

Oral History Interview Transcript

Interviewee: Anonymous

Date: 19/07/2016

Location: Anonymous

Time: 01:46:35

Interviewer: Sarah Browne

Time period: 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s

Groups: Anonymous

Roles: Domestic abuse survivor, volunteer, refuge worker, director, volunteer coordinator, organisational coordinator

Okay, so that's it recording now. Solid red line. I wanted to just start with the first question we've been asking everybody which is: If you could, sort of, describe your connection to Women's Aid and also explain why you got involved in Women's Aid.

Yes, um, in my very first connection with **[anonymised local Women's Aid group]** must have been approximately 1979. Because I had ... I was at that time, um, living with my husband and my two children and he was very abusive. And at that point when I contacted Women's Aid I had already been, in previous years, um, in [a] Salvation Army hostel, which was just completely inappropriate for my children but also really for me looking back on that. And in 1979 I again, kind of, took the courage to try and do something about it and I contacted Women's Aid and I wanted transferred out of the city. Because I had tried on many occasions prior to this to leave my husband but he had always found me, made life very difficult. Um, when I was with my parents he broke into the house during the night and, um, you know, him and my dad were, ended up in a fisticuff with my mum in between them, my children crying and screaming. You can see the, the scene. So, I thought the only way to deal with this is just to get out of the city completely and it was all set up and it fell through, um, because he must have detected something and he made it impossible for me to keep the arrangement where we were to meet in and I was going to be transferred. The next time after that, and of course, I felt terrible, I felt guilty, I felt that I had wasted people's time and resources because I didn't know at that point the way that Women's Aid actually worked. So, I then contacted them again in the middle of the night in early, I think it was, eh, in 1980, um, when I had been assaulted,

and I was admitted to the refuge and at that time in the [refuge], the person or the people that answered the online call, um, phone call, were women who lived in refuge, that's the way it was set up. And women generally in refuge would never refuse anybody. So, when I got there, um, with my two children the place was completely overcrowded, um, and it was, and partly because of the overcrowding, it, you know, the bins were all overflowing and toilets were dirty and stuff like that. So, I found it difficult to stay but the thing that stopped me leaving was that because I had arrived in the middle of the night the, um, staff who worked for **[anonymised local Women's Aid group]**, um, needed to see me.

00:03:50 So, I was called to the office and one of the women in refuge said, 'Look, it's better not to take your children with you because they'll ask you all sorts of questions. I'll keep an eye on them'. So, I went to the office, which was in close proximity to the refuge and, um, I was asked to complete a form. Now this was a Friday morning and I had asked if I could wait and complete the form on Monday because I wanted that, that space and time to think about what I wanted to do. And I don't know why, I've never found out, but, um, why that was not, that was not made possible. I mean, I was put under a lot of pressure to, actually, complete the form and in the end I got up and walked out and went back to the refuge, um, and decided, 'Right, this is not for me' and had started to gather my children together and, um, I was on the point of actually leaving the refuge when one of the members of staff, um, spoke to me and said, 'Look, let's reconsider what you're doing here'. So, we did and what I did was, I did complete the form but I used my middle names so that I wasn't being completely dishonest. And you might wonder what, you know, what is the psychology of that and as years went by I reflected on that and I think it is because one of the things that women who experience domestic abuse often, um, talk about, if you're prepared to hear it, is the embarrassment, the guilt, the feeling of that somehow you are to blame. I didn't consciously think those things. I knew exactly where the responsibility lay for what was happening to me. But I was still being affected by that feeling of how society is going to view me and in those days the term was still being used as a battered woman. Because there's something about being put into a victim role by the abuser that is quite different from being put into the victim role by society and how then society relates to that victim. And I was trying to avoid that. So, if I remained anonymous then even although I was sitting in a Women's Aid refuge somehow that anonymity meant that I was still keeping something of me for me and that I was not completely, um, giving into that sense of being a victim. So, I completed the form, um, reluctantly using my middle names because I thought, 'Well,

I'm no going to be completely dishonest here, but...' and when it came to the Sunday, that was the Friday, when it came to the Sunday, I knew that by Monday it would be necessary for me to start to claim benefits etc. so, because I had no income, um, so I decided right, 'I'm going to give it one last go'. I'll go home and see what happens. So I did. And for ... The usual pattern for a while, it was fine, but, um, the need to control me became even greater. It increased. And, of course, in subsequent times I realised that's because by leaving and him not being able to find me, what I was actually doing was challenging his power and his control of me. And so when I went back that meant he had to control me even further in order to exercise that power.

00:08:29 *What types of things was he doing then?*

Well, he would keep me very short of money. Um, I walked, um, with ... Originally, I had one of these high prams, so my youngest child was in the high pram, the other one kind of sitting on the top. But as they got older, um, it, it meant that we just walked everywhere because he made sure that there wasn't any money for bus fares. So, for me to walk, um, anything in the region of 7 miles in a day was not unusual. And of course when you've got two young children, you have to walk slowly and also you're having to carry one or other of them at some point because that's too much for children. So, um, that was one of the kind of things he was doing. He would also disappear for a couple of days at a time, um, so you would never ... It meant that you could never be reliant on him or be dependent, he was not dependable. Um, apart from the physical abuse, um, there was a lot of, eh, undermining my, em, sense of myself and who I was and, um, yeah, just that whole thing about your own identity and criticising, um. And that makes him sound as though he's some kind of evil devil and he's not. He is an ordinary guy who, um, has lots of good points about him and the reason that I am putting this in, making sure that this goes into the interview, is because it's so easy just to demonise guys who, um, are abusers and what does that then say about me living with someone who is, you know, this evil devil? He, he's not. He was not. He is the man that he is. Unfortunately, he also abused. So, as much as I, um, obviously, objected to the abuse that was going on, at the same time, um, I was in love with him. And continued to be even after the honeymoon period of, kind of, that state of being in love, still loved him and, actually, on the day that I finally left him I still loved him. But I knew that it was not possible to, actually, live with him because he was a danger to me and by being a danger to me, he was a danger to my children. He was never ever directly abusive

to the children ever. Quite the opposite, um, but by, by being a danger to me, he was endangering my children.

00:11:49 So, um, I did go back to refuge. And I knew what I was going back to. And that made it easier. That step into the unknown was made easier because I had already been there. And I had, I was determined that no matter what state it was in I was going to make it possible for me and my children to live there. So, when I went back to refuge the second time it was far more organised. Um, it was planned. And, um, I took things with me like the children's bedding because that would be familiar to them and a couple of toys and stuff. Eh, so going into refuge a second time, it was in the month of November and it was very cold. The refuge was freezing. And I was sharing with another two families. As we got nearer to Christmas, one woman went back to her husband because there's a lot of pressure at Christmas-time and children missing their home, their dad, their toys, their friends etc. Um, whereas myself and the other woman that I was sharing with, we, kind of, managed to hold out and support each other. And nobody came into refuge just prior to Christmas and I know from my then long term years of being associated with and working for Women's Aid subsequently that that is a pattern. And of, you know ... it's obvious why. So we managed to, um, to make the best of what we had and, eh, even although it was cold we made, well, I made, um, curtains for the windows because the curtains didn't fit and they were too thin, they were summer curtains. So we managed to get from the donations, um, back room ... I was going to say a box, it wasn't a box, it was a back room, it was always stowed out and I managed to get, um, various pairs of curtains because they were huge windows and just hand stitched curtains all together. So there was a joke and that was that, um ... Because there was two refuges and the one that I was in was the smaller refuge. The other refuge was much bigger and there was enough room for about six or seven families. And the two refuges did associate with each other but there were very definite different spaces and, um, there was a joke that it was not the coat of many colours, it was the curtain of many colours. So, that was really my first, um, first set of contacts with Women's Aid and they, the organisation was a lifesaver. It was needed. I have no idea where I and my children would have been without them because as I've said I had been in a Salvation Army hostel and there's absolutely no way I would be prepared to have taken my children back there. It was clean but it was clean to the point of being clinical. It was very unfriendly. It was very judgemental. And it was very controlling. And the last thing that I needed was something else – be it an institution, be it a religion, be it an individual – actually trying to control me. I did ... That was the last thing I needed.

00:15:52 *How did you hear about Women's Aid then? Because obviously you went to the Salvation Army first and then ... So, how did you hear about it? Can you remember?*

I heard about it because, um, I had, eh, the children were in playgroup in a community centre and at that point in time there were a lot of unemployed teachers and so what had been put in place was that, if you wanted to, pardon me, study for a qualification then, um, a teacher would come to the community centre and work with you. Now whether that was on a one to one or whether that was a small group, um, anything was possible. And I had decided that I would like to study for my English, um, at that time, A-level and so a teacher would come every week. Now, I had to hide this. So, it had to be done while my children were in playgroup and, um, I would go into a different room with the teacher and when my husband was out, when we were at home, um, I would get my stuff out and write stuff, you know, do my studies. Um, I had no idea how I was going to be able to sit the exam but I did manage it by, um, eh, means that I won't go into, but, um, I, I had to be devious in order to be able to do it. And that kind of brings in another point about how women can have the finger pointed at them for being devious and all sorts of other words that, you know, can be added on to that and sometimes in order to just be able to get by and survive, it is necessary to be devious. And, um, it was certainly necessary for me living with that particular, um, man. And I was certainly devious when I had to go and sit my English O-, eh, A-level. And it was during that time that a poster had gone up in the library which was connected to the community centre. That I had noticed it, um, because I was kind of nipping in and out of the library looking for books and stuff for me rather than going into the library for my children, because if I had just continued going into the library for my children I probably wouldn't have even noticed it. Um, but because I was going in for me and my children were being looked after in the playgroup then I was able to focus much more on, um, what I was there for and that was when I noticed it and I had remembered the telephone number. I, kind of, put it to memory. And it was an easy number to remember and that was when I got in touch the very first time and had arrived in the middle of the night, no the second time when I had arrived in the middle of the night. So, that's how I knew about them.

00:19:15 *So, what was it like in contrast to the Salvation Army? Obviously, you said that was quite controlling and quite clinical. So, what were your first impressions when you walked through the door?*

When you walked through the door, um, there is no doubt about it that the Salvation Army hostel, on the face of it, seems a much, much better option because you're not allowed ... but one you have a bedroom to yourself, you and your children. It is clinically clean, um, but you're not allowed into your bedroom during the day, you have to go into the common room. So, you're out of your bedroom at half past eight in the morning and you don't get back in until about half past five, even later if I recall correctly, um, because I had to appeal to the, um, Sergeant Major, um, for my children to get access to their beds in the afternoon for their afternoon sleep. Um, so you were in the common room and in the Salvation Army hostel all your meals were cooked for you. So it was regimented in that when you would eat and what you would eat. And the meals were the same meals as were sent over to the police station for prisoners in the cells and, um, a lot of the food was by donation. So for example Fyffes bananas had made a huge donation of bananas but when they were given to us they weren't ripe. So they were hardly edible. Um, where you would maybe get tomato soup, eh, a cold meat, brussels sprouts and one scoop of mashed potatoes for lunch, the next day it would be the tomato soup with the brussels sprouts in it. And it just was not ... I mean, I was always quite interested in cooking, so was my husband very interested in cooking, so we grew our own vegetables and, you know, did all that kind of preserving food and making jams and jellies and what have you. So the food was atrocious as far as I was concerned. I'm not even sure it was that nutritious over a long period of time. Whereas in refuge you were able to cook your own food. Um, and in the Salvation Army hostel they wanted [me] to pay the benefit, my benefit directly to the Salvation Army hostel, and I objected to it and kicked up a row and so it was paid to me and then I gave the Salvation Army my board but the Sergeant Major came to the general post office with me to check to cash the giro. To make sure she got her money. And I was left with so little. It was enough to get things like toothpaste, um, sanitary protection, um, and maybe a bag of chips but that was it. I mean, there was nothing left over for. There was no consideration about transport for example. If you wanted to get on the bus anywhere, which didn't really occur to me because I had been used to walking everywhere, but there was somebody else in the Salvation Army hostel along with me and she was from **[location anonymised]** and she had her wee girl with her and she didn't know the city. So for her to be able to get about she wanted to use buses but she didn't have the bus fare so we, kind of, chummed each other and I showed her where things were and, um, she introduced me to a couple of things which certainly opened my eyes! And I won't say anymore! Um, but yes, I was completely naive, for example, about the sex industry. I had no idea about it. I knew

the word prostitute and I knew what it meant. But I, I mean, I had never known or seen anything and she was able to say to me, 'That woman standing over there on the corner, this is what she's about and this is what she's doing' and I was like 'Really? Oh'. Now, I was at that point, I would be twenty-five I think, if I was even that. I might have been younger actually. So, um, because although, you know, when I say I went into the Salvation Army hostel then contacted Women's Aid, third time I contacted Women's Aid that I finally left, that was over a period of years and I finally left when I was, um, about twenty-six, twenty-seven. So, I must have actually been younger than that. I was probably about twenty-three when I was in the Salvation Army hostel.

00:24:44 *And do your children remember being in refuge?*

Actually, no, I've got this wrong. I was pregnant with my second child when I was in the Salvation Army hostel. So that puts me under twenty-one. So, there we've got ... I hadn't quite worked that out. We've got from under twenty-one to twenty-six, twenty-seven actually, trying to make a way of being okay. And, of course, what I wanted more than anything was for him just to stop the abuse. We had finally got ourselves into a nice house in a fairly good area, children settled at school, um, had our garden etc. etc. and all I wanted was for him to stop the abuse. But it wasn't to be. So, yeah, over, it was over a long, quite an extended period of time that I was trying to do something about making sure that I was not experiencing that kind of ongoing control and physical abuse. My children do remember being in refuge, um, because they were at school by the time I left. Finally. So, that was kind of my first association with Women's Aid and because, as I said at the beginning, at that time, and this would be 1980, '81, then we answered the phone in refuge when it rang so that was in the evening overnight and also at the weekends. Now on the noticeboard there was a number which, um, you then contacted and that would be the worker who was on call. Um, and so I got quite into the habit of answering the phone and speaking to women, speaking to men who were looking for women, speaking to family who were looking for women, um, officialdom in all its forms, eh, like homeless officers wanting to admit women to refuge, social work looking for women, children, wanting to admit women to the refuge. So, I'd kind of got into the habit, um, of dealing with that kind of thing. And there was one Sunday, it was a woman who, eh, had been in refuge before who phoned and she needed to get out of the city. So, I had called the on call worker who was **[name anonymised]** and **[name anonymised]** came round to the refuge and then the both of us went to the office and she said to me, 'You are dealing with this really well. So why don't you just sit

in that chair at the desk and you start phoning round all the Women's Aid groups and seeing if you can find this woman a place in a refuge?' and I said, 'Oh well, okay then, I'll do that'. And proceeded to do it. And spoke to Women's Aid workers in all sorts of parts of Scotland and finally managed to get somewhere that they would take her then started to make all the complicated arrangements thereafter, remembering we are talking about the time when there was no mobile phones, there was no computers, you had a landline and public transport basically. Um, so yes. So, that was really the beginning, because **[name anonymised]** could see from the conversations that I had had with her that I was very much making inroads into understanding my personal experience as well as the, kind of, overall sense of women in society. I was beginning to really make sense of it and make sense of it from a feminist perspective.

00:29:15 *And did that just come from being connected to Women's Aid then or had that already ... or had you already had some of those thoughts? I know it's maybe a bit difficult to tell.*

Yeah. I think I had already had some of those thoughts. Eh, I ... There, there was various influences, um, I think probably in my life ... Well, there was definitely influences in my life about women's position in society, um, especially from my mother, um, but I also lived with my Gran when I was a wee girl and there were things there as well that she would say. She would ... I could never imagine my Gran identifying herself as a feminist but she certainly ... just because of the kind of personality she was, but I could, you know ... I can recall passing a pub, um, and it was a warm day, it was a Saturday, and the door was open and as we went past, you know, you could hear this noise coming out of the pub and she said, not particularly to me but I suppose she would have wanted to pass comment, and she said something like, 'Oh humph, and they say that women are gossips! What do you think that lot in there are doing?', because it was a men's, you know, it was a man's pub. It wasn't, as we know it nowadays, where men and women ... It was men only in that particular pub. So, yes, there was influences there and by being involved through being a survivor of domestic abuse, by being in refuge, and having the influences of what was going on there at the time then it was, it was not a great leap for me to make those connections about the inequality that women experienced.

00:31:20 *How were those ideas introduced to you then? I mean, how did they even have that conversation or did they have that conversation with you about feminism or about some of the ideas connected to that?*

It, um, it, it was not programmed and it wasn't, um, like, 'Oh, we have to talk to women in refuge about, uh, you know, our feminist ideology'. It would come where, um, you, you ... Questions would be asked like, 'Well, okay then, who's the boss?' and they would say, 'Well, there's nobody is the boss. We work collectively'. 'Well, what does that mean?', 'Well working collectively means...', and there it would be explained. 'Well, why do you work like that?', 'Well, because then that links to, um, the power being shared, um, as far as is possible bearing in mind that there are people who have personalities that are on the face of it often more powerful than others'. And that was linked to why then in refuge there was no warden, why it was trusted that women would answer the phone, um, when people wanted a service or needed help, um, including social workers and officialdom as I referred to them. It was trusted that women in refuge would have the capacity to, to do that and if social work etc. found that they didn't then they wouldnae be long in ringing back. So, it was linked to how the organisation was organised in terms of collective working, no warden in refuge, and also linked to how when you did speak to anybody on a one-to-one basis about your experience, and that usually came about because you were saying, 'Oh, you know, he's sent me a letter or he's found out where I am or he spoke to the children or his mum's been in touch' and, you know, when that pressure comes to bear, it's often when women would then speak to, um, Women's Aid members of staff and it would be at that point that it was made clear to you that whatever decision you made was absolutely okay. There was no judgement going to be made and if you decided that you were going to return then that was your decision and that would be respected.

00:34:10 So, that whole way of working with people is about helping them to not identify as a victim but actually identify as a survivor so that the experience of being abused doesn't make you in, in your entirety a victim. And that making decisions for yourself ... And often when you experience domestic abuse, even sometimes basic decisions like what you're going to eat is, is not, um, something that you're in control of, then having that said to you and having that acted upon, um, helped to not only explain and talk about but actually live that ideology. Um, in refuge once a week we would have a house meeting and that's where, uh, folk who worked for Women's Aid, folk who volunteered for Women's Aid and women in refuge would all come together. Now, not all of the folk who worked for Women's Aid and all, but all of the women that were in refuge were expected to attend and it was where we would talk about what it's like living in this refuge. We need, you know, a new brush, we need a new this, we need something and so on and it gave a sense of that you

were, um, directly involved in not just refuge, because that wasn't the only thing that was on the agenda. There would be other things on the agenda like, 'Oh, as an organisation we are thinking about A,B,C' or 'We are being asked to look at A,B,C' and so they would bring that and it gave you an opportunity to voice, to have a voice and to have that voice heard. Now, a lot of women in refuge, after the meetings, would go, 'Oh god, do we have to sit through that for two hours every week?', um, and also often women would not speak in the meeting but would speak after the meeting, um, and over the years what I discovered was that that was not unique to women in refuge. You know, there would be meetings that I would attend with all sorts of different kinds of people including internal meetings within Women's Aid and you would think, you know, folk are saying what they think, what they mean and they are saying what they mean only to discover, um, later that that's not always the case and sometimes when people are silent one takes that for agreement and it's not. So, um, yeah, that was the various mechanisms that, at that time, helped, I think, women who were in refuge to understand that this was a much, much bigger picture than your own individual personal experience and so that helped again with that feeling of isolation, with that feeling of it must be me, there has to be something to do with me that's causing him to behave like that. Um, so it's, I suppose I am going to use that phrase personal is political and political is personal, um, and that way of working certainly loaned itself to developing that understanding.

00:38:07 *That's really interesting. House meetings sound really interesting.*

Oh, they were. I mean, quite. I mean, occasionally you would get a woman who ... Because I then went on to work for Women's Aid, I'm drawing on the experience of also being, um, a member of staff. But you would get a woman in refuge who was perhaps quite a loud woman, vivacious, um, outgoing personality who would be very, eh, challenging, um, at house meetings with staff. And you would think to yourself, 'How many are there here? Oh, there's only two, there's only two!'. And it's not that I was ever physically afraid but psychologically it's that when somebody's raising their voice because they are not used to, um, having the discipline of acceptable behaviour in meetings. And that was another thing just, you know, asking somebody to, 'How do you think that your ... the way you are behaving is affecting other folk? How do you think it is affecting me? Um, and do you think that's okay?'. And so the house meeting, yes, it was primarily about bringing people together to talk about whatever was necessary to talk about but it was also a vehicle to allow that process to take place where you could use, you know, the way you're behaving, 'How do you think that that is

affecting me?', and drawing on everybody's experience and relating that to, well, the abuse that you experienced. And what is abusive? What is acceptable? What's not acceptable? Um, so for me, at that time everything kind of linked with the feminist politics that were not just being talked about in the abstract but were being actually lived in a real world. And then a world that was not particularly welcoming to it. Um, but it, it was a very interesting, uh, decade in history I think, the eighties.

00:40:48 *When you say it wasn't welcoming, did you get a sense of how the local community were reacting to Women's Aid? Or when you say it wasn't welcomed?*

Well, there's a number of things there. One is, eh, there was still a lot of us, unfortunately there continues to be, a lot of myths about women who experience domestic abuse. So, without going into what those are, um, the local community did not want a refuge on their doorstep because this is what they believed, this is what it would bring to their doorstep. Now, to be fair, they were owner-occupied and having a refuge in your street is going to bring down the value of your house and there's no doubt about that. But that's not women who experience domestic abuse or Women's Aid who are responsible for that. That's the larger society because of the myth that is around domestic abuse. So, on that level, it wasn't welcomed. Um, in terms of the way Women's Aid worked, uh, the officialdom also were not happy about it because they'd pick up and the phone and say, 'Can I speak to the manager?', 'Well, there's not a manager, you can speak to me', 'Well, who are you?', so you would tell them who you are. 'Well, what do you do?', 'Well, does it matter what I do because we work collectively and although we have job descriptions and it is my responsibility to make sure that that particular job is done, we also share responsibility of jobs, um, so it's okay to speak to me'. 'Well, I, well, I'm not sure, I think I would rather speak to somebody else'. And I'd say, 'Well, you can speak to somebody else who ... What job description would you like to speak to then?'. And it was like, jeezo, you know.

00:42:50 *Who was that then in terms of officialdom?*

That would be whether it was social work, whether it was somebody from the council, homeless department, anything to do with funding, um. And I think people with fund-, around funding found it particularly frustrating. Because people who, and I'm going to push the boat out here by saying this ... What I have found is that folk who are involved with figures, as in numbers, and applying those numbers to real-life situations are the kind of folk where, you know ... That ... It's ... The way that

Women's Aid was working was in a way abstract. It wasn't one plus one equals two. It was one plus one can equal anything that you want to it to equal because we can do that. And that was just like, 'You're a bunch of nuts', you know. However, we held fast for a very long time, uh, before, uh, one by one local Women's Aid groups moved, moved over to hierarchies. And also in those days, another way that, uh, the feminism was applied to our everyday working and decisions etc. was that when there were jobs available then there ... It was and still is to this day, it's women-only for obvious reasons and you're exempt from the various acts that allow that to happen. Um, but there was also a ... There was an attempt to make sure that that circle was completed in that women came into refuge or women, because there was other services that were available as well as refuge, so using Women's Aid, women used Women's Aid services then, um, became directly involved in the organisation and that bridge was possible because by being a service user you were already involved because by the constitution you became an automatic member of the organisation when you came, when you used one of the, uh, services. So, it was also bridged by things like coming along, going along to meetings whether it was a house meeting or sometimes you were invited to other meetings and other events, to then, if you wanted to, becoming a volunteer, which is what I did, and then when jobs came up then it was seen as the thing to do to try and encourage women who were survivors to apply for the job and there was encouragement to employ them. And by doing so or by becoming, um ... Once it went hierarchical, directors for example of the organisation, as in volunteer directors, um, it completed that, that circle. And women who used Women's Aid refuges, uh, services, by and large were working class women who, um, not because they were working class, but who also happened not to have many qualifications. And that meant then that women who were working class who had experienced domestic abuse were becoming the tomorrow's Women's Aid workers, members of staff, employees. And that was completing the circle. Now, the local group that I was involved in that, um, I only saw evidence of that happening on four occasions. So, although there was a will for it to happen, it didn't happen very often. There was a peak at one point where, um, there were a lot of women who had used the services who were volunteers and that definitely influenced decisions. But to become a paid employee didn't happen quite as much as the will that was there for it to happen.

00:48:12 *Why was that? Was that in terms of Women's Aid or more in terms of the women themselves not applying or...?*

I think that, uh, I think that it was twofold. I think that it was both. Um, because what started to happen was that jobs became very much, you know, 'That is your job description and you must concentrate on that and that alone'. So, the sharing of skills, sharing of knowledge, um, became less and less possible. And certainly, once it became hierarchical that was lost really completely. Um, and at the point of time, when Women's Aid local groups started to become hierarchical, it was for all sorts of reasons, um, that are to do with the outside world, outside world of Women's Aid, but also ... And, and the pressure that the outside world was bringing to bear but there was also pressure within Women's Aid to change to hierarchy and, in my view, I think that was because there was a misunderstanding of what collective working was about. Um, it was really hard work. It was really ... Collective working was really hard work, um, but it did allow ... It made the space for and it made the time for these other things to be allowed to happen and examples of that in the Women's Aid group that I was originally involved in – because I've done work for a number ... I've been employed by a number of them – um, an example of that would be, we had a, it was in the area, it was actually in the housing scheme where the council had a lot of hard-to-let houses and, of course, that was where women were being offered housing. And so because that was where the majority of women were going from refuge into their own home it was decided it might be good to have a Women's Aid project, as in a place where women could go to, to keep that link because where [the] Women's Aid office was based and where this housing scheme was, was miles away.

00:50:58 So, uh, out of working collectively and having the time and the space to be, um, creative and think out of the box we set up a community project [section removed at request of interviewee]. And originally it was for women in refuge but then what, who had been in refuge and were now in their new home, but what we discovered was that we were actually unwittingly ghettoising women who had been in refuge and so it was opened up to all women in the community. And it was, it was a, it was a great project because, um, it allowed, in a way, a community education type of, uh, way of working to not only happen within the other services that Women's Aid were providing at the time but were also able to provide it in a community setting. Uh, so that was one thing that had developed and also part of that was where, um, there were a number of courses that were ran, women-only, which was women-only education because we became aware that, um, in mixed-gender education, um, then often, well it, the research shows that always women get far more, far less attention, um, from whoever is tutoring or, um, teaching and so we went for women-only education and there was a lot of other great stuff that came out of [it], um, and eventually that

project went on to become independent from Women's Aid. Um, and there are various views whether that was a good thing or not.

And who was that run by then?

That was run by Women's Aid, um...

And then when it became independent, who?

They became an organisation in their own right. Um, and so there was lots of things and, I mean, another thing that Women's Aid were able to, at that time, do was second-, is what we called second stage housing and that's where women who had, who were in refuge and had gone past the point of needing that personal individual support but still needed protection from the abuser and therefore needed to be in women only space and it was second stage housing but it was a complex of housing purpose built. I mean, we got funding, we worked with a housing association, um, and so these purpose, uh, built flats were for women who were going from refuge into second stage housing with the long-term view of them becoming, um, tenants of your, kind of, or owners if they were able to get mortgages, be in other parts of the community in housing. Um, so that's another example of how by, by being a group of people on an equal footing in terms of power we were able to look at, 'Let's see what we can develop here. What is it we're ... Um, what is our aim here?'. And it's the, the, you know, two heads are better than one.

00:55:00 *It does sound quite busy. So there was obviously [name of community project] and, at this time, were you ... had you shifted from being a volunteer to a worker then?*

No, [name of community project] had already started before I became a worker but then once I did become a worker I was involved in, directly involved in, um, [name of community project] as well as directly involved in the refuge. Um, and yes it was a very, very busy time. Because you not only had your ... the refuge and [name of community project] and the, the everyday making an organisation work, you also constantly had to be thinking about funding because funding was also, you know ... You were always on the precipice of, you know, falling over the other side and no' having any money. So, a lot of energy and a lot of time went into funding. And over all these years nothing has changed.

No, no. So what other groups were you involved with then, so?

That was **[location anonymised]**. And then I became, uh, involved in ... And the other thing was, before I leave that, was that there was also the national aspect of being of, you know, being a, involved whatever way you were involved in a local group because all the local groups throughout Scotland, um, of which at one time, uh, there were 32 I think, all fed in information to Scottish Women's Aid and Scottish Women's Aid disseminated information out to the local groups. And Scottish Women's Aid were the kind of public figure of Women's Aid in Scotland. And again people always saw that as hierarchical that somehow Scottish Women's Aid were the head office, the head bidders and that, you know, all the local groups had to, you know, do as they were bid. And in fact, it was the other way round. And, um, so when Scottish Women's Aid as an office became ... Because there is the network which is Scottish Women's Aid and then there's the Scottish Women's Aid office and when that Scottish Women's Aid office moved to hierarchy, again that had an, a major knock-on effect to how local groups then functioned with that hierarchy in that office.

00:57:35 *Just in terms of contacts changing or that there were...?*

Well, yes but also about decision-making. You know, who, who's making the decisions, where and about what and when? **[Section removed at request of interviewee]** And we at that time there was a move to move over to hierarchy and, uh, that's, that's what happened. So it, it was mainly about decision making and who makes it when, who has the power to ... Um, and how does working, having a national office that works hierarchically with a manager then influence other local groups? So, I worked for **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]**, um, as ... I was a service user then I was a volunteer then I was a paid worker then I left and went into full-time study and I became a director at **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]** at one point, um, because that was when it had gone ... Had it gone hierarchical at that point? No it hadn't. So, because of the way that the constitutions of organisations of charities work it still required to have a board of volunteer directors, um, but there was no, within the working group there was no manager as such so I was a volunteer director at **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]**. I also had, uh, become involved with **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]** because that was just in the process of being set up and eventually [I] became an employee at **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]** as a volunteer coordinator. I also helped to,

just in the very early days, helped set up **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]**, also linked to **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]**. By this point there was two employees appointed and I had a lot of links with them to do with training to help them to understand how the organisation worked apart from anything else because it was unique. Um, also when I worked at **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]** I was tasked with, because we were the only women only organisation in the town, in the area, then anything to do with women was referred to us. And so that was women who experienced sexual assault, sexual harassment, whether it was the workplace, on the street or at home, um, rape, uh, childhood sexual abuse, survivors of that, they were all being referred to **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]**. And so I was tasked by the collective to try and set up **[location anonymised]** Rape Crisis. So, you know, tried to get a group of women together who were not already involved in Women's Aid because otherwise people get tired and there's not energy and it's the same old story, isn't it? So, yes, did manage to get a group of women together and **[location anonymised]** Rape Crisis did eventually become, um, an organisation and, to this day, is still an organisation which is, um, very much needed by the community.

01:01:30 So, yes, having had the experience of, kind of, setting up things is always very exciting and being involved at a national level was also exciting because it gave another perspective from being a refuge – and I say that word very clearly because when I used to say it people used to say to me, 'Oh, you're a scaffy'? As in refuse worker! – so I was a refuge worker. And, um, volunteer coordinator, um, organisational coordinator in **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]** just before it became hierarchical. Because it was being, um, identified that if you have one person as a lynchpin who can coordinate things then that helps everything, kind of, turn over. But that was then ... A leap was then made to, 'Och well, we might as well go hierarchical and have a manager'. So, these were the opportunities that were made available to me which I do not think would have been made available to me had I come into Women's Aid at a much, much later date and because at a much, much later date it had gone hierarchical. And it's very much, that's your job description, it's your regular kind of employment. And it was a, it was a magical time that allowed women to try out things that they may ... I would never have had the opportunities that I had. You know, to set up things, to ... I mean, International Women's Day had never been celebrated in **[location anonymised]**. And about a week before it, the 8th of March, um, at a meeting I had said, 'Well, what we doing for it?'. 'Och, it's too late now' and I thought, 'No, we can't let another year go past where it's not going to be celebrated'. And as it happened it was, um, a by-election in **[location anonymised]** and, uh, I so there was a lot of

campaigning and I managed to get the Labour Party to lend me their, um, PA system for on the city square. And, uh, it was a very wet, rainy day and I think there was about half a dozen women who gathered round, but I had organised speakers, um, **[name of group anonymised]**, uh, and a couple of women politicians who were standing, um, and had made a great faux pas of introducing **[name anonymised]** [by the wrong name].

[Laughter] It's quite similar.

So, um, yes. And, I mean, I'm quite famous for those kind of faux pas. So all these kind of different opportunities were made available and that I think is a great loss.

01:05:02 *I was going to ask how you feel about it, having gone towards more of a hierarchy?*

I've got mixed feelings about it. I've got mixed views about it. Um, I think that the pressure outwith was brought to bear and that felt to me like we were having to finally [be] brought to heel and that definitely didn't, doesn't feel good for obvious reasons given what the organisation is about. The internal pressures I felt came about because of just not knowing what else to do. You know, the frustration that can be experienced with collective working, um, where sometimes you are almost pulling your hair out. Um, there was no other examples of what the alternatives could be and I think, if I can remember correctly, that one of the **[location anonymised]** groups, uh, **[section removed at request of interviewee]**, what they did was they put in two coordinators, you know, hierarchy rather than it being a kind of pyramid with a manager at the top and then, you know, that kind of style of management. They put in two coordinators and these two coordinators had two teams that then, um, those two teams were separate in how they operated but they had to come together but no one coordinator had overall decision making powers. So, that was somewhere between being collective and being completely hierarchical. And that was the thing that I found particularly difficult, sad, and a feeling of a loss of opportunity that there was nothing else looked at. That there was nothing else looked at with any great ... Now I don't want to be doing anyone a disservice here, I'm sure there were plenty of folk around, um, the kind of Women's Aid movement who were trying to look at other alternatives, I think, but there was nothing that became organised to ... Maybe it was because the will wasn't there to actually say what are the other alternatives? Is there something that is not collective and not hierarchical? Is there something else that we can make out of this? Um, and,

and as a result of that, for me, in my view, that lost opportunity we then lost an awful lot of things along the way that I've, kind of, talked through already. And certainly, I mean, I cannot stress this enough, of the opportunities that I had because we worked collectively, could never have been available to me in a hierarchy.

I'm just trying to pinpoint the date. Can you remember when this all started to happen? Just in terms of...

Um, it would be in **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]** became a hierarchy in early 2006.

01:08:42 *And where did it first start then? Do you know at all? Was there one group that did it?*

Yes. I think that ... and that's often the way with these kinds of, um, structures. Uh, and I think that's one of the reasons why when one group decided to employ a male children's worker there was such a big reaction to it. Because those of us who have been around for many years know that it just needs one to break and it can open floodgates, and not necessarily only within the network but pressure being brought to bear by external factors. Well, you know, 'So and so, so and so has got a blah blah blah or does a such and such, so why can't you?'. And in what way are you different from that local group? So, um, I think that, you know, folk go, 'Oh my goodness, you know, we didn't expect this huge reaction to something' but that is one of the reasons that I think that there has been a huge reaction to something like that. So, where it all started I'm not quite sure. I can't quite pinpoint in my memory who the first group was but I can remember, um, it happening at **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]** and how it happened, as in the mechanism that was used to make it happen. It was an external consultancy that was brought in to then, um, say well if the directors, if you, you're not going to go hierarchical then ... If you're not going to vote for that, and it was an anonymous vote, then you, um, the directors are likely to walk away. Now, if directors walk away funding bodies then say your funding's at risk because you've got nobody to ... And what we hadn't done, um, as the collective body external from the directors, was organise anything because that would feel like a coup. And, you know, perhaps with hindsight, that is something that could have been thought through but it's that feeling of you're doing something that is not, um, in keeping with your feminist politics. Um, so certainly 2006 was **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]**. **[Local Women's Aid group anonymised]** was earlier. I think **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]** was probably about 2004. Um, and I'm not sure about the other, uh ... Now wait a minute. **[Local**

Women's Aid group anonymised] would be about 2005, I think. So, you can see how each year there's more and more and more becoming hierarchical. And only if you've got within local groups and within the national office folk who have worked within a collective and lived through moving into a hierarchy can you then get kind of true comparison. And it's always a personal and individual comparison. And I'm sure there are, you know, others who have, as I have, lived through that who would have a different view from me. And it would be like, 'Thank goodness for hierarchy, you know?'. And I appreciate that. I, I still have very mixed feelings about it be- ... And I'll say it again, it ... to ... for me, it's about the women who come into refuge or who use other services of Women's Aid. How do they then now become involved and have the kind of opportunities that I had? And interestingly, I remembered just the other night about going to the launch of, uh, what had become known as the four Ps. Because the first three Ps, let's see if I can remember this correctly, was provision, uh, protection and ... provision, protection and ... whatever that other third one is.

01:13:27 *Prevention?*

I'm under pressure so I can't remember. But I went along to ... So that was three that, kind of, funding was built around within the whole network, uh, and that we were ... It was our, kind of, public, as in all the local groups, the network, Scottish Women's Aid office, the kind of public face of this is what we are about. We are providing protection, we are trying to have prevention and the third P. And now we were bringing on stream the fourth P. And there was a launch in Glasgow. And it was linked with the advert 'The White Feather', on television. Um, and so in ... What had been arranged, there, there was various dignitaries that were there and Scottish Women's Aid and I had gone along representing, I think it was **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]**, maybe **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]**, I can't quite remember. Anyway, I was sitting next to this woman who, um ... We sat through this presentation and so on and so forth and she said to me quietly, 'Have you any idea what this fourth P is?' and I said to her, 'Yeah, I do' and then it was kind of like we have to be quiet now. So I stopped speaking. And the fourth P was just then almost immediately introduced, it was like we are going to pull the curtains right now and here's the fourth P. And it was participation. And it was a saying that women who ... Just the thing that I'm saying, very much my history, the women who had come into the refuge now we need to make sure that they participate. And as we were leaving, the woman next to me leaned into me and said, 'Well, I think it might have been more honest for ... to have said that the fourth P was pish'.

Oh dear.

And that was funny but it was also very, very close to the bone. And I hope that since then that there has been the opportunity. I'm just not close enough anymore to the coal face to see those opportunities but where are the women who have used the services? Where are they? Are they in the entire workforce of all the national groups and the national office? Where are they in terms of the directors, of any of that? Where are they as volunteers? Where's their voice? How, how does their voice get heard? Apart from having the, a bit, you know, the opportunity to, uh, engage directly in any of the work. Because there is engagement in the work but there's also, apart from that, having their voice heard. You know, I can't recall when I heard anybody say, 'Well, women who experience domestic abuse are saying...'. Now having said that, that that kind of begs a question which is, do we all experience domestic abuse to some extent or other? So but, but, but what I ... And I'm differ – and the reason I've said that is because I am differentiating between that and, actually, women who have used the services, you know, to the extent of experiencing domestic abuse to seek out services of an organisation which is specifically for women who experience domestic abuse as well as young people and children. Where, where is the voice? Um, I'd like to hear it.

01:17:43 *Yeah, that is interesting, especially in terms of how things have changed. Um, in terms of work with children then, because that's one area that I do know there is a lot of talk nowadays about participation, did you get a sense of how that had changed during your time with Women's Aid? Because, obviously, you went into refuge with your own children.*

Well again, um, it, it ... I think because we worked collectively what we decided to do, um, was we had identified that children and young people in refuges particularly needed to have their own workers. And that came from women in refuges saying, 'Our children need to have somebody. I've got, I've got workers to speak to but you don't have either the time or perhaps the expertise to be working directly with my children or young people in my family'. So we had identified that, looked for funding, and got workers. And also within refuges, it then became very commonplace that there had to be a children's room and a young person's room or that ... And again, you know, I'm saying this as if that happened quite easily. It didn't. I mean, refuges were already bursting at the seams. Um, and to be able to find a space for children and young people, it was usually ... It was the one

room, they just had different times of the day or during the evening to be able to use it. And children's workers were employed and that was really when the voice of children and young people started to be heard very loudly within Women's Aid and what ... When, when you look at, um, the history of Women's Aid and you look at well, what else was happening within, um, our society, because I'm talking through, kind of, the Thatcher years, talking through the Blair years and, um, up to the present day.

01:20:03 So, what else was happening? In terms of children and young people, um, society became much, much more aware of the abuse of children and young people and how that had to be addressed. And rightly so. What I think we have to be careful of is that the voice of women is not, um, drowned out by the voice of people who are representing the voice of women and children, uh, the voice of young people and children because the one person who is key in children's lives is the main carer and that main carer is usually a woman, be it granny, be it mum, be it aunty, be it big sister, whoever that is. And if that person generally is okay and all that that means, as in not experiencing any form of abuse in a domestic situation because that's what we're here talking about. I mean, there has to be lots of other things to make them okay. But certainly in relation to domestic abuse, not experiencing that, then, generally speaking, the children are okay. So protecting and providing provision, that's the other 'p', uh, provision, protection and prevention for women has a knock-on effect for young people and children in my view. And that's because, again it's my view, I think that society has become very preoccupied, and rightly so, with children and young people's welfare but in doing so we have to be careful that we don't allow that misogyny to, the misogynist finger start to be pointed at mum or gran or, you know, the women who are the main carers. You know, that it's as much our fault for this child being in whatever this child's situation is as it is his. It's that, 'Who is responsible here?'. And I'm not making that very clear, um, and I, I wish I had or could, um, but there's plenty out there. There's plenty out there written about it, I think, but it's that thing about women already live in a world which is, which says that misogyny is okay. I don't think anyone would argue that it's not misogynistic but it's saying that misogyny is okay and it's then saying that women who are feminists are unlikely, therefore, to even unwittingly be misogynistic. But I think that unless you are really careful of every view, every feeling, every thought that you have, and check it out then there is a high likelihood that you will hold misogynistic views and opinions and behaviours etc. because we are surrounded by it, we are bombarded by it, we are conditioned, we are indoctrinated and there is something in there ... There is something in what I am saying here

about not then pointing the finger at women who have experienced domestic abuse as being culpable as the abuser for any state of the children and young people within that family. Um, because if Women's Aid doesn't do that then I can't see anybody else doing it, making that argument. Because I can't see any other organisation out there who, who has that focus.

01:24:43 *It's quite interesting because it has been quite a development. I, in terms ... So this all seems connected to ideas, but I wondered in terms of activism what things you'd maybe been involved in in terms of Women's Aid? So, um, you talked about the International Women's Day...*

Yeah.

So was there anything else?

Well there was, um, very much in **[name of community project]**, um, that was all about activism because it was about, you know, the community education model of, for example, I can remember when the workers at **[name of community project]** informed the workers, um, who mainly worked around kind of funding and, uh, refuge and that other side of Women's Aid, the other kinds of services that they were going to be holding bingo evenings and there was a shout of absolute horror. Because there was not an understanding that the bingo, actually, was just a vehicle. That's all it was. Um, and again remembering that we live much, much more in a society where gambling is very much accepted. At that time, um, there was no lottery, there was no ... Gambling was something that was rare rather than commonplace. So, um, yes. There was a lot of activism at **[name of community project]**. There was International Women's Day. There was, um, eventually the elimination of violence against women and children, international elimination. Um, so there was action around that. There was the women's health fair that we took part in. There was **[location anonymised]** Rape Crisis that, um, was set up. Uh, so there was the second stage housing which were all kind of facilities and services and so on but it's that activism that then brings about concrete things. So, in terms of activism the, I suppose the, taking forward or, or putting out there the kind of feminist politics, ideology, political is personal, personal is political, um, feminism in relation to, uh, the services that are required by women, young people and children that kind of activism was, was done through ... We had a newsletter that went out once every three months and that went out widely in the community, um, and there was things, the various things discussed in that newsletter. Um, there was the opposite of – now whether this was right or wrong – there was the opposite of

the sexist jokes that you would hear. You know, it's turning that whole thing round and, and making jokes in similar ilk. Um, so, you know, we would write letters in the newspaper, uh, so there was ... Part of being involved in Women's Aid was always about being an activist as well. I went to **[university anonymised]** to the psychology department to provide a personal account and link that to feminism. Um, that was certainly an experience. Um, so yeah. We would go and do talks. We would go out and do training. Um, certainly when I worked at **[local Women's Aid group anonymised]** I was the one employed, and this was the hierarchy, as the trainer and train social workers and teachers and midwives, um, particularly, uh, about being able to identify domestic abuse, signposting and understanding what domestic is actually about and why it occurs. So, not, not dwelling on the personal individual woman but actually looking, looking at it in a much more, um, within society and because there's not an even playing field between the genders then it's the reason why domestic abuse occurs.

01:29:56 *And did those discussions with external people change over time or did...?*

Uh, they did change over time because, because I think that we became, as an organisation, became more sophisticated in our arguments. I think we became more educated in our own feminism and understanding what we were really meaning because we certainly knew what we meant but werenae communicating that. So the more we were able to do that, I think, the more, more sophisticated we became in our arguments, the more difficult it was for other people out in the community. And remembering that we were not the only influences, there were other external influences that were going on through those years. Society was changing. Um, and I would have to say that in the ... in my experience, in the early eighties there was a kind of peak of understanding which then seemed to, kind of, fall away over, uh, particularly over the Thatcher years. And it's only really, I would say in the, um, new millennia that we've started to see that climb again to feminism being domestic abuse, rape, sexual assault, um, negative and awful and joyous and powerful experiences of females being written about, being out there, being talked about, being, um, songs written about, poems, you know, that whole ... It's kind of bubbling there in what I think is a quite healthy way and, hopefully, it will increase and it will have impact. But it did got into a slump, but when you look at history it would seem that that's what always happens. And being able to identify, um, why and what the causes are is for probably folk like yourself who are historians and not laypersons like me.

01:32:54 *In terms of, because you're talking about society changing there, in terms of Scottish politics then I wondered if you had any views, um, in terms of the changes that have happened in Scottish politics in recent years and how that may or may not have affected the whole issue of domestic abuse?*

I think that, um, the referendum on Scottish independence politicised an awful lot of people in Scotland. And whether they wanted to be or not, I think it did. And once that, once that happens I think to an individual where you become directly, in your mind, aware of what is happening in your community, what is happening in your, um, country, rather than only what is happening in your family then that has to have a knock-on effect for things like the women's movement. Because when you become politicised I think you, you are much more aware of what is going on around you and who's saying what about what and I think that social media has been, has helped that beyond what I would have ever imagined because it can reach so many people so easily with such diverse views. Now, you can also say, 'Well, who else is out there saying what about what?' but, um, if we keep at it, if we keep saying the things that need to be said, we keep being activists as well as providing services then let's hope that it doesn't go into its, I don't know, fourth, fifth, sixth slump. Because how far can we go back in history? Because folks seem to think that it only started with the suffrage movement when we know that it started with the beginning of time actually.

Yeah it is and there is still a lot to be done, as you say. Maybe, maybe it'll be ... Maybe this is a good time in some ways because there's so many people engaged in the process.

I think also the politics of Scotland has meant that women have become more aware because – well, there's a number of influences I think – women have become more aware of that not only do we in Scotland have a colonialist yoke around our neck, we also have a capitalist yoke and that, of course, leads into understanding that you have a misogyny yoke around your neck as well.

Yeah.

And so once that realisation occurs then you can't, you can't put the cat back in the bag, I'm afraid. And nor would we want to, poor cat!

01:36:24 *I mean, in terms of, because you were involved in quite a few groups, and I would be quite interested to hear if there were any differences between those groups, but also in terms of the history of Women's Aid you talked about the move to a hierarchy, were there any other turning points that you can remember that were significant in your mind? Or was that, was that the main one?*

I think that there were various, um, Acts of Parliament. There was the Homeless Persons Act, there was the Matrimonial Homes Act and both of those things had a major effect on, um, how, what Women's Aid were able to, um, how Women's Aid were able to support women. Uh, so these were definitely turning points. And then the most recent one, which escapes me at the moment, I knew I should have written this down, uh, which is about, um, stalking and...

Yeah, I know the one you mean.

Yes, I can't remember what it's called. Anyway, that one. I think all ... Once you get it in law then you have something, that you have a foothold. When, when people say, 'Oh yeah, we've got that Act but what difference does it make?'. Well, it makes a huge difference because it means you've got a foothold. It means that you can then refer to it and it means that those who are responsible for the upholding the law and also for administering the law can also use it as a foothold. If it's not there, it's not there. It's like the Equal Pay Act, you know, we've had it for donkey's years, um, and women are still to this day using the Equal Pay Act. So, if we didn't have it there all those years, we wouldn't, we wouldn't have the foothold. So, I think that those are also turning points, um, for women, women who experience domestic abuse, for their young people and children and I also think it's, um, was a turning point for Women's Aid because Women's Aid was much more able to make reference to these things when we are, let's say, being activists.

Yeah, no it's an important context, isn't it?

Absolutely.

01:39:04 *I mean, in terms of Women's Aid then, what do you think its impact has, has been, um, either on society or yourself or both?*

I think that Women's Aid's impact on society has been phenomenal in that, by the mere existence of Women's Aid, we are rocking the boat. We are saying, 'We are here because something is going on that you might not be particularly comfortable knowing about or looking at' but we are going to make sure that it is looked at, it is known about and that women, young people and children, um, are provided with support and a service. So, I think it has a huge knock on effect and I think that it's very important that it is there and that it continues. For me personally, um, Women's Aid, as I said at the beginning of this interview, has had a phenomenal impact on my life. And that all of the opportunities that I had as a result of having used the services, um, being supported and being a survivor and then continuing that into, at times I think, reaching my full potential. Um, there's been times along the way when it has been awful and things have happened that have had a major impact on my life, um, that would have been better not to have happened. However, that is to do with personalities and that's to do with the individuals, um, and how they have behaved and me, in relation to me. And I'm ... I could not ... You know, I'm not prepared to, because of those experiences then, um, allow that to colour and influence ... Yes it will have some kind of influence, it's bound to, but in terms of my political view of Women's Aid, it was, there have been unfortunate experiences that I would never wish to repeat because they had or it had a quite devastating effect on my life but I am only one individual in the far bigger picture and a far more important picture than, you know, these things that I'm sure if you were interviewing everybody that had ever been involved with Women's Aid would have, you know, their own story to tell of, um, upset and pain and, um, feelings of, uh, lack of sisterhood. But I think enough said about that.

01:42:39 *Well, what do you think the future holds then?*

Um, I don't know what the future holds, uh, because we seem to be living in a time of absolute shifting sand. Um, I, obviously, I have hopes that one day, um, as soon as possible, it won't be necessary to have organisations like Women's Aid so that we actually work ourselves out of existence because there is no need for provision, prevention and, uh, protection and participation. Um, that there is no need for any of that, however, that, I suspect, is not just round the corner. Um, and if I'm pessimistic, which I'm not usually because I'm a, kind of, born optimist, um, the way that the whole politics in the West is going I wonder if that, if we're embarking on a time when misogyny will take an even stronger foothold and if it does then the implications for women, young people and children is the future is not bright. To be an optimist if we are in a, kind of, working up to a peak of

understanding, en masse, of the things that I've already talked about – misogyny, colonialism, and capitalism – then if there is enough of us then it is possible to have a different world. To use a phrase which, um, I think is not only my own.

Fingers crossed. That's, kind of, all my questions unless there is anything that you would like to add? You maybe want a break.

Um, the only last thing that I would add is that, I think what I have done is linked opportunities with, opportunities within Women's Aid for women who are survivors with collective working. Collective working is no longer there. It is what it is. We are in a hierarchy. So my challenge would be how do we make it possible for women who have used the services, who are survivors, to become involved and deeply involved and have all those opportunities and have their, definitely their voice heard? And I might be saying something which is going on that I'm not aware of, so my hope would be that women who are using services just now will, even within hierarchies, will have the opportunities that I've had because I consider myself to be extremely fortunate.

That's fair enough, I think. Okay. Thank you very much.

End interview