# Karen - Interview 2 - 2018

## C

So, I know you left on retirement but you had been asked to come back hadn't you, and you said no so how do you feel about that decision.

## Karen

Oh, it’s still the best decision, nothing to do with being female or anything like that but just the fact that the stress and everything that went with it.  Way too much.  And I just didn't want that anymore.

## C

So, you are in a much better space in terms of work life balance.

## Karen

Definitely, definitely yeh because I have control of it.  It is one of the things I deliver on my mindfulness training is about being in control and out of control.  because I have to have control of it, it is my decision so I go in whereas before I knew I had to go in 5 days a week no such thing as an 8-hour day it used to be 15, 16-hour day.  Looking back on it I should have been stronger and stepped back and said no I'm not doing it but the problem is the work has to be done and there is more work with less people and they are always looking at doing more and more with less people so it was a case it had to be done.

## C

Do you think your voice would have been heard if you said no.

## Karen

I did.  I used to say no.  and they say yeh ok no problem but by the way can you make sure this is done by 5 o'clock so it was one of those things and it used to frustrate the hell out of me when they used to say that you haven't done this you haven't done that what have you done all day.  Well I have been to the several meetings that you said I had to attend and each meeting is work and when I come back I have got 40 e-mail and each e-mail had to be read I can't just delete like if you went away delete your e-mails when you come back.  I can’t because some of them used to be policies from Air Command so I used to put them in a deleted box and then when I had 5 minutes spare I would go through them.  Or if somebody rang up and said oh I sent you an e-mail, oh well you would have got my out of office which would that said I was away and therefore your e-mail has been deleted so ok, bear with me a few seconds and then I would go and find it and deal with it that way.  And then the way I started to manage it because I had them in a folder 3 months later I would just go and delete that folder because whatever was left in their if nobody had chased it up in 3 months then in actual fact that was the way of me managing my thousands of e-mails I used to get.

## C

So, I know you have a very structured and planned approach to leaving and you reduced your work load as you approached it and did all your leaving dos.  Is there anything you would change about how you approached leaving?

## Karen

No definitely not.  I know colleagues and friends now that are leaving and they have actually cancelled resettlement courses because of the work load and I have turned round and said your mental.  You need and I can understand why they have done it because I would have been in that position and that is why I made the conscious decision to say right I will take every Wednesday off.  Give or take being a bit flexible.  But the Wednesday didn't have an impact on work, cause Mondays were always the day you came in and had everything from the weekend Friday's would always be that last minute dot com and everything had to be done by 5 o'clock whereas Wednesday it was a quiet day cause there was a lot of people did sport so it was a quiet day so you know I could manage and as well the Flight Sergeant and the Sergeants could always turn round and say that the warrants in tomorrow it was alright was to wait.  But what it did do for me was give me a bit of a break that alternatively the flip side of course was I was having to do 5 days’ worth of work in 4.  Because that work load didn't stop but I used to have a word with myself right if it can't be done it can't be done and I think if I hadn't of done it like that it would have got to the point where I would have 4 weeks left and wouldn't have done any resettlement. And because I did my resettlement with the company I know work with it was great because I was getting training if you like with them, delivering for them, they were getting to see what I was like.  Great benefit for them because they didn't have to pay me great benefit for me because I didn't have to pay anything if you like.  So, it was a win win.  And what it meant as well then when I left it wasn't such a big deal.  And because I think people expected me to be like that cat or dog that is going for a shower or a bath you know and their claws are out and they are not going.  And I think I would have been like that I hadn't of staged it, and I advise anybody now at the 2-year point start focusing and looking at it because you need to look if you don't look after yourself no one else does because it will just go on.

## C

So, when you said a lot of people are cancelling resettlement and you said you understand why could you just explain why you feel they are cancelling?

## Karen

Because of the pressure of the work.  They I was talking to a friend of mine the other day he is due out in October and somebody else had told me that he had cancelled his resettlement.  So, I said what is this I hear, he said yeh it is the pressure of work.  The Flight Sergeant is out of area, the sergeant, he has got two but they are not very well so the work load it’s got to be done.  You are not going to be here.  You will leave and somebody else will take over.

## C

So, what do you think it is about the Air Force then, in particular, that is driving those behaviours.  Even when people are leaving?

## Karen

It is the can do attitidue.07:19 And that and don't get me wrong I think it is a real positive the can-do attitude is a positive thing.  But the problem is we don't we don't look at the detriments if you like and how it can affect our health and our ?@?@ and because we have passion for the job that we've done, maybe not everybody is the same you know the  people that I know that are the same sort of vein as me and because there is that passion and they don't want to let anybody down so they will stay and do that work but if you flip that then they are being let down because the bosses aren't seeing it their line managers aren't seeing it but then their line managers are under a lot of pressure to get things done and one of the things I have found doing my mindfulness courses and obviously the people who come to courses I don't know who they are, their ranks or what they do all I know is when they come to the courses and we do the introductions they give me as much information as they feel comfortable doing.08:21 afterwards when it is finished when I get the paperwork in then I will see rank structures and stuff and it amazes me that pressure is still going on but it is going on at quite high level.  My perception and it is only my opinion, bullying, because they are being made to feel guilty because they are not doing that work, they are made to feel guilty because they walk out of the door at 5 o'clock so they are working longer hours which then have an effect on their mental health and then they end up going off sick or … as I don't know if you are aware there are 2 case at recently which didn't end up positively and one of them was quite a high rank so what is going on.  It feels like the line management aren't listening maybe they are but they can't do anything because they are getting pressure so it’s that waterfall effect.  You know I am noticing it a lot in what people are telling me.

## C

So, these mindfulness course you are doing is this part of people’s resettlement or is this extra?

## Karen

yeh its whatever, the company I work for now deliver mindfulness courses everywhere but they do an awful lot on military units because people are realising the positive benefits of it.

## C

So, this is service people coming in

## Karen

Service and civilians, MoD, civil servants, contractors.

## C

The course is there and they just sign up for it.

## Karen

Yeh they sign up through TDF.  We are as company don't care, I say don't care of course we care but we are not bothered who is attending the courses.  It is funded by Lincolnshire county council so it is a free course for the individual we get paid by Lincolnshire country council so they only stipulation is the people need to live in Lincolnshire.  And as long as they live in Lincolnshire they can attend the courses and the feedback we are getting the problem is we do one day course and a two-day course, the two-day course I stress the fact that all they need to do think about for those 2 days is them themselves and that this it.  And they leave quite elated unfortunately they have to go back into the work place.  So, I say to them come back yearly it makes a difference, it is not one of these courses that you can never do again.  You can just top up and there is always new things that we have developed and this has given time to go and breath and stop and go for a walk or looking at what can I do and this big thing I concentrate on is being in control and out of control and that is what helped me when I was leaving and even with my work my building cause I am quite anal, quite micro manger in so far as I I like people to do their own work but I need to know so I micro manage so far as I need to know where they are but I try to deliver it in the way that is my problem not theirs if you like and with all the setbacks with the building work it did frustrate me and with my house being as it is, I am not the tidiest of people and I have a lot of stuff but nothing is where it should be so it really does so I sort of sit there and breath and go ok right.  Is this in your control I cannot control the weather, the plumber, the electrician, the window people.  So why am I stressing about it. and that is one of the thigs I try to focus on with people working in the military.  don't waste negative energy on something that you cannot control turn it into positive energy on something you can control and that way it makes their life better and makes your life better.  But I have noticed there is a lot of people we tend to get and can sit up to 18 and we generally have 16 people on every course and in fact I am delivering next week at Waddington.  So, it is we get there is a big turnover I have got 4 or 5 courses over the next 2 months and that is just me 12:52

(diverge slightly about friend at Waddington) 13:12

## C

So, the process of leaving then on reflection the way you managed and structured it, it allowed you to feel in control of it and you were able to transition out into a new world because you had a bridge almost.

## Karen

definitely, I didn't feel any different if you like which is really weird and I used to sit there and go this is not like me and the only thing I can think of is because of all the mindfulness that I have been doing and training and stuff that I have been doing, it worked you know and what the beauty of it was, washing and ironing you know get ready for Monday I didn't have that and even if you had two weeks leave or 2 weeks leave at the end of that 3 weeks you would be giving it (big sigh) I didn't have that.  And even now I choose to come in on a Monday, a Monday and a Tuesday but if I wake up on a Monday morning and I think, nah I don't want to go in.  I'd let the Wing Commander know just so he is not worried about me, and say oh change of plan plans of changed I'll be in tomorrow because I can work 2, 4, 6 or 8 hours and they pay me for 2, 4, 6, or 8 hours and that is all I do and it’s great because Friday I went in and I had a doctor’s appointment so I knew I had to leave by 3 so I thought right 6 hours cause I could do 7 and 3/4 hours and they would only pay me for 6, so I do 6 hours obviously if it is over lunch time I have to do 6 and a half cause I get half an hours un paid rest that I have to have so I just went in at half past eight.

## C

Do you think that's really important the fact that you are being paid by the hour as opposed to being in a salaried position where the Air Force is paying you to 24 hours day 7 days a week?

## Karen

Because there is an expectation whether it be your own perception or not but because you are being paid 23hours and 59 minutes a day you can work 14 hours. How very dare you walk out after 8 hours, that is not a full day.  It should be at least 12 hours and there is that expectation because of that the work load is greater but in actual fact those people who do walk out the door at 5 o'clock have a better quality of life and they are the ones that have got it right.  Not us. the stay behinds you know because it just and what it doesn't do is high light there is an issue, even though you point out the issue because you end up getting it done well you go the work done so that is that.  So definitely and I think what is in the military and it might be in civvi street as well but I think even for civilians in the military there is no actual credit for the work that you do.  There is an expectation that you will deliver but no one actually sort of says thank you so I used to make a point of in the morning saying hello to everybody but also as they want out thanking them.  Not cheekily but saying fab day, great see you tomorrow and I used to treat them just so they were made to feel worthy and I think more so the civilians I worked with the MoD civilians because they just felt they were a non-entity ….but they felt we had one OC who used to just come in and stick to his office he wouldn't say good morning do you know what I mean and he had to walk past us.  And he was a really, really nice guy but that was just the way he was.  His replacement came in and he would stop at the front desk and talk to the guys and say you alright and you know they knew he noticed them and that makes a huge difference and I think that is the difference.  The job I am doing now they just welcome me anytime I come in because they didn't have anybody doing it and I am taking the pressure off.  They don't have to worry about it anymore. And the job I am doing now the VeRRs thing there is no they don't have to consider my welfare, my medical morally they would do but they don't think about oh they have to do an assessment a write up or anything, anything vice versa I don't have to worry about any admin, any discipline, and welfare I don't even answer the phone cause no one needs to ring me so I don't have a phone. If they contact me we Skype a lot or those of my colleagues that I work a lot with have my mobile phone number so they might ring me on that or I will ring them and say can you help me with that. So, it’s great to go in and do the job I am paid to do, which I appreciate that doesn't happen a lot of people in the military and civvi have several jobs to do but I think now the quality of the work we give out is less because of the fact of how many associated and secondary duties we have to do. 19:18

Because there isn't the ….. all those secondary things you have to do and something else comes up and you go who else am I going to get to do it?  So now whether the Air Force has realised that which is why they have got this VeRRs programme because I see it as being consultancy work and it is a brilliant job as long as they don't take the mickey out of it and start using it to replace people because it shouldn't be that it should be within a department you realise you have got a a gap or you have got extra work load to be done but it is at short notice you know it’s something that needs to be done for 4 months or something. Then you can ask for someone to come in on VeRRs and they come and do that work.  So you can carry on with the day to day stuff but that stuff that needs to be sorted can all be done and get you back onto an even keel again and then to continue to use it like that then that is a brilliant thing and it is using people's expertise you know I left the Air Force after 36 years I have a lot of knowledge so use it and there is talk now, you know when you leave the air Force and you do like a 3 year reserve then they will bring you in on VeRRs so you won’t have any option in it.  It will be well I ?@?@? there won’t be any option in it they will have to change the contract because at the moment they can offer me work and I can say no I don't want to do it.  So, it makes sense somebody that is leaving and might just want to do 2 days week, you get paid the same, you don't get the full X factor, but you also get a paid day’s holiday for every 10 days of work. So, it is not even 90 days it is actually 81 so there is a lot of perks with it and it would make sense to capture that knowledge to see people through.  If somebody had said to me when I was a t Waddington I could have had a sergeant and a corporal on VeRRs I would have snapped their hand off because they could have been doing, all that paperwork that needed doing on the quality and the health and safety bit, that all needs to be done because somebody decides that they are going to change the name of something and its like that, thank you, you know, and if it’s an audit you would be red because it is not correct.  But do I have time to do that?  But you could bring someone in for 90 days just to sort that out and just concentrate on that while you concentrate on the bigger projects.  As long as it doesn't get abused.

## C

If you had to give yourself any advice if you were 2 years back before you left is there anything?

## Karen

Yeh I am not indispensable and you are a ripple in a pond, which is easy.  When I look back now I can see all that but when you are caught up in it, it is very hard to because you don't want to put the pressure on other people but it is you need to because the most important person in the room is you and if you don't look after yourself no one else will.  So, in actual fact it is detrimental to other people round you but that is very easy for me see now I have stepped back.  I probably thought it as well when I was doing the job but it is very hard to put it into practice because even you go away for lunch, I used to try every day but at least 3 times a week, right we are going for lunch even if we are going for coffee.  And when we get back the phone would ring, where have you been? Lunch oh you have been for lunch, it is alright for some isn't it? You know excuse me?

## C

It is interesting you know, that pressure and those norms of behaviour and how they are reinforced.

## Karen

It is.  I had a, a Wing Commander and e-mailed me and said I tried to ring you but you weren't in.  And this was half past 7 at night.  And I e-mailed back and said actually Sir I was in I was doing in I was doing work but I thought who would be ringing my phone at half past 7 at night and I copied in my squadron leader, cause it was like hang on how dare you make it sound as if you know why 2 and a half hours after the time and I was like.  No.  And all of that goes into the subconscious mind and therefore because it is in the subconscious mind it is there all the time.

## C

It is a cultural and behavioural thing and of course people get rewarded for that cause that is how they get promoted.

## Karen

Yes to the detriment of other people and that is one of the thigs about the mindfulness as well because it is not just about yourself it’s about how you interact `with other people and the effect you have and the cause and effect and that falls in line with your NLP cause and effect because every action you have their is a reaction and it’s the yeh work needs to be done but everyone goes off sick with stress you have no body there to do the work. So, it is like that balance but I don't know, I don't know why but I don't feel like that is going up to the chain of command.  And maybe those are the type of people that need to come on the mindfulness courses.

## C

Bear in mind you are in a different situation because you are in uniform for a couple of days a week but is there anything you specifically miss or is it nothing?

## Karen

Nothing. And it is strange because people said to me when they found out about this job they said I knew it wouldn't be long before you were in uniform.  But I could come in in a suit every day, I don't need the uniform to do the job, it’s the job that is interesting to me because I can do something and hopefully make a difference and make an impact.  And people have said to me why are you in uniform and I said you know what 2 days a week I don't have to think about what I am putting on today. Uniform put it on and go and the amount of times I kick myself because there is an officer coming towards me and I have to salute because I forget that I am in the military because it is only 2 days.  So, I recently went to a top table function and a friend of mine who is also on VeRRs said to me are you wearing uniform? Or are you wearing civvies?  No, I am wearing Civvies.  I work 2 days a week for that this is not a day I am wearing civvies.  I don't need to stand there and strut and say look at me in my mess kit.  I did that when I was in because I loved it and I was proud to serve I don't see this as serving this is consultancy work.  This is using your manpower to the best advantage I actually think what they should do say that you can come in in civvies, but I suppose why they say you come in in uniform is because it comes under the FTRS banner I could be called in. During that year if all hell let loose I could be called in but you would be at the bottom of the list.  Because the majority of the people who are doing VeRRs are retired the majority of people are 65 but there are people that are 70 that are doing it so you wouldn't really want them in a war zone but because of that there is that caveat so whether they will look at that you know I don't know.  But I don't need a uniform onto do the work that I need to do but it is just easy.

## C

In what was then do you think your military experience continues to affect your professional behaviours and conduct.

## Karen

With the training that I do civvi wise I can, it helps me to emphasise with people because I understand so rather than living this golden world where I can turn around and say this is what you want to do I understand that that is the way we would like to be that is the gold solution it is not going to happen so how can we make it as good as it can be in the environment that you are in and how can you adapt it.  When I am dealing with things like ILM in leadership and risk management, especially risk management I am able to think back to what I was doing and give them advice and give them hints so for example in risk management because they are looking from a business side as well as from a personal side so business continuity I might get an SAC on the course who has never heard of business continuity.  But I can relate them so typical of flying what is the worse thing that can happen aircraft crash ok, what happens when an aircraft crashes well I have to do A, B, C how do you know you have to do A, B, C? Well it is written down here and what is that? Oh yeh.  How long that will go on for I don't know because obviously things will change after 2 or 3 years I will still be able to emphasise with their work load but I may not be able to quote the policy per se.  But it definitely gives me that ability to switch and because 95% of the people that I actually deliver training with are military or work in a military environment it is easy.  I have not done, well in saying that, I am telling porky pies now I'm saying I haven't delivered to pure civilians but I have cause I deliver training for the Princes Trust for starting your own business so I talk about tax and cash flows and work books and stuff and they are between 18 and 30 and no military back ground.  Very rarely so I can still work with that because I also know what it was like when I was leaving the Air Force and what I had to do and being self-employed as well tax man, books accountant so I think I have the best of both worlds because I have the experience I can utilise and that is one of the things I have found doing the VeRRs position.  My experience I don't panic about things anymore.  And I don't focus on the past, people can't change what they have done or what they have been doing what we need to focus on is now what is going on this very minute so I find that helps me not to get anxious about things or stressed whereas they get a bit panicky.  Because they don't understand well I've got 36years experience in the trade so if I don't know the answer I know where to look whereas they don't but why would they because it’s not their trade.  They are budget people.  I don't know anything about that.  Their budgets you know.  Or the processes within the military budgets I don't need to so it’s that sort of thing.  It is a good combination of the two.30:24

## C

Is there is anything that has surprised you in respect of military life or civilian life that has made you go umm?

## Karen

No, it hasn't really to be honest because of the way I did it the way I transitioned it was almost seem less.  So, I have not, they treat you differently in uniform there is still a difference when I walk round in uniform people react differently to me then when I am in civvies.  And to prove a point when I was walking up two officer cadets walked passed me, marched passed me.  If I had been in uniform it would have been morning ma'am, cause I was in civvies they weren't going to say anything. So, I turned round to them and said, Good Morning gentlemen, how are you?  Oh, Good Morning.  And it’s that.  What difference does it make? I am exactly the same person they are exactly the same people so why is it they feel they have to acknowledge me because I am in uniform because that is the discipline, but surely when you are talking about courtesy it shouldn't make any difference. Unless they are told that when they are walking they can't say hello to anybody, I don't know what the rules are.  It might be don't associate with the civvies I don't know.

## C

Could be.

## Karen

So, there is a difference.  There is a difference when I use my rank I get things, hence why this (ID CARD) is handy to get in places whereas with my civvi ID I mean like Coningsby have changed it now so you can get on with a civvi ID but you couldn't so I used to have to go to the guard room show my ID, the car could get on, my car could get on, the car pass from Waddington was fine but I couldn't get on and then somebody that, I didn't need to be escorted but they had to ring up and say are you expected but because I had a MoD90 it’s not a problem.  Now I understand security and everything that goes along with it but you have to pass security to get an ID cared.  I don't understand what the difference is and things like if I am trying to make an appointment somewhere or if they see my e-mail address, yeh it’s not a problem.  But if I am a civvi its oh we don't have to care about you.  And I am like ok, so if I needed a room in the mess if I just rang up, I attended a top table function are there any rooms? there aren't any.  If I e-mail them from work, same top table, we will see what we can do for you not a problem.  What difference does it make?  So, its these little things, you know, and it could be the same answer to both but with a view to finding limited accommodation but they are just being nice

## C

It’s a difference in how you are being treated.

## Karen

yes, all of a sudden because you are a civilian you could almost be a you are not important and I think and again it is my perception and I think, I say it’s my perception but I did see it when I was in anyway because people used to say things like, oh typical civvi drivers.  No, it’s not because they are civvi drivers it is because the rules and regulations say they can't.  And do you know what if they are not going to get paid for it why would they want to do it.  Would you do something you are not being paid for? Well no so actual fact a lot of the things they do do they do because of loyalty and because they are nice people but they don't have to.  Whereas in the military there is a 'you have to' so there is that expectation that you are going to have to because if you don't do it will go against you in your assessment or you will be the perception is you will get a negative response if you don't do something.

## C

So, we can say that you are treated differently between when you are in uniform and when you are in civvies.  Do you think you behave differently? Have you noticed anything in yourself?

## Karen

I used to be when I was in I was more confident when I wore my uniform then I was when I was wearing civvies.  I think again it was because of that level of expectation people would know, because again when I was in civvies, the Army were the worst, even in uniform they would not talk to me they would talk to my flight sergeant or my sergeant and I used to go, look at the rank sweetheart, fair enough if you want to talk to them because they are male then you talk to them.  Because all they would do is go ma'am what do you think?  And it would that sort of thing.  So, there is that sort of air but I have noticed that over the 11 months I have been out and I think probably because of the training I do I am more confident.  So, it is not such a battle anymore.  But even when I work, when I do my civvi training I have a uniform as such.  I have a set of blue trousers and black trousers and blouses that I wear and that is my uniform so because it is professional, I think you need to look the part.  It is quite funny because when I do mindfulness people expect me to be there in a gypsy skirt and a boho isn't it no but that has given me an idea and maybe I will do one of these days and just float in with unicorns and clouds and stuff.  But I think the difference now is, the job that I am doing they head hunted me.  So, I know they want me and that is a big difference because when I was in you are just their sort of thing.  You are going to be there anyway and you are going to do that job anyway so none appreciated you for what you do. Whereas now when I do stuff, (*people say*) it is really good, I never used to get that there was an expectation well what do you expect you are a Warrant Officer, you are the MTO of course you would be doing that, well ok.  Well I was probably guilty of that myself, you know when I was doing assessments.  Some people would think they were better than they were and the expectation that I've done 3 years in the rank I should be promoted.  Doesn't work that way and I used to say to my guys when they were writing on people and they would say, brilliant best thing since sliced bread.  Well ok why are they?  Well because they are a really good driver, well that is what we pay them to do so you have to differentiate between what we are paying them to do and what they are doing extra.  So, I was a little bit I suppose harsher but that was so that people didn't get over assessed if you like and so when you look at a JNCO or a SNCO there is an expectation JNCO should be able to manage people, should be able to think for themselves, should be able to take risks.  I remember one sergeant said to me, ' but he is brilliant he does everything that I ask him to do.' you answered your won question, everything you ask him to do, whereas what should be happening is thinking at the next level outside the box, coming to you and saying I've noticed this need doing, I know it’s only a management check I've got the time I'll do it. or I've done it.  Not waiting to be spoon fed and so that is the sort of thing is needs to be looked at.  But there is a difference but it could just be my perception.

## C

But that is what I am interested in so that is fine.

## Karen

Somebody else might see something different but that is the way I see it.

## C

Well it is fascinating because you have got both worlds.  Whereas most people have left (*discus other participants general situations*). 39:39 Of course I am just a civilian but sometimes they call me ma'am when I come through the gate.

## Karen

Well I used to do it a lot when I was on the gate because I forgot people’s names.  What's   his name? 'Sir'.  That is all I need to know, Air, they are an officer and I know them but I don't need to know their name.  So, there is that and it makes me smile because those people that do that are polite anyway so I remember when I first went back with my civvi ID card at Waddington so I got to the first gate and I hadn't got it I'd had a phone call to say come and pick it up from the guard room.  And they said do you have a job number and I said they didn't give me one, do I need one? I am more than happy to give them a call and I said I know what the confusion is.  Last week I was a Warrant Officer.  This week I am a civvi and he said oh I am so sorry ma'am.  No need to apologise.  And he said what do I call you now, Karen, because that is my name and he laughed and said alright then ma'am see you later. But I have always been, I don't like rudeness but in my whole service career I can probably count on one hand how many times I actually used my rank.  Because I don't think I need to cause I think respect is earned.  So, and I think good manners it good manners. I suppose that is what niggles me I suppose it’s not that I am not they haven't appreciated my rank because that doesn't bother me it’s the fact they haven't treated me like a human being.  And a lot of people in the RAFFA organisation are civilians that don a uniform twice a week so they will say that they are C1 or C2 so they are Squadron Leader or Wing Commander equivalent.  So, they will be in civvi in the MoD for their T&S but they won’t necessarily be in the military.  And I thought do I call them Sir or do I call them ma'am so I look at the signature block and if they say C1 or C2 I just call them respectively by their name.  If it says Jo Bloggs Squadron Leader it is Sir.  When I first met the Commandant, I said should I put my hat on the, my boss was no, you are just going in for a chat, and you know this is the commandant.  But it is a much more relaxed feeling and in the office that I work in if I say the Wing Commander they sort of look at me as if what?  So, I have to say his name but if I talk about my boss I say Sir, but he is a Wing Commander, so there is a difference in it.  So, do I call them by their name or not but at the end of the day they are civilians so there is no harm in saying hello Bob are you alright, because it is still the same pleasantries.  And that has taken a little bit of getting used to. 43:42

## C

So, could we say that this is a challenge?  Working out, understanding, how all this fit together in this slightly different …

## Karen

Yes definitely.  completely different world.  The avenue it is I mean obviously I knew about the Air Cadet organisation because of summer camps and things like that.  I hadn't realised how big it was, there is over 43,000 people in RAFFA which is more than we have got in the Air Force.  And I have got to go to the Command Group on Thursday, when I was at Waddington there was myself and a Flight sergeant, 3 sergeant which I increased to 3 sergeants and 11 Cpls as well as probably SACs and stuff to look after a fleet of 300 vehicles and then obviously hire vehicles, 43,000 people at least 300 squadron owned vehicles possibly a thousand drivers and you have what nobody until I came in.  So, you now have what one person doing two days a week and it is like, ok so.  It is a massive organisation and I don't know a lot about it but I don't think it is well advertised or publicised.  So, the structure is, I will get used to it one day then I will have left.

## C

Is there anything else you have found challenging in terms of your professional? …

## Karen

No because the good thing is, I suppose I was a little bit worried because although I had only been out a very short time would I still know policies and stuff like that.  But it hasn't phased me at all and I have never quoted anything without looking it up first.  I will always and I have all my stuff out everywhere.  The other day someone said are you alright and I said yes, I am just answering a difficult e-mail and I just need to make sure my Ps and Qs and everything legal wise is not just saying just bla bla bla.  I want to know the reference so I would give the exact reference of the guidelines pg. 44 etc.  But I suppose I have almost I am surprised actually how much information I still have if you like, cause I thought I might just have switched off button and binned it but what I am able to look at is in a realistic manner.  what used to frustrate me in the military they would create new policies or bring in a new directive and say it happens as of mid-night today.  No hang on a minute I have got to look at how I implement that, what do I do while your ?@?@?@?@? you have created something and you are not giving me the tools to do it well actually I have less tools than I did before, and now I am able to go in and say. right cause one of the big things they say is don't forget we are a volunteer organisation and I appreciate that.  But when it comes to functional safety it is regulation, we can't get round it.  What I try to do is make it as painless as possible because I appreciate the fact they don't work 5 days a week.  I got audited about 3 years ago and they were going to shut me down at Waddington because I wasn't doing this that and the other.  To me it was the silly things it was to do with quality and health and safety and I hadn't breached anything but what I hadn't done was I hadn't closed the quality circle.  So, a policy came out you couldn't drive a vocational vehicle unless you drive it at least every 12months, some categories of vehicles are 6 months. so, it is to keep your competence and continuity, which makes sense so you don’t get skill fade.  (goes onto discuss details of driving regs) 48:24

## C

50:48 With that in mind then have you adapted your personal or professional behaviour since leaving and I suppose you have in terms of how you are approaching what needs to be done.

## Karen

yes, because I understood and I know the effect it had on me so I am reversing that.  I tend to work backwards so I go right to achieve that what do I need to do?  I am still up setting people because there is I need to do this work and you will never get away from that.  But it is there is an understanding, for example (goes on to discuss more driving regs) 51:36   53:25 So I am able to juggle.  But again, when we talk about the difference between civilian and service people listen to me more because all of a sudden it is Warrant Officer Young.  And therefore, they I know there is that expectation; knowledge, experience, life.  But if I signed it off Miss Karen Young would I get the same?  So, there is that expectation.  I suppose it is because we know what you need to have done to go through the ranks where it is not necessarily mean that is the same with a civilian.  But if someone has got Band B you would like to think they know what they are talking about to do the job.  It doesn't always work but it doesn't always work in the military either does it!

## C

What do you think has been your biggest personal challenge, away from work?

## Karen

Away from work itself.  I haven't got one.  Honestly, I haven't it has been such a smooth transition I sit there and question, and I ask myself why I am not feeling this why I am not some people say to me cause I used to love the mess.  I loved the functions.  'Do you miss it?' and I said 'no'.  But if you don't see it you don't miss it and they say are you going to join the mess here?  when I go back to Waddington they say come and join themes, but there is no accommodation, so therefore I have to drive there stay sober and drive back and that defeats the object.  And people that I know are slowly disappearing.  But they say join we miss you.  If I had lived closer, within working distance, I probably would have kept my membership but I work here because I don't know anybody.  I have got a club in the village that I hardly ever use because I am too lazy, it is easier to stay in my own house and have a glass of wine than it is.  So, I don't feel the need to but I thought I would.  The only thing I have noticed is that I don't have the same pressures, or stress or sleepless nights.  My health has improved ten-fold, I feel younger because I am relaxed I am not as tense as I was but challenges?  I honestly don't think I have.

## C

that I brilliant

## Karen

It I a bit idyllic but really.

## C

But why should it be painful, why should it be difficult.

## Karen

I thought going from 100 miles an hour to zero but of course because I had planned in it wasn't 100 miles an hour to zero and that is what worries me about my friend, that when he finally stops.

## C

I suppose this is a silly question since you are in uniform 2 days a week but do you still see yourself as part of the military family?

## Karen

Oh, yeh definitely and even when I do go to top tables and stuff like that I do get, Facebook is a wonderful thing isn't it when it is being positive, being able to stay in contact with people.  But it is funny there is an ex-WAAF association.  They go and do the cenotaph and all that lot but I don't feel the need to be part of that and I sit there and thing why don't I but it doesn't, it doesn't affect me at all.  And that is why I say it is not about being in uniform it is about doing a job it always been for me it is about being useful about making something better, don't get me wrong the money is alright.  I wouldn't be doing it for the love and yet my training that I do, we meet every quarter there is usually someone knew that has joined the company so and I will say I'd do this for free and I would.  the bonus is at the end of the month I get money as well.

## C

So, what motivates you to do these 2 very different jobs, what motivates you.

## Karen

The training side of it is I love helping people, you know that light bulb moment and I think I have made a difference.  The policy thing it is similar in so far as I like being able to make a difference and make things right which is why I think I went for the Command Masters' Drivers job and I would have signed on and done an extra 2 or 3 years because I wanted to make a difference it’s all about helping people.  I am quite egotistical and sometimes it is about me it makes me feel good and I have to do a little NLP session on myself and say ok right am I doing something just to make me feel good or am I doing it for that person but the benefit is also the fact that I get to feel good.  And 9 times out of 10 it is the second one.  And if I find myself varying to the first one I have a chat to myself and say right what do you want to do now how do you make it so it is all about them and its nice and I get feedback and even now in fact I went to a top table and a colleague of mine came up to me and said 'blimey, someone was singing your praises and saying they had done your mindfulness course and they didn't mention your name and I said it wouldn't be Karen would it and they were like yes do you know her' and that is I feel good and I am very aware of feedback you just feel nice.    They didn't know that individual was a good friend of mine, they were just saying it so it was that sort of thing so for me it is about helping people so with the civvi training it is the mind, body and spirit with the RAF it is about policies and protecting people so I get a double whammy.  I said at the end of my 90 days I will walk away from here knowing that I have done the best that I can it’s up to you.  Where before when I was in I didn't even, even though I knew I was coming out it was like oh, there is never an end to it and I will have done the best I can and walkaway whereas there was always it would have been my fault if it didn't work in the military.  Cause I still think we live in a blame culture and what we have to do with our people is we have got to allow them to make mistakes so they can learn from them. And we end up mollycoddling them because of the risk factors we are so scared someone is going to do something that we don't allow them to do it.  But that just puts extra pressure on you whereas you have just got to let people make up their own minds and give them a bit of freedom but also guide them and I think we have lost that because it is a lot easier to do something yourself than to try and train someone to do it because of time, we don't have anytime we are so much under pressure we have lost that art I think.

## C

Last question.  Where do you see yourself in 5 years’ time?

## Karen

Totally retired.  She said, so yeh I will be 61.  Definitely not doing this job this is 90ndays.  I'd like to be doing the training I'm doing for 5 years.  Either completely retired or almost consultancy just going in and doing the odd one or town ad even if I was able to just go in places and help people, because the thing is now your 70s is in your 60's your 60's is in your 50's I am 56 this year but I don't feel 56.  You need to do something.  the money always helps as well which would be quite nice.  Maybe only do one day a week or 5 days a month over one week so still working with people

## C

The motivation to help people.

## Karen

I don't think that will go away with me that is what drives me that is one of my key things and it can be detrimental there are negative sides to it in so far as because I am a people pleaser a true blue I get offended quickly and I get hurt easily and I always take things as my fault so the mindfulness has made me be able to say are you basing this on fact or perception.  9 times out of10 it’s my perception so it is having that little chat.  So, I don't think I will ever stop wanting to help people.1:04:49