

Q Julia Bishop (researcher)

A Rosemary M (after-school gardening club leader)

Q So basically this is around the Gardening Club that you do at the school as you know because of John's involvement in that. And so the questions relate partly to the club, and then we're going to talk a little bit about technology and media. And I've got a feeling that a lot of this may not be relevant and if that is the case obviously that's fine, just say so, but it's because it's the focus of the study.

A That's fine.

Q So I wondered sort of just in general terms if you could just tell me a bit about the actual group that you run at Abbeycliff [School], what does it do and who funds it, how often it runs, that type of thing please?

A OK. So the project An Even Better [South East Sheffield] is funded by...is that the group you mean, or do you mean the Gardening Group?

Q Well I'm not even sure of the relationship of the Gardening Group to An Even Better [South East Sheffield].

A OK, alright OK, so I'll answer that then. An Even Better [South East Sheffield] was set up this time last year and it is funded by Lottery Funding, an organisation called CIVA, which stands for Centre for Innovative Volunteering Action, and the Tudor Trust. It was kick-started by the Headteacher and CIVA. And the idea behind the project, which is going to run for 4 years at least I would say – it's certainly got funding for the next 3 years, is to empower the local community and specifically children and parents to think about solutions towards helping themselves deal with some of the issues that come about because of living in poverty. And as a consequence one of the first things that we did was, we talked to parents and we asked them what they thought were the most pressing concerns for families who were most in need in the school, and they said 'issues connected with food'.

And I am trying as much as possible for the project to be as practical as possible and to come from local people. And so we set up several things to do with food, one of them being the Community Fridge, which we open twice a week and we distribute surplus food. We run a free family feast every fortnight where parents cook and provide a hot meal for anyone who wants to come and we feed about 80 people in that. And one of the other things was about connect....well there's quite a lot of other things but one of the other things was about connecting the land to food, you know so gardening and growing food. So the aim of that was to rejuvenate the school garden, which was there but in a terrible state of affairs and wasn't really being used at all other than by an odd teacher I guess, and to get it to be a family run club. So we basically look after the space and we grow things and then we have quite a lot of conversations about what we're growing and what we could do with them. The families take the food home. If we've got lots of surplus that goes to the Community Fridge or into the feast.

So that's where it came from. And it was an interesting one, because when I first talked to parents and they said 'food' it was a really obvious one for me, but it took really until June maybe to get it working. And that was largely because it...the obviously gatekeeper was Jan

who you met, she was there, but she was so cheesed off with how the school had basically required her to work in the garden over the last few years that she just didn't want anything to do with it. And she said that...when I first approached her and she was 'oh it will be the same old thing, you know the school will ask me to sort it all out and I'll sort it out and everyone will drop away and I will be left having to look after it. Last year and the year before, for two years running the only person who has paid any attention to these beds was me, and basically I was doing it out in all weathers with no help and no engagement of children.' So she was very, very anti even starting anything.

So I decided, this was back in November, to play the long game and prove to her that it could work by engaging families maybe rather than teachers. So the first thing I did to persuade her that it was going to work was to....we were offered some volunteer time from a local church and I got them to dig over all the beds and weed them all, because I thought we needed to start with an appealing space, and then we've taken it from there. So I got to the point where we were ready to go and we'd already done a lot of planting with children just after school to see, and so I then went back to her and said 'look, I can bring you a group of people and I will be there, and I've found another parent volunteer who will lead on this, so you're not doing it on your own'. And since then I haven't been able to hold her back. Do you know what I mean? It's about community isn't it, it's not like feeling like you're left with the sole responsibility. So that's where it came from.

Q Oh that's fascinating. And just position yourself, Rosemary, in all that. Is this your theatre company, because theatre and gardening are...you know obviously they're connected I think in your concept, aren't they?

A Yes. The theatre company is employed to coordinate, to basically develop and coordinate the project. So that's me for two and a half days a week, and Paula for three and a half.

Q And the theatre, what's the concept behind the theatre company itself?

A The theatre company, or the theatre company doing An Even Better [South East Sheffield]?

Q I suppose it's....yeah where you're coming from, the one that relates to [South east Sheffield]. Because is it the theatre company or is it just yourselves?

A Yeah well it is the theatre company, because initially I was approached by the headteacher to do it as a full time job myself and I said 'no, I've got a company to run and I wouldn't want to do that'. I said you could consider employing the theatre company but it would have to be in a different....she wanted me to work full time on it, it would have to be in a different makeup because I've got other stuff to do. So we came up with that proposal of employing a second person as project support and administrator. It's slightly tenuous!

So we do a lot of community-based work but it's usually more creative. I think this is using creative skills all the time but it's not creating a creative product or necessarily process, if that makes sense? But the theatre company's whole thing is about working with people to respond to place and space, so it fits neatly there, and about having a dialogue about your community or the place that we're in. So that all kind of fits, it just means that we don't actually do that much creative drama theatre stuff. But the reason why she approached me was because when The headteacher was asked if she would like to do this project by CIVA,

they basically came to her with a plate of money. So she didn't need to apply for anything or do anything, they literally came and said 'look, we've got the money, we'll fundraise for more, we'd like to do it with your school'. And one of her conditions was that whoever the coordinator was would be a creative basically she said, because what she didn't want to get it stuck in with being...she said that her families respond really well to creative projects, creative ideas, creative things, and so she would want to take that approach.

Q Yes. Oh that's really interesting. It helps me to understand how...because I first met you as somebody who was doing drama, so I was thinking....but obviously the clue is in the name, I got that bit, but it was all those sort of connections between the work that you do in [South East Sheffield] and how I knew you obviously from other contexts.

A Yes. I mean the stuff that you saw us doing with....

Q The Opie Archive?

A Say the Archive, also took place indoors. But most of our work does take place outside and it's about being outdoors and thinking about outdoor spaces and how we can respond to them. So I think....a project I did actually with [one of Julia's colleagues] coincidentally, but just before The headteacher took us on and asked us to come and work with them, was around working with pupils at [another Sheffield school]. And they were Roma pupils largely, mainly Roma – a few other nationalities but most of them were refugees – and it was about working with them in a creative way to respond to the local community that there school was based in, because they were shipped in and shipped out and they really had no kind of engagement with the space. And so we did a project with them about transforming the area with wild flower growing.

Q Oh thank you Rosemary, that's fine. So now I can see how you're involved there. So the actual Gardening Club itself, did you say that began in June in earnest?

A Yes I think so, I can't remember exactly, I think it was June, late May or early June but I think it was June.

Q So is it just a weekly thing during term time?

A It's a weekly thing, it's once a week straight after school. It's meant to be an hour, it generally goes on for an hour and a half because we can't get rid of them, which is a really nice thing I think and something that I think me and Jan and Lydia probably feel really proud about. But you know it's a relaxed space as you saw.

Q So is that typical what I saw that day of the activities?

A Not really I would say.

Q No. Tell me a bit about what is the normal-ish.

A Well what's different.....well yes it is typical for that time of year but we....yes it is typical. When it was the summer everybody was outside all the time, we didn't really come indoors at all, we brought everything outside. We added the picnic benches to the house so that they had somewhere to sit and eat, everyone would just be outside, parents would be very

proactive about getting on with jobs and supporting kids to get on with jobs – the kids were also encouraged but when they'd had enough they could play. So with the change in the weather one of the things I've noticed was, parents were less keen to go outside, and I can't remember if it was....anyway, and were tending to stay inside. And some of the kids were coming in and some of the kids were going out. And we'd got into a situation where basically Jan neededif I was out she needed to be in, and we got into a situation I think the week before you came where most of the kids were outside, the parents were inside, and I actually after the session just said to Lydia and Jan 'you know if there was a serious injury I would want another parent outside with me'. You know I'm a First Aider and I know you're only a few yards away, but having a parent who would be able to gather up the other children or anything like that. So out of that came the ground rules. And we'd never done that before, we never felt we had to, largely because when we're all outside in the summer it just kind of flows really nicely. And we actually put the ground rules in because, confidentially, we wanted the parents to take more responsibility. But we thought if we aimed it at the children then they would hear the message.

Q So in the summer what did the children do, they actually sort of planted and dug over grounds and put things in, that sort of thing, is that it?

A They dug over ground, they planted, they weeded, they picked....you know because actually for weeks we just had so many strawberries, that was a massive job just picking and washing strawberries.

Q Yes. And then is the idea that the food is then partly taken in and used as part of what you then feed them at the end? Is that a normal thing too?.

A Yes. So what would happen then is, certainly in the summer when we had lots of crops, we'd wash the strawberries and then they'd all eat them, and then we'd have bags and they'd bag up what food they wanted to take home and then anything else went to the Community Fridge. So the children were really engaged in all that gardening, you could literally set out a bed and have two or three with them showing them what were weeds, what was to avoid pulling up, and they would happily do that. They planted all the beans that were growing, all the potatoes. So that worked just beautifully you know. And for the more bumptious children, you know if they wanted to run around they could, but most of them wanted to garden. And a lot of them wanted to collect snails and that kind of thing. So yeah it was a bit odd the session you came to because I thought Jan possibly led that for too long, I would have tried to have tighten it up a bit.

Because we were just really conscious that a parent I think the week before had come to us and said 'we've never discussed who disciplines the children if they need disciplining', and some of the parents are disciplining other children and that feels really mucky, type thing – wrong word – unclear. And so yeah, ironically this was about kind of putting things on a firmer footing for the parents without then the children, but it was aimed at the children as well, do you know what I mean?

Q Yeah of course. No that makes sense, and it's fine. I mean in a way I was really just sort of looking at John and thinking about it as a Gardening Club, but obviously there's stuff that you do every week, and that's why I'm sort of trying to get to here really, is what's more typical. But obviously as you also point out, that's a seasonal thing as well so it's a different feel this autumn.

A It is. And actually the parents that have....and this is what I love about this group, it's that they're taking the lead with ideas. They've come back to us and said 'we don't think we should keep calling it The Big Dig, that puts people off their thinking about gardening in this weather, we need to call it a name which isn't just about gardening'. So they've basically said 'what we'd like....' because originally Jan and I said we would close it down at Christmas time and then re-open it in the Spring because there's nothing really to do over those winter months in the garden. And they've come back and said 'no, we'd like to change the name to' - and it's getting changed as we speak - to Red Robin Family Fun Club. And that it's about gardening when the weather's good but the rest of the time we could do crafts connected with nature, we could do cooking and things like that. So kind of family things. It's clear that the people that it's attracting mainly are people with younger children. I think there's a couple of Year 5 boys who I think are coming because their mum's sort of come, rather than because they want to come! But mainly it's infants and nursery, and you know that's kind of stuff that you can....if people....one of the things that I think is brilliant is, and I hope we'll really develop this as it gets colder, is giving parents new skills that they can do in the home with their kids again and stuff like that. Like we were talking about making animal people and things like that and... And also the other thing that's happening a lot, which is completely by...not by design at all, is conversations about cooking with vegetables that they'd previously not used at all. So we had loads of courgettes, and I think the majority of people who come never had cooked with a courgette before, never bought a courgette.

So we've had lots of discussions about how we can roast them, or stew them, or put them in a Bolognese, do you know what I mean? But that's really fruitful isn't it? If that then allows people to start to be more....and take them home and be more adventurous, and they come back and exchange their ideas. And the children come back and tell us whether they liked it or no, so...

Q Sure, yeah I can see where that's going. And it might be - we'll come on to technology a little bit later and media, we're not just about technology as devices, but content and popular culture and so on.

A Yes.

Q Let me just finish this by just asking two more questions. How frequently does John come to the group?

A Erm...he's not an every weeker but he almost is I would say. And in fact he has been this term every week because Anna's now going to Drama Club so there's no reason for...it makes sense for Marina to spend an hour in school with John rather than going home and then coming back for her. And so he has been regular. He certainly feels comfortable and knows the group well I would say. And he's very good at....you wouldn't have really seen that on that session but he is very good at kind of being given a task, like 'here is a handful of beans, can you plant them a hand apart' or 'look at those weeds, can you pull them out'. And he's good at doing tasks and he's good at staying on task as well.

Q Yeah, so are those the sort of things he would normally do, you know thinking back to the summer term when there was more planting is that the sort of thing he did?

A Yes absolutely, or 'could you go and pick some strawberries'. And the other one that he loved actually thinking about it, is watering.

Q Oh yes.

A Yeah, so they could spend a whole hour running with a tiny watering can to the tap and then taking it up and pouring it on a plant and running back. Yeah. They really love that and it's quite a good filler I guess as well.

Q And so is Marina there most weeks?

A Yes, yeah.

Q They attend together.

A Yeah. But the way it works and has worked is, they don't necess....she's very good at keeping her eyes on him I would say and engaging him. Some parents will work on a task and engage whatever children are around them, and she tends to follow him or engage him specifically – do you know what I mean? There's that completely is a contrast between... parents either go one way or the other I think, they tend to engage with their children or engage with the task and bring others in. And she tends to focus on John, not in a controlling way but she....

Q No, no, no, but she's obviously, as you said, she's got her eyes on him and....yeah. Oh that's great. Thanks. So let's move on to some questions relating to technology and media, if any in your club. That's great Rosemary, it's so interesting to know a bit more about it as well. So the first obvious question is, do technologies and media feature in your group, and if so, how?

A Not really, no. Occasionally people will get something up on their phone to look up about gardening, but it's really casual and doesn't really play a part with the children.

Q No. Do any of the helpers use phones or anything to take photographs or document...

A Yes, yes photographs. Marina's brilliant at that actually, she's probably the best person. She and I tend to take photos. And then we tend to send them to Paula who tweets them.

Q OK, so is it photos more than film that's going out?

A Yeah it's usually photos and it's usually of what we've grown, or children holding what we've grown, with the intention of trying to persuade more families to come and join us. Whether that's working I don't think I know that really, I don't think it is.

Q What hashtag is it going out on then, is it part of the school's Twitter feed?

A Oh it's both. It goes to the school's and to An Even Better [South East Sheffield]'s.

Q Oh I see, yeah. And do the children, when they see you taking photos, I mean do they get involved in any way in sort of 'take a picture of me doing this', or do they ask for photos, or suggest?

A That's interesting. Joe really does, but he's probably about the only one actually. I don't know if you spotted Joe?

Q I think so, yeah.

A He's very, very enthusiastic about gardening, really, a real sweetheart, he's really, really keen and has a lot of staying power. Actually yeah, he's older than the others as well so he will be very much 'oh take a photo of this potato' or 'do this' or 'do that'. But the others don't tend to, it tends to come from the parents I think or from us.

Q And do you have, as well as the Twitter feed, is there any use of photographs on say websites?

A Erm....no. We put them on Twitter and Facebook I think, and we tend to....I think we have in the past put them in our newsletters. The website, I think I said to you, that's a bit of a barrier because we can't do it, we have to give it to a safeguarding officer who doesn't want to do it so it doesn't really get done.

Q And when you say Facebook, whose Facebook page, who has control of that?

A Oh, now let me be sure about this, I can't remember if....

Q I was wondering if it's a school thing, or An Even Better [South East Sheffield] thing?

A No it's not a school thing. Paula has set it up as An Even Better [South East Sheffield], but I believe it might be on a page on her Facebook, I'm not sure if it's on...

Q Oh yeah. No I just wondered you know sort of normally who is at it were broadcasting these as it were, under what banner. And also, when you said newsletter, is that again An Even Better [South East Sheffield], or is that the school, because there's the school newsletter isn't there as well I think – or is it the same thing.

A There is a school newsletter and there is An Even Better [South East Sheffield], it's not the same thing. And....what am I trying to say?

Q Do the photos go into both, or either?

A They can go to both. Occasionally I sent them on to the school, but rarely, just because I don't really remember I think, yeah if I'm honest about it yeah. But it should actually, it would be a good thing to do.

Q How far does the use of technologies and media reflect the policy of your organisation, and how far....well the question is, how far is it a more local or personal approach, but I think I would also add how far does it arise out of the nature of the activity as well?

A Erm....I think the fact that there isn't loads, and the fact that we forget to take photos and do that kind of thing, is probably because of the nature of the activity, because it's very hands-on and there's a lot of people, do you know what I mean? In the nicest possible way I

feel like you can be pulled in many different directions and so that kind of thing tends to get forgotten, yeah.

Q Yeah, no it's fine, it's interesting. So it's not like you've made a deliberate decision here not to include technology, to make it technology free or anything, there's no conscious kind of 'no tech zone' type of thought going on here?

A No.

Q No, fine. Thank you. So are there technologies that you'd like to use do you think if you had the support, the funding, the advice? Have you ever thought about that? Kind of putting you on the spot and getting you to think about it now.

A Not....within that project specifically, I mean....

Q That club yeah, so the gardening bit.

A Yeah that club. I think maybe further down the line possibly, but it feels like there's enough to be done without adding more stuff to it. I mean I guess what would be lovely over time would be to kind of have the kind of technology where you could, I don't know, rig up a camera in a bird box, or do you know what I mean, that kind of stuff would be really nice.

Q Yeah, yeah.

A But again, the house isn't set up for technology either, so like there's no screens and...

Q Oh, so that's a bit of a barrier.

A So we'd have to bring all that down.

Q Is there wifi there or anything like that?

A I believe there's meant to be but I've never managed to get it to work. So I think maybe you can go upstairs and turn on a switch. I think there probably is but I've just never really investigated because it's never been a need I guess.

Well I don't know, I guess we're just in the middle of conversations with....what are they called, I think they're called The British Tree Council, who are going to come and do a project with us and create an orchard. Yeah, which is fab. And I think that there's definitely a place in the design and the choosing of the fruit trees and all of that for technology, so in the planning stages. But I'm not quite sure whether that will go to the club or it will go to the school classes within the school, or a combination. But I would like to hope that it would go to the club actually, or at least part of it. But they are quite young to engage in that I guess.

Q So are you talking about software that would help them to do a landscape in some way or position the trees?

A Well not so much software as investigating what would grow well there, what would be in season within the school. So it would be more about kind of a web quest as such, or you know looking online to look at what would grow well, all of those kind of things. I mean at the moment they're talking about providing us with a list of things that would work well in

Yorkshire that would be in season, and then for the children to go and investigate what they are and to decide what they want to be donated, which is just fab I think.

Q Yeah definitely. And when you were talking about recipes and stuff earlier I was thinking about the way in which recipes and using that food...sorry I shouldn't really be saying this, I'm intervening here. But it seemed to me that, you know I get loads of recipes online myself now, it's become a new....

A Yes, that's a really good idea, yeah.

Qnew kind of massive way of talking about food and what to do with it thing, and perhaps has other sort of benefits there. But sorry that's by the by, just an aside kind of thing. That's great. And do you think you use technology in other ways, I mean like for staff training, for admin, are you kind of engaging with technology or media software apps, that type of thing, more generally in say For a Better [South East Sheffield] project?

A Yes, not massively but yes I would say. Well yes I mean, yeah depending on the project. I mean Community Fridge uses all sorts of technology for donations and things like that, that usually all happens through apps.

Q Do you know which apps are used for that, or can you give an example?

A Paula would be able to give you a better one.

Q Oh I'll ask her, yeah no worries at all, yeah that's fine Rosemary.

A I have one on my phone which is Fair Share Go, so I just get a text to say 'we've got this food available' and then you have to sign in and say yes or no. And she will have quite a few more I think.

Q Thank you, that's really interesting, I don't know much about that so I'll investigate that with Paula.

A Yeah. I think a lot of surplus food is set up....distribution of surplus food is done through networks that use apps basically.

Q Yeah, brilliant, thank you. I mean again that's something the children ultimately could learn about isn't it and become involved in.

A Yes, yeah.

Q So these questions relate to John himself, and I'm just looking through them because there aren't...let's have a look. So how do they use the technology that's on offer? Well there isn't any. So he hasn't taken photos or anything like that as far as you know, or asked Marina to?

A Not as far as I know.

Q No, that's fine. So in terms of sort of like the creativity, the drawing and that type of thing, would they ever use technology there, would you ever get a picture up of some plants or something to get them to draw it, or anything that you've ever used in that way?

A We haven't so far, it's been really ad hoc and not very well planned if you ask me, but because we've only been doing it for a couple of weeks. But certainly I got technology up to show them vegetable people and said 'well we could make those' type thing. I think...because we never know what the weather's doing, I'm always on the hope that we'll be outside and so I tend to leave it to Jan to come up with what's going to happen inside. But I think as the weather gets better we might need to just sit down and plan a bit more. I'm of the persuasion that you should be out regardless of the weather, but no-one else agrees with me!

Q Do you have any thoughts about....it sounds as though you think about technology as an inside thing, and I just wondered apart from the camera and the bird box thing which is obviously outside do you have any sort of feeling about technology being used outdoors in that environment in any way?

A Not so far, I can't honestly say that I have, no. And I would also say that I would think that given the choice John would go outside as well. And what has tended to happen on those days is, not all but the majority of children come outside and he does tend to be one of them. Yeah.

Q Oh that's absolutely great, thank you. So I'm just looking through these questions, whether ??? to engage with them, are there some that work well, do you have ??? play in technology, how do you think the case study draws on it....Yeah, John does do things to do with technology in his home and obviously at school I guess as well, so do you ever see any evidence of that? Can you think of any evidence of that in the way you've seen him at the Gardening Club, you know does he mentioned stuff he's seen online or he's watched on films or anything like that?

A Hmm....no, no I can't.

Q That's fine, it just sometimes emerges, you know and sometimes it emerges in their play activities.

A Yes.

Q And so he might be playing but, you know thinking about some sort of video game that he plays at home and it's in his head you know, and you can just see the signs of that in things he's saying or the ways he's moving or something like that.

A Yeah. No sorry I can't.

Q So your own perceptions then of technology and media just in general terms now. Do you think any technologies or media are particularly positive or negative for children at the club activity? I know there aren't many. Sorry I said general but it's still in relation to the club. I've sort of touched on this already.

A In relation to the club I guess anything that we're doing is positive because....I mean yeah, no. I mean neither way really, it doesn't really factor in very much, they're happy to have their photos taken but....no. I don't know.

Q No, it's just clearly an area you just haven't really...it seems to me it's just not really featured much in this way.....

A No it hasn't.

Qthat we are obviously...this is what we've carved out as a focus.

A But it doesn't get in the way, and you can imagine in another setting it could I guess.

Q And you sound open to it, but at the moment it doesn't sound as though it's arisen much for you.

A No, no it hasn't. And yeah we never set it up with the idea that 'oh we should do...' I mean I guess what we've done is, we've tried to follow what people are suggesting as much as possible and be responsive. So we have talked...I remember back in July we had a conversation about 'is there anything that we could be planting in September' and a couple of parents got their phones out and started Googling that. So we went with that. So we're not averse to it but we don't plan for it really, we're just kind of more responsive.

Q Yes, it sort of emerges within the sessions.

A Yes. And I guess, like you say, children do spend a lot of time with technology and on technology, and I think this is a space which might be refreshing because it's not about technology and it's....well I don't mean that in a bad way, but it's about working together and it's about being outdoors and it's about community. And I think that's really important as well, that there's a balance for children.

Q Yeah. Do you think that any....not just the technology but it's also the sort of media content we're interested in, and I'm just thinking, there used to be – I don't know if there still is, you know sometimes these....there was a gardening programme on CBeebies wasn't there for a while?

A Oh I've no idea.

Q Do you ever see any evidence of children referring to things they see, you know that relate to say gardening? I can't even remember what it was called now, I watched it with my own children, I just thought I don't know if it's running or not, or if there's a replacement type of programme. But you're not picking up on anything like that?

A No, not been mentioned at all. I'm trying to think about whether children do talk about....they talk about....ones that do garden at home talk about, sometimes they talk about their gardens, but....

Q Yes, so they're bringing that experience in, which again is not tech mediated in any way.

A No.

Q No, that's great. That's interesting though. And may I ask you how important you think technologies and media are for children in general terms now. Big question I know.

A Oooh. Yes it's a big question. I think they're very important really – I don't mean even 'really', I do think they're very important. I think...well it would be interesting to think about how things are for Marina as opposed to with young children but I genuinely think parents are so far behind what their children are doing, and are struggling to keep up. But that can be difficult. But potentially....yeah, no of course they're really important for all sorts of reasons. And they are part of our life aren't they?

Q Yes. I'm wondering what sort of shapes your opinion of this sort of question.

A Good question. Yeah because it was a very general answer.

Q I'm interested in, you know perhaps you're a parent yourself, I don't know, is it something ??? refer to your children perhaps being there, and we're a kind of...you know. Or is it media, do you ???

A I have two teenagers who are 15 and 13, and of course they use technology. And I think....oh what is it....I sometimes have issues with the amount of time they spend on it.

And also....I mean I have a boy and a girl and I actually have more issues around how the girl uses technology than the boy, who potentially spends more time but is probably more sociable with it – I think. I'm trying to get my head round, what do I think?

Q Sorry, I didn't mean to sort of go straight into what's the situation with your children, I suppose I was just wondering if you...you obviously have first hand observation within your family setting, so that's feeding into how you view it a bit in more detail.

A Oh no, I was just thinking, it's fine. But I think one of the things which I think....what am I trying to say....I think one of the things that I feel about technology, and also in another part of my life and work I do quite a lot of work for an organisation called QUEST which deals with conflict resolution in schools, and I've been developing work for a couple of years with them about using drama programmes to tackle online conflicts, or to tackle issues around online conflicts.

So I think that one of the things that I guess that I'm thinking is that how quickly social media can isolate people as well as bring people together. And that's possibly what I was trying to articulate about how my two use it. So one of them is very sociable on it and does it all through gaming, which feels really good because he's still talking to people – he actually uses his voice and so there's an exchange of opinions that way. And although he's not in the same room as them it feels like he is. And then the kind of thing that I feel more with my daughter and is my big concern for children and young people in general, is when you can't actually....when it's all done through written word or text or whatever we're talking about and photos, but there's no actual....yeah.

Q Yes, no nuance in that perhaps that you get.

A No nuance at all, no. And things can move really fast can't they? And I've seen that a lot doing the courses that I've done is that it's a bit of....it also allows for a crowd? mentality

very easily, and that is not always a subtle or considerate, so people can be targeted very quickly, in five minutes flat. And that's really scary. It's scary to see and it's scary to see when you are just removed from it and stepping back and looking at it and talking to young people about it. And I imagine it could be absolutely heart-wrenching if you're the person reading it and it's about you. So I think technology is here to stay, but I think what we do with our children when they're John's age and Anna's age is really important in how we set boundaries that will sustain them through their teenage years as well. Even though they might move, it's those dialogues that you have when they're children, when they're more open to listening to what their parents have to say possibly. Yes I have a very, very, very good friend whose daughter was targeted on social media and went through an awful year, and left school and has had to have lots and lots of mental health support because of what someone did online aimed at her. And I think one of the things that her parents have really, really grappled with was that they feel like they're bolting the stable door after the horse has fled. And so that goes back to the thing that I was saying around it's when children are....I think it should be when children are at primary school that all the work should be being done with them about keeping them safe for the future. Yes.

But it could be an amazing thing as well can't it, and I don't think school absolutely understand that or know that at all, or maybe they do, but I'm always surprised that schools don't use technology more. So for instance like with the theatre company, with our youth theatre, we did Silver Arts Awards with some of the young people – not many – but one of them decided to do it all. You have to do a lot of reflection and a lot of work, it's the equivalent to a GCSE, and he did it all through video. And it was as good as if it was handwritten. But he created all his content through video. And it was brilliant, it was really good and it was really engaging, and he was really engaged by it because he wasn't being asked to sit down and write about what he was doing. He was reflecting on it, he was interviewing the young people he was working with, and it was very easy to capture and he did it all on his phone. And it was just such an amazing tool.

Q How old was this lad?

A 15. No 14, he was 14.

Q And this was his idea to do it this way?

A When they started it, the person who was overseeing it – who wasn't me – gave him a whole range of options of how they might do it, and one of them was video. And I guess he just thought 'well that's do-able'.

Q Lovely, that's a really interesting example, thank you.

A Yeah, and all three of them that did it, I think he was the one who did all videos. But they all presented it on Prezi, if it was written on filmed or....it's just about showing different ways that you can share your ideas. And it was really clear I would say from the videos, and we know because we watched him working, is that he would often come with his questions that he wanted to ask written down if he was interviewing someone else in the group. So he'd done the planning and the thought in advance, and when he did pieces to camera it was really clear that he wasn't coming with an empty brain, he'd done that work in advance to think 'OK what do I need to talk about here'. But it just seemed to really free him up to be reflective.

Q Interesting. That's a great example, thank you. I was going to ask you for examples of sort of positive and negative impact, and you've given both of those, that's great.

A Yeah. And I would say with my youth theatre, a lot with our oldest group, they all use – and we've never....they all use WhatsApp and often if they're doing a group piece over a series of a few weeks they will make a WhatsApp group between the groups that are performing to send each other ideas. And certainly the last show that our oldest ones did, there were three different performances and two of them used FaceTime to rehearse, because they had this big argument in the middle of the scene and one of them was really struggling to remember the lines, so they just FaceTimed and learnt the lines together at home over FaceTime. I was so impressed by that.

Q Yes that's a very creative sort of solution to their problem if they couldn't physically get together.

A Yeah, creative and supportive I think. Because learning lines on your own is really....can, for some is easy but for others is really tricky. So it just really solved lots of problems – not problems but it solved things about supporting each other as well, or offered opportunities to support each other.

Q Fascinating, great, yeah that's something I'd not thought about before.

A Yeah. And I guess with that group, I don't really have any...we're not on their WhatsApp group at all, so the whole group has set up their own WhatsApp group. And they did it after one of the members this time last year her mum passed away, so they set up a WhatsApp group just so that they could all be in touch with each other and go out more and do more things outside of the youth theatre, which I know was in response to what had happened to this member. And I feel like it's a very safe and boundaried...because the group that we lead, a lot of them who are now 17 have been with us since they were 10, so they know each other really well, and I feel like over the years we've created a space that's very safe and very playful. I would be more....I feel confident that it's their group and I have nothing to do with it and that's fine, but I also feel confident that the group has been set up to be supportive. Whereas my daughter went to another drama group who set up a WhatsApp group and then it got very unpleasant and bitchy on it, and she came to me very upset about things. And then I had to kind of question 'well do I go to the leader with this'. So there's stuff that becomes quite problematic. Is this a friendship group or is this a drama group online. Yeah. So anyway.

Q So I wondered how important technologies are for yourself, and media content?

A For me as a person?

Q I think yes, just perhaps in your own working and personal life.

A Yeah. I guess working, kind of very I would say. I mean probably more traditional but I use obviously computers and phones and iPads. I do do a lot of....if I'm writing a script I'll often kind of record all my ideas, speak my ideas to my phone and then listen back to it, do you know what I mean, rather than just sit and write. I use audio a huge amount to develop ideas.

Q Gosh that's interesting. Is there something about audio that you find creative?

A Yeah. I have dyslexia so I think what I find is that I can get my ideas out quicker. What I tend to do if I'm writing is I can't move on from something until I'm satisfied with it, so it can be a very slow process.

A ??? by speaking it I can just get the ideas out and that at least allows me to know where I'm going – does that make sense – before I hone it down. Yes. And it's just the way I learn is through listening I think best, and talking things through. So audio I use a lot. So I use quite a bit. My husband's a film maker so we can't escape it.

Yeah. So it's really good. Yeah I use, certainly when I'm working with the youth theatre, if we're working towards creating something I will always film their pieces and use that either to remind them, or to write a script, or to remember where all the props are meant to be. Yeah. So I guess I use it quite a bit, but probably the same kind of technology that most people use.

Q But you're using it for sort of creative purposes as well as reminders and, you know sort of all functional kind of ways let's say.

A Yes definitely. And certainly I guess one of the things that I did with our youngest group this summer was, they were devising their own piece. And I wanted....they're little, they're 7, 8 and 9, and I wanted to create a script for them that didn't have loads of words in it because they were devising it. So I photographed a lot of what they did and put those in with key words, and that worked brilliantly actually, so that they looked at a page with say 5 photos and a couple of lines per photo, or a line per photo, and it was enough to prompt them to remember what they'd done or were doing.

Q That's really interesting. Actually you just reminded me, sorry, I just want to go back to when you were telling me about the WhatsApp group that worked. What ages were the students who were in that, or the young people?

A They were 13 through to 17.

Q 13 to 17, thank you, sorry it just reminded me that I needed to clarify that.

A Yeah.

Q OK so the last section is about questions relating to play with technology and media and well-being. So we're interested in exploring the link between children's emotions and well-being on the one hand, and their playing with technology and media on the other. And I just wondered if you had any thoughts on that topic that you'd like to share, maybe in addition to some of the things you've mentioned already, which might be relevant here.

A Again, not loads, because I guess I don't....by play, can you define what you mean by 'playing', do you mean playing online, or playing in general?

Q Yeah, play in a total broader way. So anything that involves digital technology we're really thinking of I think here. So either play using electronic devices. Or media content, so it's sort of in their heads but they're not actually with the device at the actual time. Or things that offer them....so popular culture film, you know sort of any kind of technology really, media, media in a more general sense. Or things like software and apps and things like that.

So really anything around that very broad way we're defining technology, not just in a narrow sense of the iPad or a particular device.

A Yes. And please could you repeat the question?

Q So play with technologies. Either play that's kind of intentional, so like a game, a computer game is intended to be played. But we're also interested in the way that children might play with your phone to take photographs, or mess about with filters on Snapchat. Do you know what I mean, it's sort of very broadly defined you know, that kind of messing about with technologies as well as more formally 'this is what we do'. Or indeed kind of educational apps that have a playful aspect to them. So what's the link between that and the emotional and well-being, do you have any thoughts on how those relate up for children, are they good or bad for children's emotional lives or anything?

A Well I think generally they can be really good because they're a connector. So I certainly often find with our youth theatre group, especially our middle group actually who are kind of top end primary lower end secondary, that they will refer a lot to characters from YouTube or characters from games. And it's a way that they create connections with other children I would say.

Q Do you mean it's like a lingua franca, because they are all aware of these people and so they....?

A Yes. Because I'm asking them to, I don't know, we play a game with them which is called Let's All Be, and someone has to say 'let's all be...' I don't know 'tigers'. And then everyone says 'yes let's be tigers' and then they act being tigers. So that group in particular will choose people from social media or from gaming, games world, to be.

Yes. And that's cool. And most of the time that works. I think occasionally....someone said something....someone said 'let's all be Super Mario' a few weeks ago, and one child didn't know what that was, and that felt....they were a bit....that felt a bit weird, alienated, as opposed to 'let's all be a tiger', everyone knows what a tiger is I guess. But on the whole it's a kind of....it's common ground I would say.

Oh all sorts. I mean my daughter does and used to do a lot of colouring online. There's some kind of app where you can colour in, colour pictures. And I really noticed her using it loads at that point when she was moving out of kind of childhood and putting all those kind of toys and things away perhaps. But still must have really enjoyed colouring because she's got thousands of...well probably not thousands, but loads and loads of these coloured pictures on her phone or on her iPad.

Q And she still has them?

A Sorry?

Q She still has them?

A Yes she still does them every now and then.

Q Is she the 13 year old Rosemary?

A Yes she is.

Q Yes, thank you.

A And she does a lot of the, like you say, all the filters and things like that. So I guess it is like picking up a colouring book isn't it, or a sketch pad, but maybe doing it in a way. And both my two for years and years, although not recently, used to love making animations with LEGO. So they build things and then animate them, make animated films. They did lots of...there is a LEGO app where you can – it's like stop motion – make little mini films, and both of them did tons of that, not just with LEGO, with other toys and things as well but particularly with LEGO. Which I really liked because it combined both the act of actually physically making something with LEGO and then using technology to animate it.

Q Have you done anything like that with the drama group, I was thinking about sort of voice over and animation and things like that, have they done that?

A No we haven't. A couple of years ago....with our oldest group we do tend to give them one term's worth of work where they self-select into groups and define what they want to develop. And a couple of years ago we had, I think, a group of three who decided that they wanted to focus on monologues and turning them into....performing monologues, rehearsing performing monologues and the cutting them together and making a film of them. So they did that and we supported them to do that with....they did all the filming themselves and then I asked my husband Chris to come in and teach them how to edit it.

Q Yes. And just thinking about sort of the signs of emotion that you might see in these different settings. So I wondered about when they're sort of...the game that you mentioned first of all with Let's All Be ???

A Yeah.

Q What jumped to my mind there, but it may be an assumption, is that maybe there's sort of quite a lot of humour could come out of a situation like that?

A Yes definitely. And definitely they can come up with stuff that me and Paula might not know, or me and Emma might not know. There's definitely a real sense...and Andy actually in our oldest group does a lot of characters from YouTube that she will just play out and put on all the voices. And when they recognise that she's doing it, yeah they find it really enjoyable and they find it more enjoyable if we don't know what they're going on about!

Q So it's like she can do impressions of people on... YouTubers.

A Yes, yeah she does lots of impressions of different YouTubers, or she'll create a character inspired by one and put it into her whatever, the piece that she's working on or something. Yeah.

Q And that also makes me think about illusion, you know like, I don't know, sort of iconic moments from comedy films or something like that. Do those kind of creep in, do you find catch phrases or.... So I don't know whether that sort of thing happens amongst that age group, I was interested, given it's a drama kind of setting you know.

A Yeah well I definitely think all that YouTube stuff comes in, and sometimes programmes. One group did a piece the other day which was based on X Factor I think. And that wasn't....I can't remember what they were being asked to do but they'd been given a theme, and the way they interpreted that theme included setting it in an X Factor space. And I think one of the things that they'd been required to do was create a piece with some poor singing included in it – so some badly sung singing.

Q Yes. And it was their idea to bring in the X Factor sort of frame of reference if you like?

A Yes absolutely. But alongside that, there was another group who kind of did a thing all about ancient druids, so it could have gone anywhere basically, do you know what I mean?

Q Yeah. No it's just interesting. So there's almost a bit of parody sometimes going on there as well maybe you could say?

A Definitely, I would say definitely. I mean one of the things...yeah, one of the things actually the oldest group does quite a lot – and I hadn't thought about this until that moment is, they will go on their phones and find something to add to it. So this group that did about the druids or whatever it was, I don't know if it was specifically druids but it was something ancient. They found the words to a song....I'd given them a song, a really simple song, and I'd said that they had to include that song, it was in their piece. And they had to....I think....yeah maybe it was that simple, we definitely did one session all about performing songs badly, and I can't remember if it was that one. But they'd gone online and put this song into Latin and then discovered this cave with this writing on the walls, and none of them could understand it. And then they'd got in somebody who could interpret it and...do you know what I mean?

Q Yeah.

A So they'd used technology to really embellish their whole piece. And another group had, another week a couple of weeks ago, had done a piece about spies and they'd gone online and got the Mission Impossible music and was playing that in the background.

So they do, they do use technology quite a lot without me kind of really being conscious of setting that up, but just that there's the permission for them to do that.

Q Yeah, and they enjoy that by the sounds of it would you say?

A Yes, yes. And one of the things that I'm really trying to encourage them this term is to think about the place of music in a performance. So that's why I think they're using sounds and music quite a lot, from going on to YouTube or whatever to get it.

Q And that all sounds quite positive in terms of the emotional satisfaction that they gain from that.

A Yeah, because it's fun, it's fun, they can play around with it, it's playful. And I think that's really, with that group particularly, that oldest group, they are exceptionally playful and it's a safe space for them to be playful. What am I trying to say? So they are a bit daft with it – and I think that's really good, and of course that makes you feel happy doesn't it?

Q Yeah, yeah, that's great. And you mentioned there there's that sort of slight element that they are able to find stuff, original stuff, that you might not be aware of as the leader and so on, that they access well perhaps. And in a sense there's that showing of the skill of 'yeah, we found something here, something that will surprise you'. They can surprise you, they can....

A Yes absolutely, absolutely. I mean it was brilliant, I was floored by that scene because it was....it just was very unexpected and funny at the same time, yeah.

Q Do you think there's ever a way in which there could be a negative emotion come out of any of these, using the technology in this way, you know is it always positive or are we being romantic about it I suppose I was thinking. Could you imagine or have you seen where the use of technology might lead to expressions of other emotions that aren't enjoyment, or negative emotions? Does it lead to....

A That's a really good question.

Q I mean thinking about it perhaps in relationship to play in general, you know which can lead to arguments, you know who's idea we're going to use, or....you know I'm just throwing out potential ideas here you know.

A I guess it's when....I think what can feel bizarre when technology kind of takes over slightly is that thing when things are not going well and you can't...not within the human interaction with it but if the computer or the game or the whatever starts to do things unexpectedly and the young person can't control it or can't make it work for them.

Q Yes, it's a frustration there.

A And it becomes frustrating and then upsetting and all of that. And they get kind of sucked into that moment, rather than being able to kind of step away and say 'OK I'm going to give myself 10 minutes and then come back to it', do you know what I mean? It just feels at the times when I see that, that young people find it...or maybe....yeah, it's particularly something I feel like I see in boys rather than girls.

Q And do you think Rosemary it's something about that they can't...would you say...I'm not putting words in your mouth but it's making me think about the idea that they might find it had to graft in a situation where the technology doesn't work for them, do you think? Is that part of it, or am I pushing that too far and you don't intend that?

A I don't know if it's a graft, I don't know. I used to notice it when my son was really little is that if something went wrong, if the computer didn't work really well – and he actually is the kind of person who would stick at something generally and try and solve the problem – but if he wasn't being able to he would get really, really upset and always to the point where I think 'hmm, this doesn't warrant this level of upset, let's walk away, turn it off, and let's turn it back on or come and ask for some help'. But he'd sit with the problem, he wouldn't come and....that was the issue I think, he'd sit with the problem and get more and more upset, rather than walking away and saying 'I need some help'. So I don't know if I would connect it with grafting, but it might be for others.

Q No you've clarified it, I accept that yeah, no it's fine it just popped into my head, I thought I'd ask.

A Yeah. And that might be a thing around obviously his investment in it, his investment in it was....I'm thinking really little, like you know kind of infants and early juniors, his investment in a given game or whatever was so much that to kind of walk away or abandon it or ask for help at worst, then....I don't know, I don't know what I'm saying.

Q It's an interesting example, yeah.

A But I've always been really struck by that, it kind of became all consuming for him, the let down.

Q Yes. Well I mean that is exactly what we're talking about here, it's about well-being and emotional experience of being involved with tech in some way, and that's a really good example of that.

A Yes, and I guess that's for adults as well isn't it? My friend had her phone stolen the other day, and I was talking to her a week after it and she was just saying the headache of not having everything at my fingertips for this week has just been horrific, you know. And obviously 20 years ago we wouldn't be able to say that if things were stolen from us.

Q No, quite, that's exactly right.

A We wouldn't have all that stuff in one place, you know. And I was talking to her after the week and she was saying 'I'm exhausted, I've spent my whole week trying to find everything that was on my phone', and everything was taken, all her technology was taken, and how difficult it is to replace all that. And remember how....she was saying she'd now got a new phone but to remember all the short cuts that she'd put on and all the apps she had and everything. Yeah. So I can see that the more and more we become dependent on technology the more overwhelming it can feel if we're let down by it.

Q May I ask you about getting bored with technology, and do you think children are more likely in your setting to become bored with technology? And do you think that's...how that compares with say normal playing, gaming and so on, playing games rather without technology. I mean given that sort of what you do is quite playful anyway in the drama setting. So I just wondered if you can compare them with the tech and whether they get bored more easily perhaps with that than when they're in a non.....

A Well generally we don't.....no, I mean I think that would be really hard to answer just because they get their phones out if they need it for something like finding out how to say something in Latin or whatever, but they don't generally have their phones out. And it's never something that we've had to enforce or say, you know 'phones are for after' it's never something we've had to think about at all in our sessions. So we're quite happy if someone...yeah, like when they were doing their Arts Awards, they were having to collect evidence all the time, so we were consistently having to remind them in the first instance 'don't forget to take a photo' or 'to film this bit' or 'to record what people have to say about what you've done'. You know actually we had to get on their case a lot to remind them to use their phones. So I think in the moment when they're in the sessions they're enjoying themselves that they don't tend to think 'oh I want to be on my phone'. Does that make

sense? Because that's kind of the reverse almost, they don't get bored with them because they don't tend to use them unless it's for a purpose.

Q Yeah, so it just doesn't really arise in that way does it, it's got a more...

A No, no, for a purpose, like to provide a piece of information or a song, or to document something, they don't use them for technologies sake.

Q Yeah, that's brilliant. So really I have two questions to finish, and one is, do you feel that certain types of technology might lead to more social play?

A Yes definitely. I really do. I mean it goes back to what I was saying about the contrast between my son and daughter. I think my son does lots of gaming and I find that far, far more social than my daughter I think, who tends to...yeah she's on Instagram and stuff like that but it's all very momentary, there's not real interactions if you see what I mean. They're real but they're momentary, if that makes sense.

Q Yeah. And you were talking about being text written and text based, rather than something that might involve...

A Yes, or photo, or just a look at something and go 'oh yes I'm going to put a heart next to that' or whatever it is that you're doing. Whereas like when Ajay's gaming, he does so with a wide range of people – what do I mean by that – not all at the same time, but he is interacting, he's playing games with all sorts of different people that he knows from the rest of his life. So he belongs to a couple of groups run by the Music Club, and there are kids in those groups which he plays games online with, where....and I think that's a real positive because he's socialising with them outside of the social construct that he would meet them in, which is the flute choir or the festival band, if you see what I mean? So I think that's really good because that extends the friendship. Yes. And I think there's something really, really positive with young people when their friendships are not bound by the friends that they have at school. And so I feel that gaming does that for him in a really positive way. Because they're all trying to achieve something together as a team generally, whether it is trying to kill the alien or whatever.

Q Can you give me an example of one of his sort of passions of games, you know which sort of gaming are we talking about here, just as an example?

A All sorts depending on who he's playing with really.

Q Yeah, so what would be some of his....

A We also have some family friend who has a son who is....some really good family friends, we've known them for nearly all our adult lives, so they have a son who is 3 years younger than Ajay, and Ajay will play with this child, Dan, and they tend to play kind of racing type things, you know or, I don't know, characters in cars racing round different worlds and stuff like that. But with older kids he might play more taking over planets or worlds. I don't pay that much attention I have to say to the detail.

Q Do you know the names....

A You know but killing things and being in battle with others. And then he's got another set of friends where he does stuff all about creating worlds. And you know I don't understand it completely but you might have to be a farmer and grow a certain amount of stuff, and then you go on, and it's all about world creation. And that's very kind of....that's not kind of a violent end, it's more collaborative world building quests, that kind of thing. So I guess he does different things with different people.

Q Yes as you say, he's got a varied repertoire of....

A He's got a varied...yeah, he's not on it all the time but he's got a varied repertoire and he interacts with different people accordingly. And so I don't know quite how that happens, whether he goes on....I mean with the younger child, Dan, he generally, again he turns to ring Ajay up and say 'would you play with me for a bit' and I always think that's really nice, I really encourage my kids to have friendships across their age range.

Q Yeah, that's a very interesting point there I think of that inter-generational within childhood but different stages.

A Yeah. But obviously if he didn't know him that would be a different case. But they're very good family friends and I know that Dan looks up to Ajay like he's an older brother, and I think it's a really kind and nice thing that he does and I hope that he gets loads out of it too.

Q Thank you Rosemary that's so....it's been a fascinating conversation. Before we finish I just feel like I've fired a million questions at you, and maybe there's things you'd like to ask, or thoughts, further things that you'd like to add on these general topics that we've covered really?

A No. It's really actually, it's really heartening to think about all the positive things that it can be isn't it, because I think we can really dwell on the negative sides of things, or the negative impact that technology can have on young people, and it is about getting a balance. So it's been really nice to feel that the majority of the conversation has been about all the positive effects that it can have I think.

Q Yes. So I hope you don't feel I've biased it in that direction, perhaps in the nature of my questions, but....

A I don't know, yeah, I don't know. Yes because there was quite a lot on....I mean the wellbeing question could go in the opposite direction can't it I think as well, and that technology can have a really negative impact on young people's well-being as well and it just depends on the context.

Q Yeah, and you mentioned earlier about the sort of cyber bullying online thing, you know as well as the amount of time that young people can spend, or feeling the frustration as you say around it, not being able to fix it.

A Yes. And also I guess the whole....I mean I think there's a couple of other things, is when it becomes to the point where it takes over so that you're not sleeping well, or all those kind of things which will have an impact on your well-being, it can be devastating. And also that whole thing about one moment everything's fine, and then literally within a few minutes your world can come crashing down around you – well I'm talking from the point of view of

how a teenager would see it by just a string of comments that people made, or by a post that someone puts up, and that can be horrific I think and is not easy to repair. Oh! I was ending on a positive note, and now I've gone off.

Yeah but I find that very worrying and distressing how I've seen that happen to young people, and it's just awful, it's really awful. And I feel that adults are really not equipped to respond to it quickly and well.

Q Yes, and it's partly sort of a new thing isn't it as well for some of us, we didn't have that so we have nothing to draw on, it's new.

A No. Current young people will be amazing parents with ??? technology won't it?

Q Let's hope. That's right.

A And I bet they'll be saying.....they won't be letting their children do lots of things that maybe we are letting our children do.

Q It would be so interesting to ask them in, you know sort of 20 years time how their childhood experiences were formative and their parenting skills.

A Yes, yes, completely yes. No I completely agree.

Q It's been a wonderful conversation, thank you so much Rosemary, you've given me a lot of food for thought and really a lovely insight into the many things that you do.

A You're welcome.

Q So thank you very much for all your time.

A That's fine.