutes my mentor said, "Tim, could you just come into my office for now". I went into his room where he sat down behind his desk and I was encouraged to pull up a seat and sit down at the opposite side of the desk in this grey walled dark office with the dark grey sky outside. When we were both seated, he sat there leaning on his left forearm with his hands clasped together with his left shoulder slightly higher than his right and he asked me in a very nervous unconvincing manner if I had a fear of the telephone. He went on to further say that I need not worry if I did have such a fear as he knew many people who had a terrible fear of the telephone. My mentor then said that he very often heard me say 'Excuse Me' when I was on the phone and someone answered. I replied by saying that I did not have any phobia about using the telephone. I informed him that I used the telephone when doing voluntary work at Epilepsy Scotland back in 1993, had been using the phone as part of my job as a support worker at Thelmer Turner Homes in Nottingham in 2003 as well as Fair Deal in Glasgow in 2004, and had spent two years in a job as both a disability information provider and symptom management trainer; where I was answering and making calls every day, and that my use of the words "Excuse Me" were just being used as a figure of speech whenever someone picked up the phone at the other end. He then responded to this by saying that there may be difficulties in allowing me to see clients I told him that he didn't express any concerns about my suitability to be a social worker the first week I started my placement right up to asking me on the Friday of week two to phone the other office as he felt it important for me to see the other client groups I might find myself working with when I qualified. I told him that right up to this morning there had been no instances where he had expressed doubt in my suitability nor had anything happened that would give one reason to think I was not suitable. I asked him if this set up over the appointment, the accusation of being paranoid with using the phone and then expressing that there will be difficulties allowing me to work with clients had anything to do with the fact that I had disclosed to him that I had epilepsy when giving him my reasons for going into social work the previous week. My mentor responded to me asking him these questions by saying, "Wait Here!"